

COUNCIL MINUTES

April 27, 2021

ZOOM MEETING

Present were council members President Greg Stinson, Vice President David Phillips, Erik Wagner, Brian Finley, William Lopez, Attorney Gregg Sobkowski, Police Chief James Spanier, Fire Chief Jay Craig, Park Director Brian Bugajski and Building Commissioner Michael Barry. MVH Director Sarah Olson was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Finley made a motion to adopt the April 6, 2021 minutes as written and Wagner made the second, vote 5-0, motion passed.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Lopez made a motion to approve the claims and sewer adjustments as presented and Wagner made the second, vote 5-0, motion passed.

COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR

Jessie Campaniello of Marquette Road, asked the council if she could park a semi-trailer on her property for 30-45 days. She noted that her father-in-law passed away and they are trying to clean up a mass amount of accumulation of everything. She noted that the semi would not block the vision of any traffic on either street. Attorney Sobkowski stated that he would check and see if the council can waive this request since the ordinance says no semi's allowed parked in a residential area. The council by consensus tabled this request until first meeting in May.

Jennifer Klug Franklin Street asked if there was going to be a 4th of July celebration or fireworks. Stinson received an email from the Duneland Chamber that it was under consideration and they were going to have a board meeting regarding the fireworks and Stinson has not heard back from them. Klug also asked about if anyone has heard from Dune Big. Stinson said that he does not believe anything will be happening at this point. She also asked if the zoom information for the police commission meeting will be on the website, she was told it will be on the website tomorrow morning.

Vern Brown, Chesterton Brewery 1056 Broadway, Chesterton requesting permission to hang blue bows on light poles on Lincoln Street starting May 9th thru

May 16th honoring police week. Wagner made a motion to approve Mr. Brown putting blue ribbons on poles on Lincoln Street and Finley made the second, vote 5-0, motion passed. Stinson thanked him for recognizing the services of our police officers.

CLERK TREASURE REPORT

None

ATTORNEY REPORT

Attorney Sobkowski stated that there is legislation on virtual meetings and on electronic notices that the Governor has approved and he will give a summary at the next meeting.

POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

None

FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT

Fire Chief Jay Craig a request for inventory transfer of 2019 Dodge Ram #18 from the police department to the fire department. Phillips made a motion to transfer the 2019 Dodge Ram from the police department to the fire department and Finley made the second, Lopez asked Craig if he was replacing a vehicle or adding another vehicle to the fire department. Craig said it was replacing 2011 Chevy Silverado, he said he will receive the 2019 Dodge Ram and his vehicle will go down to Deputy Chief Dan Branham and 2011 will be taken out of initial response. Vote was 5-0 to approve the transfer.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Olson was absent and Barry stated that spring cleanup ended April 23rd. Please bag all leaves and follow the rules for brush and call the street department for pickup.

PARK DEPARTMENT REPORT

Bugajski reporter that a tree in Hawthorne Park was struck by a vehicle and had to be removed by a professional tree service. The work was completed and the driver's insurance company has submitted a check to reimburse the town for the cost of removing the tree. Bugajski asked the council for permission to receipt the \$1,800 reimbursement check into line item 216-001-395, Park Contracted Service. Finley made the motion to receipt the \$1,800 insurance check into appropriation 216-001-395 and Phillips made the second and the motion passed 5-0.

Bugajski reported that recently retired Captain Joe Torok of the Porter Police Department has been hired as the new Parks, Trails, and Facilities Specialist of the Park Department. Since Joe is a former employee of the Town, Bugajski asked the Council to approve bridging Torok's benefits, contingent on a successful completion of the 90 day introductory period. That 90 day date would be July 26, 2021. Lopez made the motion to approve bridging Torok's benefits from the police department to park department after his 90 day probation period is over and Finley made the second and the motion passed 5-0.

BUILDING COMMISSIONER REPORT

Barry presented 8 new contractors for approval and Phillips made the motion to approve the 8 new contractors and Finley made the second, motion passed 5-0. Barry presented a task order 21004.05 from Global Engineering for a proposed loop road at Porter Beach that goes from Wabash to Duneland Drive and East to Dabbert and back to Bote and if we can connect the road we can make a one way loop out to help alleviate traffic problems and the proposal is not to exceed \$7,500. Barry has already met with the Park Services and they think it is a good idea, everything is lined up and it is possible that we can use Community Crossing funds for this and are still investigating if this is the fastest and best way to do this. This will not be very expensive since part of the road is already in place. The town would be rehabbing sections of the road and adding a third section. This proposal includes right-of-way staking, geotechnical soil borings and roadway design and surveying. They are ready to start surveying tomorrow. Stinson asked for a motion to approve the task order from Global Engineering to do surveying and complete the road at Porter Beach, Phillips made the motion and Wagner made the second, Phillips asked which direction is the one way. Barry said at the stop sign at Duneland Drive you would turn right and then go south to Bote and make this a 4way stop and then they could turn left and leave. Chief Spanier said that will be very helpful regarding traffic in the summer. Barry said the road would be gated so no one would be going back there unless there is heavy traffic. Barry said it would be gravel so that cars would not be going fast. It will be a one lane road with no parking on the side. If they can't use Community Crossing money it is possible to appropriate money from Public Works and pay for it. Vote 5-0, motion passed.

