

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES FROM: December 16, 2019

Council called to order in regular session at 7:04 p.m. with Mayor John Heckerman presiding. Opening ceremony: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mayor Heckerman. Roll call of members: Brenda Mackey, here; Connie Mehring, here; Jamin Roe, absent; Jason Benedict, here; Matthew Shanahan, here. Also present were Village Administrator/Utilities Superintendent/Meter Reader Chad Johnson, Zoning Inspector Brian Owens, and Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Visitors present: Brent Boyd from Solar Power & Light; Otsego School Superintendent Adam Koch and Otsego Treasurer Steve Carroll; Marissa Benschoter-Euler from Hylant Administrative Services; Otsego government class students Natalie Puffer and Grant Perdue. Minutes from the December 2 meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCE and CLAIMS: A spreadsheet of the current invoices was reviewed and approved by members. Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger pointed out that Chad Johnson had four extra hours added to his monthly payroll for extra work done. Councilwoman Mehring made a motion that these bills be allowed and orders drawn for same. Councilman Shanahan seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Mayor Heckerman invited School Superintendent Adam Koch to speak to members. Mr. Koch reported that the solar project is ready to go, the LED lights have been installed, and they will be flipping the switch soon. They met with Chad Johnson and got the meters figured out. All inspections have been completed. They just needed one last document signed—a letter from the Village Council confirming that the Solar Farm at 18505 Tontogany Creek Road has an approved and completed Interconnection Agreement with the Village of Tontogany Utilities Department and is being granted Permission to Operate (PTO) pursuant to the terms and conditions of the executed Interconnection Agreement. Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger had prepared this letter, which he gave to members and to Utilities Superintendent Chad Johnson to sign. Once signed, the letter was given to Adam Koch. With nothing further to discuss on the matter, Mr. Koch, Mr. Carroll, and Mr. Boyd left the meeting.

Mayor Heckerman invited Marissa Benschoter-Euler to speak to members. Marissa handed everyone copies of the Ohio Plan Package insurance renewal proposal for 2020. Then she proceeded to go through the plan, explaining each part of the property and liability coverages and deductibles. She told members that Malicious Act insurance is optional for the 2020 policy, costing \$157.00 of the premium. Members agreed that they wanted to leave it in the policy, with no objections voiced. The total premium for the package is \$3,953.00, up a little from last year due to inflation. The Advantage Credit for risk management compliance will reduce the total by \$550.00, bringing the package cost to \$3,403.00 (apart from bonding). With no questions from members and nothing further to discuss, Ms. Benschoter-Euler left the meeting.

Mayor Heckerman did a first reading, by title only, of Ordinance #907-19, an ORDINANCE INCREASING THE SALARY OF THE VILLAGE FISCAL OFFICER AND ZONING INSPECTOR, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. This ordinance increases the salary of the fiscal officer from \$1,550.00 per month to \$1,750.00 per month, and it increases the salary of the zoning inspector from \$100.00 per month to \$125.00 per month, effective January 1, 2020. Councilwoman Mackey made a motion to suspend the rules and declare an emergency for Ordinance #907-19. Councilman Shanahan seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried. Councilman Benedict made a motion to adopt Ordinance #907-19. Councilwoman Mehring seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger introduced the permanent appropriations ordinance, having provided copies of the breakdown of appropriation funds and line-item accounts to everyone. He explained that he only made the changes decided on at the previous meeting: increasing the zoning inspector and fiscal officer salaries and withholdings, and moving \$10,000.00 from the cost of water line item to the contractual services line item in the water fund, to provide for the cost of Feller, Finch's creation of an

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EPA-required Asset Management Plan. Mr. Harnishfeger also reported that he contacted an assistant state auditor, as requested by Council, to get answers on our questions about the possibility and method for moving money from the general fund to the water fund. He was informed that the Village can transfer money from the general fund to any other fund by passing a resolution to do so and recording it in the minutes. The money can be transferred as an advance (a loan) or as a permanent transfer. If done as an advance, it must be paid back to the general fund in the same year as the advance. Mr. Harnishfeger gave his opinion that the water fund would not be able to repay an advance in the same year. He suggested that Council decide in 2020 how much extra money the water fund needs and then transfer the money permanently from the general fund, as a boost to help the water fund get back on its feet. Then, hopefully, the increased water rates will help the fund continue to pay for itself, and new increases may be necessary in the future. After a transfer is made, we can ask the county auditor for an Amended Official Certificate that will allow us to do an amended appropriations ordinance to use the extra money for water expenses.

Mayor Heckerman gave a first reading of Permanent Appropriations Ordinance #908-19, AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE VILLAGE OF TONTOGANY, COUNTY OF WOOD, AND STATE OF OHIO, DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2020, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. The following sums are set aside and appropriated: \$254,591.00 from the general fund; \$78,895.00 from special revenue funds (includes \$55,000.00 from street maintenance, \$9,895.00 from motor vehicle permissive tax, \$4,000.00 from special assessments – street lights, and \$10,000.00 from special assessments – trees); \$0.00 from the capital improvement fund; \$276,400.00 from the water fund; \$650,675.00 from the electric fund; and \$118,000.00 from the other agency – sewer fund. The grand total of permanent appropriations is \$1,378,561.00. Councilman Benedict made a motion to suspend the rules and declare an emergency for Ordinance #908-19. Councilwoman Mackey seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried. Councilwoman Mehring made a motion to adopt Ordinance #908-19. Councilman Shanahan seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

The topic was brought up that a president of council had not been chosen since John Heckerman left that position to fill the mayor's seat. After a short discussion, Councilwoman Mackey made a motion to nominate Jason Benedict as President of Council. Councilwoman Mehring seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger asked members to confirm a meeting schedule for 2020, to also be published as a news brief in the Sentinel-Tribune: The first meeting of the year is scheduled for Monday, January 20 at 7 p.m. (no meeting on Monday, January 6, so the fiscal officer can work on rolling the books over to the new year); subsequent meetings are scheduled for the first and third Monday of each month at 7 p.m., with the exception of Monday, September 7, which will be canceled in observance of Labor Day. Members agreed with this schedule, with no objections voiced.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger asked members for approval to pay any bills that may come due before the first meeting of 2020. Councilman Benedict made a motion to give the fiscal officer approval to pay any bills that may come due before the first meeting in 2020. Councilwoman Mehring seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reviewed the 2020 salaries and compensations for employees and elected officials: mayor's salary is \$300.00 per month; village administrator's salary is \$300.00 per month; fiscal officer's salary is \$1,750.00 per month; utilities superintendent's salary is \$500.00 per month (split \$400.00 for water and \$100.00 for electric) plus \$20.00 per hour for extra work or \$7.50 per meter installed, subject to approval by Council; utilities clerk's salary is \$450.00 per month; zoning inspector's salary is \$125.00 per month; meter reader's salary is \$150.00 per month plus \$20.00 per hour for extra work or \$7.50 per meter installed, subject to approval by Council; council members' compensation is \$64.00 per month, conditional upon a member attending at least one council meeting monthly or being excused for nonattendance by Council (see Ordinances #807-10 and #847-14); village

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laborer's pay is \$15.00 per hour. There was no further discussion and members did not voice any desire to change these amounts.

ZONING: Zoning Inspector Owens reported that he did a zoning permit for \$100.00 for a salt shed which the school is putting in behind the bus garage; it is just for the school. He also reported that Village Solicitor Skaff is working on the matter of the zoning change requested by Glen Hefflinger, but it may not be something we can legally do; Mr. Skaff said it was highly unlikely. Councilwoman Mackey asked if Council had received a request from Mr. Hefflinger. Nobody had received one yet. Mayor Heckerman commented that in that same block it is looking worse with garbage and garbage cans from the Grosjean apartments there. Mr. Owens responded that a vehicle is illegally parked there as well. Mayor Heckerman said we need to do whatever we can do there to get them to keep it cleaned up.

UTILITIES: Mayor Heckerman reported that he went to a Washington Township meeting last week. Craig Spoore had called him about a notice in the paper. There is an association that goes out and bids for cheaper utility rates, which the township was talking about joining. Mr. Spoore was concerned that we might get drawn into this as a village, but it does not include any villages.

Councilwoman Mackey asked if no one at the township meeting remembered flushing hydrants for the village. Councilman Shanahan answered that they were very open with him and Chad Johnson that they didn't remember doing it. Utilities Superintendent Johnson commented that with new regulations for hours and training, the fire department doesn't have time to do it anymore anyway.

