

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES FROM: November 7, 2022

Council called to order in regular session at 7:00 p.m. with Mayor Matthew Shanahan presiding. Opening ceremony: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mayor Shanahan. Roll call of members: Brenda Mackey, here; Connie Mehring, here; Mark Smith, here; Robert Bergfeld, here; Damon Lee, here; Lincoln Fox, here. Also present were Utilities Superintendent Chad Johnson, Zoning Inspector Brian Owens, and Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Visitors present: Nate and Eric Heinemann, to discuss an Eagle Scout project for the village; and Sergeant M. Meyers from the Wood County Sheriff's Office. Minutes from the October 17th meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCE and CLAIMS: A spreadsheet of the current invoices was reviewed and approved by members. Councilwoman Mackey made a motion that these bills be allowed and orders drawn for same. Councilman Fox seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried. Copies of the September Bank Reconciliation, Fund Status, Revenue Status, and Appropriation Status Reports were given to the mayor and the Finance Committee to review. A copy of the Staples Credit Card Reconciliation Report was given to President of Council Mark Smith to review.

Mayor Shanahan introduced visitor Nate Heinemann, a Scout with Boy Scout Troop 332 in Luckey, Ohio, and his dad, Eric, who were here to discuss Nate's Eagle Scout project of renovating the village sign at Centennial Park. Nate reported that the two new pillars for the sign are up. The mayor commented that it looks much better than the old dilapidated posts. Eric commented that the sign was nearly falling over when Mayor Shanahan presented it as a possible Eagle Scout project. Looking into the history of the sign, they found that it was formerly an Eagle Scout project around 1992 or 1993, meaning the sign has been up for thirty years. The posts had rotted through. The goal they have set for an Eagle Scout refurbishing project is to leave it better than they found it. He said he would like to get a consensus about some things regarding the pillars. There are various options, but what they would prefer to go with would be stonework or brickwork around the pillars. They think river rock or a dark stone would be best, as it would look nice but not distract from the sign. Cody Donaldson assisted them with creating the new pillars and they will last a very long time. Nate reported on the progress of the work on the sign itself. They are piecing the former sign back together. They will repaint it, but they would like to know Council's preference of whether or not to go with vibrant colors as on the other two village signs. Eric explained that they noticed a difference between this sign and the other two signs. The other signs used white paint on the Indian head and the lettering. The sign they are working on may have faded over time or maybe gray was used on it instead of white. Councilman Fox stated that he thought multi-colored river rock would be good to cover the pillars. Councilman Smith agreed and, concerning colors to use on the sign, he said he wanted "Village of Tontogany" to pop, so it is clear to people that they are in Tontogany. As a final question, Eric asked if there is anything members would like for them not to do, for instance, a flower bed under the sign, which would need to be maintained by someone. Councilwoman Mackey stated that she thinks it would be perfect not to do a flower bed, because we hire mowing and trimming, and that would be one less thing for them to do. Also, no flower bed would be one less thing to detract from the sign. She also commented that the natural river rock for the pillars sounds good to her. Eric commented that, when they took the old sign out, the posts were down four and a half feet. The new footers are two and a half feet down, and Cody assured them that it was more than adequate for five-foot pillars. Cody also secured some local stone, from which he will make capstones for the tops of the pillars, and he is donating his labor to do this. Mayor Shanahan asked Nate what his budget was for the project and where he is at on financing it. Nate answered that he has fundraised \$2,250. The mayor asked if that is the total cost of the project or more than what the project will cost. Eric explained that they have spent all but about \$500 and they have two more purchases to make—brick or rock and mortar/Quikrete. They will be pretty close on the money. They had some donations that helped: Sherwin-Williams donated all of the paint; Industry 60 is doing the doner plaque

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for the back of the sign. Nate added that all of the people or businesses who donated for the project will be listed on the back of the sign. Also, Michael Enright, the Eagle Scout who created the original sign, will be commemorated on the back of the refurbished sign. Eric told members the refurbished sign will receive three coats of paint and a sealer, and it should last a long, long time. They will start painting this week and it should be finished in about a month. The newly refurbished sign should be up before year's end. Councilman Fox told Nate and Eric that he was glad they stepped up to do this project and that they should be proud of themselves. Other members agreed. The mayor commented that Nate had done his homework for the project, having gone around to small villages and towns and having compiled a notebook of designs of their signs, from which he chose elements that he liked. The mayor complimented Nate on a nice job. Members agreed. With nothing more to discuss on the matter, the mayor thanked Nate and Eric and they left the meeting.

