

TOWN OF WORTHINGTON  
MEETING MINUTES APRIL 11, 2023

Presented for approval MAY 9, 2023

**PUBLIC HEARING:** Michelle Carrico from SIDC was in attendance to hold a public hearing regarding the upcoming sewer improvement project. She explained that a grant proposal will be submitted on April 28th. The purpose of the grant is to help offset the cost of adding a new air clarifying system, a uv disinfection system, a new lavatory and building, a sludge line and other improvements required by the state and recommended by the engineering firm. The cost will be \$2,010,000. The grant will cover \$700,000 and the local match will be \$1,310,000.00 which will come from state revolving loan funds. The hearing was opened for public comments. Tom Franklin explained the Town has been working on this for 2 years. Brian Stoner commented that the improvements will provide for a much more efficient plant, but that will come with a rate increase. Kim Archer reiterated that no one wants a rate increase but we must complete the project to be in compliance. The town hopes to keep that as low as possible. The full application to the state is due June 30, 2023. Michelle told those in attendance that letters of support for the project and concerns are welcome to be added to the application. There will be another public hearing before the June meeting. The hearing was adjourned at 6:13PM.

The Worthington Town Council met for the monthly meeting on 4/11/2023 at Town Hall at 6:00 PM. Members in attendance were Brian Stoner, Tom Franklin, and Barry Hoover and Kim Archer.

Meeting was called to order by Tom Franklin. Kim Archer offered a prayer.

Motion to approve the minutes from the March meeting was made by Kim Archer. Barry Hoover seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Motion to approve and pay claims was made by Kim Archer. Barry Hoover seconded. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report**

- Clerk Treasurer Mindy Hoover presented the fund report and explained that the 2023 budget had finally rolled over to 2023 and the numbers on the report reflect the new balances. She expressed concern over the negative balance of the MVH fund. It has been addressed with Jim Higgins who suggested that only the most necessary expenses come from that fund. It should correct itself by the end of the year. The payroll account shows a negative balance, but that is not valid. Once that week's payroll distributions have been made, it will be corrected.
- She expressed concern about the low cash balance. It has been slowly draining due to overspending, which led to the discovery of unauthorized payments being made from town to the Fire Territory which does have its own tax levy to fund the budget.
- The Fire Territory has received a portion of the Town's Local Income Tax (LIT) since it was formed. They have received \$141,213 from the town. There is no resolution to support this sharing of revenue.
- In 2018 the Fire Territory wanted a new truck. The truck was leased without following proper procedure for bids and a public hearing. There were two finance options discussed. The Fire Territory wanted to use First Republic. Mr. Stahl, Town Board President, had an offer from an Indianapolis bank with a lower interest rate. The FT chose the First Republic option. The debt was secured by the Town and Mackie Stahl signed the documents.
- A Resolution passed in 2018 by the Town Board to allow half of the county Public Safety Local Income Tax be deposited in the Fire Territory Equipment fund. The resolution ended in December 2019, and PS LIT money should not have been shared beyond the expiration date.
- After consulting with the DLGF and the SBOA, the Clerk was advised to take the overpayments of LIT back and credit them to the Town's PS LIT appropriation account. Barry Hoover asked if this is considered a misappropriation of funds. According to the SBOA, it is a misappropriation.
- Based on information from the state, the clerk advised the Board to proceed with the process of making an additional appropriation from the Equipment Replacement Fund cash balance to pay off the fire truck debt.
- Fire Territory President Chuck Strickler spoke in response to the Clerk. He spoke to how the territory was formed and the amount that each township donated to the Territory at that time of formation. According to

his documentation, The townships transferred \$229,407. The town contributed the fire station and all its equipment, and \$7000 although he doesn't know if that happened. In 2010 Jefferson Township donated \$150,000 as a down payment for a new tanker truck. Later in 2010, the township trustees donated the remainder of their budgets. In 2011, the Fire Territory received their own budget. He also reviewed subsequent budget dollar amounts. Chuck expressed concern over the inequity of the tax levy on the citizens of the townships versus the town's citizens. He believes the people who live outside the town limits have paid more than their fair share to make up for the lower assessed value of the town. He explained that he believes the townships are supporting the Fire Territory but the Town has the majority of the runs.

