

# Village of Hiram

## Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2023

**Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Szell called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm

**Committee Members Present:** Lou Bertrand, Mayor  
Chris Szell, Chairman  
Beth Greenwood, Councilperson at 6:09 pm  
David Smith, Councilman  
Paul Spencer, Councilman  
Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

**Committee Members Absent:**

**Hiram Officials Present:** Brian Gregory, Police Chief  
Bill Byers, Fire Chief  
James McGee, Village Administrator  
Steven Schuller, Asst. Village Administrator  
Jason Groselle, Asst. Fire Chief

**Others:** None.

**Minutes:** A motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 31, 2023 as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

**Agenda:** Chris Szell asked for a motion to approve the agenda. A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

**Guests/Public:** None.

### **Department Updates:**

**Police Department:** Police Chief Brian Gregory reported receiving complaints about loud noises in the Village in the morning. Turns out it was the football team jogging through the Village early one morning.

Regarding the recent layoff of officer Devin Brown; he was decommissioned today. He was notified of the layoff on February 14<sup>th</sup>; all equipment has been turned in as of February 24<sup>th</sup>.

Brian asked about the three parking spots at the Teachout Price building? They belong to the Village. Finance would like Brian to get signs. Brian said he would let them know tomorrow.

His department has eliminated 8-hours per day and is now staggering their hours, the Sheriff's Department is aware. Officers will keep track of their Village and Township hours.

Brian brought up the liquor permit application for Hiram College; it is a huge mess and will not be for the "student" bar, it will be for everywhere on campus! Beth Greenwood asked Brian what the college did in the past. Brian said they would come to him for an F4 permit; it would have to be approved by him and an officer would be present. This would be for every event!

Brian has nothing further to report on the levy information. We were talking about \$75,000. Bill Byers said 3 mills brings in about \$28,000 for Fire and our EMS 2 mill brings in \$17,000.

Brian asked about the parking ban through the night from 2:00 am. He is not going to have officers out there at times to write tickets. He had an idea to possibly getting boots, mechanical devices to put on a car's wheel to disable it. He will check with other communities.

**Fire Department:** Fire Chief Bill Byers reported the E2 bumper is done and it is back in service.

His department discovered a programming issue with the MARCS radios this morning. Reported it to MARCS; they realized the State programmed the radios wrong; they will come out and re-program the radios. We do have a couple radios that are programmed correctly.

They did have an issue with dispatch; our guys returning from a fire received a report of a seven-year old seizing. Dispatch was asked to contact Troy since it was on S.R. 700 north. The dispatcher tried to get ahold of Geauga County; could not reach them twice; mutual aid was not called! They have assured them it will be corrected to make sure it does not happen again.

Bill provided the Township's thoughts on future funding. They want to speak with someone representing Council and go from there. Chris Szell felt that we should be not only looking at a police levy but collectively fire and police as a safety services levy. Chris wants to look at all the finances behind our Fire Department before we approach the Township. The Mayor said taking a look at our levies; we collect about \$44,000 while the Township collects about \$345,000! Our biggest issue is that the Village does not have much real estate to tax. Bill said Hiram Township was receptive to the idea behind it and even brought up a property tax versus an income tax. Paul felt an income tax in the Township will never happen! An income tax for fire or a safety levy. Jason said Steve Schuller was the one who mentioned an income tax in the Township. Paul Spencer said income tax makes more sense than property taxes. Dave Smith said regionalization is necessary; however, no one wants to bite the bullet and go that way. Dave said the Mayor had mentioned a water/sewer district. Bill said County wide, more departments are with the Sheriff's office for dispatch; we are starting to see it more and go down that road. Paul said the smartest thing for us would be to drop the boarder and have just Hiram! Bill said Hiram Township is happy with the services we provide to them.

**Village Adm/Utilities:** VA James McGee reported receiving the bid documents for the Hinsdale/Winrock resurfacing project on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Bids were opened with Grade Line, Inc being the lowest bid at \$199,958.50. Grade Line, Inc. has already worked for us doing the watermain project. All the bid documents have been sent to Tom Reitz; we should have legislation to pass at the next Council meeting. Grant funds will pay for most of this project! Paul asked if these were the only roads that need to be paved in Hiram; why did we pick these two roads? Steve said these are the only two that haven't been paved other than Ryder Road. Chris Szell said James and Steve talked about doing some additional things since the bid came in much lower than the estimate? Steve said yes, the original project estimate was a \$250,000 grant/\$50,000 loan. It's an 80/20 match. Now the asphalt can be thicker and we talked about adding in the parking area for the hike and bike trail head. This project will be done late spring or early summer. There were large discrepancies between all the bidders.

Chris Szell asked about Ryder Road. Steve said we can get some bids; it needs work! A large hole has appeared. James will get something to fill the hole. Finance members would like James to check into the weight limit.

Work at Fairview Cemetery is ongoing. They did have it surveyed and are clearing back brush in areas that according to our book, have people buried there or have plots available. There was discussion on the encroachment of the bathroom addition jettisoning from the old township garage. The building has since been sold but should be resolved. Chris would like to have it confirmed with the surveyor to see does the building actually cross the line and by how many feet. Then approach the landowner and determine what we need to do. Chris felt the bathroom could be removed off the back; since they are just using it for storage.

James brought up a Facebook page; Hiram Community Cares, Chris McCreight is the page administrator. There is a lot of complaints about the Village on this website; James cannot respond to them. There were complaints about some brown water issues. The site should be monitored. There was discussion about rust in our water at times and flushing the system.

Dave Smith asked about the Kubota; it was supposed to sweep/clean the streets. There is a lot of debris in our roads? Dave would like to see a schedule for cleaning out our storm sewers.

**Mayor:**

The Mayor's meeting was recently held. He spoke with the County Commissioners regarding the Local Government Funds; they are going to press the legislature to restore it back to what it was prior to 2010 for local municipalities.

The Mayor provided information to members of an upcoming dinner with the Portage County Health District. It is on a Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Ravenna Elks and is no charge. He cannot attend and asked if anyone else can attend. We should have a representative.

The Hiram Township garage property has been sold to Jimyz Auto for \$144,000. Their intention is to just use it for storage. Paul said it needs to be rezoned, it is currently zoned R-2 residential and cannot be used for vehicular storage. It should be commercial or industrial.

**Fiscal Officer/Admin:** Susan Skrovan-DeYoung reported closing out the year for Hiram Village and Hiram ESID! These are two separate Hinkle notes and two separate financial statements sent down to the State Auditor! Susan will then advertise for the public to be able to view the year end reports.

Susan informed Finance members that she will not be here for the March Finance meeting; she will be in Columbus for the Local Government Official's Conference. Wendelin will attend.

Susan said she would have a RITA report with UAN actual versus estimated at the next meeting.

With closing out year-end, Susan has no additional information on the Star Ohio investing.

Susan presented the draft permanent appropriations for just the General Fund for members to review and discuss. Steve said as it stands now, total expenditures of \$701,000 is a \$77,000 cut from what we spent last year. Paul asked about the other financing sources. Susan said these are transfers out for fire operating and for capital. Questions arose how these transfers affect the bottom line; is it part of the total expenditures or is it an adjustment from revenue brought in. Steve felt they would not, it is money in and then money transferred out. Susan and Steve will further review the numbers to definitely answer this question. More discussion followed.

Susan passed out the renewal for our liability insurance; department heads need to review our equipment lists. We did a thorough review of our equipment last year. This renews April 1<sup>st</sup>. Susan needs direction as to whether or not the Village covers liability on the Historical House?

James said the legislation Wendelin found said we would cover it. Tom will need to review this so that it can be updated.

Susan noted our Anthem medical insurance is also coming up for renewal May 1<sup>st</sup>. Wendelin emailed everyone the renewal documents. Susan said the renewal for health insurance increased by 8.87% and the dental increase is 4.0%. This is with the SOCA-MEWA consortium plan.

Susan had questions regarding whether or not to include in the Police budget, Officer Brown's compensatory payout and potential unemployment should he apply for it? Unemployment compensation would need to be reimbursed if used. Dave Smith said he saw the footnotes for these items. Susan said she had them in and then backed them out of the Police budget because it was not part of his original budget when cuts were made. Steve Schuller suggested we leave the Police budget as it is and see how things progress through the year. Finance members reviewed the General Fund appropriations and the carryover amount.

**A motion for the Police Budget, as cut by Council, will not be changed and will be reviewed in six months for possible amendments was made by Mayor Bertrand and seconded by Mr. Spencer. The motion passed 5-1 with a no vote by Mr. Smith.**

Steve Schuller had one more item to bring up for clarity. The roof of the light plant was supposed to be replaced; which is a straight General Fund expense and almost \$20,000 itself! Are we still going to go through with that? The Mayor said yes, because we are going to get revenue out of it. Chris Szell asked if we were sure? The Mayor said if the township garage building sold for \$144,000, this one is going to go! Steve said why don't we just sell the building? The Mayor said it is worthless, you cannot sell it because it has all kinds of problems with it! The quote was \$17,000 for the roof out of the General Fund. The Mayor said, when you fix it up, you can get rent! There is nothing else you can sell it for. The College does not want it. Chris felt we could list it first to see what offers we get. The Mayor said we cannot in the shape it is in now; the only thing we can do with it is use it for storage rental. We do not have easement frontage to the building. Terrier Drive is owned by the College. The Mayor said we already agreed in Council to put a roof on the building late last year. Steve said the contractor could not make it out last year and the purchase order from last year was closed. Paul felt we have been poor neighbors and should take care of our own properties. Chris would like to see some return on it. Paul said get it fixed up and it can be a marijuana dispensary! Dave Smith felt if we try and sell it, there are going to be issues with encroachment. Paul said we are not going to be able to sell it. Paul said it should be zoned College Research, or it is R-2. Steve said while we are on the subject, does anyone want them to get an appraisal to sell the hair salon building? They may be interested in purchasing it. Paul said we would have to advertise it for public bids. Steve said they pay \$630 per month times 12 months does not even cover the HVAC system we put in. We have a roof to put on that building.

**Bills List:**

Bills list was reviewed. A motion to pay the bills was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

**New Business:**

**a. Hiram Twp. Ryder Road Property:** This was brought up and discussed earlier.

**Unfinished Business:**

**a. Ordinance 2022-18 Snow Emergency:** Chris asked whether the revisions were okay that Tom Reitz presented? Yes. Steve explained it was something to have on the books if needed.

**b. Permit Parking:** We were going to have a townhall meeting but had to cancel due to illness. It has not been rescheduled yet; Wendelin is going to contact the College for possible dates available at Koritansky Hall. Dave Smith said he did hear back from Peninsula; they make approximately \$5,000 per month and have 7,000 cars coming through per day. They have 300 parking spots. They spend 15 hours per week administering the parking program and the people writing the tickets are volunteer police. They have six full-time police officers.

**c. Any Other Outstanding Matters:** the idea to explore a "Safety" levy. Paul mentioned further discussions regarding the concept of dropping the border between the Village and Township; making it just Hiram! Dave said the Township has proposed that, making the Village part of Hiram Township. Paul does not want to dissolve it to that degree. The Mayor said they could not run the water and sewer system; they would have to turn it over to the County. Paul said right now, that may be the most sound thing to do! The Mayor said the Township would then control all of it, Village and Township.

**EMS Collections:**

Bill had one for review. Bill asked whether we need legislation to raise Lifeforce rates? Wendelin was unable to find anything in legislation in the past for raising rates. Finance members would like Bill to bring a resolution to Council and ask Tom Reitz about ratifying past actions to make it effective January.

**A motion to recommend to Council to pass a Resolution for raising Lifeforce rates was made by Mayor Bertrand and seconded by Mr. Spencer. The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.**

The next Finance/Safety Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 28, 2023.

**Adjournment:** A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:54 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

**Attest:**

  
Susan J. Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

  
Chris Szell, Finance Chairman