Barry said he sent information on Roskin Road and will get back to them at next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

ORDINANCE 2021-08 ESTABLISHING ARP CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY FUND

Stinson did second reading by title only and Lopez made the motion to adopt Ordinance 2021-08 and Finley made the second, vote 5-0 motion passed. Stinson explained that this is establishing a fund to receive money from the federal government of approximately \$500,000 that it can be receipted into the town.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION OF TOWN COVID-19 POLICIES

Stinson wants to remind all department heads that it was discussed at last meeting that it is mandatory that everyone will wear mask in all town buildings and including vehicles if someone is with you. Everyone will also maintain 6 feet social distancing that is Porter County health department recommendations. This will be followed until the first meeting in May at which point it will be discussed again. Town Hall, Fire and Public Works buildings are closed except by appointment only, Stinson stated that numbers in Porter County are raising and he is not comfortable with opening buildings and Porter County is now orange and will probably remain that for the next few weeks. Stinson does not know how council members feel about opening buildings. Stinson noted that when this discussion started Porter County was blue and then dropped to yellow and now it is orange. He also said he has not heard one compliant from residents about buildings being closed. The council agreed by consensus to basically all buildings that are closed will remain closed and everyone wear mask and maintain 6 feet social distancing until next meeting in May. Stinson noted that Attorney Sobkowski mentioned legislation regarding zoom meetings, it looks like there is some flexibility and he is not sure how council feels about meeting virtually. Finley and Wagner want to go back to meeting in person. Phillips asked if everyone has been vaccinated, all responded that they have had their shots except for Wagner who had to wait longer because of his age. He said he will be done in a couple of weeks. Stinson noted that he is also concerned about people coming into the building and be able to maintain social distancing. If the council decides to go in person do they allow the other boards and commissions to do their business virtually or do they mandate it. He said he is worried about Plan Commission because they have 7 members, attorney, town planner plus Michael, they have 10 people that need to attend in a close space. It will be hard to social distant for this commission and then if they have a public hearing, that creates a whole new issue. Stinson noted that Porter County meetings are all still zoom. Attorney noted that if the Governor does not extend the public health emergency at the end of the month, the decision will be made that the town will be able to meet

virtually in May. He explained that what he has observed that if the meetings are virtually only half of the members could attend virtually, he stated that he has to look at it more carefully. Stinson noted that we do not have streaming capabilities, if the Governor lifts the order and that is the town's option until we were able to put in a system in town hall there is no way to stream it. He noted that the public may not be comfortable coming to the town hall for a meeting knowing there will be a lot of people present and they want to stream and be able to attend virtually. The council agreed not to make a decision tonight. Wagner wants to start meeting in person and let all the other boards and commissions decide what they want to do. Stinson asked for a motion, if the Governor's order is lifted this is mute, if the Governor extends the order to allow electronic meetings continue in an all virtual format the town council will return with its first meeting in May, all other boards and commissions will have the option of being in person or zoom Lopez made the motion and Phillips made the second, motion passed 5-0.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Stinson said he received a letter from Porter County Council with a nomination to our Economic Development Commission, this appointment will run through December 2023, and they recommend Margo Machnik. Stinson accepted their recommendation and will appoint Margo Machnik to the Economic Development Commission as the Porter County Council representative.

Phillips said this is in regards to Chesterton Middle School issue, and read the following statement

The Chesterton Middle School recently decided that LGBTQIA+ pride and Black Lives Matter affirming displays of flags and posters be removed from the school classrooms. They said it was "controversial and political". I strongly disagree with that. They should have left those displays up. The choice to remove those symbols of inclusion were anti-LGBTQIA+, and did nothing but EXCLUDE our children. Instead of taking that chance to help educate, they chose to remove these symbols of inclusion. That choice hurts our kids who desperately need the school's guidance and acceptance. It's telling all the marginalized and at risk students that they DON'T deserve to be protected or accepted. The students need to see actions from the staff and school system that shows them that they are ok and that they are accepted.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 2021-02 AMENDING COVID-19 POLICIES

Stinson read Resolution 2021-02 by title only. Wagner made a motion to adopt Resolution 2021-02 and Finley made the second,

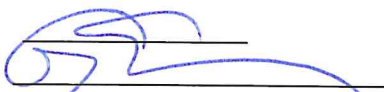
Stinson explained that this adds an addendum to the Covid19 policy for both the police and non-emergency employees that sets up different protocols if you are fully vaccinated. If you are fully-vaccinated and are exposed to someone who has symptoms of Covid-19 or who has tested positive does not have to quarantine themselves unless they are exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms. The vote is 5-0 and Resolution 2021-02 passed.


Finley reminded council that golf season is coming up and he will not be able to attend DEDC meetings until September. He noted that they are meeting virtually, Stinson said he would send them an email and say he will be doing the meetings until September so that he can log into the meetings.

Stinson said he wanted to thank Phillips for his comments regarding Chesterton Middle school situation and reflects a lot of the difficult things that are going on in our country. He wants to acknowledge the hard work that is done by the town's employees to be inclusive and make sure everyone is welcome. That we do our best to welcome and be supportive to everyone and not create an environment that they feel at risk. We must remember that it is our differences that make us strong and makes us what we are. If anyone ever feels that they are not welcome his phone number and email is on the website and to call him any time.

Stinson said that he will adjourn this meeting unless he hears an objection, meeting adjourned.

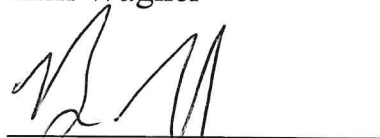
Dated this 11TH day of May, 2021.



Greg Stinson, President


David Phillips, Vice President


Erik Wagner


William Lopez


Brian Finley

ATTEST 
Carol Pomeroy, Clerk Treasurer