

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of the Vermilion City Council Meeting

Minutes of

Meeting

BARRETT BROTHERS - DAYTON, OHIO

Form 6101

Monday, November 2, 2020

Held

Videos and minutes of council meetings are available to the public to view online at www.cityofvermilion.com under 'meetings' tab (City Meeting Minutes or Videos).

Vermilion City Council: Steve Herron, Council President; Monica Stark, Council at Large; Emily Skahen, Ward One; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Hlovacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four. Absent: B. Holmes, Ward Five

Administrative Staff: Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Ken Stumphauzer, Law Director; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director

CALL TO ORDER:

Steve Herron, President of Council called the Monday, October 26, 2020 Vermilion City Council Meeting to order via ZOOM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The members of Council, administrative staff, and audience participants recited the Pledge of Allegiance; a moment of silence followed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

S. Hlovacs MOVED, F. Loucka seconded to approve the minutes of the October 26, 2020 Public Hearing and Regular Council meeting. Roll Call Vote 6 YEAS. MOTION CARRIED.

CORRESPONDENCE: None.

PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL'S REPORT:

S. Herron asked all the citizens to continue wearing masks in public and to continue practicing social distancing during the time of the COVID-19, so they can get through this quicker rather than slower.

Secondly, he reminded the citizens that election day is tomorrow, November 3 and asked everyone to please go to their election polling place and cast their vote. He said if someone does not know where their polling place is, they can go on the Secretary of State's website and simply put in your name and the information will be provided.

He said his number one rule is to be kind to one another no matter how they look at things. He said no matter how bad things get everyone needs their neighbors.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Contractor Registration:

S. Herron reported on the meeting held October 27. The next meeting is December 1 at 6:00 p.m.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

S. Herron reported on the meeting held October 27. The next meeting is December 1 at 7:00 p.m.

MAYOR/SAFETY DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

My Mayor's Report is intended to cite notable City business, but it seems COVID-19 has become City business.

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Numbers for this week from Erie County Health Department.

This weekend the ECHD epidemiologist provided the current counts for the City of Vermilion, both Lorain and Erie Counties.

To review:

- Last spring: 9 – 12 cases.
- Last summer: a high of 26 cases.
- My reporting two weeks ago: 55 cases.
- Reporting as of this weekend: 82 active cases, a 49% increase in two weeks. We have had 12 new reported cases in the past week. Two hospitalizations. Zero deaths gratefully.

A couple months ago I did not even know anyone who had COVID. Now I am calling employees, relatives, or friends with positive cases daily.

Redirecting Work Force

I have given instructions to temporarily close City Hall to the public. The purpose is to preserve our ability to provide services to Vermilion residents. COVID's presence at City Hall occurs daily in one form or another. We have had positive COVID tests, quarantines of staff because of exposure to COVID and other restrictions on our ability to operate. As you are aware, I cannot talk about specific cases due to HIPA laws. I have directed as many of the City Hall staff work from home as possible. I have arranged for a deep cleaning of City Hall. Through previous economizations our departments have very small staffs. An infection or simple quarantine can wipe out an entire public service.

This is not a shut down. We are closed to the public, but our intention is to redirect our work force to an arrangement more sustainable under the current circumstances. It is purely situational. Our schools have different circumstances. Other organizations like some libraries have closed. City of Milan shut down their City Hall temporarily. Elyria City Hall is operating under restricted conditions, Cleveland is closed to the public. During the Spring stay at home order City Hall, employees worked surprisingly well from home. We hope to repeat that arrangement. Bills can still be paid, building permits issued, questions and complaints handled. Other City departments will be handled based on their individual situations.

City Hall exists to serve the residents of Vermilion. My decision is made to maintain the health of City employees and their ability to serve the public.

I will monitor employee health conditions and let you know of a reopening date.

Hospital Board COVID Advisories

Recently invited to join the advisory board of Avon Hospital, a Cleveland Clinic facility. A meeting was held October 27th.

The board of physicians, epidemiologists and social workers addressed the impact of COVID-19 on the surrounding communities.

Worth note here are a few take a ways:

- Spread of COVID is as aggressive as it has ever been since the epidemic became public early this year.
- It is growing in all racial, age and socio-economic sectors.
- There have been cases of people getting COVID-19 a second time.
- Addiction and mental health cases have grown as the epidemic continues. Some services are being overwhelmed. I ask Vermilion residents to be particularly vigilant of your family and neighbors who may be exhibiting stress symptoms and don't be afraid to connect them with local mental health and addiction resources.

Halloween

Halloween went well for a pandemic holiday. Both Erie and Lorain County Health Departments determined OUTDOOR Halloween was a reasonable risk. It was gratifying that some kids had fun. We had a good turnout though less than usual. Thanks to VPD for their safety patrols.

