

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HOBART
LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA
June 17, 2020**

Call to Order: Mayor Snedecor called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. The meeting was held with the building open to the public and a call-in number for remote public participation.

Roll Call: The following members were present: Mr. Kopil, Mr. Maggio, Mr. Vinzant, Mr. Wells, Mr. Claussen and Mr. Waldrop. Absent: Mr. Huddleston. Also present: City Attorney McCarthy and Clerk-Treasurer Longer.

City Attorney McCarthy advised the public to mute their phones to allow the Council to conduct business and Mr. Snedecor would ask if anyone would like to speak to an issue as the Council went through their agenda.

Reading of the Minutes: Motion by Mr. Maggio, seconded by Mr. Kopil, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 3, 2020 as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Correspondence: Mr. Snedecor noted that there have been misconceptions posted on social media that were a result of an e-mail he had sent to his Department Heads earlier this week and he read the actual e-mail sent to be clear about the intentions of his words which are not how social media portrayed the information:

E-Mail of June 15, 2020 from Mayor Snedecor to Department Heads:

First let me say thank you to all leadership of the City on how you have responded and effectively kept the City going forward in a safe and responsible manner while we continue to go through COVID-19. Unfortunately, the last three months have had a considerable impact on the finances of the City. This impact not only effects 2020, but will have a major impact on 2021. As Deb and I have monitored the City's budgets and revenue, it will require us to make additional cuts this year as much as 20%. In 2021, we could be looking at an additional reduction of up to 30%. As leadership, you understand the overall massive impact that this is going to make to the City. In recently speaking to the Lieutenant Governor, she advised that she had received information that we may not see revenue levels equal to 2019 until the year of 2024. With this in mind I cannot wait until the 4th Quarter to start making reductions in spending, to which the below requirements will be adhered to immediately:

- 1) NO overtime other than FLSA will be paid by payroll unless the accompanying form has been signed by the Mayor or Clerk-Treasurer in advance of the overtime approved.
- 2) No expenditures over \$500 from the General Fund without prior mayoral approval.
- 3) No backfilling of any vacancies or hiring of any new employees without prior approval of the Mayor in conjunction with Human Resources.

I understand that this may require working short-staffed and may require reducing services in your department and personnel on a day to day basis, but we have no other options at our disposal and must implement these policies. REMEMBER, not only are we facing the deficits caused by COVID-19, we are also looking at tax appeals as well as a negative cash balance to start the year 2020.

Thank you for your assistance and we will get through this, but it will require everyone's commitment in making TOUGH decisions.

He requested the public be aware that not everything posted on social media is portrays the true picture.

Committee Reports: There were no committee reports.

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Mr. Vinzant, seconded by Mr. Wells, to approve the agenda as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Unfinished Business: There was no unfinished business.

New Business:

Request for Use Variance: To allow a two-unit dwelling at 201 East Street located to the NE of 2nd and East Streets, Sec. 154.152, zoned B-2, 0.96 acres +/-: D&S Property Management, LLC: Mr. Snedecor stated the BZA has forwarded a favorable recommendation to the Council with the contingencies that the Building Department would make an inspection on the dwelling unit and for the owner to provide a Rule 12 Boundary survey. Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Maggio, to approve the Use Variance with the conditions as forwarded by the BZA. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Compliance with Statement of Benefits:

Jefferson, LLC (Albanese): 5441 E. Lincoln Hwy:

Real Property / 2011 Building Addition;

Real Property / 2014 Building Addition;

Personal Property / 2009 Equipment Purchase;

Personal Property / 2011 Equipment Purchase

Hancock Enterprises, LLC (Albanese): 5441 E. Lincoln Hwy:

Personal Property / 2014 Equipment Purchase

Motion by Mr. Vinzant, seconded by Mr. Wells and Mr. Kopil, to approve all of the Compliance with Statement of Benefits as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Ordinance 2020-04 (1st Reading): An Ordinance of the City of Hobart, Indiana Providing that the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Hobart, Lake County, Indiana be Amended by Changing an established R-2 Zone to B-3 Zone Classification: Hobart Assembly of God, Inc., 7545 E. Ridge Rd., 5 acres: The Ordinance was read. Mr. Vinzant noted the Plan Commission is recommending this rezone with no conditions. Mrs. Longer stated the BZA also approved a conditional use for this property contingent on the rezone being approved. Motion by Mr. Vinzant, seconded by Mr. Waldrop, to pass Ordinance 2020-04 on first reading. Roll Call Vote taken. All aye, motion carried. (6-0) The second reading of this ordinance will be set for the July 1st meeting of the Council.

