

Bethel Village Council August 25, 2008

Council of the Village of Bethel, Ohio, met in regular session in Council Chambers in the Bethel Municipal Building on Monday, August 25th, 2008 at 6:30 pm with Mayor John Swarthout presiding.

The meeting was video taped and will 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 were counted as present: Council Members Alan Ausman, Joe Houlihan, Donna Gunn, Gary Hutchinson, Tim Cherry. Also present: Village Administrator Travis Dotson, Fiscal Officer Angel Burton and Solicitor Leicht. Mr. Dick was absent.

A motion to approve the minutes from August 11th, 2008, with name corrections, was made by Mr. Cherry. Seconded by Mr. Ausman. All ye.

COMMUNICATIONS

A representative from the Bethel American Legion addressed Council on the group's annual fundraiser. The event is to raise money to purchase food and gifts for 65 needy families in the Bethel community during the holidays. The legion would like to hold this year's event on Saturday, December 6, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The fundraising will take place in front of Frisch's and Skyline Chili restaurants. Due to the Down Home Christmas parade that day, and the legion's participation in the line-up, the fundraising will wrap-up around 3:30 p.m.

Chief Wallace stated his support of the group and their efforts to help local families. Historically the fundraising has caused no problems. The Chief does not foresee any logistical problems for his department with the fundraising event.

A motion to allow the Bethel American Legion's Annual Fundraising Event on Saturday, December 6, 2008 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in front of the Frisch's and Skyline Chili restaurants was made by Ms. Gunn. Seconded by Mr. Cherry. All ye.

ADMINISTRATION AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mayor Swarthout

Mayor Swarthout attended Pastor Dan Pence's retirement event this past weekend. Pastor and Mrs. Pence have worked in the Bethel community for 35 years. The Mayor expressed his appreciation for their efforts, and noted the couple will be missed.

The mayor and village administrator have discussed placing flower containers from the park in various locations about town, with the possibility of organizations/groups decorating them. It was Council's consensus to allow the placement and the decoration of the flower pots.

A local benefit for Cincinnati Children's Hospital is planned at Burke Park on September 21st, with activities including horses. Mr. Leicht advised the Village be named as a loss payee on the group's liability insurance. Mr. Dotson should also get an event description.

A motion to give the Village Administrator authority to approve the park fundraiser as long as he considers conditions have adequately been met was made by Mr. Hutchinson. Seconded by Ms. Gunn. All ye.

Village Administrator

The Village's online auctions have ended, with over \$2900 in merchandise being sold. (121 of 169 items sold) All unsold items will be reevaluated for sale or disposed of.

Mr. Dotson will be meeting with an arborist from the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources Division of Forestry tomorrow, August 26th, to evaluate the large sycamore tree in the park. The service is at no cost to the Village.

The Village website (www.bethel-oh.gov) has been updated with current meeting agendas and minutes.

In October 2007, the Village adopted an OPERS early retirement incentive plan (ERIP), in effect until November 1, 2008. The plan includes a 3 year buyout for eligible employees. The remaining 2 eligible employees have opted to take the ERIP. Ms. Burton copied Council on the estimated cost to the Village for the employees, and noted the numbers are estimates, with the final figures coming from OPERS once they receive ERIP contracts. The final cost to the Village may increase, but the buyouts provide an overall cost savings to the Village. Once OPERS receives the contractual agreement between the Village and the employee, the Village is bound to the financial commitment. The Village may make quarterly payments to OPERS instead of one lump sum payment.

A motion authorizing the Village Administrator and/or Fiscal Officer to enter into an ERIP agreement with both Ralph Byrd and Terry Laypool was made by Mr. Ausman. Seconded by Mr. Hutchinson. All ye.

The Village now accepts online credit card payments for utilities. The transaction cost to the customer is \$4.95. Reconnect fees must be paid separately and after hour payments are not accepted online. The payments are handled by a third party, retained by the Frey software company, the developer of our utility software.

Mr. Dotson made the following statement regarding the Village's organization:

“About a month ago, I stated that I was continuing to explore options of cost savings for the village, and that I was looking at every option to ensure that the village is operating in a fiscally sound and responsible manner. At the present time I am exploring options of restructuring the public works department. Historically, the village has had three separate departments under public works, which are the electric, street and water departments. Over the past four years, the village has worked toward the goal of combining these departments into a truly single public works department. Now, as we have two employees who will soon be opting for early retirements, we have the perfect opportunity to move forward with a restructuring of the public works department to achieve a singular, functioning department. By unifying the department this potentially could result in a reduction of the necessary number of public works employees. I will be meeting with the finance and public works committees to work through this process and should be able to report more at the next council meeting. At the same time, I will look at all the village employees and make recommendations for any other needed reduction.”

Fiscal Officer:

Chase Bank contacted Ms. Burton regarding the credit card account held by both Mr. Shiverski and the Village. Apparently, the recent newspaper article regarding the account was faxed to a company executive by a local Chase employee. Chief Wallace has obtained the details on the transactions.

Ms. Burton is continuing the 2006 reconstruction, which she anticipates to have complete in the next couple weeks. Before beginning the 2007 reconstruction, she will be addressing 2009 appropriations and various other items that need attention.

The implementation of ClaimLINX, the third party administrator for insurance claims, seems to be a success. She has received a few employee questions, but no complaints, and the statements from ClaimLINX indicate claims are being paid.

Solicitor:

Mr. Leicht requested an executive session at the end of tonight's meeting to discuss potential litigation.

Police Department:

The Bethel-Tate Fire Department held a fundraiser for the MDA, similar to what the American Legion will be conducting. The Bethel community donated over \$7000 to the cause.

September is National Preparedness Month. Chief Wallace stated it's not too early to begin preparing for winter, winter driving, and the potential for severe weather.

Finance Committee:

The next finance meeting will be Monday, September 8, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.

Public Works:

Mr. Cherry spoke on behalf of the Public Works Committee. The committee met this evening with the Burke Park Cabin Committee, to discuss logistical problems, such as non-profit dealings with Village owned properties and grant procedures. The two committees will be meeting again.

Safety Committee:

Mr. Houlihan spoke on behalf of the Safety Committee. He reminded everyone to be extra careful at bus stops, crosswalks and school zones, since school is back in session.

Burke Trust Committee:

Nil.

Planning Commission:

The next planning meeting is September 4th at 6:00 p.m.

Call of Members:

Mr. Ausman: Nil

Mr. Houlihan: Nil

Ms. Gunn: The Village's trick-or-treat hours will be Friday, October 31st from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Mr. Hutchinson: Nil

Mr. Cherry: Addressed the propane tank storage mentioned at the last council meeting. Mr. Dunn stated the tanks are actually empty Freon tanks. The location is a temporary storage area and though the tanks are a public eyesore, they are not dangerous.

Public Input:

Mr. Ron Dunn, the Village's code enforcement officer, spoke before Council.

The vacant trailer addressed at the last Council meeting is in the township and out of the Village's jurisdiction.

Village wide yard sales were established to eliminate yard sale fees, though the sale permits may still be obtained. Often, sales and other items are posted on poles about town, which can compromise the safety of our linesmen. Mr. Dunn would like council to consider erecting 3-4 community bulletin boards around town, to allow for resident postings.

Mr. Dunn has been in contact with Dave Kennedy, from the Village of New Richmond, regarding that village's weed ordinance. Once a year, the village advertises seasonal mowing dates. If a property is not mowed, the Village chooses from a list of contractors for the mowing, and assesses the homeowner the cost of the mowing, as well as an administrative fee. A similar procedure in Bethel may appear more effective to village residents. Bethel's current procedure is the issuance of a certified letter and the subsequent return or response from the property owner. Though only a small number of people let their property maintenance go, it appears to other residents that the Village is not moving fast enough.

Mr. Leicht mentioned the residents' rights to due process and the Village's noxious weed ordinance. Mayor Swarouth pointed out the issue is frustrating to Council, Mr. Dunn and the Village Administrator, and stressed he does not want the Village to become a mowing service.

Legislation:

RESOLUTION 869 REVISING JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR CERTAIN VILLAGE EMPLOYEES AND INCORPORATING THE SAME IN THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK, tabled until next council meeting

ORDINANCE 1598 ADOPTING THE 2007 OHIO FIRE CODE, 2nd reading

Payment of Bills:

A motion approving the payment of the presented expenses and bills was made by Mr. Houlihan. Seconded by Ms. Gunn. All yea.

A motion to enter executive session to discuss potential litigation was made by Mr. Hutchinson. Seconded by Mr. Ausman. By roll: Mr. Hutchinson "yea", Mr. Ausman "yea", Mr. Houlihan "yea", Ms. Gunn "yea", Mr. Cherry "yea". 7:30 p.m.

A motion to enter regular session was made by Ms. Gunn. Seconded by Mr. Cherry. By roll: Ms. Gunn "yea", Mr. Cherry "yea", Mr. Ausman "yea", Mr. Houlihan "yea", Mr. Hutchinson "yea". 7:50 p.m.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ausman. Seconded by Mr. Houlihan. All yea. 7:50 p.m.

Mayor John Swarouth

Angel Burton, Fiscal Officer