

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES FROM: November 21, 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, absent; Damon Lee, absent; Lincoln Fox, here. Also present was Village Solicitor Paul Skaff and Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Visitors present: Gail Christofferson to discuss downtown revitalization; Otsego student Tyler Heurman for government class. Minutes from the November 7th meeting were approved as submitted.

FINANCE and CLAIMS: A spreadsheet of the current invoices was reviewed and approved by members. Councilwoman Mehring made a motion that these bills be allowed and orders drawn for same. Councilman Smith seconded this motion. All were in favor; motion carried.

Mayor Shanahan did a first reading, by title only, of Ordinance #956-22, an ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING EMPLOYEE SALARIES, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. There were not enough members present to pass this ordinance as emergency legislation at this meeting.

Mayor Shanahan reminded members that they received a Christmas Dinner Invitation from Washington Township Fire Chief Bill Gase. The mayor said that Mr. Gase sent out email invitations; he also commented that the event was a nice time last year.

Mayor Shanahan pointed out that everyone had copies of a survey drafted by Gail Christofferson, and he invited Gail to speak to members. Gail began with an update on the old carryout building on the corner of Broad and Main Streets. She has been in the building twice, once with a construction person and a mason, and the second time with a structural engineer (who is doing the steeple at the church). The roof is the biggest problem; there is a leak in the middle of the building. The structural engineer had commented to her that it was not the worst he had ever seen, structurally, but he did not give her a detailed explanation of what the problems are. She now needs to find a contractor who is willing to give her a quote on repairing the building. Steve Powell has acquired keys to the building from the owner, so they can get in again for further inspection or to show it to an interested buyer. The owner would like to get \$20,000 for it, which is what he paid at auction for it, although Gail commented that she doesn't see how the building has any value with the leaking roof. She said there is a new industrial tech teacher at the school, who met with her and who said they are more than willing to have the students take part in renovations of the carryout building, as lessons in construction, if the building is made safe and secure.

Ms. Christofferson went on to say that she and Sarah Sheperd-Brokamp, who works at BGSU, are working on these things as a small committee. Sarah was concerned about the legalities of a survey specifically for the carryout building. Gail consulted with Steve Powell, in his capacity as a real estate person, and he told her he saw no legal issues with doing a survey about the building. However, he advised that specific interest shown only toward that building could cause the owner to raise his asking price, so Mr. Powell recommended doing a broader survey. Having thought about this, Gail realized that there are other buildings downtown that are likely to become empty in the not-too-distant future, due to the age of the occupants. She said she thinks it behooves us to research what people are interested in and if there are businesses that are willing to move to Tontogany, if commercial real estate becomes available. Gail noted that her proposed survey asks residents about their history in the community and what types of businesses they would like to see in Tontogany. It also asks if people are interested in renting or buying commercial property or if they are interested in renting an apartment downtown. And it asks contractors if they are interested in being hired to do renovation work, or if they are willing to donate time or resources. And it asks survey participants what they see as the future of Tontogany in the next ten years. Gail said she needed the partnership of the village council in her efforts. She said she thought the survey would be something the village council could use and that it would be more beneficial to all if it came from the village, rather than just from her committee. She thinks they can do

