

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HOBART  
LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
July 15, 2020**

**Call to Order:** Mayor Snedecor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. The meeting was held with the building open to the public and a call-in number for remote public participation.

**Roll Call:** The following members were present: Mr. Kopil, Mr. Huddlestun, Mr. Maggio, Mr. Vinzant, Mr. Wells, Mr. Claussen and Mr. Waldrop. Also present: Mr. Snedecor, City Attorney McCarthy and Clerk-Treasurer Longer.

**Reading of the Minutes:** Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Kopil, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 1, 2020 as presented. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

**Correspondence:** Mayor Snedecor and State Rep. Lisa Beck presented certificates of appreciation to Grace Mikrut, 17 years old, who stopped on Rt. 30 in Hobart to help a motorist who was having a medical issue and was unconscious at a stop light. Ms. Mikrut called 911 and stayed with the motorist until police and medical personnel arrived. Mr. Snedecor, Ms. Beck and the entire Council thanked Ms. Mikrut for caring enough to stop and render aid, saving the life of this citizen.

Mr. Snedecor stated that due to the COVID-19, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July City Fireworks display had to be postponed and it is now scheduled to take place on Saturday, August 22<sup>nd</sup> during Lakefront Fest.

**Committee Reports:** There were no committee reports.

**Approval of Agenda:** Mr. Snedecor requested the Council add Resolution 2020-13 regarding the Interlocal Agreement with Lake County already on the agenda. Mr. Vinzant requested that Ordinance 2020-09 regarding the wheel tax be removed from the agenda. Motion by Mr. Vinzant, seconded by Mr. Maggio to approve the agenda with the amendments as stated. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

**Unfinished Business:**

**Tabled: Consideration and Approval of Capital Improvement Plan Update:**

Motion by Mr. Wells, seconded by Mr. Maggio, to remove this item from the table. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

Mr. Fulton presented the updated Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2025, stating that each year the City staff will review and update the plan for the Council's consideration. Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Kopil, to approve the updated Capital Improvement Plan as presented. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

**New Business:**

**Ordinance 2020-08: An Ordinance Transferring Appropriations within the 2020 Budget of the General Fund: Police Department and the Law Enforcement Training Fund of the City of Hobart, Lake County, Indiana:** The Ordinance was read. Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Huddlestun, to pass Ordinance 2020-08 on first reading. Roll Call Vote taken. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Maggio, to suspend the rules, declare an emergency and proceed with the second reading of the ordinance this evening. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

**Ordinance 2020-08: An Ordinance Transferring Appropriations within the 2020 Budget of the General Fund: Police Department and the Law Enforcement Training Fund of the City of Hobart, Lake County, Indiana:** The second reading of the Ordinance was held. Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Maggio, to adopt Ordinance 2020-08 as presented. Roll Call Vote taken. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

**Ordinance 2020-09:** Removed from Agenda.

**Resolution 2020-13: A Resolution Adopting an Addendum to the April 18, 2019 Joint Interlocal Cooperation Agreement for the Lake County Bridge No. 253, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street over Lake George, between the City of Hobart, Indiana and the Government of Lake County, Indiana.** The Resolution was read. Mr. Snedecor explained that the Lake County Commissioners and Council is willing to contribute an additional \$500,000 toward the 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Bridge project and provided this Addendum to the Joint Interlocal Agreement for consideration. Motion by Mr. Vinzant, seconded by Mr. Waldrop, to approve Resolution 2020-13 as presented. All aye, motion carried. (7-0)

**Announcements:** The Mayor's proposed 2021 budget worksheets were distributed to the Council. Mr. Snedecor noted there were no raises included in the salary ordinances and the budgets are very similar to the current year budget after the cuts were made. Mr. Snedecor gave an overview of the budget approval process, stating that the Mayor's proposed budget is given to the Council and the Council considers, amends if appropriate and adopts an ordinance for the budget. The budget is then sent to the Dept. of Government Finance who reviews and either accepts the budget or issues the amounts of required cuts necessary prior to final budget certification by the State. He noted there are checks and balances in place with the appropriated line items in government budgets and the restrictions on how certain funds may be spent. Mrs. Longer stated the salary ordinances will be considered in August and the budget ordinance will be presented for first reading in September.

