

## **Bethel Village Council**

### **April 27, 2009**

The Council of the Village of Bethel, Ohio, met in regular session in Council Chambers on Monday, April 27, 2009, with Mayor John Swarthout presiding. The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

The meeting was videotaped, to be aired on cable television.

Mr. Ausman delivered the invocation, followed by Mayor Swarthout leading the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. Upon roll call, the following members were counted as present: Council Members Alan Ausman, Joe Houlihan, Donna Gunn, Gary Hutchinson, Tim Cherry, James Dick; George Leicht, Solicitor; Travis Dotson, Village Administrator and Angel Burton, Fiscal Officer.

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 13th, 2009 meeting, as corrected (name clarification), was made by Mr. Ausman. Seconded by Ms. Gunn. All ye.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Ron Dunn, the Village of Bethel's Zoning Administrator and Code Enforcement Officer, spoke before Council. With the onset of spring and summer, Mr. Dunn reminded all that the property maintenance code limits the height of grass to 6 inches, and no signage can be posted on poles nor in the public right-of-way. Pole signage is prohibited for the safety of our public works employees and passersby.

Bethel Village has approximately 728 single family homes, of which 55 are vacant, representing 7.5% of the total. The vacant homes may be under renovation, for sale, empty or under foreclosure. The Village has 30 homes in pre-foreclosure, foreclosure and/or up for sheriff's sale, based on realtytrack.com. The foreclosure number is on the low-end for the area, though Mr. Dunn expects the rate to get worse before it gets better.

Ms. Gunn invited Mr. Dunn to the next Finance Committee meeting, to discuss the Village's zoning and permit fee structure.

#### **ADMINISTRATION AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### **Mayor John Swarthout**

Nil.

##### **Village Administrator, Travis Dotson**

Mr. Dotson delivered the following statement, regarding the Village's fiscal recovery.

##### **“PHASE II**

As we made clear in the first phase of our Fiscal Recovery Plan, which was implemented last year, the Village of Bethel is intent on operating in a fiscally responsible and conservative manner. In the development and implementation of our fiscal recovery plan, we feel we continue to do so.

We have recently met with the state auditors who have been working on the completion of the 2004-2005 audit, as well as the 2006-2007 audit. As the work on the 2006-2007 audit continues, we have found that accounting issues which we have begun to address.

- Over a period of many years, our past clerk/treasurer was able to transfer excess funds from the electric revenue fund into a rainy day investment fund.
- Over time, as banks sold to other banks, and investment companies merged with other investment companies, some of these investments fell outside the limitations of how the state allows public monies to be invested.

- It appears that our former administrator realized this and began pulling those funds back into the general fund to be used. A portion of these investments were used to purchase the three properties next to the municipal building with the plan to construct a new municipal building. The remainder of the invested funds was used to supplement the rising cost of utilities service which allowed the village to delay rate increases for such a long period.
- The issue involves the fact that this money originated from the electric fund before it was invested and was subsequently pulled from the investment into the general fund. Enterprise funds such as the electric revenue fund are not allowed to be transferred into the general fund without a court order authorizing it.
  - The portion of the funds which were used to supplement the cost of the electric utility will only require an accounting move to correctly account for these funds as they were used in their proper fund.
  - However, the portion of the funds which were used to supplement the water utility expenses as well as the portion used to pay for the purchase of land for the possible new municipal building will have to be reimbursed to the electric fund. In essence, this creates a negative fund balance in our general fund, which obviously the state auditor's office does not allow.
- This will be the main issue which will be worked out during the state's audit of our fiscal years 2006-2007. Therefore the Village of Bethel is continuing to work to eliminate every possible expense from the general fund. The general fund covers the expenses of the police department and a portion of the expenses of the street department. Phase I largely addressed the expenses of the street department through the consolidation of Public Works. This leaves the police department as the main burden of the general fund. The Police Department is currently being evaluated for areas where streamlining can be done while being mindful of the safety and well being of the residents and businesses of the Village."

**Fiscal Officer, Angel Burton**

Nil.

**Solicitor, George Leicht**

Nil.

**Police Chief Mark Planck**

Nil.

**Finance Committee, Chairperson Donna Gunn**

The next regular Finance Committee meeting will be Monday, May 4, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

The committee recommends a decrease to Council salaries. The current wage is \$100/meeting, and it is recommended the wage be set to \$100/month for newly elected council persons. The committee will also be reviewing the Mayor's rate of pay.

**Public Works Committee, Chairperson Tim Cherry**

The committee met before tonight's council. The compressor is out for the east side of the building.

A motion to repair the municipal building compressor, at an amount not to exceed \$3500, was made by Mr. Cherry. Seconded by Mr. Dick. All yea.