- Terry Blanton stated that the town is benefiting more than the townships because they pay more taxes. Mindy responded that unfortunately the tax system penalizes people who own and make more money. He asked about the purpose of COIT( and how much was going to the Territory. When he was Smith trustee he stated the COIT to the township was cut in half when they joined the Fire Territory. He believes that the COIT from the township should come back to the Fire Territory.
- Chuck presented the dollar amount or \$529,811 that he has tracked as revenue from town to the Fire Territory. According to his numbers the townships have provided \$909,120. So the townships have paid almost \$400K more than the town. It is his opinion that the LIT money makes the share more equitable to the townships. He believes there should be a variable tax rate, so that the townspeople pay more. Barry Hoover asked what the levy has to do with paying off the fire truck, and agreed that we need to sit down and discuss the possibility of changing the levy. Mindy Hoover reported that since the debt belongs to the town, and it has never been reported as a debt to the state, it is in the best interest of all parties to pay off the truck.
- Barry and Kim Archer asked if the Territory can survive on its current budget if the truck is paid off. Terry Blanton responded that Mackie thought he could get a grant to help pay for the truck, but when that fell through, safety tax was discussed. He agrees that if you can save money on interest, you should pay off a loan. Chuck asked about future payments of LIT money. Mindy stated that it will not continue this year, but can be readdressed in future budget talks. If something catastrophic happens in the future and the FT has an immediate need, it can be worked out between all parties. Also paying off the truck helps the town and the fire territory have more buying power in the future. Mindy explained why the original finance deal was bad business and may result in a reprimand from the state for the conflict of interest of a fireman being a sales rep for the company involved in procuring the truck.
- In conclusion, Mindy said that it is in the best interest of all parties to pay off the truck. If she went by the SBOA opinion, all of the money paid (without a resolution) would go back into the town's general fund. She does not want to do that. Tom Franklin asked what is needed from the board to proceed with paying off the truck. Mindy said she needs permission from the board to advertise for an additional appropriation to use the cash balance of the Equipment fund to make the payoff. Kim Archer made a motion to approve the procedure to pay off the truck. Barry Hoover seconded it. Motion carried 4-0.

#### **Street Department:**

- Tim reported they have been picking up limbs from storm damage and spreading rock where needed. He is concerned about the number of people that want the town to pick up their yard waste. It is the town's opinion that we are not responsible for picking up anything other than storm damage. We will try to find townspeople to help others who need assistance. Other trees that are on the town's property will be done by Rick Williams.
- After going through the interview process for an assistant superintendent, Brian Stoner made the motion to hire Roy Eddy to fill the position. Kim Archer seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

- **Police Department:**

- Officer Gambill attended the meeting through Zoom from the Academy. We had 80 incidents last month. He will be finished law enforcement academy April 20th. Tom asked about the status of interviewing for a new officer. Jake has asked for interviews and is still waiting for that to occur. Tom said he would make a note for Gerren to move forward with that.

#### **Utilities Report:**

- Renie Powell reported that she has filed 24 liens for past due sewer bills. She will continue to send monthly late letters. Tom praised her for the good work she is doing in collections.

**Old Business:**

- Barry Hoover brought up the work being done on the Worthington Rec Center. He asked town permission to apply for planning grants. Michelle from SIDC asked some questions, and offered some help with grant planning.

**New Business:**

- Maebelle McCafferty is concerned about blighted properties on Edwards Street. She even offered to pick up the property if the owner would get a dumpster. Kim Archer agreed that the town needs to address blighted properties. Clerk has created a form for residents to report problems. Other properties were discussed. Tom Franklin stated we don't have an employee that handles property complaints and we don't have a good way to enforce. The Town Board will work on finding a solution, including the county Health Department.
- John Rogers asked if the town can do something about people leaving their trash cans on the curb. Tom said that is another thing we can address with blighted property.
- Clerk asked about how building permits are handled. Tom Franklin will take care of checking on the current permits.
- Jim O'Malley thanked everyone for helping to build a ramp for Anna Rochelle. Some older residents reached out to him to ask if there is a safe place where people can come during storms for shelter. The diner has a basement, Jose's bar has a large basement. Jim suggested we put together a list of people who are homebound or elderly with no family so they can be checked on after a storm. Jim also asked if the town has a barricade he can use for the school wide drill to block the street. Tim will put a barrier up the morning of the drill. He asked if the Lion's Club can still use the Community for free. The Clerk reported that there have been some changes to park rental policy.
- Mindy said IU School of Business is helping to create a new town basement. She will continue to work with them to get it up and running.
- Chuck Strickler passed out a list of all the accomplishments of the fire territory since its inception.
- Michelle Carrico had an authorization and explanation of 4 factor analysis that needs to be signed by Gerren Cullison to move forward with the sewer project. Barry made a motion to include this information in the minutes, Kim Archer seconded. Motion carried 4-0.
- Barry made a motion to adjourn. Kim seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

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Gerren Cullison, President

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Melinda L. Hoover, Clerk-Treasurer