

# Village of Hiram

## Finance/Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

June 25, 2024

**Call to Order:** Chairman Chris Szell called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

**Committee Members Present:** Anne Haynam, Mayor  
Chris Szell, Chairman  
Beth Greenwood, Councilperson  
David Smith, Councilman  
Justin Bisutti, Councilman  
Susan Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

**Committee Members Absent:**

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

**Others:** Lisa Muldowney, Garrettsville Branch Manager of Middlefield Bank

**Minutes:** The Mayor asked to approve the 5/28/2024 meeting minutes as presented. A motion to approve the 5/28/2024 minutes was made by Mr. Bisutti and seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously.

**Agenda:** The Mayor asked to approve the proposed agenda as presented by general consent, no objections made, agenda approved.

**Guests/Public:** Lisa Muldowney with Middlefield Bank presented to Finance information regarding positive pay and ACH protection. Each service would cost \$30.00 per month, a total of \$60.00 per month, \$720.00 per year. A small price to pay for having that level of security in banking. More general discussion followed. The Mayor asked Lisa how they handle fraudulent payments now at Middlefield Bank. Lisa provided some details in the steps they do take to help curb fraudulent activity. These two services would be absolute for the Village; no altered payments would get through their system.

### **Department Updates:**

**Police Department:** Police Chief Brian Gregory had sent his report to members. There were no other questions. Brian provided a few updates. There was a chief's meeting this morning at Portage County dispatch; they have not discussed raising dispatch fees.

Our MARCS radios are to be reprogrammed next year.

**Fire Department:** Fire Chief Bill Byers had sent his report to members. Asst. Fire Chief Jason Groselle reported having a busy month.

**Village Adm/Utilities:** VA Steve Schuller had provided his report just before the meeting. No further questions.

**Mayor:**

Mayor Anne Haynam provided an update on the Hiram College contract. She is asking for a \$45.00 fee per student per semester for "safety services" built into the tuition fees.

Mayor met with Deborah Wordell; her year end falls in June/July. At our August Finance meeting, the administrative and the Village Administrator will present their budgets. At the September Finance meeting, the safety services will present their budgets. By doing this, we can present the final appropriation budget in October for three reads and have them in place by year end to start January with all departments having their full final budgets for the year.

The Mayor brought up the recommendations from Deborah Wordell's efficiency report: Anne would propose over the next three months:

- Susan to take the lead in her department with the recommended changes and as Fiscal Officer & Clerk of Council
- Eliminate the full-time Assistant Fiscal Officer/Asst. to the Mayor position
- Shift that to a part-time position at 16-20 hours per week, The Mayor would suggest two individuals working 8-10 hours each which would allow for more flexibility. One for water billing/cemetery and one for PD support/parking bureau. Both positions would report to the VA.
- Starting October 1<sup>st</sup>, the Mayor has an intern with expertise in records retention

The Mayor noted with all that said, there is a human involved that has been really dedicated to the Village. This is a really tough and uncomfortable decision to make. We do not have the luxury to have extra help in one area when we have deficits in our safety services.

Beth Greenwood asked if Council is still going to consider trimming down the Council board to five members to save money. This had been discussed several months ago and members felt we may have to wait for the next election cycle. The Mayor will speak with our solicitor. Dave Smith and Chris Szell agreed with this concept as a cost savings.

Beth Greenwood was not present during Deb Wordell's presentation but she is sensitive to the fact that this person, whom we are considering cutting her position, has contributed a lot to the Village of a long period of time. The Mayor said this will not get done all this week; we will have to research some of these efficiency options. Chris Szell asked if the Mayor was looking for something today from Finance on her proposal. The Mayor said it would be helpful to get a sense from Council members if this is in line with what we are all thinking for the fiscal efficiency of Village operations. Once it is all formally outlined, the Mayor would bring it before Council for approval. Beth said it is difficult to have an opinion without numbers behind what we are talking about. We need a clear understanding of the cost savings or some other benefit to the Village. She would like to see some numbers. Dave Smith wondered about the cost benefit; what we are losing versus what we are gaining. The Mayor said this is the largest chunk of money we are going to be able to save. You are talking about a full-time individual with benefits; then going to half the hours without benefits. Beth said there is always a cost when you use technology to replace human effort. It is not totally clear to her right now until she sees what the numbers look like. Justin Bisutti still needs to reach out to the hardware people for the water/sewer billing to review the system.

**Fiscal Officer/Admin:** Susan Skrovan-DeYoung had nothing further to report tonight. Susan said she would be happy to put some numbers together for Beth and any other Council member that would like to review our current personnel costs in the administrative offices. Chris Szell would ask that Susan share those figures with all of Council.

**Bills List:**

Bills list was reviewed. A motion to pay the bills was made by Mr. Szell with a second from Mr. Bisutti. David Smith asked about the invoice for emergency service gas line repair. Steve explained where that repair was made, near the historic house. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

**New Business:**

**a. Engine Brakes:** Our Solicitor recommends signage being installed; if legislation passes.

Chris Szell said if we don't see any movement from the college on the contract; paid parking, in his mind, is not off the table and we should revisit it. Discussion followed on the steps to implement the paid parking system. The Mayor is talking with the College about a safety services fee of around \$45.00 per student per semester basing that on 700 students.

Chris Szell asked members if they want to give Susan some direction on the positive pay/ACH protection. Justin Bisutti said based on his experience, he felt it is worth the cost. The Mayor said she could see doing this for the ACH; she felt we need to get out of writing checks. Susan said we are never going to get completely out of writing checks. The Mayor felt we need to see how far we could get down to minimizing those checks. We could pay a lot more vendors by ACH. Beth commented that she tried moving the company she is with to ACH; there are a lot of vendors that simply are not prepared to accept an ACH payment. And, some won't because of the cost; it is a real challenge for some vendors. Eventually more and more will go to ACH but it will not happen overnight. Before doing this for checks, she would like to see how many checks we can convert over to ACH payments. David Smith agreed with Beth that we will probably not get away from checks for some time. He was in full agreement with the ACH protection but also felt the positive pay on checks would be a good idea as well.

**Motion to authorize the Fiscal Officer to set up positive pay for ACH payments was made by Mr. Szell and seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion passed unanimously, 6-0.**

The Fiscal Officer was asked to present a list of vendors who we pay checks versus warrants.

**Unfinished Business:** None

The next Finance/Safety Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 30, 2024. Chris Szell said he will be out of town for that meeting and would like to move it up to July 23<sup>rd</sup> if that works for everyone. Yes, that would work since there are five Tuesday's in July. This will be placed on our website as well.

**Adjournment:** A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Szell with a second from Mayor Haynam. Motion passed unanimously 6-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

**Attest:**

  
Susan J. Skrovan-DeYoung, Fiscal Officer

  
Chris Szell, Finance Chairman