

Village of Hiram

Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

September 26, 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
Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

Committee Members Absent:

Hiram Officials Present: Frank Hemphill, Councilman arrived at 6:16 pm
Brian Gregory, Police Chief
Bill Byers, Fire Chief
James McGee, Village Administrator

Others: Ed Frato-Sweeney, Lisa Muldowney, Manager of Middlefield Bank in Garrettsville and Fred Miavitz and his friend Kristen

Minutes: A motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 29, 2023 as presented was made by Mayor Bertrand with a second from Mr. Spencer. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda: A motion to approve the proposed agenda. A motion to approve the agenda as presented was made by Mr. Spencer with a second from Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously.

Guests/Public: Lisa Muldowney with Middlefield Bank presented why the Village should continue to do its banking with Middlefield Bank, a local bank. She explained how difficult it is for a local bank to compete with the State's bank, STAR Ohio which does have an interest rates that fluctuate throughout the year. Middlefield Bank is willing to bring the Village's interest rate to 5.40% and can hold that rate for six months, effective tomorrow! This is very competitive.

A motion to recommend the Village of Hiram remain with Middlefield Bank on their proposal of a 5.40% interest rate for six months effective September 27, 2023 was made by Mayor Bertrand and seconded by Mr. Smith. The Motion passed unanimously.

Lisa thanked the member of the Finance Committee for the opportunity to come and speak with them tonight and for the Village's continued support to keep its banking local!

Ed Frato-Sweeney was present just to say hello.

Police Officer Fred Miavitz and his friend Kristen were present to observe. Fred said it has been many years since he has attended a meeting; he has been an officer here for 26 years!

Department Updates:

Police Department: Police Chief Brian Gregory reported that he reached out to the Coleman Behavioral Center concerning the past history of a Village resident; Coleman Center is support for mental health.

Brian reported his department is out of money! He is short approximately \$13,000 in personal services and has gone over his current appropriation line items with the Fiscal Officer to see what he can move to personnel. Susan added that moving appropriations from his "other" line items into his "personnel" line items is not something that she can do; it must be passed by Council through legislation. Legislation will be prepared for Council to reallocate his current funds; we will not be adding to his budget. It will clean out most of his line items for the remainder of the year! Brian spoke about special events and how he plans to cover them as well as the cost of the annual Halloween event which he and another officer donate to cover costs. Brian does have funds coming in for training and will be able to utilize that for some of the officer's training hours which would lower what he needs to around \$10,000. Susan did say that any compensatory payout at year end will not be covered by moving these funds; it may come up again in December.

Mayor Lou Bertrand stated that we have got to have a police department; we need our Police! Whatever it costs, even if we have to raise taxes to do it, we need to do it now!

Chief Brian Gregory said he did talk with Hiram College regarding a contract now! They are considering a contract. Their sports events will be kept out of any contract and be a-la-cart!

A motion to create legislation for the next Council meeting to approve these line item changes for our Police Department's budget was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Mrs. Greenwood. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion to pay out of the Village Hall funds \$400.00 for Halloween for the Police Department was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

Hiram College is planning a "soft" opening on their new bar. AVI will be running it. The State of Ohio has not yet issued them a liquor permit. More discussion followed.

Traffic cameras will be discussed later in the meeting.

Parking permits: Brian wanted to clarify that as per Ohio Revised Code, we can pass legislation that the person does not need to be a commissioned police officer to issue parking tickets!

Finance members discussed the need to increase the Police Budget for next year, especially for Hiram Township hours, to be realistic in what is needed and when the temporary and permanent budgets will be ready for review and passed by Council.

Fire Department: Fire Chief Bill Byers reported his department is going along as it should, they swore in a new paramedic tonight.

Chief Byers passed out a spreadsheet for the ARPA retention bonuses. These amounts were based on hours calculated by the Assistant Fire Chief Jason Groselle. Susan said we have received the \$20,000 grant funds and it has been appropriated. New line items have been created for all of fire and EMS personnel. With this payout, Susan felt it may be easier to pay it out as a bonus because that is what they are calling it for working through COVID.

We should be able to write a check as a bonus pay, no taxes are deducted from it and would be put on their W-2's as a fringe benefit. The employee then pays the taxes on their bonus.

