

Village of St. Paris
December 16, 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 Mayor Susan Prince. Frank Blair, Joe Curran, Terry Ervin II, Tony Hoyt, Linda Julien and Steve Lett were present. Village Administrator Spencer Mitchell was also present. Fiscal Officer Marc McGuire was absent.

Motion was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Hoyt to approve the council agenda, as amended. Motion passed.

Public Comments on Agenda Items:

- Charlene Hess, 240 W. Troy Street, stated that she submitted a records request to the Fiscal Officer and the items requested are “public” knowledge. Ms. Hess also stated that there is no information to the conversations within subcommittee meetings and that the records at the public library are not up to date and people need access to information.
- Starr Lear, 6532 N. State Route 235, asked what research was done to keep the police department and if the village speak to others about their current and past experiences.

Motion was made by Councilor Hoyt and seconded by Councilor Lett to approve the council meeting minutes dated December 2, 2024. Motion passed.

Mayor’s Notes:

- Mayor Prince thanked all the volunteers who were involved with Christmas in the Village.
- Drew Esposito, Human Resource Consultant, spoke of Eric Smith’s, Chief of Police, internal investigation results. A total of 6 charges against Eric Smith were outlined and include; 1) Violation of Mayor directive. Violation of village policies and procedures such as insubordination, failure of good behavior and violation of work rules. 2) Violation of Mayor directive. Violation involves Mr. Smith stating to the Village Solicitor Daniel Bey “don’t start with me Danny or I will finish it.” 3) Secretly recording village officials, village representatives and private citizens. Charges of malfeasance, incompetence, discourteous treatment of the public and violation of work rules. 4) Without authorization of the Village or notifying the Champaign County Communication Center, assigning an individual (live-in girlfriend), who is not employed by the village, to serve as the village’s Assistant TAC Officer. Charges of incompetency, dishonesty, neglect of duty, misfeasance, malfeasance, violation of work rules. 5) Failure to comply with direct orders to turn over the PIN to the village owned cell phone. Charges include insubordination, nonfeasance, inefficiency. 6) Failure to notify the Mayor and/or Village Council about relevant exculpatory items for applicants/new hires. Charges of incompetence, inefficiency and nonfeasance.

The presentation of financials dated November 30, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Lett to approve the financial reports as presented. A roll call vote was taken and council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

The presentation of the Bank Reconciliation dated November 30, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Julien to approve the Bank Reconciliation. A roll call vote was taken and council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

The presentation of Water/Sewer Account Adjustments dated November 30, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Curran to approve the Water/Sewer Account Adjustments. A roll call vote was taken and council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

The presentation of the Appropriation Supplemental dated November 30, 2024 was reviewed. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Blair to approve the Appropriation Supplemental. A roll call vote was taken and council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

Committee Reports:

Finance:

- The committee met on December 10, 2024 and reviewed Resolution 1386 regarding 2025 temporary appropriations. The committee agreed to recommend passage of Resolution 1386 to council.

JSP Fire Board:

- A special meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2024 at 6:00 PM at the firehouse.
- The next regular meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2025 at 7:00 PM at the firehouse.
- **Motion** was made Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Lett to appoint Stuart Everett to a two-year term as the Village of St. Paris representative to the JSP Fire Board. Motion passed. Johnson Township will now have to approve Mr. Everett to the JSP Fire Board as the Village of St. Paris representative.

Park, Land & Buildings:

- The next meeting is scheduled for December 20, 2024 at 11:00 AM in the council room.

Planning Commission:

- The next meeting is scheduled for January 2, 2025 at 7:30 PM in the council room.

Safety: none

Street: none

Zoning Enforcement:

- The next meeting is scheduled for December 20, 2024 at 10:00 in the council room.

Old Business:

- Ordinance 2024-10 – Dissolve Village of St. Paris Police Department. Mayor Prince read the third and final reading of Ordinance 2024-10. Councilor Blair questioned R.C. 311 listed in Section 1 regarding entering into an agreement with the Champaign County Sheriff and asked if council was voting on 2 different ordinances. Councilor Ervin expressed concern about not having a Sheriff contract for 2025 and what it could entail. Councilor Blair noted that council would be voting blind. **Motion** was made by Councilor Blair to table Ordinance 2024-10. Motion dies to a lack of a second motion. Mayor Prince read the third and final reading of Ordinance 2024-10. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Curran to approve Ordinance 2024-10. A roll call vote was taken and council voted to a 3-3 tie, with Council Blair, Councilor Ervin and Councilor Hoyt voting against. Mayor Prince voted yes in favor of Ordinance 2024-10. Motion passed.
- Ordinance 2024-4 Water/Wastewater Rate Increase. Councilor Curran asked how many residents are connected to water and not sewer. It was noted that there were less than 10 residents connected to water and not sewer. Councilor Ervin checked into how the village water/sewer rates compare to other municipalities and noted the village is currently replacing water lines that need fixed and how local dollars are needed to enhance the capability to receive grant money. Councilor Curran inquired when the rate increase would take effect and the increase takes effect for the next water readings done at the end of December. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Ervin to approve Ordinance 2024-4. A roll call vote was taken and council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

