

# Hiram Village Remote Video Conference Council Meeting

Rosser Municipal Building  
11617 Garfield Road, Hiram, Ohio 44234

December 15, 2020

The following Members of Council were present online: Mr. Dempsey, Mr. Greenwood, Mr. Smith, Mr. Spencer and Mr. Szell. The following were also present: Mayor Lou Bertrand, Village Solicitor Tom Reitz, Fiscal Officer Susan Skrovan, Police Chief Brian Gregory, Fire Chief Bill Byers, Asst. Fire Chief Jason Groselle, Village Administrator James McGee and Asst. VA Steven Schuller.

The following persons were present online: Hiram Township Trustee Steve Pancost, Ed Frato-Sweeney, Stacy Turner, Reporter with The Weekly Villager, Anna Johnson and Alex Andrzejewski.

Mayor Bertrand called the regular meeting to order at 6:42 p.m. immediately following the Finance & Safety Committee meeting. The Mayor asked that all cell phones be silenced. There was a moment of silence, the Mayor remembering all those in our community that are ill or dealing with life threatening situations during the Pandemic we are in, followed by the pledge to the flag.

Mayor asked for a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of 11/10/20. Dave Smith said he was the one who made the motion to enter executive session. Frank Hemphill seconded his motion. A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Smith. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

Mayor asked for a motion to approve the proposed agenda. A motion to approve the proposed agenda as presented was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mr. Dempsey. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

## GUEST AND PUBLIC COMMENT

We do have guests, but no public comments.

## DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

*\*Police Chief Brian Gregory was present to provide their monthly report.* There were 301 offense reports for November. There were 54 traffic stops with 32 citations issued. Chief Gregory detailed some of the stops made.

They will continue to do their patrol around the community; however, traffic stops will be limited due to COVID and Portage County's status in the purple.

For our Shop with a Cop program, 29 children participated in the program. Chief Gregory and his wife did all of the shopping and the wrapping to keep distancing. Brian thanked all of those who wanted to volunteer to help.

For the dispatch contract, we are still waiting to hear from the Portage County dispatch on the final contract.

Regarding the speed message sign along State Route 700, which is located in front of the Municipal building and gathering information. The Chief was surprised to see over 16,000 vehicles a week pass by our municipal building! The average speed for this past week was 31.5 mph with an average of 11.9 vehicles a day speeding over the threshold set of 40 mph.

Chief Gregory detailed steps that are being taken for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine! There is an upcoming webinar scheduled with Governor DeWine to discuss the distribution plan.

*\*Fire Chief Bill Byers provided their monthly report for tonight.* The report was emailed today to everyone.

Chief Byers added his assistant Fire Chief Groselle and he met Friday with one of the area hospitals and have been in contact with other area hospitals regarding the distribution of the COVID vaccine. Earlier this year, Bill signed an MOU agreement to allow our fire station to be used as a vaccination center. The Chief provided more details.

Assistant Chief Jason Groselle addressed the Mayor and Council regarding some talk about changing the employee handbook concerning the health insurance for non-full-time employees. He asked whether there has been any talk for the firefighters to have the option of health insurance coverage. We have some that are not currently covered by health insurance and could really use it. Dave Smith asked if Susan could explain the health insurance coverage. Susan said following discussion from Council on health insurance coverage for our Solicitor; legislation to amend the employee handbook is presently tabled. Solicitor Tom Reitz added that information that was provided to him and that he then provided to Council. The insurance provider requires that the employee be "regularly" scheduled for 30 hours per week. This is the threshold requirement and is not waivable by the Village Council; it is the insurance company's requirement. Jason said we have five employees that currently meet that requirement. Solicitor Reitz said this has all been forwarded to the Village Council and has not heard back on it since. It is still under consideration. Rob Dempsey said he believes there is a difference between working 30 hours a week and "regularly scheduled" 30 hours a week. Jason has those employees who regularly work 30+ hours would ask Council to consider the part-time firefighters as well. Paul Spencer felt this is a major cost to the Village and was afraid of this becoming a slippery slope. Jason asked why we are picking and choosing who we give this benefit to? Paul felt Council is not picking and choosing, the consideration is part of his contract; Tom Reitz does a lot of work for the Village. Paul asked Susan what the cost of the Solicitor's coverage. Susan said it is approximately \$1,700.00 per month. Paul and Dave asked Jason if the fire department budget could afford to absorb those kinds of costs. Paul said Tom is considered administrative and is paid out of the General Fund. More discussion on overall costs. Paul would like to see health insurance available to all employees and even elected officials during a new term. The problem is having the revenue to cover it. Dave said Jason Groselle is questioning giving it to one part-time employee; it should be offered to all part-time employees. Paul does not believe doing away with the tax credit will not be enough. He does not know if the Village residents will go for an increase in income tax to 3.0 or 3.5%! This may be the only road we can go down; it would have a major impact on Hiram College employees. We are going to have to encourage economic growth or go for an income tax increase. Jason would like all part-time employees to be considered. The Mayor clarified that Tom Reitz is a department head and he suggested the amendment to the employee handbook limit it to department heads. The Mayor believed this is why it is being considered. Paul assured Jason Council will discuss this further and will work on the possibility of having the health insurance coverage made available for part-time fire personnel.