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Moody's Investor Services Success

Congratulations to Finance Director Hendricks. The Finance Director will give details in her report. Ms. Hendricks and I were on a Moody's call this month. The analysts were impressed by her preparation and command of the facts regarding the City's finances. Even though Moody's did reduce the bond rating for some of neighboring communities due to reduced tourism business, Ms. Hendricks managed to keep Vermilion's rating at a very respectable A1. Some of you may remember that we were upgraded to this rating after Ms. Hendricks helped get our financial house in order a couple years ago. These good ratings are money in the bank for our taxpayers. Congratulations and thank you to Ms. Hendricks.

Summer Construction Success.

I also want to recognize Service Director Toy Valerius and City Engineer Chris Howard. The public should make public note of the fact that of the three construction projects this season, Vermilion Road phase II came in under budget, the Sanford Street water line replacement came in under budget, and High Bridge Road construction does not yet have final charges but it looks like it will also be under budget. All three also came in close to on time allowing for weather delays. Here again, good project management puts money back in the taxpayers' account.

Power Outages in Valleyview

Last week I received numerous calls about electrical power outages in the Lexington, Concord, and Hawthorne area of Valleyview. Apparently calls to Ohio Edison by residents have been unproductive. The issue reportedly has been going on over a year with loss of frozen and refrigerated property to homeowners.

I called the regional representative for First Energy. Two representatives said that the affected area of Valleyview is budgeted for complete replacement of the underground electrical utility in 2021. It is recognized that there is an underground fault that was difficult to trace in the current system. Residents should look forward to a resolution next year and I will follow progress from my office.

SERVICE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

T. Valerius reported that NECO has discontinued replacing meters inside homes due to Erie County going into the red on the COVID rating scale. Installation will resume once the county goes back to orange.

He reminded citizens to not rack leaves in the street as the City does not have leaf collection services. They may place leaves in yard waste bags and set them out on regular garbage days. Yard waste will be picked up through December 9.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

BWC to Issue 3rd Rebate

An additional (3rd) BWC rebate has been authorized that should be approximately \$275,000. This will be allocated back to each fund based on the prorated share of premium that was originally paid.

Bond Refinancing Success

Our refinancing of \$3,745,000 in bonds was tremendously successful last week. We had three bidders and the final rate was 1.32% to R.W. Baird. This represents a savings through 2032 of just over \$681,000 in interest. This will mean additional funds available for projects in the impacted funds as well as dropping off a year of payments for the portion related to special assessments for those property owners in those projects. Our advisors at Sudsina & Associates relayed that the rates Vermilion received for this deal not only were more attractive than comparably rated issues, but when compared to entities with higher ratings (Aa, etc.) that were up during the past week, did not receive interest rate offers that would have been low enough to beat our highest offer.

To recap our evolving debt profile beginning in 2018, it has enhanced the reputation of Vermilion in the public finance arena substantially. We started in the fall of 2018 by issue bonds against nearly \$4 million in notes. Historically, these notes were rolled forward repeatedly with only the minimum required payment made at maturity. We now have this revolving debt on an amortization schedule to pay it off at a locked in interest rate. In 2019, just under \$2 million in existing bonds were refinanced saving \$85,000 over their remaining life. That brings the total interest savings to \$766,000 to our community.

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There are a few very small bonds with call dates between now and 2024, but the savings do not support the cost of those transactions. However, the 2018 through 2020 refunding have call dates in 2024 (sounds like a plan!) that will give us another opportunity for savings if the rates are favorable.

Training Goes On

During the month of October, our annual software training for Software Solutions that covers all the accounting and utility billing functions has been conducted virtually (and FREE)! So, all staff who would benefit have been able to participate and the sessions have been recorded for on demand viewing if the timing did not work in our schedules. I was also able to "attend" the Ohio Municipal Finance Officers Fall Conference remotely last week as well which included the completion of annual investment training requirements without travelling to Columbus.

Payment Processing during Office Closures

While making in person payments at City Hall is not possible right now, there are still many convenient options (more convenient and safer than paying in person). Customers are encouraged to sign up for autopay through the city or use their own online banking which are FREE. The online payment portal is available 24/7. And payments can also be made at Drug Mart in person. Mail is always an option, but you may experience delays in manual processing times once it is received at the office.

Please check the announcements email addresses to communicate to the various departments. The first phase of equipment for our new phone system have arrived and we are cautiously going to try to roll that out as a number of city hall staff have opted to use a "soft phone" that will run through their laptops remotely so you can speak to someone directly even if they are working remotely.

To keep up to date, sign up for our new text alert system. Just text the key word VERMILION1 to 91896 and following the prompts.