Keith Smith, Pershing St., questioned whether consideration of the wheel tax was done for the year; whether the power shift created at the Fire Dept. was required for firefighters; whether the 5 items to consider for financial planning suggested in the BakerTilly study were moving forward such as a fire territory; whether response time has increased with the closing of fire houses; that the financial plan also recommended budget cuts of over \$1.5 Million to get back to a reserve of 15%; and expressed hope that the Council would be transparent and reach out to constituents prior to making decisions. Chief Smith noted the power shift is voluntary and a fire territory is being researched to be presented to the Council in the future. He also noted there have been over 200 emergency runs since July 1<sup>st</sup> with an average response rate of 9 minutes. He noted two stations remain open 24 hours/day and 1 additional station is open during peak times and he is responsible for allocating the manpower and equipment available to run the department. Mr. Snedecor noted he has talked with the Crown Point Mayor who has one fire station and a current minimum staffing of 9, adding that with our power shift, our minimum staffing is 13.

Mr. Huddleston asked about the use of Mutual Aid among departments. Chief Smith stated there is automatic aid set up through the dispatch center to send information/call outs to area stations; mutual aid is a box alarm system that can increase the automatic aid needed depending on the circumstances. Automatic aid with Portage is problematic as their radios are on a different frequency and unable to communicate with the radios in Lake County.

Tina Anderson, Hobart resident, questioned the transfer of funds in Ord. 2020-08 and whether training funds can be moved to other funds. Mrs. Longer explained that in this case, the Police Dept. General fund budget was cut in early January 2020 while at the same time, an invoice was presented and paid

from a line item that was being cut. Since the equipment purchased from the general fund was to be part of a grant submission for reimbursement, a decision was made at that time to hold off on transferring any funds until the grant reimbursement was received to keep the paper trail on course. The reimbursement from grant funds was received in late May 2020 and this transfer is the balance to make up for the remaining portion of the invoice paid from this line as the budget was being cut. Ms. Anderson stated she has talked with police officers who have said they are denied training when they request it because there are no funds available. Mr. Snedecor stated the police training for our department is the best in the area, partially due to having the NILEA academy on site. Ms. Anderson also questioned the budget process, asking if the budget is similar to 2020 does this mean that there still won't be funding for the fire department. Mr. Snedecor stated he cannot raise the total budget more than what the state will allow and there is approximately \$5.5 Million Dollars committed to the Fire Department utilizing the Public Safety funds that has been purchasing most of the fire related equipment needed and the general fund budget is approximately \$4.3 Million Dollars in 2021.

Spencer Lemmons, Hobart resident, stated he was opposed to any additional tax but requested transparency and a guarantee that a new wheel tax would be 100% used for the specific purpose it was intended for: roads, maintaining streets and sidewalks, and not put into the General Fund. Mr. Maggio pointed out that the rules of a wheel tax include the creation of two funds with restrictions on how the funds may be used, exclusively for roads and street infrastructure. Mr. Lemmons asked for more transparency from the Council to inform the public of how and why certain items are being considered and how money will be spent to assure actions are taken for the betterment of the entire community. Mr. Lemmons also stated opposition to a food and beverage tax and asked that tax abatements be stopped as there are many streets in many subdivisions that have never been paved and funds should be used for this purpose, taking care of our subdivisions, before we encourage building new subdivisions with tax abatements.

Lisa Beck, State Representative, explained that the state legislators put the circuit breaker controls into the State Constitution in 2010 and in Lake and St. Joe County, eliminated the exempt debt provisions beginning in 2020. She also outlined the work done regarding the big box appeal impacts should refunds of prior years' property taxes be owed back from local taxing entities. She noted the legislators have been working to come up with ideas to help cities and towns to supplement their budgets to offset some of the limitations imposed. She noted she continues to be open to any suggestions from the public to take to the state legislature.

Robb Zimmerman, Rush Ct., Hobart, thanked the Fire Chief for being creative and working through the shortages and dealing with the COVID-19 issues and thanked Rep. Beck for representing her district downstate. Mr. Zimmerman stated the Black Farmer's Network has scheduled two food markets: July 24<sup>th</sup> at Hillman Park from 10am – 2pm with fresh fruits and vegetables and on August 1<sup>st</sup> at the School Resource Center on SR130 from 8am-10am with eggs, milk, cereal and possibly produce. Volunteers to help are welcome and if anyone is in need, please let them know to come to the sites, no proof of financial need is required and no proof of residency is required.

Sara Wells, Hobart resident, questioned whether the wheel tax is a dead issue. Attorney McCarthy noted that September 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for a tax to begin in 2021, after September 1<sup>st</sup> it would be enacted to begin in 2022. She also questioned the parameters of the use of the wheel tax and whether that was a local code. Mr. Vinzant stated the rules for type and use of the wheel tax are part of the Indiana Code, written and enforced by the State and cannot be changed by local governments. Mr. Huddlestun added that a food and beverage tax must be approved downstate, local governments only make the request.

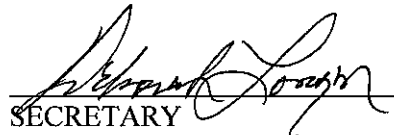
Shawn Millard, HFD, provided some history of the Fire Department, explaining that Station #3 was built and opened in 2000 with overtime used to man the station, gave an overview of manpower numbers through the years and the SAFER grants awarded. He noted the staffing, overtime and equipment have all had ongoing shortfalls through the years and the current limitations of a power shift at Station #1 does

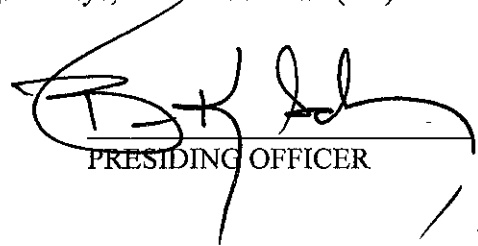
not provide fire protection, only an additional ambulance available. Mr. Millard also noted concerns regarding response times with some stations being closed. He asked about the current hiring list and Chief Smith stated the Fire Commission has exhausted their current hiring list and has started the process to test for a new hire list which will be for lateral positions from other departments. Mr. Millard asked that the staffing issues be addressed by the Council to assure public safety.

Brian DeGrauwe, Fire Department Local 1641 Secretary, discussed the shortage of staffing as required by the SAFER grant, reviewed the number of personnel off due to work related injuries and the need for overtime or hiring, causing stations to be closed and stretching resources to the limit. He noted the calls have increased a great deal over the years but the staffing has not increased to keep up with the workload. Mr. DeGrauwe stated the Fire Union will work with the Council and the Administration to address the issues and find a way to meet the demands. Mr. Snedecor questioned whether the Union understands if additional funding cannot be found, would a supplemental force or reserve unit be a viable option to address the issues. Mr. DeGrauwe stated he could not advocate a non-union force. Mr. Snedecor stated the City will continue to explore all options to maintain services needed. Chief Smith noted the training of a supplemental staff would not sufficiently address the need for firefighter manpower but an apprentice program that could feed into a hiring program similar to the reserve program at the police department may be an option in the future.

Mr. Snedecor asked if there was anyone on the phone or in person who wished to address the Council and there was no additional response.

**Adjournment:** Motion by Mr. Claussen to adjourn the meeting. All aye, motion carried. (7-0) The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

  
SECRETARY

  
PRESIDING OFFICER