Mr. Dotson will be in contact with Tom Noble/Who Skates regarding the hardware for the table at the skate park.

The committee reviewed the Brandsetter Carroll traffic signal upgrades to be made at the Plane and Main, and Cherry intersections. The upgrade will be done by 2010. Mr. Dotson is working on the possibility of ODOT providing the backup generator for the traffic signals. Mr. Dotson will also be getting another quote on a 25kW generator.

### **Safety Committee, Chairperson Joe Houlihan**

The committee met last Monday, regarding requests made by the Finance committee. Safety will address Finance's recommendations at the next Safety Committee meeting, scheduled for Monday, May 4, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

### **Burke Trust Commission, Chairperson Donna Gunn**

The upcoming Burke Trust fund requests will include \$20K for scholarships and \$3500 for 2 tables (\$836/each), 2 benches (\$372/each) and concrete pads (\$800) for Burke Park. The community center furnace replacement expense will also be included in the request.

The Burke Trust value on 01/01/2009 was \$1,185,261, and the value on 03/31/2009 was \$1,128,786 – a decrease of \$56,475.

### **Planning Commission, Councilperson James Dick**

Nil.

### **CALL OF MEMBERS**

Alan Ausman: Thanked the township for the junk days – many residents took advantage of the program. Thanked everyone for dropping off their brush at the street barn, and cleaning up the Village. Thanked the public works department for their work around the Village.

Joe Houlihan: Asked when residents would be able to drop brush off again, and Mr. Dotson stated brush could be set at the curbside, for public works to pick up.

Donna Gunn: The National Day of Prayer is May 7, 2009, though she doesn't know of any local events.

Mayor Swarthout: Thanked the fiscal officer and village administrator for their work and recognized the hard decisions that have to be made.

Encouraged everyone to support Bethel-Tate's emergency levy, and vote yes at the 5/5/09 election. The levy is a property tax, not an income tax, and will increase the taxes on a \$100K home by \$180/year, or \$1/school day. Mayor Swarthout understands people don't want to pay more taxes, but urged everyone to consider the children and their future, and Bethel-Tate's "Excellent" standards. He hopes everyone will invest in the schools.

Mayor Swarthout thanked everyone for their support and thoughts during the difficult time he and his family have been through recently.

Gary Hutchinson: Nil.

Tim Cherry: "Wash your hands."

The Clermont County Auditor's website will provide the tax amount due for a property if the tax levy passes.

James Dick: Nil.

### **PUBLIC INPUT**

Mr. Greg Schuler addressed Council regarding the Village's water rates. He believes Mr. Dotson's numbers were incorrect when he quoted an 11,000 gallon water bill at \$75 for Tate Township. The township bills water at \$5/1000 gallons, bringing the total to \$55, not \$75 as stated by Mr. Dotson during the 4/13/09 meeting. Mr. Dick asked if the base meter rate of \$20 was in addition to the water charge. Mr. Schuler stated the \$20 includes the first 4000

gallons and is not in addition to the water charge. He submitted a print-off from Tate Monroe's web site stating the rates. Mr. Schuler is confident his numbers are accurate.

Mayor Swarthout thanked Mr. Schuler for standing up and saying something.

It was mentioned that Mr. Dick made a presentation to the Public Works committee regarding the Village's utility rates. The Village is comparable to other providers when usage is on the low end, but the rates do increase at a greater rate with higher usage.

## **LEGISLATION**

ORDINANCE 1621 AMENDING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE VILLAGE OF BETHEL DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2009, (General Fund Decrease \$11K, Street Fund Increase \$12K, MVL Fund Increase \$5K, Court Computer Increase \$3K, Grant Memorial Increase \$2K, Water Revenue Fund Decrease \$38,350, Garbage Fund Decrease \$3100, Electric Revenue Fund Increase \$31K, Unclaimed Money Fund Increase \$500, Total Fund Increase \$1550), 3<sup>rd</sup> reading

A motion to adopt ORD 1621 Amending Appropriations for Current Expenses and Other Expenditures of the Village of Bethel during the Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2009 was made by Mr. Ausman. Seconded by Ms. Gunn. By roll: Mr. Ausman "yea", Ms. Gunn "yea", Mr. Houlihan "yea", Mr. Hutchinson "yea", Mr. Cherry "yea", Mr. Dick "yea". Motion carried.

ORDINANCE 1623 SETTING THE SALARY OF THE MEMBERS OF COUNCIL, 1<sup>st</sup> reading

## **PAYMENT OF THE BILLS**

A motion to approve the payment of the presented bills and expenses was made by Ms. Gunn. Seconded by Mr. Cherry. All yea.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Dick. Seconded by Mr. Hutchinson. All yea. 7:15 p.m.

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Mayor John Swarthout

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Angel Burton, Fiscal Officer