**\*Village Administrator James McGee presented the monthly water/sewer report.** Steve reported talking to the Finance Committee about a mix-up with our water meter project OPWC grant funding. We ended up filing for a local match rather than a loan match! We need to find \$200,000 as a local match towards the \$400,000 project with \$200,000 coming from the grant. We can file for an OWDA loan; there is legislation before Council tonight. It would be a \$200,000 loan over 20 years at 1.95 percent. We may even receive a better rate once the application has been filed.

The only other item is the contract with Clearwater, our licensed water license. James and Steve have talked with Dan Vair, who is willing to come back and do what Clearwater is doing for the same price. Clearwater failed to test some water and we now have some violations that need to be addressed. Steve and James both agree that Dan is the better person to do the job with 20 years' experience in the plant. He has always been a valuable resource and has always come to help whenever we needed it. No one else in our departments currently carry a water license. Steve said it would probably be another year before James or he could obtain a water license. They are looking into it. More discussion on what it costs for Dan Vair versus Clearwater. Paul, at this point, would like to stay with Clearwater to have the two licenses. They do have mixed feelings on relying totally on Dan for all our licensing. Dave felt Clearwater should have taken care of the violations that they caused. More discussion followed. The Mayor brought up again a water and sewer district! Something he has been talking about for the past five years!

Discussion returned to the OWDA loan. Legislation will come before Council in the near future. Chris Szell and Steve discussed the other items on the original proposal. What is restricting us from going to OWDA and asking for the full \$318,000 rather than only the \$200,000, and cover all of the upgrades we wish to make. Steve did not see any issue with doing this. Chris did not want to see us limit ourselves to only the minimum we need for the project.

Solicitor Reitz verified the standard agreement was the only item provided to Council this evening. The rate sheet has not yet been provided allowing Council to determine the amount of the loan this evening if they so desire.

## **HIRAM MAYOR LOU BERTRAND'S DECEMBER 15, 2020 REPORT TO COUNCIL + FINANCE & SAFETY COMMITTEES**

### **CORONA-VIRUS aka COVID-19 PANDEMIC:**

As of Monday December 14, 2020 - 522,467 Total COVID-19 cases | 32,264 hospitalizations and 5,209 ICU admissions. | 7,551 Total Deaths Updated Ohio Public Health Advisory System: **Level 4 (PURPLE):** Medina, **PORTAGE**, Richland, Stark, and Summit Counties | **Level 3 (RED):** Franklin, Morgan Noble, Harrison, and Washington | Watch list Counties: Cuyahoga, Fairfield, Madison, Ashland, and Guernsey.

Governor DeWine announced that the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) would be extending the 10 P.M. TO 5 A.M. statewide curfew until January 2, 2021.

COLUMBUS, Ohio) - Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Lt. Governor Jon Husted today provided the following updates on Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **VACCINATIONS BEGIN IN OHIO:**

Governor DeWine announced that the first COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered in Ohio. Shipments of 975 doses were delivered Monday morning to both The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus and UC Health in Cincinnati. Healthcare workers and personnel who are routinely involved with the care of COVID-19 patients immediately received vaccinations.