Councilman Benedict asked about our electric and a text from Mr. Johnson that appeared to say that Bowling Green would not be servicing us anymore. Mr. Johnson replied that he did not say that, but he had had a fairly heated conference call with Electric Superintendent John Stewart in which Mr. Stewart kept emphasizing that the school's switch to solar power was not Bowling Green's project. A year and a half ago Daryl Stockburger of Bowling Green Utilities had expressed his opinion that this was not a good deal for the Village of Tontogany and its residents, even though it was a great deal for the school. Mr. Johnson pointed out that it doesn't matter now, since it is a done deal. However, an underlying problem for Bowling Green is that they do all the distribution and electrical line work in the village for dirt cheap and they go out and buy electricity in advance, a certain amount of kilowatts, figuring Tontogany is going to use a certain amount every year. It was already purchased but now the village won't be using all of that electricity. Also, Tontogany will still have the costs of keeping up the electric infrastructure—pole replacements, transformer replacements, and other normal costs—while the electric revenue will be significantly reduced. Mr. Johnson said he expects that Bowling Green will raise our electric rates more every year to cover their losses, and Village Council will then need to raise the citizen's rates to offset the higher price. Councilman Shanahan commented that Bowling Green had a solar project many times the size of the school's solar field and they didn't have a problem with that. If they raise our prices just to get back at us, that would be wrong. He said he didn't think they could raise our rates more than the set amount they already announced, and that he doesn't want our citizens to think it is the schools' fault if their electric rates go up. Mr. Johnson replied that Bowling Green does not raise prices in retaliation, but they do cost of service studies and raise rates as a part of doing good business. Mr. Johnson also reported that he asked John Stewart if Bowling Green Electric would be willing to do repairs of street lights for the village, to which Mr. Stewart answered, "We'll talk." Mayor Heckerman concluded that the school's switch to solar power will change Tontogany's electric footprint, but it is inevitable and we will just have to deal with it; the world is changing.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger provided everyone with a copy of a letter from Cindy Reynolds, complaining that her 87-year-old father at 17388 Hannah Road had received a utility bill for 35,900 gallons of water. This was due to the meter being estimated for 18 months and then adjusting with a real reading. Ms. Reynolds asked the Village Council to look into the matter and advise her on what steps will be taken to ensure this situation does not repeat itself. She also asked for an adjustment on

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the bill, due to negligence. Councilman Shanahan asked Meter Reader Johnson about the letter. Mr. Johnson replied that that is the only meter pit in the entire village that doesn't meet specs. It has always been a problem pit. It has had to be estimated at times because it is almost always under water. Sometimes it has a read, sometimes it doesn't. Mr. Johnson said he didn't know who installed that pit. Councilwoman Mackey asked why the pit hasn't been replaced. Mr. Johnson replied that it was probably a cost issue. An effort was made at drainage, but it doesn't work. Councilwoman Mackey commented that they have a right to know why the meter was estimated for so long. After more discussion, there was a question as to who installed that non-standard pit in the first place and whose responsibility it would be to replace it, which would be very costly to do. Also, it was made known that the water service there supplies two houses and several extra people, not just two people in one house, which could explain the higher usage over a long period of time. Councilman Shanahan summed up the situation as: 1) We owe them an explanation. 2) Figure out a solution. 3) Make a plan to get it fixed. Zoning Inspector Owens advised talking to Village Solicitor Paul Skaff about whose responsibility it is to put in a new meter pit that is needed there. Members decided to have Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger tell Cindy Reynolds that, due to the holidays, Council will look into the matter after the first of next year and get back to her.

STREETS and ALLEYS: Mayor Heckerman reported that he did some of the cleanup he previously said he would do at the railroad crossings and by Doc's.

Zoning Inspector Owens asked about the leftover guardrail posts at the park. Mayor Heckerman stated that the old ones are gone. We were trying to come up with a use for the leftover new ones or a place to store them. Councilwoman Mackey offered to advertise the posts online as "free for the hauling." Members agreed that that would be a good idea.

SIDEWALKS and TREES: Mayor Heckerman commented that a lot of the pieces from downed trees are gone now. Councilman Shanahan observed that the only ones left are on North Street. Zoning Inspector Owens suggested having them cut into smaller pieces.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

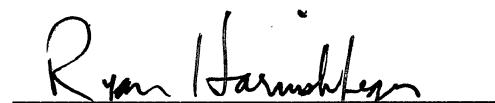
CITY HALL and PARKS: Mayor Heckerman thanked Councilman Shanahan for his efforts in organizing the Tree Lighting and Santa Visit event. The mayor said he was very impressed with the crowd that showed up for it. Mr. Shanahan responded that people's comments were that it was the biggest crowd they had seen in a long time. The mayor and members noted that it was well advertised this year, and combining the Santa Visit with the Tree Lighting also helped. Councilwoman Mehring reported that she spoke with Evelyn and Louis Pauff, who were very pleased as the honored guests; they had a good time and they were surprised. Mr. Shanahan said he would like to have some nice banners downtown next year.

Councilwoman Mackey reported that we were awarded a park grant for about \$1,779.00, which included new soccer ball nets, a new volleyball net, sand, and repairing the benches.

Councilman Shanahan thanked John Heckerman for his sixteen years of service to the Village of Tontogany. Mayor Heckerman responded that he has been honored to live and work here. Members expressed that they would miss him and may call upon him for advice.

With nothing further to discuss, Mayor Heckerman declared the meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.


Matthew Shanahan, Mayor


Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer