

Village of St. Paris
December 2, 2024
Council Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll call was taken by Council President Pro-Tempore Tony Hoyt. Frank Blair, Joe Curran, Terry Ervin II, Tony Hoyt and Linda Julien were present. Mayor Susan Prince and Steve Lett were absent. Village Administrator Spencer Mitchell and Fiscal Officer Marc McGuire were also present.

Motion was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Blair to approve the council agenda. Motion passed.

Public Comments on Agenda Items:

- Tony Whitman, 340 E. Main Street and downtown business owner, requested that a motion be made to table Ordinance 2024-10 to dissolve the village police department.
- Charlene Hess, 240 W. Troy Street, agreed with Mr. Whitman and also wanted to know where the investigation into the Chief of Police stands as he is still on paid administrative leave.
- Karl Zerkle, 401 S. High Street, stated that the village needs a full-time police department.
- Betty Smith, 127 S. High Street, agreed that Ordinance 2024-10 should be tabled and it is a bad idea to disband the police department at this time.

Motion was made by Councilor Hoyt and seconded by Councilor Blair to approve the council meeting minutes dated November 18, 2024. Motion passed.

Mayor's Notes:

- Christmas in the Village is December 7, 2024 from 1:00 PM – 5:30 PM. The tree lighting will be at 5:30 PM with a Light Parade at 6:00 PM. Vendor booths will be at both the municipal building and Evans-Purk Building (located behind the Lutheran Church). On Springfield Street, there will be food trucks, sleigh rides, kids' activities and there is ornament making at the Library.
- The community pancake breakfast for December 21, 2024 is cancelled. The next breakfast will be on January 18, 2025 from 8:00 AM - 11:00 AM in the municipal garage.

Administrator:

- Eleven (11) bids were received for the for the US 36 Waterline Replacement. The low bid was from Ranger Earthworks, LLC, with a bid price of \$1,487,650.00. The second low bidder was J&J Schlaegel, Inc., with a bid price of \$1,633,598.00. It is the recommendation of Administrator Mitchell and Access Engineering to accept the bid as presented by Ranger Earthworks, LLC. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Curran to accept the bid price of \$1,487,650.00 from Ranger Earthworks, LLC. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed. The project is slated to start in the Spring of 2025 with a completion date in the Fall of 2025 and will run from Rupolo Street to Huffman Drive.

Old Business:

- Ordinance 2024-10 – Dissolve Village of St. Paris Police Department. Councilor Hoyt conducted the second reading of Ordinance 2024-10. Councilor Curran noted that section 3 of the ordinance is important being as how the Sheriff would be the sole enforcing agency of the village, and the Sheriff would not take the village seriously if section 3 were not included in the ordinance. Councilor Blair noted that he has not seen the contract for next year or the numbers and noted that it would be hard to vote on Ordinance 2024-10 without that information. The third and final reading will be held at the next regularly scheduled council meeting on December 16, 2024.
- Ordinance 2024-4 Water/Wastewater Rate Increase. Councilor Hoyt conducted the second reading of Ordinance 2024-4, due to the material change at the November 18, 2024, council meeting. Councilor Ervin state that he has asked Administrator Mitchell to gather some comparables to other municipalities water/sewer rates and how it is billed. The third and final reading will be held at the next regularly scheduled council meeting on December 16, 2024.

New Business:

- Resolution 1313-6 – Establish Salaries and Wage Ranges. Councilor Hoyt read Resolution 1313-6. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Curran to approve Resolution 1313-6. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 5-0. Motion passed. Councilor Ervin noted that Resolution 1313-6 can be updated at any time throughout the year if council so chooses.

- Resolution 1385 – Indigent Defendants. Councilor Hoyt read Resolution 1385. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Blair to approve Resolution 1385. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 5-0. Motion passed. Councilor Ervin noted that an Indigent Defendant resolution is done every year as to provide legal defense for Indigents.
- Councilor Ervin noted that 2025 temporary appropriations will be reviewed by the Finance Committee and be brought before council at the next meeting.

Public Comments:

- Eric Smith, Chief of Police, noted that he is still on paid administrative leave and his case against him was dismissed and does not know what the other investigations are being conducted by council. Mr. Smith asked that he have access to his work email so that he can completed training that is required to be done before January 1, 2025.
- Joyce Bowlin, 274 W. Poplar Street, expressed concerns about the safety of the village and about how young people are harassing mothers at Harmon Park and nothing is being done.
- Betty Smith, 127 S. High Street, wants to know what the rush is to get rid of the police department.
- Barbara Drozier, 133 S. High Street, stated she knows who call if her house is on fire and who to call if she has a medical emergency, but asked who she needs to call if someone would break into her house. She stated that she wants to call the police and questioned who she should call for help.
- Charlene Hess, 240 W. Troy Street, stated that she put the numbers together for the cost of the Sheriff Department to patrol the village and at that rate the village could have 3 full-time police officers. She noted that the village has always had a police department and the village takes care of their own. Ms. Hess continued by saying that the Sheriff is short staffed and the village should not put our problems on the Sheriff as village police department could handle the problems. Ms. Hess stated that council needs to be held accountable as they are costing the residents their safety and security and business will not come to the village if there is no police department.
- Vella Reeves, 274 W. Walnut Street, stated that since the Mayor is absent then she must not make the village a priority. Ms. Reeves inquired about the Park Committee and noted that the playground swings are wrapped up to the top of the swing set.
- Jeff Wooten, downtown business owner, asked council to tell the truth on why they want to get rid of the police.
- Greg Hayes, 216 Cottage Street, noted that there was an accident at State Route 235 and US Hwy 36 last week and the Sheriff was slow to respond and that is the type of coverage the village would get with the Sheriff.
- Jeff Schwierking, 266 W. Elm Street, wants to know how much money was spent on attorneys defending against the police department.
- Karl Zerkle, 401 S. High Street, questioned why there is no Safety Committee. Mr. Zerkle was informed that the Safety Committee has been reinstated.

There being no further business, **motion** was made by Councilor Curran and seconded by Councilor Julien to adjourn at 7:53 PM. Motion passed.

Marc McGuire, Fiscal Officer

Susan Prince, Mayor

Date