Vaccine shipments were delivered to eight additional hospitals in Ohio **TODAY:**

- Mercy Health St. Vincent Hospital, Lucas County
- \* CLEVELAND CLINIC, CUYAHOGA COUNTY
- \* METRO HEALTH MEDICAL CENTER, CUYAHOGA COUNTY
- Mercy Health Springfield Regional Medical Center, Clark County
- OhioHealth Riverside Hospital, Franklin County
- Aultman Hospital, Stark County
- OhioHealth O'Bleness Hospital, Athens County
- Genesis Hospital, Muskingum County

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:**

A meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, December 15, 2020, which was cancelled and a newly proposed meeting date of Tuesday, December 22, 2020 has also been cancelled by its Chair, Tom Bollenbacher.

### **MARILANE SPENCER'S PROPERTY:**

We are awaiting an agreed appraisal report by *Jack Kohl Realty*.

### **PLANNING & ZONING:**

No meeting was held as there was no business.

Submitted by:

**MAYOR LOU BERTRAND**

*\*The Fiscal Officer Susan Skrovan presented the monthly financial reports for November.*

**The following reports were provided to Council for this meeting:**

The November Bank Reconciliation balanced with the UAN system with no adjusting factors, has been emailed for review before signing by Mayor & Council.

Cash Summary by Fund as of November 30, 2020 was provided in Council e-Packets.

List of bills as of December 4, 2020 was provided in Council e-Packets.

Council Regular meeting minutes for November 10, 2020 were provided to Council yesterday by email.

R.I.T.A. income tax receipts YTD report was provided to Council yesterday by email.

Comparison of Budgeted and Appropriated YTD report was provided in Council e-Packets.

Dave Smith said he could not find the bill's list in any of the emails he received. Susan thought she sent it out on Friday along with the first agenda and most of the legislation. Others did not receive the bill's list. Jason Groselle took a copy of the bill's list from the Mayor, scanned it and will forward it to the Fiscal Officer and to Chief Byers.

A motion to approve the Fiscal Officer's report for November as submitted was made by Mr. Dempsey and seconded by Mr. Smith. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

## **HIRAM TOWNSHIP REPORT**

Hiram Township Trustee, Steve Pancost, had nothing to report at this time. He did inform Council that their next Trustees' meeting was moved to December 22, 2020 to conduct their December meeting as well as their year-end.

The Mayor asked Mr. Pancost about the square footage of their new building. Steve said he was not sure of the exact size; he knew it is under the requirement for sprinklers. Paul Spencer thought it might be beneficial for them to have the sprinklers in a new Township building and to take a look at their insurance rates. It might mitigate the cost of installing a sprinkler system. The Village would be glad to offer water and wastewater to their new building.

## **LEGISLATION**

### **ORDINANCES**

**2020-24: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND PART 1 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM ESTABLISHING THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE. 3<sup>rd</sup> READING.** A motion to approve was made by Mr. Greenwood and seconded by Mr. Szell. Chris Szell brought up the makeup of the board and do we currently have five members. The Mayor felt we do have five. Paul was trying to find the final updated version. Solicitor Tom Reitz spoke about the amendment to Section 144.03. Mr. Spencer called for the question. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

**2020-30: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM'S EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK, SECTION 5.1. TABLED ON 1<sup>st</sup> READING.** A motion to bring Ordinance 2020-30 off the table was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Smith. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. Paul Spencer asked Tom Reitz about the 30 hour required for a department head/part-time. Is that doable, can we do that; should that be included in the verbiage. Solicitor Tom Reitz said the department head requirement does not seem to have any support in law. Council sets the criteria, however, your insurance company requires that employee is regularly scheduled for 30 hours per week. Tom tried to get clarification from the insurance agent and some guidance. Paul asked Tom Reitz whether Council is good with what is before them for the legislation. Solicitor Reitz said he did not get any direction from Council to make any change. He would amend it to state, "Part-time employees must meet the regulations and requirements established by the Village health insurance carrier". This would be good because there is no guarantee that your next insurance carrier will have the same requirements. This is on second reading.