Copies of the October Incident Report were provided to members. Mayor Shanahan asked if members had any issues for the deputy. Councilman Fox reminded the deputy that we had been having problems with other municipalities' calls being listed on our incident reports. Mayor Shanahan noted that there were none on the current list, so the problem was apparently solved. With nothing more to discuss, Sergeant Meyers left the meeting.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reported that there are currently six paid hall reservations coming up in November and December: Friday, 11/11/22, Saturday, 11/12/22, Saturday, 11/26/22, Saturday, 12/10/22, Saturday, 12/17/22, and Saturday, 12/24/22.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger told members he needed to get a little more clarity on employee compensation adjustments before he could ask Solicitor Skaff to draft an ordinance. He reported that he researched how to do the accounting for mileage reimbursements to employees for operating a personal vehicle to do village business. He consulted with Local Government Services and with an assistant state auditor, as well as the IRS website and other online information. He discovered that mileage reimbursement becomes taxable income for any reimbursement that exceeds the IRS standard mileage rate. That standard rate is normally published by the IRS once a year, except in 2022 it was raised 4 cents mid-year, due to gas prices rising significantly—it was 58.5 cents for the first six months of 2022 and 62.5 cents for the final six months of 2022. To avoid payroll complications, trying to deal with amounts in excess of the standard mileage rate, Mr. Harnishfeger advised that members either just go with the standard mileage rate or, if they want to give no more than 60 cents per mile, then word the ordinance to give 60 cents or the standard mileage rate, whichever is lower. Either way, if gas prices drop, the standard mileage rate will drop, and the village wouldn't be overpaying mileage reimbursement, which could happen with a flat 60 cents reimbursement locked in. A second thing needed in order to do mileage reimbursement properly is for employees to use a mileage log that they turn in for council approval. These records must be kept for the auditors, and to meet the IRS' requirements for the mileage reimbursements to be non-taxable. Mr. Harnishfeger provided members with a simple mileage log form he had created and he asked if it would be acceptable for use, or if they wanted any changes made to it, such as more odometer details. After a little discussion, members decided to go with the IRS standard mileage rate to reimburse mileage, and to use the mileage log form created by Mr. Harnishfeger. If we find that the form needs to be modified in the future, that can be done.

Mr. Harnishfeger went on to say that nothing was decided at the last meeting about pay for extra hours for the utilities superintendent, or for the meter reader to install meters. In the past it was \$20 per hour or \$7.50 per meter installed for both of those positions. Also, nothing was mentioned about mileage reimbursement for the utilities superintendent, even though he drives his vehicle to do various jobs, such as delivering water samples to the lab, purchasing water line parts, exercising valves, and other tasks for the village. After some discussion, it was decided that just paying an hourly amount for extra work and meter installation was the fairest way to handle compensation, rather than a per-meter payment, since it takes different amounts of time to install a meter, based on the circumstances. The

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decision was to pay \$20 per hour for extra work done by the utilities superintendent and \$20 per hour to the meter reader for meter installation, and the former option of \$7.50 per meter installed is to be cancelled. Also, the utilities superintendent should be reimbursed for mileage just the same as the other designated employees.

ZONING: Zoning Inspector Owens reported no new permits. He reported that Mayor Shanahan, Councilman Smith, and he met about the Fox-Shank property and had a good conversation with them. Everything seems like it is changing daily. He is supposed to be the point of contact, but he hasn't heard from them in about three weeks. Nothing is happening. Mayor Shanahan asked Councilwoman Mackey, who lives on North Street, about the meeting they had last week with residents there, if she attended and how it went. She answered that the meeting was positive. She said that one of the things he did mention last week was that they planted a cover crop, but the problem is that they don't know how they are going to get it down. It is not something they can bale, so they are not sure exactly how they are going to handle it. However, he said they will work it out and it will be soon that they will get it down.

Councilwoman Mackey asked Zoning Inspector Owens about the legality of the PODS container in the driveway on Main Street, if they needed a permit or not. Mr. Owens responded that it is temporary and they do not need a permit; it is expensive and will probably not be there long. Councilman Smith added that PODS stands for Portable On-Demand Storage. Utilities Superintendent Johnson commented that your biggest threat is cargo containers, which a person might put on their lot and it can be an eyesore. The mayor said he thought we talked previously about not allowing those. Mr. Owens said he has seen some that look nice, and even houses have been made out of them, but we would need zoning stipulations on how they should look.

Councilwoman Mackey asked Mr. Owens if the people who built the handicap ramp onto the alley got a permit. Mr. Owens answered that we do not have any permit in place covering a handicap ramp. Ms. Mackey added that they also put in a large deck or porch and the house sits on a half-lot. Mr. Owens said he would have to look at it and talk to the owner about it; if it is a deck, there will be a zoning permit fee for that.

UTILITIES: Utilities Superintendent Johnson reminded members that Orville Buehrer had previously expressed concern that Hefflinger's place downtown was a firetrap. Mr. Johnson said the staircase leading to two meters 20 feet off the ground in the back is rickety and ready to fall down. He changed the electric meter there and it didn't do any good. There is a big hole in the wall. To get readings, you either need binoculars or you have to go up those rickety steps, which may break at any time. The meters really need to be brought down to grade, but he doesn't know how that would be done. He checked recently on high water usage and there was furniture up and down the hallway, which would make it difficult or impossible to get out in case of fire. Also, water runs off of the roof and freezes on the staircase in the winter, making it even more hazardous. Councilman Smith commented that our meters need to be accessible for reading, whether it means repairing the staircase or bringing the meters down to grade. We don't want our meter reader getting hurt going up dilapidated stairs to read the meters. Mr. Johnson asked if we might call Wood County Building Inspections to look at it. He also asked if Fire Chief Gase would have any authority on something like this. Mayor Shanahan said he would be with Mr. Gase tomorrow and would speak to him about this. He will also speak with Solicitor Skaff about it. He added that we would have a right to send a letter to the owner, stating that our terms of utility service require safe access to read the meters.

Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger reported that, before the deadline of October 27, we received from the delinquent commercial utility customer the required \$4,000 payment and a signed payment-plan agreement to pay new billing each month plus \$1,500 on the previous balance until it is paid off. Therefore, utilities were not disconnected. Mr. Harnishfeger added that he received a home mailing

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address from the customer, to which he mailed their November bill, with a letter explaining exactly what would be due on November 21 to comply with the payment-plan agreement. Councilman Fox asked if they asked for a copy of their bill to be sent to their email or not. Mr. Harnishfeger answered that they did not request an email copy, so he did not send one. However, if there is a problem with them getting their bill by mail, he will be glad to email it to them.

STREETS and ALLEYS: Councilman Fox reported that it looks like the leaf cleanup is going well. The mayor and members agreed. It seems they decided to start early this year on the last Monday of October, instead of waiting until the first Monday of November to get started.

SIDEWALKS and TREES: Councilman Smith reported that he spoke with Cody Donaldson today. Tontogany is next on his schedule. Mr. Smith said he floated the idea to Cody of waiting until next year, but Cody said he wanted to get done whatever he can this year and try to finish up. They are behind on concrete; everyone is being shorted on Portland cement. There is a shortage that is pushing everybody back. Cody has been taking leftover small amounts to try to get projects done, but he is really struggling to get material. If he isn't able to get it done for us this year, he is good with doing it in the coming spring and keeping the price the same. Mr. Smith said he told Cody about the one resident who has their sidewalk already prepped, and Cody is pretty sure he can at least get that one done this year, if nothing else. Utilities Superintendent Johnson asked if he can turn the park drinking fountain off, which he left on for Cody and his crew. Mr. Smith answered that he could go ahead and shut the fountain off. Councilwoman Mackey asked about the porta johns, which we had left in place for Cody. Mr. Smith said he didn't think Cody will be here long enough to worry about it. Ms. Mackey asked if we might want to just leave one porta john at Mehring Park for now. Mr. Smith agreed that that would be good, since his work will be in that area and he won't be here for long.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