New Business:

- Resolution 1386 – 2025 Temporary Appropriations. Mayor Prince read Resolution 1386. **Motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Curran to approve Resolution 1386. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.
- Resolution 1387 – Support AMERICA250. Mayor Prince read Resolution 1387. **Motion** was made by Councilor Ervin and seconded by Councilor Hoyt to approve Resolution 1387. A roll call vote was taken and Council voted in favor 6-0. Motion passed.

Public Comments:

- Charlene Hess, 240 W. Troy Street, stated there is a zoning issue on W. Troy Street regarding trash cans and how the garbage is stacked up higher than the trash can and it is creating issues. Ms. Hess state she is disappointed in council dissolving the police department and the village will have less coverage and the village could have had a Chief and 2 full time officers. She noted that council has accomplished nothing and the spending of money has to stop.
- Doug Baugher, 221 N. Springfield Street, stated that Casstown and Christiansburg went to the Sheriff Office to patrol their villages. Mr. Baugher suggested that the village install speed bumps to slow speeding vehicles and council would be blamed if someone got hurt due to speeding traffic.
- Shelley Valdez, 217 W. Plum Street, noted that citizens have investigated and met with a lawyer and are in the process of a referendum petition to be put on the ballot to let the citizens choose, not council. Ms. Valdez gave Mayor Prince the Referendum Petition, Municipality of Home Rule Township.
- Starr Lear, 6532 N. State Route 235, state that Ordinance 2024-10 in violation of Ohio Revised Code because it contains two subjects.
- Eric Smith, 6532 N. State Route 235, stated that council failed the community and failed him.
- Jeff Schwierking, 266 W. Elm Street, asked how much money was spent on lawsuits and voiced concern with speed sign on US Hwy 36 and concerns with school zone sign readings and speed. Councilor Curran offered to meet with Mr. Schwierking to address his concerns.
- Jerry Teem, 321 S. Springfield Street, supports the police department and is disappointed in the decision to dissolve the police department.
- Donna Teem, 321 S. Springfield Street, voiced concern with the speeding on S. Springfield Street and the parking along the same street. Ms. Teem noted that kids and adults know there is no police in the village.
- Betty Smith, 127 S. High Street, stated she is disappointed in the decision and council did no research.
- Tony Whitman, 340 E. Main Street and downtown business owner, asked if Councilor Curran will fund the difference if Sheriff costs more than a police department and the results of the referendum will get council fired.
- Joyce Bowlin, 224 W. Poplar Street, stated she is disappointed in the decision and is concerned about the elderly population.
- Terri Henson, 237 W. Walnut Street, stated she is disappointed in council and did not try to pass something to pay the police department.
- John DiPietro, President of Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Ohio Lodge 117, is disappointed for different reasons as it creates exposure for the village. Mr. DiPietro stated council is “logrolling” and a new sheriff does not know department staffing and if there will be enough deputies available to patrol the village. Mr. DiPietro stated that the Mayor was charged criminally.

- Heather Ryan, owner of Station House Café located at 102 S. Springfield Street, stated she is disappointed in the decisions and it was biased and a personal attack and noted she will close the café if there is not local police presence.
- Kelly Bailes, 360 Washington Street, stated he has previously approached Councilor Curran about the sheriff proposals and Mr. Bailes noted that there are no future plans with the Sheriff and criticized the information on Councilor Curran’s website. Mr. Bailes claims the pay to the sheriff department is 3 times the pay of village police and research shows that crime goes up, businesses move out and property values go down when there is no police department.
- John Wright, 114 Rupolo Street, stated that cities are run like a business and he once served on village council and stopped because of corruption and greed. Mr. Wright commented that he is disappointed in council’s problem solving and lack in human skills. Mr. Wright noted that the village needs to look at the problems and fix the problems or leave.
- Wild Man, President of Eagles Breed Motorcycle Club, noted that the club was secretly recorded by Eric Smith and he asked that Drew Esposito, Solicitor, interview him about what happened.
- Vella Reeves, 274 W. Walnut Street, noted that Ohio is a 1 party State in regards to privately recording conversations.

There being no further business, **motion** was made by Councilor Lett and seconded by Councilor Julien to adjourn at 8:23 PM. Motion passed.

 Marc McGuire, Fiscal Officer

 Susan Prince, Mayor

 Date