

JANUARY 2, 2024

VILLAGE OF NEW ATHENS

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6:30 p.m. The regular meeting of the Village Board of Trustees was called to order by Mayor Behnken. A roll call was answered aye by Trustees Newbold, Politsch, Fitzgerald, Feder, Geppert and Kearns. Also present were Tim Buehler, Chief of Police, and Jason Berry, Patrol officer for New Athens.

**VISITORS**

Gene Triefenbach, Jason Bohannon and Josh Dietz.

Gene Triefenbach was first to speak. He complained his trash ceased being picked up May 2023. He stated some of his trash during the next pickup was thrown in his yard and left the rest. He stated it coincided with an article in the Belleville New Democrat, that stated there were a number of people that accused the Mayor of infringing upon their constitutional rights and his behavior was less than professional. He was told by the previous village clerk it was due to him having bricks in his trash. He said everyone in this community has done that before. He feels his trash not being picked up and then strewn in his yard was in retaliation. He then stated the leaves that are being picked up from around his house are not being dumped into his mulch pile. He accused Chris of "not liking" a video of a thief that was caught at The Nail that was posted online. Following that video, leaves were no longer put into his mulch pile. He threatened the Village with a lawsuit but he's willing to settle and there are two suits he is filing against the Village that are going to hurt because he is asking for punitive damages due to the retaliation. He wants the marina fixed or pulled out of the river. He said the IDNR is coming to look at it and the village will receive a letter regarding such. He accused the Village of not knowing what they are doing. He stated there are at least a dozen more violations that the Illinois and the Federal Regulatory Commission will come assess and make the Village fix. He then proceeded to call the Mayor names and stated he is "not just going to go away". He then excused himself and left. No other visitors cared to comment or speak.

**READING OF THE JOURNAL (MINUTES)**

The minutes of the December 18, 2023, regular board meeting were submitted to the Board for approval.

A motion was made by Trustee Newbold, seconded by Trustee Geppert, to approve minutes from the December 18, 2023, regular board meeting as presented. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

The minutes of the December 7, 2023, Committee of the Whole were submitted to the Board for approval.

A motion was made by Trustee Geppert, seconded by Trustee Newbold, to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2023, Committee of the Whole as presented. A vote was answered aye by all members present.

**REPORTS AND COMMUNICATION**

**MAYOR**

Mayor suggested a vote to approve contracting with Volkert Engineering to advise on USEPA Lead Service Line Replacement for water lines new regulations (see handout). The Illinois Municipal League and the EPA's

newest situation in wanting to eliminate all lead water pipes. The inventory of lead water pipes is due 10/16/2024. Trustee Feder questioned the reasoning for Volkert's involvement. Trustee Geppert asked if there was someone other than Volkert who could investigate it. Trustee Kearns stated that the lead pipes would be the supply lines to the homes, not the main water pipes. The Village will need an official statement determining if there are any lead supply lines in the town. Mayor said the city may be exempt based on location or size of the community. Motion was made by Trustee Fitzgerald, seconded by Trustee Newbold, to table the discussion till the Committee of the Whole meeting this month. A vote was answered aye by all members.

#### **VILLAGE CLERK**

Nothing to report.

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

Treasurer not present.

#### **POLICE CHIEF**

Chief Buehler presented the December, 2023, police department activity log.

Trustee Geppert questioned the quote on the body cams, if the quote was still valid, given the expiration date was December 29, 2023. Chief responded yes. Trustee Newbold questioned if this would put the Village up to date with the cameras. Chief responded yes, per the safety act but due to the privacy laws, the videos would have to be redacted and faces covered. Trustee Feder asked if there was any kind of grant that could help defray the cost. Chief answered yes, but they are reimbursement type grants and all of Illinois is going to be requesting such grants. Motion was made by Trustee Feder, seconded by Trustee Newbold to accept the quote for said equipment. A vote was answered aye by all members.

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

Not present due to water main break.

#### **AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Josh reported that there were 32 calls in December including four back-to-back transfers. The numbers were much better for the month than in the past. As far as ALS goes, Washington County has been helping out with stuff. A gentleman from the refinery up north had an old ALS bag he donated for us to use. Washington County had a drug box we could have. The narcotic box we need is around \$3500 which will work for both units. There's also a larger lock box that stays on the base, which is around \$6800 for the total setup. He's still trying to contact other agencies to see if the \$3500 box will suffice between the two trucks. He's thinking we may have to go with the \$6800 option, but he's trying to see if the more affordable one will work. He quoted everything on Boundtree, for supplies we will need to purchase ourselves, the hospitals will help with other supplies. The other fund raisers (meat raffle, bake sale, etc) may be willing to donate some funds towards this. Mayor questioned the proceeds of the fund raisers and questioned those proceeds go to. Josh said it goes to New Athens Volunteer Ambulance Group, which is a registered group. There is a board for this group. They would have to vote on it if they were to donate any funds to us. They were out of service for four hours at the end of last month. This month is looking pretty good until the end of the month. Josh is going to meet with an EMT from Lenzburg who has experience that may want to work for us.

Mayor stated the financial report and projections he shared show we need to consider doubling the utility taxes or we are going to have to close the ambulance service. He will take the December figures based on ALS runs and see how many it would take to break even.

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## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES OF THE WHOLE

### STREETS AND ALLEYS

Nothing to report.

### FINANCE AND AUDIT

Finance committee met earlier and reviewed the bills and found everything to be in order. Trustee Newbold made a motion to approve the bills as presented, seconded by Trustee Geppert. A vote was answered aye by all members.

A motion was made by Trustee Newbold to approve the transfers made on December 14, 2023, seconded by Trustee Politsch. A vote was answered aye by all members.

### WATER AND SEWER

Mayor reported that at the last meeting, Chris indicated that the biggest problem with our water issues are the water meters. He found some information in reports from 2007-2008, that we are selling 67% less water now but we are purchasing the same amount of water despite the fact that the population in town has not changed. Leak detection could not find any leaks. He questioned if residents are using 67% less water than they did back in 2007-2008. He reminded everyone when we bill for a gallon of water, we are also billing a gallon in sewer charges. When you take that into consideration, that percentage less is costing us around \$20,000 per month. The upgrade to 813 water meters, paying to have them installed, otherwise, they are not going to be installed. He would like to have someone come in and focus their dedication to getting them installed. If we did that and we financed the water meters over a 12-year period at a 6% interest rate, those water meters are going to cost the city \$2 per water user. He feels installing 10-12 a month isn't enough. Trustee Feder questioned if we install all of them at the same time, what are we going to do when they all need to be replaced again after a certain length of time. Trustee Feder agrees that doing them in sections makes more sense. Trustee Newbold suggesting putting this to the Committee of the Whole. Trustee Politsch stated that the last time this discussion took place, they had agreed to the plan of starting with the largest water meters first, then going from there on replacing the rest of them. Trustee Newbold suggested trying to figure out where the oldest water meters are first. Mayor stated if he understood Nancy and Matt correctly, we have a serial number for every meter and we basically purchased the meters from the same vendor, so we could possibly find out from that vendor a year of manufacturing of the meters based on serial numbers. Trustee Newbold said to hold this discussion during the Committee of the Whole meeting.

### PERSONNEL

Trustee Politsch stated she wasn't sure how many applicants we have had for our open positions. Chief Buehler stated he has been talking with a gentleman who is going to retire from the Army soon, so he emailed him an application. A prior EMT that used to work here requested an application as well. Neither of them have had academy. Public works has received a handful of applications. The deadline for the applications is January 12.

### PUBLIC PROPERTY AND PARKS

Nothing to report.

### CEMETERY

Nothing to report.

## **ORDINANCE**

Trustee Fitzgerald supplied everyone with a copy of the Chapter 11 Employee Code ordinance updates/edits. The existing language will be crossed out and the suggested edits are out to the side. Basically, for the excess compensation/comp time, someone would receive credit for the hours worked beyond their scheduled time, up to a 40-hour bank. Same language for the office employees that are salaried and public works salaried employees, too. The 120-hour cash out of sick pay hours at a rate of ½ the rate at 60 hours. For example, if an employee has so much time that he has saved up, and the employee does not have the opportunity to utilize the hours, he may not accrue anything over those 120 hours. The ordinance states they accrue 32 hours every 6 months. The employee may elect to cash out any hours, but if they do, they will get paid for the hours at half rate. They may take it as a day off, but under the new law taking effect 1/1/2024, an employee does not have to supply a reason they need to take a day off. If they have time on the books, according to state law, they may take it at their discretion. Trustee Fitzgerald states our ordinance is out of line with the new state law. He suggested that this be discussed at the Committee of the Whole meeting, giving everyone time to read through the ordinance changes. Mayor stated that state laws do not apply to municipal employees. The decision was made to discuss this at the Committee of the Whole meeting.

## **IMPROVEMENTS AND GRANTS**

Nothing to report.

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

Trustee Geppert reported that Devin Brown is still going to work with her on emergency management services.

## **MARINA**

The previous owners have been cleaning items out of the marina. They had until December 31, 2023, to retrieve whatever was theirs.

## **REPORT OF SEPCIAL COMMITTEES**

Nothing to report.

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

Nothing to report.

## **CURRENT UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Nothing to report.

## **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting @ 7:32 p.m., by Trustee Fitzgerald, seconded by Trustee Newbold. A vote was answered aye by all members.

Joe Behnken, President

Paula Allard, Village Clerk/Collector