A motion to move forward with the ARPA bonus payouts as suggested was made by Mr. Spencer and seconded by Mayor Bertrand. Motion passed unanimously.

Chief Byers reported that MRSA (a staph infection), COVID-19 and the flu are running around the College! They did have to close the health center to decontaminate it!

Bill reported on the homecoming events; Hiram College reached out to the Fire Department regarding open flames and the use of sternos. Bill said they can hire us; he is waiting to hear.

Village Adm/Utilities: VA James McGee reported computer monitoring costs have been going up; \$120.00 per month for the 365 Microsoft software for our eight computers for all departments. MSRC, LLC will be reaching out to Council for their email addresses to migrate to our new emails.

The fire hydrant is fixed at Jagow Park; they are working to fix the curbs and will need to hire a contractor to repair the storm drain under the driveway, sometime next year. The cost would be incurred by the General Fund.

The water tower is in process now.

James reported having an ODOT issue with an oversized load! It came through yesterday and could not make the turn at our intersection! The light was too low. Mr. Ron Zoller with ODOT told James it is our light and our responsibility to raise it when something of this size comes through our town. James told him we cannot do that if we do not know it is coming through! James called Signal Services to come out and raise the light, which they did. They still could not make the turn and ended up going 305 all the way to State Route 422. It had been detoured from State Route 44 originally but re-routed. We are going to get a hefty bill from Signal Services that we will have to pay. James is going to try and charge the contractor, Kush Creative Outdoors LLC, who brought the oversized load through our intersection! Brian said when he spoke with ODOT they told him that we should bill the contractor; they are responsible! If they don't want to pay it; give it to the Solicitor.

Mayor: The Mayor reported on a Federal grant available for the planting of trees! He heard about it this morning on NPR radio.

The Mayor would recommend to Council to advertise to sell the Old Light Plant property and take bids on it asap. We have the easement. The legal description needs to be recorded!

The Mayor said he will meet with the president of Hiram College to discuss the safety forces contract.

The Mayor also felt the Hiram Hair Salon is an asset to our Village! We are making money on the lease; they pay all the property taxes and insurance. They pay income taxes to us as well!

Fiscal Officer/Admin: Susan Skrovan-DeYoung reported no unusual spending in the General Fund for September.

Regarding the Hiram Salon; Susan has pulled together revenue versus costs from 2017 to present. Susan said she did not have enough time to put these figures into a spreadsheet. Susan presented the numbers showing that for most of those years, we came out way ahead of our costs. It was only last year, 2022 and this year that we had incurred any large repair costs for the HVAC system of \$12,000 and for the new roof of \$7,200.00!

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 said Targeting Solutions has a \$25,000 up front fee? Chris said that is how he interpreted it. Beth said he is using it as a retainer; it is a five-year contract that we would sign. We would get it back over a two-year span; \$1,000 per month. Brian plans to visit Peninsula and Walton Hills to see how their system is working. Brian felt the best way to do it would be with fixed cameras; however, we would lose our local government funding which is \$60,000 to \$66,000 per year. Right now, he does not have the officers to utilize a hand-held unit. More discussion followed.

Brian asked Finance members to look at parking permit passes again. We may be able to add permit fees into Hiram College's tuition fees and work with them, it could be an option.

Paul Spencer said the Planning & Zoning board and Economic Development committee is looking at re-zoning the State Routes to a "mixed use commercial" district to bring in more revenue. Get rid of CR (College Research) and make it commercial for the college. Susan said wasn't that a way to lower the speed limit on those routes as well? Yes.

There was more discussion on ways to fix the General Fund. Chris said we need to provide for Police whether it's rolling the tax credit back completely or raising taxes. Chris said the other thing would be pushing the Fire Department to a district! Paul Spencer felt Council may have to cut the tax credit entirely and raise the tax rate to 3.5%! The Mayor felt we would not have to go that far, 2.5%. Beth felt we are taxing people to death! Susan said for every .25% income tax, we generate approximately \$55,000 annually.

Unfinished Business: None.

EMS Collections: None.

The next Finance/Safety Committee meeting was moved up a week and scheduled for Tuesday, October 24, 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 7:42 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Attest:


Susan J. Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer


Chris Szell, Finance Chairman