

Bethel Village Council February 23, 2009

Council of the Village of Bethel, Ohio, met in regular session in Council Chambers in the Bethel Municipal Building on Monday, February 23rd, 2009 with Mayor John Swarthout presiding.

The meeting was video taped, to be aired on cable television.

Mayor Swarthout called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Mr. Cherry delivered the invocation followed by Mayor Swarthout leading the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Upon roll call, the following were counted as present: Council Members Alan Ausman, Joe Houlihan, Donna Gunn, Gary Hutchinson, Tim Cherry, James Dick. Also present: Village Administrator Travis Dotson, Fiscal Officer Angel Burton. Solicitor Leicht arrived at 6:40 p.m.

A motion to approve the minutes from February 9, 2009, as corrected, was made by Mr. Ausman. Seconded by Ms. Gunn. All ye.

COMMUNICATIONS

Nil

ADMINISTRATION AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mayor Swarthout

Reminded Council of the 2004/2005 post-audit meeting with the Auditor of State's office this Wednesday, February 25, 2009 at 11:00 a.m. Mr. Hutchinson mentioned he has not received his audit report.

Village Administrator, Travis Dotson

Nil

Fiscal Officer, Angel Burton

Nil.

Solicitor, George Leicht

Nil.

Police Chief Planck

Needs to get Mayor Swarthout's signature on Ofc. Wood's Oath of Office. (President Pro-Tempore Donna Gunn swore Ofc Wood into office, in the Mayor's absence, yet the state requires the mayor's signature.)

Noted there is COPS grant money included in the Obama Stimulus Package. It provides 100% funding for 3 years, for the salary and benefits paid to a police officer.

Finance Committee, Chairperson Donna Gunn

Nil.

Public Works, Chairperson Tim Cherry

The committee met this evening and discussed the Village's traffic lights. The only two warranted lights are at Plane and Main, and at Plane and Charity. The light at Main and South is being considered.

The back-up generator for the traffic signals is no longer functioning, but there is a possibility the state will replace it. Money will not be awarded for projects until August, 2010.

Mr. Dotson is continuing to work on future Village projects, looking into engineering services for the sidewalks and the streets, and potential “Obama Money” projects.

The Grant Memorial Building porch is in need of repair, and the trim needs to be painted.

The Village will be reaching out to various community groups, to consider landscaping and beautification projects around town.

Pierce and Lloyd Hale have asked for Council’s approval in farming the water plant property. Mr. Hutchinson believes the farming may impede the sale of the property, and is not in favor of granting permission. Mr. Ausman noted the farming would result in less land for the public works department to maintain.

Mr. Leicht informed Council the Army Corp of Engineers denied the transfer of the water property easement. The easement was given in order to maintain the water supply, and because the property is no longer used for that, the easement was denied. The Corp still reserves the right to flood the property (E. Fork Lake). The Village does not have the option to sue the federal government, but Mr. Leicht believes there are other ways to deal with the matter.

Despite the potential sale of the water plant property, Mr. Cherry believes the farming of the property is beneficial.

A motion to allow Mr. Hale to farm the water plant property, as in past years, was made by Mr. Cherry. Seconded by Ms. Gunn. 5 years, Mr. Hutchinson “nay”. Motion carried.

Safety Committee, Chairperson Joe Houlihan

The next Safety Committee meeting will be Monday, March 2, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

Personnel Committee, Chairperson Donna Gunn

The next personnel meeting will be Tuesday, March 3, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

Burke Trust Committee, Chairperson Donna Gunn

Scholarship packets will be delivered to schools in early March. The scholarship interviews will be Monday, May 18th, 2009.

Planning Commission, Councilperson James Dick

The next Planning Commission meeting will be Thursday, March 5, 2008 at 6:00 p.m.

Call of Members:

Mr. Ausman: Congratulated Louis Schaljo on his 1000 point club basketball accomplishment.

Mr. Houlihan: Nil.

Ms. Gunn: Nil.

Mr. Hutchinson: Complimented Police Chief Planck on his efforts to refurbish the police cruisers by utilizing Grant Career Center, and in turn, saving the Village a lot of money.

Mr. Cherry: Nil.

Mr. Dick: Believes the repairs to the Grant Memorial Building need to be a priority, considering it is a community staple. Perhaps other park funds could advance the necessary funds.

Public Input:

Bethel Resident, Mr. Justin Weeks, addressed Council regarding the utility rates, and proposed increases. He has recently moved back to the Village, and noticed a steep spike in his billing. He has heard a large number of residents complain of bills reaching as much as \$700/month. He also questioned why the Village’s water rate was twice that of surrounding communities. A flyer was

attached to his car stating rates were about to increase again in the spring. Mr. Weeks stated he has not had an opportunity to research other communities, but is shocked by the large increase in rates.

Utility rates were increased in June 2008. Mr. Hutchinson stated the Village has to pass the purchase expense of bulk utilities on to its customers, since the Village no longer produces water, nor generates electricity. These enterprises are regulated by the state, and the rate at which the Village must bill. Council is cognizant of the utility expense, but believes Mr. Weeks will find the Village's rates are less than surrounding areas.

Mayor Swarthout thanked Mr. Weeks for his input, noting Council's appreciation.

Mr. Weeks mentioned his son has qualified for the Ohio Athletic Commission's State Wrestling School Tournament. Mayor Swarthout congratulated his son's achievement, and also mentioned Cory Disbennett's 100 wins on varsity mats in wrestling.

Legislation:

Nil.

Payment of Bills:

A motion approving the payment of the presented expenses and bills was made by Mr. Hutchinson. Seconded by Mr. Cherry. All yea.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Gunn. Seconded by Mr. Dick. All yea. 7:12 p.m.

Mayor John Swarthout

Angel Burton, Fiscal Officer