

Village of St. Paris
February 26, 2024
Council Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The invocation prayer was led by Pastor Jeremy Spence of the First Baptist Church St. Paris.

Roll call was taken by Council President Pro-Temp Susan Prince. Frank Blair, Joe Curran, Terry Ervin II, Tony Hoyt and Steve Lett were present. Mayor Sam Ronicker was absent. Village Administrator Spencer Mitchell, Fiscal Officer Mark McGuire and Chief of Police Eric Smith were also present.

Motion was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Hoyt to approve the Council agenda, as amended. Motion passed.

Public Comments on Agenda Items:

- Charlene Hess, 240 W. Troy Street, questioned the approval of council minutes dated January 15, 2024, stating that the meeting should have not been held.
- Hannah Gaver, 375 W. Main Street, questioned if council was getting rid of the Police Department.

Motion was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Ervin to approve the Council meeting minutes dated January 15, 2024, as amended. Motion passed.

Motion was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Hoyt approve the Council work session minutes dated February 5, 2024. Motion passed.

Council President Pro-Temp Prince informed everyone that the public has a chance to speak only during the public comment sections of the agenda and a 3-minute time limit will be enforced. Councilor Prince also noted that council members and village staff will be held accountable for their actions during the meeting and should act professionally.

The presentation of financials dated January 31, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Hoyt to approve the financial reports as presented. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

The presentation of the Bank Reconciliation dated January 31, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Ervin to approve the Bank Reconciliation. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

The presentation of Water/Sewer Account Adjustments dated January 31, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Curran and seconded by Councilor Lett to approve the Water/Sewer Account Adjustments. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

The village received an email from the Regional Income Tax Agency (RITA) stating that were approximately 309 non-filer letters (as compared to 261 non-filer letters in 2023) mailed to taxpayers that neglected to file a municipal income tax return for the Village of St. Paris. Taxpayers can simply file e-file returns or exemptions at www.ritaohio.com, mail or fax to RITA the documents listed on the non-filing letter.

Police Department:

- For the month of January, the department had 29 recordable calls for service, 2 arrests for 9 criminal charges, and 9 citations issued.

Administrator:

- 1 bid was received (from Midstates Playground) for the Harmon Park playground project.
- The water department worked on water main breaks on W. Main Street and W. Walnut Street. The water department has also been working with the street department in regards to the storm tile issue on E. Elm Street.
- The street department will meet with the Champaign County Engineer's Office to discuss the 2024 chip and seal program for St. Paris. There are certain streets and alleys that are good candidates for the chip and seal program.
- The Champaign County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) named William Frey as the new director. Administrator Mitchell, a member of the EMA Executive Board, was involved in the application review and interview process for the new director.

Committee Reports:

Finance:

- The committee met on February 9, 2024, to review and discuss the permanent appropriation cuts made by council at the February 5, 2024 council meeting.

JSP Fire Board:

- The next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2024 at 7:00 PM at the firehouse.

Land & Buildings: no report

Park & Trees:

- The committee suggested to conduct a meeting to review the bid received for the Harmon Park playground project.

Planning Commission:

- The next meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2024 at 7:30 PM in the council room.

New Business:

- Ordinance 2024-1, Authorizing the village to enter into a contract with Dinkler Law Office. Council President Pro-Temp Prince read Ordinance 2024-1 as an emergency ordinance. **Motion** was made by Councilor Curran and seconded by Councilor Lett to approve Ordinance 2024-1. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 5-1, with Councilor Blair voting against. Motion passed.
- Resolution 1375, Supporting the Simon Kenton Trail. Council President Pro-Temp read Resolution 1375. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Blair to approve Resolution 1375. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

Old Business:

- Council reviewed the revised 2024 requested expenditures. Councilor Prince stated that she had spoken with Mayor Ronicker and he suggested reducing the police staff to 3 full time officers and 2 part time officers. Councilor Ervin noted that he was not in favor of immediately cutting staff, but preferred to reduce staff through attrition. If an officer was to resign, then that position would not be filled. Most of council agreed with Councilor Ervin and that reductions in expenditures could be made in other areas. Councilor Lett informed the public that the village is spending more than what the estimated revenue is for 2024. After reviewing the 2024 requested expenditures, council will reduce expenditures by only appropriating \$22,000 for a new police cruiser and taking a loan on the remaining amount (the total cost of the cruiser is \$65,000), by removing the washroom and evidence room, the camera system, the washing machine and the upgrade to the firing range as well as lowering the cost to the playground/recreational equipment at GYAA. Also, council asked questions, regarding the Pony Wagon Trail, to the Friends of the Pony Wagon Trail committee regarding the need for a trail, how the grant money is appropriated and then received back as a reimbursement and how the money will be spent. After discussion, most of council agreed to lower the \$100,000 appropriated to Pony Wagon Trail to \$50,000. Fiscal Officer McGuire will take council's appropriation cuts and prepare a 2024 permanent appropriation resolution for council to approve at the next regularly scheduled council meeting on March 4, 2024.

Public Comments:

- Betty Smith, 127 S. High Street, stated that police are important to the community.
- Hannah Gaver, 375 W. Main Street, questioned if property insurance would increase if there was no police department and that a bike path is not needed.
- Charlene Hess, 240 W. Troy Street, opposed the bike path, questioned the purpose of Ordinance 2024-1 and why the village is still paying lawyers, recognized the value of the police department and noted that the street department is not fully staffed.
- Gary Conn, Helltown Road, stated that, in regards of the bike trail, his property is not for sale.
- Tonyia Hackley, 232 E. Elm Street, expressed concerns over possible robberies and school violence and noted that the village should keep the police department.
- Joyce Bowlin, 274 W. Poplar Street, stated that it was a tough night for council in trying to make budget cuts.
- Theresa Henson, 237 W. Walnut Street, noted that she backs the police department.
- Patty Watkins, did not give address, stated that council is rude, the police need K9's and the village needs a judge to keep money in the village for traffic citations and not give it to Urbana.
- Elizabeth Carine, 410 W. Main Street, told council to take the sheriff off the list of things to do and to cut hours at other departments to save on payroll.
- Greg Marlow, full time police officer for the village, stated that the citizens and kids are important to the police department.

There being no further business, **motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Blair to adjourn at 10:25 PM. Motion passed.

Marc McGuire, Fiscal Officer

Susan Prince, Council President Pro-Temp

Date