

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
AMBERLEY VILLAGE COUNCIL
MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2021**

The Council of Amberley Village, Ohio met in regular session online via Zoom on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Mayor Muething called the meeting to order, and the following roll call was taken:

PRESENT

Richard Bardach
Peg Conway
Elida Kamine
Thomas C. Muething
Natalie Wolf
Ray Warren

ALSO PRESENT

Scot Lahrmer, Village Manager
Chief Richard Wallace, Police/Fire
Andrew Kaake, Village Solicitor
Rick Kay, Village Treasurer
Tammy Reasoner, Clerk of Council

Mayor Muething welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Amberley Village Council. He led those in attendance through the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Mayor Muething asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting of February 8, 2021 as distributed. There being no changes, Mayor Muething stated the minutes were approved as distributed.

FINANCE REPORT

Village Manager Scot Lahrmer reviewed the January 2021 UAN Report and stated earnings tax collections for the month of January totaled approximately \$300,000 which was up 2.4% from collections for January of 2020. He said the earnings tax estimate for the year was \$3 million. No property tax was collected during January.

Mr. Lahrmer said expenses for the month of January totaled \$452,000. The total budget for 2021, he said, was set at \$5.7 million, and the unencumbered General Fund balance as of the end of January was \$5,162,900.

INTRODUCTION OF AUXILIARY OFFICERS

Chief Wallace introduced and shared photos of two new Auxiliary Officers, who were recently hired by the Police Department. He said Auxiliary Officer Eddie Hunter joins us from BCI and previously Woodlawn. Auxiliary Officer Steve Makin is a retired Captain from Indian Hill, and brings investigative experience to the Village. Chief said both Auxiliary Officers join the Department with extensive skills and a good breadth of knowledge, and will be an asset to the community.

CITIZENS TO SPEAK

Mr. Matthew Kraus of 2580 Twigwood Lane spoke on behalf of the Human Rights Commission to request adoption of a proposal the Commission had prepared to acknowledge the indigenous people who once owned the land where our Council

meetings are held. He said he was seeking direction regarding next steps to implement the proposal, which would include a Land Acknowledgement Statement at the beginning of each council meeting, as well as replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day.

Ms. Wolf stated she was regularly surprised with the direction of the Human Rights Commission, and its efforts to open the eyes of the community.

Mayor Muething said Council tries not to single out any one group, and requested background on the proposal and its impact on future requests. He also stated Columbus Day was no longer a recognized public holiday in Amberley Village.

Mr. Kraus said he wished to discuss the proposal further with Council, as indigenous people were unique to other groups in that they had been violated since 1492.

Mayor Muething asked for feedback from council regarding which committee was suggested for referral.

Ms. Wolf stated the Health, Education and Wellness Committee would be happy to explore the Human Rights Commission proposal.

Mayor Muething referred the proposal to the Health, Education and Wellness Committee, and thanked Mr. Kraus and Human Rights Commission Chair Boney for their commitment to this work.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS COMMITTEE

Chair Kamine said the Compensation & Benefits Committee met on February 25 to discuss financial stewardship and the incredible work of the Village employees with respect to morale, benefits and retention.

She said the Village was in a fortunate financial situation despite COVID-19 due to employees' use of CARES Act funding and additional unexpected income. Ms. Kamine said Council had budgeted for a 2% increase in 2021. The Compensation & Benefits Committee discussed a 2.5% increase in wages for Village employees due to the positive financial outlook, but was aware of the long-term financial impact. A one-time bonus was also considered to say thank you to employees for a great job in a challenging year.

Ms. Kamine said the committee was recommending a \$1,250 bonus for full-time employees to be pro-rated for part-time employees, and an overall cost of living increase of 2.5%. She said the total cost to the Village would be \$42,500, with only \$17,900 not budgeted, but covered by CARES Act reimbursements.

Mr. Warren thanked Ms. Kamine and said the proposal was great. He said his only concern was that the process used to demonstrate employee compensation utilized a chart that showed 13 years of history, when a more typical presentation would cover 5 – 10 years.

He further stated there are problems with determining the most appropriate benchmark when considering employee pay, and suggested it best to review compensation for other municipalities.

Mr. Warren stated the process recently completed with regard to the Village Manager's compensation was based on real data, and given the disparity between Amberley Village and other municipalities' Village Manager compensations, a raise was clearly warranted.

Ms. Kamine said Chief Wallace had reported comparative wages during the Compensation & Benefits Committee meeting, and moved to waive the three readings of Ordinance 2021-7, which would approve a compensation increase and bonuses for Village employees and declare an emergency. Seconded by Ms. Conway, the following roll call vote was taken:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Kamine, Muething, Warren, Wolf (6)
NAY: (0)

Ms. Kamine moved to approve Ordinance 2021-7, which was seconded by Ms. Conway. The following roll call vote was taken:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Kamine, Muething, Warren, Wolf (6)
NAY: (0)

Ms. Kamine moved to pass Ordinance 2021-7 as an emergency measure to enable compensation increases for employees to occur on April 1. Seconded by Ms. Conway, the roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Kamine, Muething, Warren, Wolf (6)
NAY: (0)

Correction to Resolution 2021-3

Mayor Muething recognized Ms. Conway, who wished to clarify a typographical error in last month's Resolution 2021-3, which approved the purchase of new police cruisers. She said the amount of the Ford Explorer was listed incorrectly, and moved to clarify the amount as \$33,745 in Resolution 2021-3. Seconded by Ms. Kamine, the motion passed unanimously.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Lahrmer stated that Amberley Village Maintenance Crews had collected 96 bags of trash along the Village right-of-ways after the recent snow melt. He encouraged people not to litter, and commended the Crews for their efforts.

Mr. Lahrmer also said the Village had received numerous kudos for the Maintenance Crews' snow removal efforts from appreciative residents. He pointed out that much of the snow removal was supported with help from the Police Department as well.

Mr. Lahrmer said that Ohio Public Works had approved a grant for \$145,000, and a loan for \$217,000 from the Water Pollution Control Loan Fund had been approved for road repair work on North Farmcrest. In addition, he said a \$71,000 grant had been awarded by the Municipal Road Fund administered by Hamilton County for work on Kincaid, taking the Village into the Accelerated Streets Program (ASP) with a total of \$433,250 already secured toward the \$1.6 million project. He said ASP would launch next month, and emphasized the importance of investing in our infrastructure.

Mayor Muething commented on the happy response from council, and Mr. Warren thanked the Village Manager and staff. Mayor Muething said he appreciated Mr. Warren's efforts as Chair of the Streets Committee, and recognized the need for the project. Both Mayor Muething and Mr. Warren congratulated Village Engineer Frank Twehues for his role in securing the funding.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Muething reported that the Hamilton County Public Health meeting would be held on Tuesday, so there is no update to share at this time. He also said the Environmental Stewardship Committee met on February 2 to consider dates for the One Stop Drop. Dates under consideration include Sunday, September 26, 2021 or Sunday, October 3, 2021. Mayor Muething also said electronics recycling will not be included in this year's One Stop Drop due to costs. He said the ESC plans to seek out alternatives at the March 22 meeting, which will be communicated out by Village staff.

NEW BUSINESS

Council member Conway attended the update meeting for the Deer Park Branch Library, and said the plans were very impressive. Plans include taking over the former T.J. Maxx location, with spaces mapped out for all different age groups, including quiet spaces for reading, kids' craft spaces and a community room that will be available for reservation. She said additional information was available on the library website.

Chief Wallace addressed Mr. Warren's earlier comments regarding employee compensation. He said a letter was usually issued to council prior to the vote, which didn't happen this year due to extra responsibilities as a result of COVID-19. He also stated he had personally agreed to a decrease in pay to allow for greater resources to go to employees. He said in no way were employees trying to present inaccurate comparisons, and that what he presented verbally was closer to what Ray had

suggested. He emphasized the importance of keeping employees happy, particularly in a competitive market, and said he had actually recommended a 3% raise.

Mayor Muething said there would be a Special Meeting of Council on March 11, 2021 at 4 p.m. via Zoom to discuss the process for identifying a new council member to fill the vacancy left by the passing of Mr. Hattenbach. Then, an additional meeting would be held on March 15 at 4 p.m. via Zoom to interview candidates in executive session. He said information regarding both meetings was available via the Village website.

Mr. Warren wished all employees and residents a Happy Easter and Happy Passover.

There being no further business, Mayor Muething adjourned the meeting at 7:13 p.m.

Tammy Reasoner, Clerk of Council

Thomas C. Muething, Mayor