

Regular Meeting of Bethesda Village Council

December 17, 2019

Mayor Marty Lucas called the meeting to order, Mayor Lucas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Present: Mayor Marty Lucas, Fiscal Officer Ricky Burkhead, Ruth Saffell, Jay Van Horn, Solicitor Jeffrey Menoski, Jordan Castello, Administrator Dirk Davis, Chuck Little, Cindy Foose, Carol Merritt
Absent:

Guest(s)

Stephanie Castello, Pete Busack, Phil Castello, Samantha Burkhead, Bill Cox, Rod Miller, JR Whiteley, Dave Green, Allen Stonebreaker, Theresa Thornberry, Fred Thompson, Dave Schaffer, Dan Lucas, David Allar, Sandy Wise, Joan Snyder, Rachael Smith, Matt Smith, Katina Emory, Jeanette Lucas, Shirley Lucas, Scott Blake, Mindy Blake, Fred Janoski, Sally Janoski, Curtis Hallstrom, Joni Davis, Derek Roby, Mike McCormick

Special Council Meeting Minutes

Ruth Saffell made a motion to go into executive session to discuss pending litigation and hiring of personnel, at 7:31p.m., seconded by Cindy Foose, Jay - Yes, Ruth - Yes, Jordan - Yes, Carol - Yes, Cindy - Yes, Chuck - Yes.

At 8:07 p.m. Mayor Lucas declared executive session over.

Jordan stated that after extensive discussion in Executive session she would like to make a motion to appoint Pete to chief for a 6 month probationary period. Mayor Lucas made the recommendation to appoint Pete to the chief's position. Jordan Castello made the motion to confirm the appointment with a six month probationary period, seconded by Chuck Little, Jay Van Horn - No, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello - Yes, Chuck Little - Yes, Cindy Foose - Yes, Carol Merritt - Yes. Mayor Lucas stated that he would like to see Pete after the meeting to discuss the terms of his probation.

Mayor Lucas introduced Sally and Fred Janoski who served on council for 16 years. Scott Blake stated that he was also on council along with Bob Porter. Mayor Lucas stated that there were two letters of interest for the empty council seat. Mayor Lucas stated that Rod Miller and Chuck Little submitted letters of interest. Jordan stated that Chuck has shown his dedication to the town and that he put in a petition to be elected but the petition was rejected. Jordan made a motion to appoint Chuck Little, no one seconded it. Cindy Foose made a motion to appoint Rod Miller to the vacant seat, seconded by Ruth Saffell, Jay Van Horn - Abstain, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello - No, Cindy Foose - Yes, Carol Merritt - Yes. Mayor Lucas congratulated Rod Miller. Theresa asked if we can still have mayors court since we won't have anyone trained. Rick stated that the training is January 9th.

Dan Lucas asked about the six month probation and if the mayor would appoint him to the permanent position after that. Dan asked what happened to the reasons that council did not want to put Pete in as chief did they just go away. Ruth stated that it was discussed a lot and this is what they decided. Dan asked if any information they had has changed. Ruth stated that the information has not changed. Pete stated that he doesn't know what the information is. Jordan stated that they will be going over the terms of the probation with him. Theresa asked if in 6 months the same thing could happen that happened this time. Jeff stated that yes.

Rachael Smith asked why council doesn't listen when people speak. Rachael stated that things happen and we need to have a chief. Rachael stated that everyone wants to know why council didn't want to put Pete in the chief. Rachael asked what happens in six months when council decides again that they don't want Pete. Cindy stated that after six months the position can be permanent but we are not making that decision right now. Sally stated that people came here tonight and then council went off in a meeting for 40 minutes. Cindy stated that we had to have the executive session first to discuss things that pertain to all of this. Mayor Lucas stated that we had to discuss things that are not the exact same as the issue with the chief's position.

Allen Stonebreaker asked when Pete is going to start doing his job. Allen stated that there is constant speeding. Pete stated that he spent 15 minutes on three separate occasions and 28 mph was the maximum recorded on 42 cars. Chuck told Allen that this meeting isn't about speeding in town. Chuck stated that he even set down there and only seen one truck speeding. Allen stated that he doesn't support Pete being the police chief.

Curtis Hallstrom stated that there are pretty strong opinions on both sides of this debate. Curtis asked if the terms of the probation would be open to the public. Jeff stated that they would consider it and that for right now they are not open to the public.

Fred Janoski stated that Pete was demoted for a reason and now he is being put back in as chief which doesn't make sense to me. Fred stated that either there wasn't sufficient grounds or if there was, then council shouldn't be putting him back in. Dan Lucas stated that same thing. Mindy Blake asked why council wanted rid of him and no one is giving them an answer.

Regular Meeting of Bethesda Village Council (Continued)

December 17, 2019

Jordan stated that at the last meeting she did a lot of talking. Jordan stated that there is an issue going on that we are not allowed to speak of. Jordan stated that it is however a public record so people can always request it to become enlightened. Jordan stated that council just is not permitted to discuss it. Jordan stated that in six months we should have some sort of outcome to this issue and we may be able to move forward in a better fashion. Dan Lucas stated that it doesn't matter to him what the issue is but asked if Pete is aware of the issue. Pete stated that the issue Jordan is referring to, he is very familiar with. Jordan asked Pete if he agrees that at this time that the current position of council is fair. Pete stated that Jordan is correct. Jordan stated that this issue is a major issue for everyone on council. Jordan commended Pete for stick around during all of this.

Ron Lucas stated Pete is fairly personal. Ron stated that if he does a good job and there is nothing on him, he should be chief. Cindy stated that this reason is why there is six month probation.

Curtis Hallstrom asked council if part of their hesitation of hiring a chief is due to the issues with the last chief. Mayor Lucas agreed that this could be part of it but he doesn't speak for council. Curtis asked if during the probationary period if Pete would be Chief. Council stated that yes he would be. Curtis stated that Pete's gun is older than he is and that we need to look at updating our weapons. Curtis stated that he hopes to eventually be able to provide free demos to the local police department. Rick stated that we purchase new pistols in 2014 and stated that he didn't think the guns were old at that time. Pete stated that 7 fire arms are there and they look nearly new. Curtis stated that he has not looked at those guns.

Cindy Foose apologized to the audience for not being able to reveal to the public the confidential reasons for all of this but stated that she hopes there is a good result from it and that she hopes we can start over and see how the next six months turn out.

Mike McCormick asked if there will be certain benchmarks that Pete will be aware of for his probationary period. Council stated that yes we do.

Jay stated that based on what is going on he cannot vote for Pete. Jay stated that he is willing to start over and see where this all goes. Jay stated that Pete has six months to prove himself. Jay stated that he hopes that we have a good outcome with the things that we can't speak of. Cindy stated that council wants to take this next six months and start fresh and that we would like to have the outcome we hope for with the issue going on. Cindy stated that she understands the frustration of the residents of council not being able to tell them why.

Bill Cox asked why council wouldn't put chuck back on council. Chuck stated that this is just how it works and how it happens sometimes. Marty stated that there is an election in two years. Stephanie Castello stated that there is a petition at the gas station to have Ruth, Carol, and Jay removed from council. Stephanie Castello stated that there is a procedure to remove appointed council member also. A resident asked why people want Jay and Ruth off of council. She asked if it was because they are not "yes people." She stated that they are the only two people who are standing up for other people and what they believe in. She stated that a petition at the gas station is ridiculous. Jay stated that this is people right to do, it doesn't bother him. Jay stated that he has always tried to be fair about what he does as a council member. Jay stated that he is not going to make a decision that is going to make people happy every time. Jay stated that this is the fourth meeting on this topic and he has offered to meet with anyone and discuss his issues. Jay stated that only two people took him up on it. Jay stated that he will not apologize for his decisions. Jay stated that he doesn't care that there is a petition because he is not walking away. Jay stated that these are business decisions, not personal. Jay stated that he stayed out of this vote for the council seat, so that he doesn't get accused of appointing someone being that he is an appointed person. Jay asked if Chuck had been appointed to that empty council seat would he have been treated the same way being that he would have been appointed and not elected. Jay stated that he will be here after this meeting also to meet with people if they like.

Administrator Dirk Davis asked the audience if they would be in favor of a new police levy for more man hours. The current levy brings in \$33,500 which isn't very much at all. Dan Lucas asked if we had 13 officers. Rick stated that we never had 13 active officers. We only had 5-6 officers who actively worked. Dirk stated that we got \$100,000 from Union Local contract which we no longer have. Dirk stated that we had 20 hours per month at Morrystown and 20 hours per week from Belmont which brought money in. Right now we don't have that income and we only have Morrystown and the levy. Dirk stated that the town wants a police chief and a police department we need to have the money to run it. Dan stated that having public issues like this doesn't help the cause either. Curtis asked if there is transparency on new levies. Rick stated that levy language is well stated and can be put to very specific needs and uses.

Samantha Burkhead stated that she ran on transparency and that everything will be available to the public. Samantha stated that during her term as mayor her goal is to show the residents what the police department does and what they can do for the community. Samantha stated that she wants to help show the residents that the police department works for the residents at this town.

Rod Miller asked we can hire another officer. Rod asked if the department can be self sufficient on ticket revenue. Mayor Lucas stated that you can't rely on ticket revenue as a constant dedicated income.

Motion to adjourn by Jay Van Horn, 2nd by Cindy Foose, with a unanimous vote.

The next meeting will be Thursday December 30th, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.

Mayor Marty Lucas

Fiscal Officer Ricky W. Burkhead Jr.