Ordinance 2020-05: An Ordinance Transferring Appropriations within the 2020 Budget of the MVH Fund (#201) in the City of Hobart, Lake County, Indiana: The Ordinance was read. Motion by Mr. Maggio, seconded by Mr. Claussen, to pass Ordinance 2020-05 on first reading. Roll Call Vote taken. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Motion by Mr. Maggio, seconded by Mr. Claussen, to suspend the rules, declare an emergency, and proceed with the second reading of the ordinance. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Ordinance 2020-05: An Ordinance Transferring Appropriations within the 2020 Budget of the MVH Fund (#201) in the City of Hobart, Lake County, Indiana: The second reading of the Ordinance was held. Motion by Mr. Maggio, seconded by Mr. Kopil, to adopt Ordinance 2020-05 as presented. Roll Call Vote taken. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Resolution 2020-12: A Resolution to Petition to Appeal for an Increase above the Maximum Levy: The Resolution was read. Mrs. Longer explained that this request is for 2018/pay 2019 property tax shortfall collections due to errors or adjustments in A.V. The collection rate in 2019 was at approximately 94% of the anticipated taxes. This resolution would begin the process of applying for an excess levy to make up

some of the difference in the 2021 levy. Motion by Mr. Waldrop, seconded by Mr. Wells, to approve Resolution 2020-12 as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

Consideration of Proposed Fee Increases: for Financial Impact Analyses and Legal Ad Portion of Public Notice Fee: Ms. Kane provided an overview to a variety of fees currently charged for Financial Impact Analyses and Legal Ad portions of public notice fees and proposed an increase based on increased hourly billing amounts and real charges currently paid for these items. General discussion followed regarding this was only putting the fees in line with the current costs of these services and charges. General consensus of the Council was to have an ordinance prepared for a future meeting for Council consideration.

Announcements:

Keith Smith, a resident for 13 years, expressed his disagreement with the Hobart Firefighters announcement today that 2 firehouses were being closed down and noted that all of the firefighters are outside the meeting room tonight, ready to stand to keep their jobs and to keep the firehouses open. He continued that he understood the COVID-19 issues and the 2 stations closed have major access to main highways and major businesses and he questioned how the Council and the City could agree to put the public in harm's way by closing the stations. Mr. Snedecor stated he has always been willing to sit down to discuss issues with the Fire Chief and the Firefighter Union representatives and the Chief has the authority and responsibility to determine what firehouses and equipment are operating on what days with an agreed upon number of no less than 11 firefighters on each shift with the understanding that many days there will be more staff on shift without the need for overtime hours. The day-to-day decisions are left to the Chief of the Department. Currently we have exhausted over \$360,000 in overtime in the fire department budget since the beginning of 2020 and the overtime budget was \$45,000 and the budgets are controlled by the State Department of Local Government Finance based on revenues and property taxes and the City must live within those constraints. Mr. Snedecor noted that we may get reimbursed for some of the overtime from the COVID funds but there is no assurance at this time that we will be reimbursed. Currently we have some firefighters off for health-related matters, some on scheduled vacations and we have not backfilled positions of those who have retired or left the City's employ recently.

An unidentified woman questioned the understaffing of the Fire Department and why the City would continue to allow the department to be understaffed at the risk of public safety. She asked the Council to find somewhere else to cut budgets. Mr. Snedecor stated the budgets were not recently cut and were not the cause of his e-mail, the fact that departments had met or exceeded their budgeted amounts and concerns regarding future revenue losses when we are less than ½ way through the year precipitated the need to curtail all spending. He stated we have to live within our constraints and asked the public to be informed rather than believe what is posted on social media. Discussion followed regarding the budget cuts done in January of approximately \$2.3 Million across all departments. Discussion continued as to how long the firehouses would be closed and response times impacts.