CITY ENGINEER'S REPORT: No report.

G. Fisher asked if Highbridge Road would be opened this week and C. Howard replied yes.

OPEN TO THE AUDIENCE: No participants.

Reading of the Ordinances:

Tabled - Third Reading – Ordinance 2020-30: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 618.01 ENTITLED "DOGS AND OTHER ANIMALS RUNNING AT LARGE, DANGEROUS AND VICIOUS DOGS" OF CHAPTER 618 ENTITLED "ANIMALS" OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. *(Referred to November 9 Legislative Committee Meeting)*

Tabled - Third Reading – Ordinance 2020-34: AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING FUND 234 "DOG PARK" AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-39: AN ORDINANCE PURSUANT TO SECTION 1240.02 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF VERMILION GRANTING A LAND USE (ZONING) VARIANCE TO ROAD TO HOPE IN THE B-3 HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT, LOCATED AT 1863 LIBERTY AVENUE, VERMILION, OHIO. *(Public Hearing – November 16, 2020 @ 7pm)*

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-43: AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING FUND 710 "PAYROLL CLEARANCE FUND" THAT BECOMES EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2021.

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-44: AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE 2019-5 ADOPTED FEBRUARY 25, 2019 PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 873 ENTITLED "TRANSIENT ACCOMMODATION, ROOMING OR BOARDING HOUSES" OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF VERMILION AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. *(Referred to November 9 Legislative Committee Meeting)*

Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-45: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CREATION OF THE POSITION OF PARALEGAL/LEGAL ASSISTANT TO THE VERMILION CITY PROSECUTOR(S) AND ABOLISHING THE POSITION OF SECRETARY IN THAT OFFICE AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. *(Referred to November 9 Finance Committee Meeting)*

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Second Reading – Ordinance 2020-46: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH SOUTH SHORE DREDGE & DOCK INC. OF LORAIN, OHIO TO PROVIDE ICE BREAKING SERVICES ON THE VERMILION RIVER FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2021 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2021 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-48: AN ORDINANCE CONFIRMING THE APPOINTMENT BY THE MAYOR AND THE VERMILION PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD OF CHAD KUHN AS RECREATION DIRECTOR TO THE CITY OF VERMILION FOR THE 2021 RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS; ESTABLISHING A SALARY FOR SUCH APPOINTEE; ESTABLISHING COMPENSATION OF CERTAIN AUTHORIZED POSITIONS WITHIN THE VERMILION DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION AS HAVE BEEN FAVORABLY RECOMMENDED BY THE CITY'S PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-49: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO RECEIVE A SUBSIDY FROM BROWNHELM TOWNSHIP, LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES THROUGH THE CITY OF VERMILION'S CONTRACT WITH LIFECARE AMBULANCE, INC. OF ELYRIA, OHIO FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2021 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2021 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-50: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH USALCO LLC OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND FOR THE PURCHASE OF POLYALUMINUM CHLORIDE TO BE USED IN THE VERMILION UTILITIES DEPARTMENT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-51: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH PVS TECHNOLOGIES OF DETROIT, MICHIGAN FOR THE PURCHASE OF LIQUID FERROUS CHLORIDE TO BE USED IN THE VERMILION UTILITIES DEPARTMENT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-52: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH SNF POLYDYNE, INC. OF RICEBORO, GEORGIA FOR THE PURCHASE OF CLARIFLOC CE-1593 POLYMER TO BE USED IN THE VERMILION UTILITIES DEPARTMENT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-53: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH JCI JONES CHEMICALS, INC. OF BARBERTON, OHIO FOR THE PURCHASE OF LIQUID CHLORINE TO BE USED IN THE VERMILION UTILITIES DEPARTMENT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

First Reading – Ordinance 2020-54: AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF VERMILION, OHIO TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH BONDED CHEMICALS, INC. OF COLUMBUS, OHIO FOR THE PURCHASE OF HYDROFLUOSILICIC ACID, LIQUID CAUSTIC SODA, SODIUM HYPOCHLORITE, AND SODIUM BISULFITE TO BE USED IN THE VERMILION UTILITIES DEPARTMENT AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Announcement of Meeting Dates:

- November 9, 2020 – Vermilion City Council Committee Meetings – via ZOOM @ 6:00 p.m.
- November 16, 2020 – Vermilion City Council Public Hearing & Regular Meeting – 7:00 p.m.
- December 7, 2020 - Vermilion City Council Meetings – LOCATION/TIME TBD
- December 14, 2020 – Vermilion City Council Committee Meetings – followed by Special City Council Meeting if required. – LOCATION/TIME TBD

Adjournment:

Upon no further business coming before the body, Steve Herron, President of Council adjourned the Vermilion City Council meeting.

Transcribed by Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk