

# Village of Hiram

## Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

October 24, 2023

- Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Szell called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
- Committee Members Present:** Lou Bertrand, Mayor  
Chris Szell, Chairman  
Beth Greenwood, Councilperson  
David Smith, Councilman  
Paul Spencer, Councilman arrived @ 6:04 pm  
Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer
- Committee Members Absent:**
- Hiram Officials Present:** Frank Hemphill, Councilman arrived at 6:04 pm  
Brian Gregory, Police Chief  
Bill Byers, Fire Chief  
James McGee, Village Administrator  
Steven Schuller, Asst. Village Administrator
- Others:** Anne Haynam; candidate for Mayor, Lynn Brewster, Robert & Denise Summers, Jim Reger, Sean Fabich, Sue Ellen Steffens, Isabel Kopp, Ellen Eckhouse and Madison Palm; Student at Hiram College, Hiram College President Rob Bohrer, Hiram College CFO Mr. Sippel and Ed Frato-Sweeney.
- Minutes:** A motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 26, 2023 as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- Agenda:** A motion to approve the proposed agenda. A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mrs. Greenwood. Motion passed unanimously 5-0.
- Guests/Public:** Chairman Chris Szell asked the public to limit their comments to three minutes given the number of people present at the Finance meeting and please state your name and affiliation for the record.
- Sean Fabich spoke about attending the last two Village meetings and a lack of engagement. He went on and on about rumors circulating in the Village and a lack of transparency, a lack of good government and ethical principles! Please do not pass a tax increase before the next election or without engagement from the public! Chris Szell noted that there is no legislation before Council or this committee to raise taxes.
- Denise Summers asked about the parking permit fees and the parking situation. Chris said we will be talking about the parking further down on our agenda. This committee has not met as a committee to discuss how to implement the street parking.
- Ellen Eckhouse asked about the revenue estimates on the parking. She had concerns about this being passed without details for the public; she was disappointed.

Isabel Kopp asked what the Village will have to pay for the parking app, the overall setup costs and what income will defray that cost. Chris Szell said they have only spoken with one company regarding it. The set-up fees would be between \$2,500 to \$5,000.

Paul Spencer said Council has empowered our Street Department and our Police Department to move forward and to figure out how to implement the program. They will bring their findings to Council. We do not have a signed contract at this time. Again, Sean Fabich goes on and on. More discussion. Mrs. Greenwood addressed Sean Fabich and said what he was stating was not true! Beth went onto State, "the legislation that Council passed in our last meeting was simply to enable our department heads as Mr. Spencer was explaining, to explore whether it makes sense to move to paid parking in the Village. Nothing has been determined. This is simply an opportunity for us to say, we know that the citizens don't want us to raise taxes, we know that we have a revenue stream that is not satisfying the demands of our operational costs. So, this is one of only very few opportunities we have to raise revenue in Hiram Village! We don't have a commercial base, we don't have real estate taxes for the lion share of the property in the Village. We have very limited opportunities to raise money!" Ellen Eckhouse said so you have delegated the fact finding to the Street and Police Departments and they are going to hammer out what is going to be feasible. Whether the initial outlay of \$2,500 to \$5,000 is going to be worth their investment. Paul Spencer said that is right or to look at different opportunities that may be able to be implemented. Beth added all of which will be totally transparent to Village residents and individuals who work here. Paul added that they need to do the work; Council cannot do it. Sean Fabich wondered how the Police Department is going to do the work when they are short staffed and say they cannot do the work they are supposed to be doing. He cannot do research when he cannot be out on the streets writing tickets! Chief Brian Gregory responded to Mr. Fabich by saying whether his department is short staffed, short budgeted, we are still doing our job as best we can. We cannot move forward with the department with the staffing we need unless we have some kind of revenue stream coming into the Village! More discussion on the revenue shortage, how the departments are operating and public records that are available for anyone.

Anne Haynam said the Village is focusing on their revenue needs; however, she felt they need to be cognoscente of unintended consequences. Implementing parking permits will be a culture shift for the Village. She is concerned about the College and for our businesses.

Lynn Brewster asked about a time frame for gathering information for the parking permits. Chris Szell said the start time is now; without a deadline. Chief Brian Gregory said he plans to involve Everyone. Beth Greenwood said there is a basis of research that we already have to start from and that would be great to put on our website to share with the community. Sean Fabich asked the question that we are in the mantra in this country that growth is good; there has to be a point where you say, you can't always grow. You have to manage your household, your funds and what the reality is. He is concerned that this is growth, at all costs! Are we more committed to growth or are we more committed to where we are spending the money.

Paul Spencer said we are not as concerned over growth; we are more concerned with being able to sustain the Village! More discussion on employee wages and holding off on raises for many years.

Chris Szell said we are getting off topic again. Mr. Fabich was talking about Mayor and Council pay and doing their jobs for no pay. Mr. Fabich continued to go on and on and on!

Beth Greenwood said she would voluntarily assume per position but she firmly believes that this government needs to fund salaries for its' elected officials because that is a very difficult precedent to set and to sustain! Beth would give back her pay to the Village but would not expect any other elected person to do the same. Government needs to fund what it pays for; you do not get talented individuals to run for Village Council without ensuring that they are compensated. Chris Szell said he would have to consider the question but liked the answer that Mrs. Greenwood provided. Mr. Fabich disagreed and was trying to go around the table to ask everyone else including the Mayor if they would forego their salaries.

Chris Szell interrupted Mr. Fabich to state that he is not running this meeting; Chris is running it! Mr. Fabich, again, went on and on with the public and officials!

Madison Palm said they held a student Senate Committee meeting on October 23<sup>rd</sup> with Mr. Chris McCreight; she read a letter of the committee's concerns regarding the parking permit implementation. Their concerns included; pricing of the daily parking, relationship between the College and the Village police enforcements, accessibility of parking for visitors and potential students, urbanization of our rural community and students having to pay for many permits. Chief Gregory clarified some of the senate committee's concerns and spoke about the Clery report; a national database for college students to report a crime. Paul Spencer added that if we cannot fund and keep our police department operating; the sheriff's department is going to move in.

Hiram College President Rob Bohrer commented on his meeting with the Mayor and Chris Szell. We don't always see eye to eye, we don't always agree but we did discuss how we can continue to cooperate with each other. We are better off working together.

**Department Updates:**

**Police Department:** Police Chief Brian Gregory reported on their continuing CPT Training; they have received a partial reimbursement check yesterday of \$2,454.50 from the State of Ohio.

The AAA Community Traffic Safety Award banquet is November 1<sup>st</sup>. Brian has applied for it again this year; the eleventh year in a row. Hoping to receive the platinum award again which is the highest award for safety on our roadways.

**Village Adm/Utilities:** VA James McGee reported on the leaf pickup; James will provide a date as soon as it is possible. Regarding the twigs and branches; his department will pick them up this Friday and the again the last Monday of November after the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. After that we will probably not pick up again because the equipment will need to be changed over for snow removal. Dates have and will be posted to the Communicator and to our website.

Water reads will be this Friday; we are still experiencing problems with our Sensus read system on the water tower. Sensus have had to come out and manually read the meters until they can correct the problem. Finance members and guests stated they have not received their last water bills. James and Susan will talk to the Assistant FO Wendelin Taylor about bills going out.

The water tower is in motion to have them both connected to change over; pipe has been dropped off today. Steve said there should not have to be a boil alert for anyone.

Chris Szell asked about the intersection issue last month with the oversized load? Have we received a bill? Fiscal Officer Susan said she has not seen any bill yet. James has not seen a bill. Susan said a purchase order has been issued; we are just waiting on the bill. We can then pass along the invoice to the contractor for payment.

**Fire Department:** Fire Chief Bill Byers was called out on a run and could not provide his report for tonight.

**Mayor:** The Mayor reported that we do now have our interest rate up to 5.4% on funds we have on deposit at Middlefield Bank.

The Parks & Recreation Committee/Beautification Committee did meet to discuss the tree canopy. The Mayor is checking with Congressman Dave Joyce's office on possible Federal tree grant funds.

The Mayor has also been in contact with the County Economic Development Director regarding the 88-acre property within the Village to the north, the property owner is interested in developing it as a possible expansion of our industrial park.

The property east of town was sold at auction; he could not find more information on it with Kiko Auctions.

The Mayor had researched the law in regards to transferring funds and had contacted our legal counsel for additional information. There was discussion that we would have to go to common pleas court in order to transfer funds; that is not correct. We can do that by vote of Council; ORC Sections 5705.14 to 5705.16.

The Mayor talked about the need to explore water/sewer districts, police and/or fire districts and JEDD's. The Mayor said he has been contacted by people living in Rolling Acres; they have had to put in a new septic system at a cost of \$25-\$30,000! Their septic systems are starting to fail! Our water/sewer facility is only running at 40% capacity; it is under-utilized. Steve said that is probably correct or even less; it was built for the College to grow.

Congressman Dave Joyce has put the Village into their State Budget for next year for a 1.2 million dollar grant for improvements to our water/sewer system! The Mayor gave some examples of what has been accomplished working alongside the College.

**Fiscal Officer/Admin:** Susan Skrovan-DeYoung reported she will probably look into the ORC Section 5707.14 because as far as she knows, it is very strict on what funds can be transferred. As an example, when the Village transferred money from our Capital Fund to our General Fund which originally came from the General Fund; we still needed to have a judge sign off on the transfer. The General Fund can transfer money out to other funds; she does not believe we can move money from other funds back to the General Fund without court approval! Many of our Special Revenue Funds are tied up within those funds. Steve said if there was a fund that was used for a specific project that is now completed; those monies can be transferred with approval from Council. Steve added that money in those funds are being used to operate those funds.

No unusual spending in the General Fund for October.

The Ohio Ambulance Program update; Finance approved the spending of the \$20,000 for bonuses for Fire/EMS. The only issue right now is that we thought originally, we could pay out those bonuses as a 1099 lump sum payment; we now know taxes have to be deducted from that bonus payout. The bonuses will need to be re-figured with the taxes deducted; Federal, SSA and Medicare. The Auditor of State told Susan to get a legal opinion from your Solicitor.

Susan and Wendelin had AOS training in Twinsburg today; it is an all-day training course.

Regarding public records and comments by Mr. Fabich; public records are open and available to everyone! We may not be able to get them for you right on the spot, but they will work to get them for anyone that asks. Our year end reports, notes and audits are all with the State of Ohio. And regarding our bills; Susan does a bill's list twice a month! We track every bill; there is a description of every bill on the list for Council and Finance to see. Any bill's they can review. Susan watches the bills very carefully and do everything we can to save costs on our bills.

Susan spoke about the Mayor's assistant, Wendelin Taylor, which was also mentioned by Mr. Fabich. Very little comes out of the Mayor's fund; it is not his personal assistant. She does the monthly Communicator and helps all departments including water & sewer billing. Paul said he has utilized her many times for P&Z. She took on the water & sewer billing to save us money! Steve added we cut a part-time position by having Wendelin take on the job.

Susan would ask to schedule an annual Record's Retention Commission meeting. She would prefer to have it in December. Chris Szell said December before Council would work; December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:45 pm.

**Bills List:**

Bills list was reviewed. A motion to pay the bills was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

**New Business:**

**a. Traffic Cameras:** Chief Brian Gregory met with Peninsula and afterwards he is 100 percent for them! Traffic safety is #1. Peninsula said that only 70-75% pay the tickets. It does however, bring in a lot of revenue! Brian said it must be a fully commissioned officer. We must give a 30-day notice and a media blitz. The company does the signage and they do court. Chris Szell said he negotiated the \$25,000 up-front costs; there will be no up-front fee! Brian said we cannot set the cameras to below 10 mph over unless it is a school zone.

**Motion to recommend to Council to move forward with a traffic camera contract was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mrs. Greenwood. Motion passed unanimously.**

Chris Szell said he will pass this along to our Solicitor Tom Reitz. We should negotiate a better split as well; something like 70/30 or 75/25.

**b. Parking Bureau:** Finance members wondered if we could empower non-commissioned officers to issue tickets. More discussion followed. There is more to come on this topic. We may want to open this up to students in a criminal justice course.

**c. Street Parking Implementation:** Assistant VA Steve Schuller passed out a map. All the yellow is Village parking; 258 possible parking spots. There are 19 at Bancroft Street not added in to that number along the street that are public parking as well. There are 50 spots on Winrock; Hiram College uses them and is supposed to maintain the roadway by them, which are not in the above total. They are open for everyone to use. There is a total of 15 homes that have public parking along our streets.

We could do \$20.00 per year for residents (proof provided they are residents) and \$100.00 per year for anyone else other than residents. \$2.00 or \$2.50 per hour on the apps.

Susan said we have funds available in the Permissive Vehicle Tax fund to cover the set-up costs. Beth Greenwood said the intersection of S.R. 700 and Hinsdale, around the College, is a premium parking area.

No parking from 2:00 am – 5:00 am, Monday morning through Friday evening.

Our Street Department should now research other companies.

Chris Szell asked the Finance & Safety Committee to put their concerns in writing and bring them back to Finance.

Members want to see the parking spots striped. The public comments heard this evening would want the Village to wait until they get the details ironed out; let the Street Department do some more research first.

**Unfinished Business:** None.

**EMS Collections:** None.

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

**Adjournment:** A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mrs. Greenwood. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

  
Susan J. Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

**Attest:**

  
Chris Szell, Finance Chairman