Denise, Crown Point resident, the wife of a Hobart firefighter, questioned whether new hires could be done with grants or other revenues to avoid using overtime. Mr. Snedecor stated the Chief and Union Representatives are having conversations about that and the SAFER grant was obtained in 2017 for new hires in 2018/2019 and the reimbursements are less each year of the grant. Other grants have recently been applied for to cover some COVID related costs. Chief Smith stated that this is the 2nd SAFER grant the City has obtained but we have not replaced approximately 8 of the firefighters who have retired over the years and as of today, he stated there are 6 other firefighters who are on sick leave for a total of 14 firefighters not available for scheduling, not including any firefighters that have to call off on a day-to-day basis.

Sarah Wells, Hobart resident, asked if the money earmarked for the pool renovations could be used to cover staffing. Mr. Snedecor stated it cannot be used as it is bond funds specifically earmarked for the park projects. He also noted that almost all of the Public Safety Income Tax money has been being used for Fire Department equipment purchases over the years.

Samantha Esquivel, wife of Hobart firefighter, questioned the recent promotions of some Hobart Police officers and how that was done and paid for without regard for sufficient fire department staffing to keep the current firefighters safe. Mr. Snedecor stated there is a separate line item in the Police and Fire Department budgets for rank and each Chief may use this line within their budget constraints for promotions if warranted. She also questioned the number of employees required under the SAFER grant and Mr. Snedecor stated there was not sufficient funding to backfill the vacated positions and the City cannot afford to hire on new firefighters. Mr. Snedecor stated he will continue to discuss staffing with the Union and the Chief. He noted the City just had a meeting with our financial advisors related to the losses of revenues and other financial issues in this uncertain future and this is an issue throughout the state. Ms. Esquivel stated these responses do not assure her that her husband is going to work and will be safe.

Angela Wedel, wife of Hobart firefighter, stated the Council knew the budget would come up short but cannot now assure her that her husband is safe and her property is safe. She questioned how long this shortfall was going to last.

Shannon Howerton, questioned the equipment allocations being scheduled. Mr. Snedecor stated at this time there will be 2 ambulances and 2 fire engines in service at a minimum. Ms. Howerton asked if it would make more sense to have 1 piece of equipment at each of the 4 firehouses to not require the closing of any. Mr. Snedecor again stated that it is up to the Chief to determine how the equipment is allocated within the department and at this time 11 is the minimum staffing for any shift. She noted those staffing numbers are terrifying to hear to assure safety.

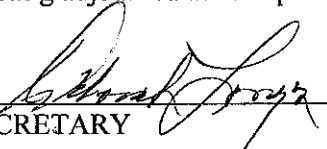
An unidentified woman expressed her frustrations to the situation and asked that someone needs to be part of the solution rather than just part of the problem.

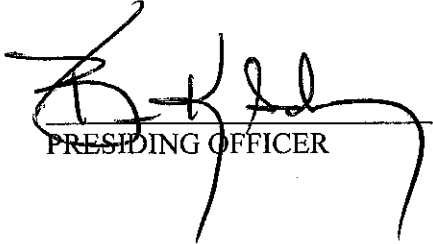
Enrique Lopez, Union President, stated there is open communication with the Mayor and the Chief and the social media post was placed to inform the public, not create animosity but stated that public safety should be the last to cut.

Chief Smith stated he is looking into additional cost saving measures and is proud of the HFD and the services they provide. He will continue to work with the Mayor and the Union to address the budget shortfalls and staffing issues.

Mr. Snedecor asked if there was anyone on the phone or in person who wished to address the Council and there was no additional response.

Adjournment: Motion by Mr. Claussen to adjourn the meeting. All aye, motion carried. (6-0) The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.


SECRETARY


PRESIDING OFFICER