**2020-31: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM'S EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK, APPENDIX A. 1<sup>st</sup> READING.** A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Smith. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. A motion to approve on first reading was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mr. Spencer. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

**2020-32: AN ORDINANCE APPROVING TEMPORARY APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM FOR 2021 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.** A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Spencer. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. A motion to approve as an emergency was made by Mr. Dempsey and seconded by Mr. Smith. Chris Szell spoke about the park budget and the need to consider an increase to maintain and make improvements. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

**2020-33: AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS IN THE GENERAL FUND (1000) BY \$37,916.25 AND AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF \$37,916.25 TO THE SPECIAL REVENUE FUND (2914) FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. OPTION 1 or 2.** The second one is half of what we were originally going to transfer. Susan would recommend the second option to transfer half to get things up and running for the first quarter. Now that we have moved the Fire Department out of the General Fund, we have to transfer money to support them. The \$37,916.25 is half of the amount that the General Fund would appropriate for the Fire Department operations besides the amounts received from Hiram Township as well as the EMS revenue and the Fire Levy, which is already separated. Chris Szell asked Susan about moving monies from the Fire Levy. Susan said that would be a decision of Council to consider the Fire Levy as part of the money contributed by the Village. Council discussed the levy monies we have received. A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. A motion to approve Option 2 as an emergency was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. Chief Byers asked about the funding from the General Fund, which should be part of the original funding when we passed the Fire levy to establish 24 hours staffing. Rob Dempsey called the question. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

#### RESOLUTIONS

**2020-30: A RESOLUTION RETAINING THOMAS REITZ, ATTORNEY AT LAW, AS SOLICITOR FOR THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM, OHIO, AND FIXING HIS FEES FOR THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1, 2021 TO DECEMBER 31, 2021, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.** A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Greenwood. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. A motion to approve as an emergency was made by Mr. Dempsey and seconded by Mr. Smith. The Mayor asked Tom Reitz how many years it has been for him as solicitor for the Village. Tom replied 21 or 22 years! The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

**2020-31: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE INTERNET SALE OF UNNEEDED, OR UNFIT, OR OBSOLETE PERSONAL PROPERTY, INCLUDING MOTOR VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT OWNED BY THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM. 1<sup>ST</sup> READING.** A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. A motion to approve on first reading was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

**2020-32: A RESOLUTION DECLARING IT NECESSARY TO RENEW AN EXISTING TAX LEVY FOR CURRENT EXPENSE PURPOSES AND REQUESTING THE PORTAGE COUNTY AUDITOR TO CERTIFY THE TOTAL CURRENT TAX VALUATION OF THE VILLAGE AND THE DOLLAR AMOUNT OF REVENUE THAT WOULD BE GENERATED BY THAT RENEWAL LEVY AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.** A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mr. Dempsey. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. A motion to approve as an emergency was made by Mr. Dempsey and seconded by Mr. Szell. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. Solicitor Reitz explained the levy renewal process.

**2020-33: A RESOLUTION SUBMITTING THE QUESTION OF RENEWING AN EXISTING TAX LEVY FOR CURRENT EXPENSE PURPOSES TO THE VOTERS OF THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM PURSUANT TO SECTION 5705.19(A) OF THE OHIO REVISED CODE AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. 1<sup>ST</sup> READING.**

**2020-34: A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT AN OWDA LOAN, AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND THE FISCAL OFFICER TO ENTER INTO A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FOR THE HIRAM WATER METER REPLACEMENT & AMR SYSTEM PROJECT BETWEEN THE VILLAGE OF HIRAM AND THE OHIO WATER DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

A motion to suspend the rules was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Smith. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. Solicitor Reitz asked Council to indicate the parameters that would be acceptable as Assistant Steve Schuller had indicated earlier in the meeting. A motion to approve the legislation with the amendment stipulating the principal amount to be borrowed shall be no more than \$318,000 at an interest rate of no more than 2 percent for a term of no more than 20-years was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

Council reviewed the bill's list. A motion to approve the bills list was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mr. Dempsey. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.

Chris Szell brought up political signs and how to regulate them. He believes we only have one house still in the Village with a political sign posted. How do we notify them? Paul asked whether we really wanted to push this issue. Council discussed this further in detail what signs are "political" for a candidate for office and what are freedom of speech. Solicitor Tom Reitz asked if someone could send him a picture of the sign or signs in question. Tom informed Council the Ohio Supreme Court provides greater privilege on political signs than other signs.

**A motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss personnel matters; hiring, firing, disciplinary actions at 8:29 pm was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Szell. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor.**

**A motion to return to Regular Session at 9:00 pm was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Dempsey. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. No action was taken.**

**A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mr. Spencer. The result of the voice vote was 5-0 in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:03 pm.**

These minutes are pending approval by Council.

  
Mayor Lou Bertrand

ATTEST:

  
Fiscal Officer Susan J. Skrovan