CITY HALL and PARKS: Councilwoman Mehring asked about the tree lighting downtown this year, if they would be coming to the hall afterwards for cookies and refreshments. Mayor Shanahan answered that nothing has been said so far about having cookies and refreshments. We haven't done that since the pandemic. There is a meeting tomorrow where they will be given the timeline and the full list of the events planned for that night. Sunday, December 4th is the date for the tree-lighting event. Gail will be open and will do some type of Christmas craft. Doc's is going to do their half-off appetizers and will stay open on Sunday night. The fire department will drive Santa up and down each street on the fire truck and then he will go to the fire department where children can sit and talk to him. A choir will be coming to sing some carols; a band may play some music as well. We had the opportunity to get a 30-foot tree from Alexander's on Route 6. We have a donated hoist to set the tree in place. Someone is also putting up the money for the tree, which is \$50. The mayor said that he and Councilman Smith took the cap off and looked in the hole for the tree. Mr. Smith commented that they measured 13 inches. The mayor added that Mr. Smith has an idea for additional stability in the hole. And they also found a blue cable hanging on the wall in the back right-hand corner of the shed; the mayor asked Mr. Johnson if that was an old cable that they previously used to secure the tree to the buildings. Mr. Johnson did not know. Councilwoman Mackey said she thought the fire department might have helped in the past, so they might know what the cable is for. The mayor responded that they will not help us this year with securing the tree, due to liability issues, but they will allow us to use their flatbed to go pick up the tree. The mayor reminded members of the two quotes that he previously shared with them for tree lights—one from Christmas Lights 419 for \$3,750 and another from Malczewski's in Waterville for a couple of hundred dollars less (but who would not include coming out to fix damages, whereas Christmas Lights 419 will). He asked if members were good with one of the two quotes, which includes the lights and

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taking them down and storing them for us. They will just put the lights up; the committee will be responsible for the wires to secure the tree to buildings. The committee will also send out a postcard announcement of the event and the cost of the postcards has been donated. Other than the lights, everything is being donated. Members agreed to go with the tax-exempt quote from Christmas Lights 419 for \$3,750. Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger asked if they would store the lights for us and use the same ones next year, only charging for replacements as needed. The mayor answered that he had asked how the following year would be priced, but he did not receive a response to that question yet. He will ask again. Councilman Fox asked if they would decorate the downtown area too or just the tree. The mayor answered that they would only do the tree; any more decorating would be an extra charge. He also said he will now need to coordinate and schedule everything to get the tree up and decorated within about three or four days before the event.


Mayor Shanahan reported that he received a text message from Katrina Baughman, principal of Otsego Elementary School, who is asking if council would consider a gaga pit for Centennial Park, perhaps as a grant request. It is essentially a gentle version of dodge ball inside an octagonal pit, played with a soft foam ball. They don't have room on the school grounds for one. The mayor said we could put it just about anywhere and it wouldn't interfere with disk golf. We could put it in the volleyball court. He asked members if we would provide the ball or tell people they have to bring their own. Members agreed that people should bring their own gaga ball. Councilman Smith suggested that it would be an outstanding Eagle Scout project, if we don't get a grant for it.

Councilwoman Mackey reminded members that it would still be good to move the repainted benches under the shelter house for the winter. Also, the plexiglass on the back of the basketball goal on the south end is cracked. It is the one for which she wrote a grant request to replace it. Yesterday, kids were bouncing balls against it and it broke through, leaving a hole in it. We need to do something to make sure it is not a safety issue until it is replaced—perhaps put a tarp over it or just remove the backboard. The company that will replace it is going to take the old one out and remove it, but the problem is the safety issue until they do that. Mayor Shanahan suggested getting together this week, while it is still nice out, to put the benches away and take the backboard down.

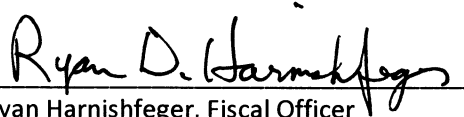
Councilwoman Mackey reported that one post of the message board at Centennial Park is cracked. In the spring we need to get a new one; in the winter season we will not be using it. She said it is in concrete and she doesn't think we could add a metal post to support it. Mr. Johnson commented that the Legion is putting in a real fancy one. Councilman Smith offered a suggestion to reinforce the posts, but Ms. Mackey said the whole thing needs replaced because the message board also leaks. The mayor suggested that we might want to talk to Haley about just doing our park rentals online.

Councilwoman Mackey reported that she contacted some people about the veteran's banners. She has pictures of Jack Hain, Dale Korn, and Jack Crawford. The mayor said he is getting some information too. Ms. Mackey commented that, if we do Ralph Wires, we should also do Grover Wires. Another consideration should be David Albert.

With nothing further to discuss, Mayor Shanahan declared the meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.



Matthew Shanahan, Mayor



Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer