

Regular Meeting of Bethesda Village Council

May 28, 2020

Mayor Samantha Burkhead called the meeting to order, Samantha led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Present: Mayor Samantha Burkhead, Administrator Dirk Davis, Solicitor Jeffrey Menoski, Fiscal Officer Ricky Burkhead, Ruth Saffell, Jay Van Horn, Jordan Castello, Rod Miller, Cindy Foose, Carol Merritt

Absent:

Guest(s)

Stephanie Castello, Pete Busack, Phil Castello, Fred Thompson, Scott Blake, Mindy Blake, Chuck Little, Dick Quinlin

Reports

The Fiscal Officer E-Mailed Fund Status, Cash Summary by Fund, Fund Ledger, Payroll, Receipt Register & YTD Appropriation status reports to Council Members, Administrator, Fire Chief & Mayor. Cindy Foose made a motion to approve the February 2020, seconded by Jay Van Horn, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello - Yes, Rod Miller - Yes, Cindy Foose - Yes, Carol Merritt - Yes.

Regular Council Meeting Minutes

Administrator Dirk Davis provided his monthly report:

- 1- We have no update on the grant for the spillway of the park lake. Hopefully we hear something soon.
- 2- The quotes to chip and seal the alleys between Chestnut and Maple will cost \$35,250 for all and \$15,500 for the one parallel long alley.
- 3- Virginia Street sewer line project grant is being worked on. The grant will be applied for through CDBG. The estimate is \$191,525 and we have to do a 100% income survey on the street.
- 4- Reminder that if residents want to replace their sidewalks the village will contribute \$300 to the project and the sidewalk needs to be 48" wide and 4" thick.
- 5- Parnell and Associates sent us an estimate for the repaving of areas on Main Street and Dirk gave this to Jeff to send to EQT. The estimate is \$73,400. Jeff stated that he has not been able to reach EQT but will try again and send a letter.
- 6- We received an EPA violation on March 30 on testing. We have to notify the residents. We collect routine samples in accordance with our systems sample plan and we missed two samples.
- 7- We had two street committee meetings on water, sewer, streets.
- 8- The USDA Grant for the new trucks is 99% complete. The grant is a 55% Grant and 45% loan with a total cost of \$170,000.00.
- 9- The village's website is up and running. Mayor Samantha Burkhead has been working with the web designers and the website is up and running. www.bethesdaohio.org. Dirk stated that the EPA notice will be posted there.

Fiscal Officer Rick Burkhead informed council that the audit is ongoing but should be wrapping up soon. Rick presented the 2020 Belmont County EMS contract renewal for approval. Ruth Saffell made a motion to approve the contract renewal, seconded by Carol Merritt, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello - Yes, Rod Miller - Yes, Cindy Foose - Yes, Carol Merritt - Yes. Rick asked council to approve the transfer of \$5,000 of mayor's court revenues from General Fund to Police Fund. Rod Miller made a motion to approve the transfer, seconded by Cindy Foose, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello - Yes, Rod Miller - Yes, Cindy Foose - Yes, Carol Merritt - Yes. Rick asked for approval of a \$10,000 advance from General Fund to Water Fund to pay for the meter upgrades. Cindy Foose made a motion to approve the advance, seconded by Carol Merritt, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello - Yes, Rod Miller - Yes, Cindy Foose - Yes, Carol Merritt - Yes. Rick informed council that the Park Board received a \$5,000 grant from JB Green Team to purchase a water bottle filling station at the park trial, and purchase two picnic tables and two park benches. Rick reminded everyone that Fireworks will be held on July 12th and we have a fund raiser gun raffle to help pay for it. Rick stated that if anyone wants to donate to the show, they can drop their donation off at the city building or the water department drop box.

Mayor Samantha Burkhead thanked everyone who helped with Easter and Memorial Day events. Samantha stated that she wished we could have done more for these events. Samantha thanked Dave Green for making the bookshelf for the little readers program. Samantha thanked all of the first responders who have been working through all of this craziness. Samantha stated that the website is not fully up and running and encouraged everyone to go check it out. www.bethesdaohio.org If anyone has any changes or additions let her know and she will get them added.

Samantha stated that the personnel committee has been working to redo the employee handbook and update it with current ordinances. Once the handbook is done we will be giving it to Jeff to review. The police committee met and discussed finances as well as operation procedures. Rick stated that the finance committee met and discussed the local government cuts, the USDA Grant, police finances, Dirk suggested at the meeting that perhaps we look at the sheriff and see if that's even an option. Jordan stated that the ordinance committee met and they have a form ready to start sending out notices to residents in violation. Jordan stated that we have many properties about to receive them in the mail. Scott Blake suggested two properties, and they were already on the list.

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Chief Pete Busack stated that in March, April, and May there were 69 citations, 52 in Bethesda and 7 in Morristown. There were 31 general complaints responded to and 30 warnings issued. Pete stated that one felony warrant was served and four dog bites dealt with. Pete stated that there is one pending child abuse case. Pete stated that we had video evidence but it was not clear enough to make them out. Pete stated that we have had several complaints about barking dogs south of town. Pete stated that the dodge is in need of tires. Pete stated that his current hours are 32 hours a month.

Scott Blake has a complaint about a neighbor with major dog issues. Scott stated that the dogs are in wire cages and that they walk on wire mesh and has inches of poop under them. Jordan stated that she would get with Scott and look at the issue. Pete stated that he sent a lady over to look at the situation last week and hasn't heard back yet. Scott stated that the dog bark constantly and never shut up. Mindy stated that she had a sheriff show up at their house and accuse them of trespassing. Jordan stated that the person does not have a kennel license because you have to have a vendor license to sell dogs to have a kennel license. Jordan stated that one of the dogs are pregnant now.

Jay Van Horn presented an application for Christopher Underwood to apply for Fireman. Ruth Saffell made a motion to approve the application, seconded by Carol Merritt, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello – Yes, Rod Miller – Yes, Cindy Foose – Yes, Carol Merritt – Yes. Jay stated that we have received the new ladder truck on May 1st and it is not in service just yet. Jay stated that equipment is still being loaded on the truck and everything is being checked to make sure it works properly. Jay stated that Sutphen was down and worked on a few things last week. Jay stated that four firemen went for training on using the truck. Jay stated that the department hopes to have the truck in operation next week. Jay stated that the chicken BBQ went well and thanked everyone who worked, donated, and purchased meals. Jay stated that the department has managed to keep the shifts covered through all of the COVID stuff. Jay stated that the department is always looking for new members.

Solicitor Jeff Menoski stated that the western division court has been closed since March. Jeff stated as soon as they get back up and running, he will most likely have to go deal with the cases. Jeff stated that he is working with the ordinance committee to make a property violation form for the committee to use. Jeff stated that this should be a way to get people motivated to clean up their properties. Jeff presented Ordinance 2020-3 for the third and final reading. This is the property maintenance ordinance which is changed that the ordinance committee now choose which properties to look at and also added a section that allows the village to clean up the property and assess taxes if the owner doesn't clean up. Jordan Castello made a motion to approve Ordinance 2020-3, seconded by Cindy Foose, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello – Yes, Rod Miller – Yes, Cindy Foose – Yes, Carol Merritt – Yes. Jeff presented Ordinance 2020-4 which is the junk vehicle ordinance. Again the changes are that the ordinance committee now decides who to issue violations, and will allow the village to removed the vehicles and assess the property taxes of the resident. Jordan Castello made a motion to approve Ordinance 2020-4, seconded by Cindy Foose, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello – Yes, Rod Miller – Yes, Cindy Foose – Yes, Carol Merritt – Yes. Jeff presented Resolution 2020-1 which adopts the Belmont County EMA hazard plan. Jeff stated that this is needed in case we ever need to access FEMA funds. Jordan Castello made a motion to approve Resolution 2020-1, seconded by Carol Merritt, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello – Yes, Rod Miller – Yes, Cindy Foose – Yes, Carol Merritt – Yes.

Jordan Castello made a motion to go into executive session to discuss pending litigation and purchase of property, at 7:29p.m., seconded by Rod Miller, Jay - Yes, Ruth - Yes, Jordan - Yes, Carol – Yes, Cindy – Yes, Rod - Yes.

At 8:04p.m. Mayor Samantha Burkhead declared executive session over.

Rod Miller presented building permits for Joe Braido, Samuel Blake, and Devin Auto. Rod said everything looked good. Jordan Castello made a motion to approve the permits seconded by Cindy Foose, Jay Van Horn - Yes, Ruth Saffell - Yes, Jordan Castello – Yes, Rod Miller – Yes, Cindy Foose – Yes, Carol Merritt – Yes.

Mayor Samantha Burkhead stated that the sheriff came and gave a presentation and discussed his services the other evening and she handed out a printout of everything discussed and what they sheriff would provide if this was an option for the police funding situation. Cindy stated that there is no decisions made and this was simply to explore options. Rod Miller stated that the sheriff stated that his drug task force is top notch. Pete stated that he runs around with them all of the time in the back of the unmarked car. Samantha stated that the sheriff provided the total amount of calls they make vs how much that Bethesda PD makes. Other options that the committee has discussed is having only the police chief work, to have the police chief work 20 hours and have a couple part time officers to work the odd hours, to find a way to raise more money, or to explore the sheriff's department. Fred Thompson stated that he worked with Dave and Dave worked for him. Fred stated that Dave promised Holloway 20 hours a week and they maybe get 20 hours of coverage per year. Fred stated that by law, the sheriff has to handle calls anywhere in Belmont County if Bethesda is not on duty. Cindy stated that we are financially tight with the police department. Chuck stated that the budgets are tight everywhere. Fred stated that we are still suffering from the last chief. Cindy stated that using oil and gas is a bad idea because there is a lot of things infrastructure wise that needs done and we will need this money to apply for grants. Jordan stated that the sheriff can't guarantee hours but that they would be around. Jordan stated that she didn't like that as we wouldn't have dedicated coverage.

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Samantha stated that no one here wants to permanently shut down the police department and we need to figure out how to operate in budget and find a way to get the coverage we need. Jay asked why the sheriff wants to take our vehicles. Jay stated that he doesn't like that stipulation either. Jay stated that he sees the sheriff around here a good bit. Jay stated that if this was an option, the vehicle deal would be an issue. Rod stated that the sheriff also doesn't enforce local ordinances. Chuck stated that this is the way that the administration is going to get rid of Pete. Chuck stated that he would bet his life on it. Samantha stated that we are simply looking at options and not making a decision on anything at this point.

Scott Blake discussed the history of the police department and how it operated back then. Scott stated that Tim and he went after many grants and such to help the department. Rick stated that by making Tim administrator and police chief, we were able to have one full time chief. Rick stated that Dick Quinlin, John Craig, Dave Wines, Tim Zdanski, and others worked for many years free of charge to make that department work. Rick stated that Dirk and he have been into arguments for many years about how the General fund should not be funding the police department. Rick stated that he agrees with Dirk and funding any department from the General Fund is not a good idea. Rick stated that our levy provides \$33,000 a year and that we may write \$11,000 in tickets annually. Rick stated that this doesn't provide enough for wages and expenses for the department to operate with as many hours and it did the last 3-4 years. Rick stated that the contracts provided more man hours and some extra revenue that helped the department. We no longer have those contracts. Rick stated that if we use the oil and gas money to run the department, eventually it will be gone and we will have no way to operate what we have created. Samantha stated that if we have things that pop up that requires quick money such as a pump blowing up or a road needing fixed and a water line that needs put in, we need to have the backup money in the general fund to cover these items in case something pops up. Rick stated that we need to pay off interest bearing debt and the rest needs to be set aside for major infrastructure problems that need to be addressed. Scott stated that we used to write tickets and then it goes into the general fund then transferred to the police fund. Rick stated that it is exactly how it works right now as well.

Stephanie Castello stated that the idea of not getting hours and having to give away vehicles makes the sheriff a bad idea. Carol agreed. Carol stated that she has issues with the county responding to calls. Stephanie and Jordan Castello proposed the idea of putting on a 3.5% income tax on to help fund the police department. Jordan stated that it could be put on without being voted on by residents. Rick stated that he thought that only 0.5% could be put on without a ballot vote. Stephanie asked how previous chiefs were paid. Rick stated that Tim and Jeremy were paid out of water, sewer, street, police, and general because they were administrator as well. Rick stated that Eric was paid out of General Fund, which he recommended not doing at the time, knowing what it would cause to the general fund. Rick stated that last year he was holding bills because the general fund was flat broke and we had no way to pay them because we were funding the police out of the General Fund.

Council and the Audience discussed annexing properties into town to help with the tax base. Rick stated that we wouldn't see the benefits of this for 5 years. Dirk stated that he suggested it many years ago and we really need to look at it. Everyone discussed holding fund raisers for the police department. Scott Blake suggested that we remove the park or the fire department from the gun bash and add the police department. Jay stated that the fire department is the main reason that we get donations and the park does most of the work on setting it up. Rick stated that there is a new fire truck to pay for and the park has a huge list of projects that they are working on. Samantha stated that the fire department is a draw for people to donate to because they are a 501C3.

Council discussed looking into increasing the police levy to help fund the department properly. Rick stated that he would talk to the county auditor and see what the logistics of doing this would be. Chuck suggested that we put it out on Facebook and see what people think. Samantha stated that the way to get support is to be seen and this is why she has asked Pete to work night shifts and evening and early morning shifts so that residents see him at different times out in the town. Samantha stated that when people see Pete having someone pulled over late on a Saturday night, it gives them a sense of security knowing that they are being protected. Chuck stated that people see Pete around and stated that he hasn't heard from one person who dislikes him. Jay stated that being a council person is not the more fun job in the world because sometimes it stinks. Jay stated that everyone gets mad at council and sometimes it's not council's fault. If the police department fails financially it would be because over everyone in the village. Jay stated that if we have to put up another police levy to help run the department, he would absolutely vote for it because he wants to have a police department in this town. Jay stated that he lives across from a place that has people speeding out of it all of the time. Jay stated that we need to have money to run the department and it's not just up to the administrator to find the money to run it, it's up to everyone.

Samantha stated that we need to find a way to fund the police department and make it effective with the coverage we need to protect the residents of the village. Jordan echoed what Scott Blake stated and asked if the park board could be taken off of the gun bash and add the police department. Samantha stated that the park board has not money and we may have enough money to pay for the mowing this year. Jordan stated that there are police and fire guns that could be done at the gun bash and are popular and she sees that as a good community growing event. Samantha stated that most of the work done on the gun bash is done by the park board. The fire department sells tickets and is the best way to get donations. Jordan suggested that we make another fund raiser for the police department. Dick Quinlin stated that being an election year, it may be a good idea to get a hold of congressman and put pressure on them to get more funding to local governments.

Motion to pay bills by Jay Van Horn, 2nd by Carol Merritt, with a unanimous vote.

Motion to adjourn by Jordan Castello, 2nd by Carol Merritt, with a unanimous vote.

The next meeting will be Thursday June 25th, 2020 at 6:30 P.M.