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

an online survey, but she suggested that the village also do a mailing with a cover letter from the mayor, pointing out some positive things that have been happening in the community, such as the solar installation at the school and the Fox property improvement, and stating that we want to see things keep moving in a positive direction and do not want to see the downtown die. Gail said she is willing to be in charge of a Tontogany Citizens for Revitalization Committee, but the main message needs to come from the village council. Along with the mailed letter and survey, Gail said she thought she could use SurveyMonkey online, as well as social media and the village website, and she could have it promoted in the school newsletter and church bulletins. She asked if the township trustees have a mailing list, because she would like for the survey to go to the surrounding area, as well as Tontogany. She told members they could add other questions to the survey, if they wished, such as if people were happy with the streets and roads. She asked if members had any questions or concerns. Councilman Fox asked if there is any kind of mold or mildew in the carryout building, or excessive water damage, which would make it a lost cause and in need of being torn down and rebuilt. Gail answered that they had not looked that closely for mold issues, so she did not know about that, but the mason and structural engineer did not have a problem with the structural integrity of the building. She needs a construction person to get up on a ladder to determine the real extent of the damage. Mayor Shanahan asked if the building is old enough to have state historical preservation issues. Gail answered that she has barely touched the grant prospects, due to being busy with her own work. She will look at grants next, but she needs the survey information to apply for a grant, because grant people really like it when you have feedback from the community. She doesn't want it to be a historical restoration, having to meet certain historical parameters, if that can be avoided. She said she also talked to Ms. Hefflinger about the GLN buildings, which are empty, and she said they would love to get rid of them. Councilwoman Mackey stated that, if we send out a survey, she would like to see it expanded to the township—not just how long a person has lived in Tontogany, but Washington Township. She said she thought the township constituency would be willing to participate in the survey. Gail agreed and reiterated that she will try to get it promoted through SurveyMonkey and other methods as well. Gail said she would leave it to the village council to talk it over and let her know what they decide. She commented that, if it could be ready by the tree lighting, it could be offered up at the fire department and at her studio. With nothing more to discuss, Ms. Christofferson left the meeting. The mayor asked members to review the sample survey that Gail had created and to be ready to make decisions at the next meeting, even though that will be after the tree lighting. Councilman Smith suggested that we could give Gail feedback on the survey for now without committing any money yet; then at the next meeting we can decide whether or not to spend money and send out a mailing. The mayor said he would send Gail's email address to everyone, so they could share feedback with her.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reported that he received payment for another hall rental scheduled for Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25, 2022.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger reminded everyone that he had sent his proposed appropriations budget for 2023 to members to review before this meeting. Also, a printed copy was supplied to everyone at the meeting. Mr. Harnishfeger commented that he had updated payroll and payroll withholdings to be consistent with the ordinance for increased employee salaries for 2023, which is yet to be passed before the end of 2022. He said he added an appropriation line item in the general fund to cover the costs of Christmas tree decorating services, now that the downtown tree has been revived. He pointed out that there is \$40,000 appropriated in the street fund for sidewalks or streets, and there is another \$40,000 in the general fund for sidewalks or streets, as a backup to the street fund, if we have an overflow of costs for our projects. He reminded members that all of the ARPA coronavirus recovery fund money received from the U.S. Treasury is tied up in 2022 appropriations, so it is not currently available for 2023 appropriations; any of that money left at the end of 2022 will need to be made available in 2023 by a supplemental appropriation ordinance. He was able to appropriate \$16,550 from the tree fund for now; if more is needed in 2023, any unspent money of the \$20,000 appropriated in 2022 will be available for

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

a supplemental appropriation in 2023. Mr. Harnishfeger reported that the electric fund is still recovering from severe losses before the rates were raised. It has definitely improved, but he had to appropriate almost every penny in the fund for 2023 spending needs. Mr. Harnishfeger asked if members had any changes in amounts or additional projects that they wanted to add to the 2023 appropriations, or if the numbers he proposed were acceptable to be made into the permanent appropriations ordinance for 2023. Member agreed that the numbers Mr. Harnishfeger submitted were acceptable for the 2023 appropriations ordinance, with no one voicing an objection.

ZONING: Councilwoman Mehring asked about the property for sale with dilapidated garages on it. Mayor Shanahan explained that there is a property for sale by the railroad tracks with two dilapidated garages on it, at least one of them with the roof falling in, which happens to be a Hefflinger property. The question is, what is the right way to handle the dilapidation of the buildings. The mayor commented that he doesn't figure a lot of money will be put into the buildings to clean them up, since the property is for sale. Solicitor Skaff advised that the zoning inspector should first prepare a report for the council, a declaration of nuisance. That report should include something from an engineer who has taken a look at the buildings. Then council can vote, declaring it a nuisance, and notice goes out to the owner that it has been declared a nuisance and they have so many days to remedy the situation. If they fail to do so, then the village can come in and tear it down and assess the costs to the property owner. Councilwoman Mackey asked if that would apply to any building in town. Mr. Skaff answered that it would. Ms. Mackey added that she knows we have at least one house in town that is in horrible condition. Solicitor Skaff commented that that is where the zoning inspector comes in. The zoning inspector writes up a report for council and issues a notice that it is a nuisance. If they fail to respond, the council can declare it a nuisance, forcing them to do something about it, or the village can if they don't. Mayor Shanahan asked about the suggestion of having an engineer look at it. Solicitor Skaff said he recommends bringing in an engineer to provide his written statement that the zoning inspector can use in his report to council, so council has something to rely on to make their declaration of a nuisance. The mayor asked if the cost of the engineer could be included in the assessment on the property owner, if the village had to take down the structure. Mr. Skaff answered that it depends on what the order says, but we ask for it. The mayor asked Councilwomen Mehring and Mackey if we had done anything like this in the past for any dilapidated structure in the village. They did not remember ever doing so. Solicitor Skaff commented that they did this process a couple of years ago in Weston and they tore down a commercial building downtown, at quite an expense. Mayor Shanahan commented that he may be able to get some information from Weston Mayor Schroeder about that and what engineer they used. Councilman Smith added that we know somebody who knows an engineer. The mayor said that he also knows the construction person who was helping the church, who probably has numerous contacts of engineers as well. Ms. Mackey asked the mayor if he will be giving this information to Zoning Inspector Owens to have him proceed with this matter. The mayor answered that he will do so. Solicitor Skaff told the mayor to have Mr. Owens send him an email and he will spell out the process for him that he needs to follow. The mayor said he is intending to have Mr. Owens deal with as many buildings as we need to, while the engineer is in the village. Councilman Fox cautioned that if we have a lot of structures to deal with and decide to move on them all at once, it will cost a lot of money up front. The mayor responded that that is a fair point.

UTILITIES: Mayor Shanahan reported that we had a couple people in the village over the last couple of days who lost electric. Utilities Superintendent Johnson was notified about it and got Bowling Green Electric in town to take care of the problems. The mayor also reported that he talked with Mr. Johnson and asked him to start being aggressive on the ARPA-funded backflow prevention project for the master meter pits after the new year begins. The mayor said he wants to get on someone's schedule so we are not six, eight, or ten months behind as they are taking on larger municipality projects.

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

STREETS and ALLEYS: Nothing to report.

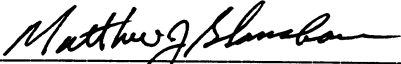
SIDEWALKS and TREES: Councilman Smith reported that he talked with Cody Donaldson this morning. He will be in town tomorrow and Wednesday. He will set up forms on Tuesday. He will pour the sidewalk on Wall Street that is prepared on Wednesday. If he can't get the other two done this year, he will do them in the spring. Councilwoman Mackey asked Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger to unlock the back door of the hall while Cody and his crew are here, so they can use the restroom if they need to.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

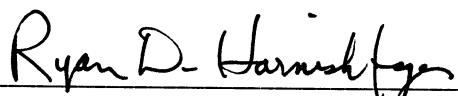
CITY HALL and PARKS: Councilman Smith reported that we did some work at the park since the last meeting. The broken basketball goal has been taken out. Mayor Shanahan added that Councilman Smith used the old basketball goal to make a tree stand for the Christmas tree to go in the center of the intersection downtown. He showed pictures of the tree stand and everyone thought it was a great creation and an excellent way to repurpose the old basketball goal materials. Mayor Shanahan explained to Solicitor Skaff that the village used to have a tradition of putting up a Christmas tree in the middle of the intersection downtown. Someone ran into it and on multiple occasions it became a liability issue. Therefore, the tradition was abandoned for about the last 20 years. We now have a four-way stop for insurance and liability concerns, and the tradition is being attempted to be brought back. While speaking of the tree, the mayor asked members if any names came to mind to be chosen as the honored guest to light the tree. The pole in front of the carryout can be used, along with an on-off switch that Councilman Smith has. The mayor said that Steve Powell suggested Thelma Wires' name for the honored guest. Councilwoman Mackey said that someone last year mentioned former Mayor Todd Buehrer, which she was okay with. Mr. Smith asked about the possibility of the school nominating a student to do it. Former Mayor Melvin Mehring's name was also brought up as a possible candidate. Mayor Shanahan informed members that the lighting company will be out on December 1st for a survey of everything. The mayor said he will meet with Abe Euler tomorrow to set a timeline for picking up the tree and bringing it into the village. An hour-by-hour timeline will be set up to have the hoist here, to get the stand on the tree, get the guy wires attached, and put the tree in place, so everyone knows exactly when to be here for each part of the process. Friday, December 2nd, Christmas Lights 419 will be out to put the lights on. The tree lighting should be an enjoyable festive event with Santa at the fire hall, half-off appetizers at Doc's, the school choir singing carols, the band playing music, and both pastors from the churches present. The mayor said he hopes that in the coming years we will get the downtown lit up and this will bring small town Christmas back to life in Tontogany.

Mayor Shanahan reminded members that he had sent them some updated pictures of the village sign Eagle Scout project for Centennial Park. He reported that everything is going well on the sign. The mayor wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a safe holiday. The mayor asked members if we typically stay for a half an hour or so after the last meeting of the year for some holiday refreshments and if we want to do the same this year. Members agreed that we have done so and would like to do so this year too.

With nothing further to discuss, Mayor Shanahan declared the meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.



Matthew Shanahan, Mayor



Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer