

TONTOGANY VILLAGE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES FROM: October 2, 2023

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, absent; Mark Smith, here; Robert Bergfeld, here; Damon Lee, absent; Lincoln Fox, here. Also present were Zoning Inspector Brian Owens, Village Solicitor Paul Skaff, and Fiscal Officer/Utilities Clerk Ryan Harnishfeger. Visitors present: Lottie Bergfeld to observe; Bodde Simon to observe for government class. Minutes from the September 18th 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 Smith 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.

Mayor Shanahan did a second reading, by title only, of Resolution #963-23, a RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE AMOUNTS AND RATES AS DETERMINED BY THE BUDGET COMMISSION AND AUTHORIZING THE NECESSARY TAX LEVIES AND CERTIFYING THEM TO THE COUNTY AUDITOR. The mayor stated that the amount approved for 2024 was \$9,477.17.

Mayor Shanahan did a first reading, by title only, of Resolution #964-23, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE VILLAGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2024 WOOD COUNTY PARK DISTRICT PARKS GRANT PROGRAM, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. An official vote on the emergency legislation was not permissible, due to an insufficient number of council members present. Therefore, voting will be executed at a future meeting at which at least five members are present.

Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger gave an update on the status of hall rentals: For October, the hall has been rented on Friday, October 6th, Saturday, October 7th, and Saturday, October 29th. Saturday, October 21st has been requested, but not yet paid for. For November, the hall has been rented on Thursday, November 23rd (Thanksgiving Day). Saturday, November 11th has been requested, but not yet paid for.

ZONING: Zoning Inspector Owens reported that he had received about five phone calls from people interested in property in town. He also reported that he and Utilities Clerk Harnishfeger had to fill out information for a company doing research about the property at 18540 Main Street, in preparation for a real estate closing. Mr. Owens said he answered questions about zoning issues. Mr. Harnishfeger added that they also asked questions about the status of delinquent utilities and, at the advice of Solicitor Skaff, he informed them about the \$4,712.50 in delinquent electric utilities that was left on the account. Mayor Shanahan commented that a neighbor to 18540 Main Street had told him that Rocket Mortgage had someone there filling up a small dumpster, but he didn't think the dumpster was nearly large enough for all of the material needing discarded from there. Councilwoman Mackey remarked that they haven't cleaned up the back yard yet. The mayor also mentioned that he never received any follow up from the Wood County Health Inspector about the property.

UTILITIES: Mayor Shanahan reported that email communications had been going back and forth for several days between Ryan, Mark, Paul and himself regarding Glenn Hefflinger's empty lots with two garages on them. Mr. Hefflinger apparently has a potential buyer. He had an electric inspection done, but there is some confusion and we are trying to get clarification from Glenn about it. There are three parcels, two with the same address and one with a different address. The parcel that was inspected for electric doesn't seem to be the parcel that Mr. Hefflinger wants electric hooked up on. There is also a possible interest in combining all three parcels into one parcel. The mayor said that we will just keep

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asking Mr. Hefflinger questions until we can clear up the confusion and determine how we should proceed. He told members that we would keep them posted on the progress of the matter.

Mayor Shanahan reported that Mr. Johnson had turned in the order for street light repairs to Bowling Green. However, the mayor said he had not received an update yet on when the street lights will be repaired.

STREETS and ALLEYS: Mayor Shanahan reported that it was suggested by a resident that we may want to consider sealing the cracks in village streets before winter, and that we might want to consider using the same company that does crack sealing for the township. He said that the township has provided him with the name of that company and he just needs to ask them to come and look at the village streets and give us a quote. Councilman Smith asked how many streets were suggested. The mayor replied that all streets were suggested, although he said he would let the company look at the streets and let us know which ones do or do not need sealing. Councilman Bergfeld commented that he thought sealing cracks in Broad Street would be pointless. The mayor added that Crom street is still fairly new and probably wouldn't need crack sealing yet either. The mayor asked Mr. Smith to also seek a quote from Morlock, while he seeks a quote from the other company, so we can compare prices. The mayor also told members that he thinks we should look at doing something about the alley behind Doc's, maybe in the spring. The alley is pretty rough and a lot of trucks deliver back there. We may want to consider getting it patched up. Zoning Inspector Owens asked if we know whether or not that alley is on railroad property. The mayor replied that he doesn't know who owns it, but it would be a show of good faith to repair it; we can take a look at it. Councilman Smith commented that he thought it would be more beneficial to fix this alley than the one we had previously considered, owned by the railroad. The mayor suggested that we could get a quote for what the alley may need while companies are in town to look at the streets for crack sealing. Councilwoman Mackey commented that sealing the cracks on the streets would be a good preventative against cracking and breaking in the winter.

SIDEWALKS and TREES: Councilman Smith reported that the large fir tree on Kellogg Road has been trimmed back a little, improving visibility for motorists at the corner of Tontogany Road and Kellogg Road. Councilwoman Mackey agreed that it helped the situation some. Mayor Shanahan said he had asked them to go to the stop sign and look to the right to see how it blocked the view.

Councilman Smith reported that Abe Rowe got back to him about the walnut tree on Main Street and agreed to cut it down per the quote approved by Council. Mr. Smith said he didn't know exactly when Abe will do it.

Mayor Shanahan reported that the new owners of the house at the east end of Main Street asked him today when brush pickup would be. He said he told them it would be at the end of October. They had cut down some branches and had them nicely stacked by the driveway. They asked if they could be left there until brush pickup. The mayor said he didn't have any issue with them doing so, but he asked members if they had a problem with it. Members agreed that it would be okay to leave the brush there until brush pickup; no one voiced any opposition to this.

DRAINS and SEWERS: Nothing to report.

CITY HALL and PARKS: Councilman Smith reported that Kirk Shank has agreed to accept the honor of lighting the Christmas tree this year, as long as he does not have to be publicly interviewed or put on the spot. Councilwoman Mackey asked if we could privately interview Mr. Shank in order to put together something to say about him. Mayor Shanahan answered that we can do that; Mr. Shank just wishes not to have to speak in front of everyone.

Mayor Shanahan reported that the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Fox-Shank living laboratory was today. It was a very nice ceremony and students were at various stations, telling people what to expect.

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The mayor told members that a future goal for the property there is to install a functioning restroom, instead of a portable restroom. He was asked to approach Council to ask if the tap fee could be waived when the time comes to install the restroom. The mayor told members that they don't need to make a decision right now; he and Councilman Smith were told that the project is probably not going to happen in the next five years. Councilwoman Mackey reported that another thing Trustee Steve Powell was concerned about was parking on Tontogany Creek Road for people who go out to the property, that parking along there would be inappropriate. The mayor commented that, until they have an established parking lot on the property, people will probably just park across the street at the school and walk across Tontogany Creek Road to the property. He also said that he didn't know what the timeline is for putting in a gravel parking lot. Councilman Fox asked what the tap fees are. The mayor answered that we just raised the tap fees a year or so ago. Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger stated that the water tap fee is now \$10,000 plus a \$2,500 system development fee. The mayor commented that the tap fees were increased because we discovered that we had been losing money on taps by not charging nearly enough to cover the costs. Mr. Fox asked if the tap fees were basically just how much it costs us. Mr. Harnishfeger answered that the tap fees are set to an amount intended to cover all costs, which can get pretty high when there is excavation involved, such boring under a road. If the tap costs more than the basic fee, the wording of the tap agreement states that the property owner incurs the extra cost. Ms. Mackey reported that a fund-raising committee is being formed to help raise funds from local establishments to help pay for things that they do at the living laboratory. Materials for some things will be donated, but they will need funds for labor. Ms. Mackey said she had agreed to serve on that committee and she will keep Village Council informed of what is going on. Nothing is happening immediately; it will be down the road.

Mayor Shanahan reported that the fence at Centennial Park, on the shelter side, is leaning. There are two posts that are broken at ground level. It looks like some of the posts have been cemented in, but the two broken ones don't appear to have been cemented in, or the cement is hidden below ground level. The mayor said that we will need to get those broken posts replaced.

Councilwoman Mackey reported that she got an estimate from Playground World for a new slide set for Mehring Park. The estimate is \$10,840 and includes the tearing out of the base and slide with disposal, plus delivery and installation of the new equipment. Ms. Mackey passed around a printout of the slide that was chosen. She commented that the slide there now is six feet tall, meant to cater to smaller children than the one at Centennial which is taller. The new slide for Mehring Park will also be six feet tall. She said she will get the grant request written up and submitted to the Park District. Councilman Fox asked if we were planning to include mulch in the grant request. Ms. Mackey answered that we are not. She explained that the Park District will accept three grant applications and they then choose one. The mulch is quite a bit less than the slide, so we are going with the slide. She added that we have just submitted one grant application each year for the past two or three years, and we have been awarded the grant each time. Mr. Fox asked if we send pictures of the old equipment to be replaced. Ms. Mackey answered that they don't ask for pictures but she does send them pictures anyway. Mayor Shanahan remarked that we have probably over-informed them of why we choose a project, but that seems to work in our favor. Ms. Mackey said that the Park District always asks if the village is willing to contribute financially toward park projects, and she answers that we are willing to do so. She pointed out that we may be able to do some of the tearing out of the old slide ourselves, but she included it in the grant request to be sure it is covered.

Mayor Shanahan reported that we have received a lot of compliments already on the veteran banners along Tontogany Creek Road. He said he had about thirty names suggested and given to him, which he will send to members in an email. All of the new names suggested so far are deceased veterans, mainly World War II veterans and a couple of Vietnam veterans. The list will make our job easier next year for choosing more banner candidates. The mayor also remarked that the new banner

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brackets we purchased were very good quality and we will want to stick with that company for future bracket purchases. Members agreed.

Mayor Shanahan asked Solicitor Skaff if he had anything for Council. Mr. Skaff replied that he had researched online during the meeting and found that the alley discussed earlier in the meeting is on railroad property. The mayor thanked him for looking that up.

Mayor Shanahan reported that he had a Teams meeting with the broadband division of the state. They sent an email out today to their cell phone partners and we are listed as a village that is seeking to expand cellular coverage and is exploring options. We will see what kind of response we get from that and hopefully we can get somebody to come and take a look in the village. The mayor said he told them that we don't have any property for a full-fledged tower. Councilman Fox noted that there is land for sale in the village and probably some outside of the village too. The mayor reported that they were thinking that a repeater would be a good first step and they asked if we had any buildings that we could put a repeater on. The mayor said he told them we could work with that. Councilman Smith suggested the grain elevator as a good building to use. The mayor said he hoped to get someone into the village to show them where the dead spots are and have them look at locations for a repeater. Solicitor Skaff asked if the village has had any consideration toward free internet for the village. The mayor answered that we have not. Mr. Skaff said he was thinking that maybe the village could partner with the school to do that; it would certainly help the school to have free internet access in the event of another pandemic or something like that. The cost could be shared with the school and it would be a help all village residents to have internet access available. Members discussed the matter briefly and who might be the provider. Mayor Shanahan said he would reach out to Bowling Green and see who their contact is who can give us more information. Zoning Inspector Owens also offered to get some contact information about this topic from another source he knew of. Councilman Smith commented that he was wondering if Northwestern Water & Sewer District might have room for a tower on their property where they have the sewage facility. Mr. Owens suggested that the Legion may have some room for a tower too, which would help support them financially, because they would receive a certain amount per month for having a tower. He also suggested talking to the township and seeing if they would want to have a part in this. The mayor asked Solicitor Skaff to provide any names he can come up with to contact about this, while he and Mr. Owens also seek contacts. He said we will then get some meetings set up to look into this.

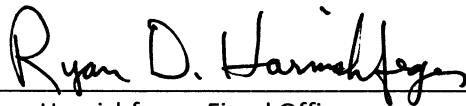
Mayor Shanahan reminded members that November is budget month. He asked members to be ready to start thinking about the 2024 budget, including salaries.

Councilman Smith asked if we wanted to talk about the village administrator position. Mayor Shanahan responded that we had a résumé submitted for the village administrator position, which was emailed by Fiscal Officer Harnishfeger to the mayor and members. Councilman Fox stated that he needs to recuse himself from participating in the process of possibly hiring this applicant because she is his mother-in-law. The mayor said he would follow up with the applicant and set up an opportunity for an interview at the village hall. He said he would like for a council member to participate in the interview, or even a couple of council members could conduct the interview without the mayor.

Mayor Shanahan asked Bodde Simon if he had any questions. Bodde responded that he did not.

With nothing further to discuss, Mayor Shanahan declared the meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.


Matthew Shanahan, Mayor


Ryan Harnishfeger, Fiscal Officer