

JANUARY 15, 2024

VILLAGE OF NEW ATHENS

4.1

6:30 p.m. The regular meeting of the Village Board of Trustees was called to order by Mayor Behnken. A toll call was answered by Trustees Newbold, Politsch, Fitzgerald, Feder and Geppert. Trustee Kearns was absent. Also present were Tim Buehler, Chief of Police, Andrew Green, Ambulance Director, and Andy Fauth, Village Treasurer.

#### VISITORS

None present due to inclement weather.

#### READING OF THE JOURNAL (MINUTES)

The minutes of the January 2, 2024, regular board meeting were submitted to the Board for approval.

A motion was made by Trustee Fitzgerald, seconded by Trustee Newbold, to approve minutes from the January 2, 2024, regular board meeting as presented. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

#### REPORTS AND COMMUNICATION

##### MAYOR

There were some previous concerns about engineering fees. Trustee Feder brought up 6-7 months ago that St. Libory, by requesting going out to 3 engineering firms, and asked for request for proposal, and if we submit those to the county, they will reimburse a portion of the engineering fees. If that is something that would encourage the board to move forward on our sidewalk program. Discussion surrounding which sidewalks would be choice to begin work on. Trustee Feder wants to get some quotes from different engineering firms. Mayor stated we have a hard deadline of March 12, 2024. So, we need to get moving on this. CDBG must have it in St. Clair County's hands no later than that date. He noticed a sidewalk by the public park needs work, Kaskaskia and Johnson on the east or the west side, would be a good choice and it is not ADA, where the old hotel was. Trustee Politsch said that would be an excellent sidewalk to do, especially if we could get sidewalks on both sides because KTM is right there. It also goes past the post office, where we have a problem with the fence that is collapsing onto the sidewalk now. Across the street from there is also a section of buckles sidewalk. It would be a great area to start with since it goes down to Okaw Valley Park. Trustee Geppert pointed out there is a section of sidewalk being pushed up by a large tree and that it is a dangerous sidewalk to use as it is totally buckled. Mayor explained the Community Development Block Grant, you can get up to \$100,000, and your costs, if the engineers underestimate the price, you are out of pocket there and the engineering fees are not cheap, they could cost \$19,000, for every dollar you put into engineering fees, you get about \$4.00 of construction. So it is difficult to not go after the grant. Trustee Newbold said he was astounded at the engineering fees, we have spent about \$131,000 with Volkert this year. We just cannot continue at that pace. He stated he is not a grant person or an engineer, but they need to convince him that Volkert is not taking advantage of us. He thinks we should put it on hold for a year. He is in a belt tightening mode right now, especially with the amount of money we currently have going out. Trustee Politsch agreed, because we have gotten a lot of engineering input that we have not gotten any results from. We really need to see some of these things finished, like Spotsylvania, we need to see some results with that. Mayor stated there are negotiations between IDOT and DECO on whether it should be statewide bidding or local bidding. If it is IDOT bidding, the contractor will be paid directly by IDOT. If it is a local bid, we have to cough up the money, then get reimbursement from DECO, so right now, they are trying to arrange a meeting between IDOT, DECO and the Federal Highway Administration, so they can try to figure out a game plan. Mayor stated we are getting reimbursed for work on Spotsylvania. Trustee Newbold said he read an article where Shiloh is getting over \$4 million dollars for a new police station and a road upgrade and \$1 million for upgrade to a golf

course. He let Kevin Schmidt's office know we are still waiting for something; since they are getting money for the golf course, while we are waiting for a main thoroughfare to get fixed. He inquired to Schmidt if we could get a push from him to help us. We have been passed over before and we cannot afford to continue being passed over. Mayor stated we could use both the IDOT and DECO money to finish the project. Both grants could help us work on the project. It should all begin by June and we're looking for construction, hopefully, by late summer. It is only going to take a week to do the typical resurfacing, what they call a "mill and fill". The sidewalks will take a little longer but won't take long to do it. We were hoping to be completed by September 2023, but when everything started turning to mush between the two agencies, it was postponed. They agreed to put this item on the agenda for the February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, meeting. There will be a resolution to not move forward to the CDBG in the year 2024, unless anyone else has thoughts on it.

#### **VILLAGE CLERK**

Paula stated she needs OMA certificates from Trustees Feder and Kearns. A copy should be put in their files.

#### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Andy provided copies of the 2023 and 2024 balance sheets for comparison. Everything is up to date and banking looks good, as everything was reconciled on January 10<sup>th</sup>.

Motion was made to accept Treasurer's report by Trustee Newbold, seconded by Politsch. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

#### **POLICE CHIEF**

Chief Buehler presented the activity log for the first two weeks of January 2024.

Body Cams have arrived and Computype should be out within the next week to sync those up from the computer to the server so they can link up and accept the storage. There is also an 8-hour Field Sobriety course that Officer Berry is behind on so he is to take that next week. Chief also wanted to recognize Officer Berry for an outstanding traffic citation because he made a traffic stop involving a person who was driving on a revoked driver's license and was caught; he was then caught again, and he had a warrant for his arrest. Their handheld radar device is broken. They have fixed it twice to no avail. It is about 15 years old and really needs to be replaced. Motion was made by Trustee Geppert, seconded by Trustee Feder, to purchase a new handheld radar device for \$1400, which will come out of the restricted police funds. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND BUILDINGS**

Superintendent Remick not present, due to the entire staff being out repairing a water main break. Trustee Feder made a motion to table until the next meeting so Chris could share details on the situation. Seconded by Trustee Fitzgerald. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

#### **AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Andrew informed us that the call volume has been high so far this month. They had 6 calls in one day. More than one call per day so far. Schedule coverage is good this month. They have hired two new EMT's in the past couple of weeks.

### **REPORTS OF COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE**

#### **STREETS AND ALLEYS**

Nothing to report.

### **FINANCE AND AUDIT**

A motion was made by Trustee Newbold, seconded by Trustee Geppert, to approve the transfer of funds on January 5, 2024, taking it from the Ambulance Fund and depositing them into the General Fund. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

### **WATER AND SEWER**

Nothing to report.

### **PERSONNEL**

Trustee Politsch recommended hiring Ralph Boden as the new full-time Public Works staff. They want him to begin tomorrow morning. He will start at the 80% rate for the first 3 months, graduating to 90% at 3 months and 100% at the 6-month mark, which is what they have done with the past new employee. Motion was made to accept Ralph Boden as new employee by Trustee Politsch, seconded by Trustee Newbold. Trustee Feder wanted it documented in the minutes that he disagrees with hiring another full-time employee since our Ambulance Service is struggling and possibly closing. We didn't have this many Public Work employees in the past. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

### **PUBLIC PROPERTY AND PARKS**

Nothing to report.

### **CEMETERY**

Nothing to report.

### **ORDINANCE**

Trustee Fitzgerald has received the Mayor's recommendations. He asked for any further recommendations. Further discussion will take place with the Committee of the Whole.

### **IMPROVEMENTS AND GRANTS**

Trustee Politsch wants to use TIF funds to replace the fire hydrants out by the school. She did speak with Brian Karraker and since it is in the TIF district, it is a logical expense, a necessary expense. She would like to recommend that we move forward with the three fire hydrants and check out the roadway behind there so we can possibly fix the big dip in the road. Decision was made to have further discussion regarding the use of said funds at the Committee of the Whole meeting. Trustee Politsch reported that we did get the St. Clair County grant award. She contacted UltraSite and she is working with Chris Remick and Paula Allard to move forward on the projects.

### **PUBLIC SAFETY, AMBULANCE AND ADA**

Trustee Politsch reported that we received the signed contracts for the New Athens Ambulance contracts for the 2024 year, with quarterly payments. Trustee Politsch made a motion to accept the contract, seconded by Trustee Newbold. Trustee Feder questioned if the contract was the same as last year's, and Trustee Politsch answered yes, there were no changes. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

### **MARINA**

Trustee Politsch downloaded info from Roverpass and she is going to work on the numbers. She will have the information available at the next regular board meeting in February. Trustee Feder reported that Ervin Smith did go to the marina and remove almost everything, including signage and flooring. Trustee Politsch expressed concern that the marina is now a safety concern and Chief Buehler said they have "chained off" and used police tape to block areas off that are off limits to the public.

**REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Nothing to report.

**COMMUNICATIONS, PETITIONS, RESOLUTIONS, ORDERS AND ORDINANCES**

Nothing to report.

**CURRENT UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Trustee Newbold inquired about the owner of the problem fence by the post office at 202 St. Clair St. Mayor said we could send a certified letter regarding cleaning up the property of the railroad tie fence. The top boards were taken down but thrown in the yard. Chief Buehler wants to proceed with a letter to Alicia Hanna, as letters have been sent in the past but no resolution to the problem. The Chief felt we should proceed with sending the owner a citation by mail.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting @ 7:15 p.m. by Trustee Fitzgerald, seconded by Trustee Geppert. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

Joe Behnken, President

Paula Allard, Village Clerk/Collector