

TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL



January 2, 2024

Public Meeting Advertised for 7:00 PM  
Conducted at the Cedar Lake Town Hall  
Pledge of Allegiance & Moment of Silence  
Roll Call:

Present	Robert H. Carnahan	Ward 1	Present	Mary Joan Dickson	At Large
	Council Member			Council Member	
Present	Julie Rivera	Ward 2	Present	Richard C. Thiel Jr.	At Large
	Council Member			Council Member	
Present	Nick Recupito	Ward 3	Present	Jennifer N. Sandberg, IAMC, CMC, CPFIM	
	Council Member			Clerk-Treasurer	
Present	Chuck Becker	Ward 4		Town Manager	
	Council Member				
Present	Greg Parker	Ward 5	Present	David Austgen	
	Council Member			Town Attorney	

*\*Margaret Abernathy, Administrative Assistant, was present.*

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. **Town Council President**

Clerk-Treasurer Sandberg solicited nominations for Town Council President. Greg Parker nominated Nick Recupito. Mary Joan Dickson seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0. Mr. Recupito thanked his peers for the opportunity.

2. **Town Council Vice President**

President Recupito solicited nominations for Town Council Vice-President. Richard Thiel nominated Greg Parker. Chuck Becker seconded the nomination. No other nominations were made. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

Mr. Recupito took a moment to thank all of the new members as well as currently serving members. He took a moment to have Department Heads and Elected Officials as well as the Town Attorney introduce themselves.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Ordinance No. 1456, Public Way Vacation Continued Public Hearing – Rago**

Mr. Austgen stated a letter was received today from Attorney Wieser requesting a deferral.

A motion to defer to the first meeting in February was made by Robert Carnahan with second by Greg Parker. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Grounds Use Approval:** Use of Town Grounds June 28 – July 11, 2023 for the annual Summerfest Event, dates include setup and teardown and cleanup dates. Event to be July 4-7. Mrs. Abernathy reported the Summerfest has had the dates reserved for some time. They are looking for confirmation until the Resolution/Contract is approved by the Town Council.

A motion to approve was made by Chuck Becker with second by Richard Thiel. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS

1. **Ordinance No. 1473 – Pine Crest Rezone from Resort to a Planned Unit Development**

This item received a favorable recommendation from the Plan Commission 9/20/23 and was deferred by TC 12/19/23. Mr. Nathan Vis, Attorney for the Petitioner, discussed the request. The petitioner is looking to install a forty-foot storage building. He discussed the business activities that occur on the few acres including business operations, repairs, and recreational use. It was discussed with staff and Town Council that it would be prudent and appropriate to develop a Planned Unit Development for the uses. He stated they worked to ensure a good drainage plan as well as a development plan that will occur over the next few years. Extensive revisions have occurred between the two parties. Mr.

**TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

Carnahan stated Christopher Burke's letter from December 19<sup>th</sup> stated there were multiple items that were not addressed. Mr. Vis stated those items have been addressed. Mr. Austgen recommended that any action include the finalization of the exhibit documents to be upended. Mr. Parker added that this was vetted heavily at the Plan Commission for the PUD zoning and other items like drainage and recovery. He asked if there is some scraping of the lake bottom in this item. Mr. Vis stated they did not discuss scraping of the sea bottom. His client intends to get a permit from the DNR to scrap away the edges. He stated when he does that there will be a new sea wall put in. Mr. Parker asked if that would be at his expense. Mr. Vis stated yes. It is built into the timeline. Discussion continued on the matter.

Mr. Parker read Ordinance No. 1473 by title only.

A motion to approve Ordinance No. 1473 contingent on signatures being withheld until the organization of the exhibits to the ordinance documents was made by Julie Rivera with second by Chuck Becker. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**2. Ordinance No. 1483 – Centennial PUD Amendment**

Mr. Parker read Ordinance No. 1473 by title only. Mr. Richard Anderson, Attorney for the Petitioner, 133 LBM LLC, discussed the amendment requested. The parcel is 16.2 acres. The is an amendment and restatement of the PUD that was approved in 2006. That is why the title of the ordinance goes back to Ordinance No. 962. The Plan Commission made its favorable recommendation on December 20, 2023. The revisions to the plans since 2006 include front and rear yards being increased from ten to twenty feet and well as a redesigned townhouse. The individual townhomes will be front loaded instead of rear loaded. The townhomes shall include five color variations. The total density of Centennial Community will be reduced from 20 units per acre, which was approved in 2006, to 8.03 units per acre. The developer will install a six-foot tan PVC privacy fence along the north and west boundaries of the property. The north and west boundaries are against the railroad and industrial. The developer will also have purchasers sign a rider that notices they are buying property across from an industrial area. He stated they have a letter from Don Oliphant regarding the project. There have been resubmissions since then but they will make it subject to any of the engineer's statements and make sure they are met plus any other engineering items that come up. Mr. Austgen discussed the project plan and work that went into making it favorable for the Plan Commission to move forward with. A brief discussion continued on engineering and utilities.

A motion to approve Ordinance No. 1483 contingent upon the items from Christopher B. Burke Engineering being cleared was made by Julie Rivera with second by Richard Thiel. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**3. Resolution No. 1346 - Temporary Loan 2017, A, B, and C Bonds**

Mr. Parker read Resolution No. 1346 by title only. Clerk-Treasurer Sandberg stated this is a resolution for a temporary loan from the Wastewater Township Special Fund (Fund #633) to the 2017 RDA ABC Bond Fund (Fund #412). She stated the request was for a temporary loan in the amount of \$193,587.44. This is in order to make the lease rental payment that is due January 15, 2024. Upon receipt of the Fall 2023 Settlement, the previous temporary loan was repaid and that left insufficient funds to make the lease rental payment due. A brief discussion continued on the bonds.

A motion to approve Resolution No. 1346 was made by Robert Carnahan with second by Mary Joan Dickson. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**NEW BUSINESS**

A motion to amend the agenda and allow the addition of a personnel item was made by Chuck Becker with second by Richard Thiel. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**1. Personnel Item**

Mr. Recupito stated this is to fill the vacant position of Town Manager. Mr. Parker stated they have a vacancy in the Town Manager's spot. He stated they have a gentleman from the community that has a background in urban planning and is a local business owner. He stated that person is Jeff Bunge. Mr. Bunge introduced himself. He is a fifty-year resident, been on the BZA for 26 years, and business owner for decades. He has a bachelor's degree in urban affairs from Indiana University. Mr. Recupito discussed

**TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

working with Mr. Bunge on the BZA. Mr. Parker stated he knows a lot about the community and the people that live here and he thinks Mr. Bunge knows how they think and where they want to go. Mr. Recupito opened the floor to public comment. Donna Corey, 14605 Bryan Street, stated she was happy to hear the offer for Jeff. She discussed the history of the Town Manager in Cedar Lake. She thinks someone homegrown can make a big difference in the Town. Gayle Brannon, 7014 W. 139<sup>th</sup> Place, stated she endorsed the pick of Jeff Bunge. She stated she thinks he is an upstanding citizen and a good thing for the Town. Carl Sprehe, 7326 W. 143<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, stated he has known Jeff and his family for a long time. He discussed the businesses they have established being part of the community and being supportive of the local charities. He stated to have someone who knows the Town and knows the people and has no political agenda, is important for everything they are trying to accomplish. Brenda Roberts, 15008 Morse Street, stated she accepts what they are trying to add. Everyone is for him. She stated she has not been around much and does not know Jeff well or his credentials. Mr. Parker discussed his degree in urban planning and previous work with the City of Chicago for a number of years. Mr. Bunge clarified he had an eight-month internship with the City of Chicago. Mr. Recupito added he was on the Board of Zoning Appeals for 26 years. He thinks she will be pleased.

Mr. Parker made a motion to officially hire Mr. Bunge and direct the Town Attorney to create a contract with a start date of January 8, 2024. A second was made by Chuck Becker. Mrs. Rivera clarified that she would be voting no. It was not a reflection of her opinion on Mr. Bunge but she feels with so many new members they should have posted it and given a few weeks for interviews. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – No, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 6-1.

**2. Town Council Appointments**

Mr. Recupito read off the list of liaison appointments as follows:

Plan Commission: Robert Carnahan, Greg Parker, Chuck Becker

Board of Safety Commission: Julie Rivera, Robert Carnahan

Park Board: Julie Rivera, Mary Joan Dickson

Unsafe Building: Richard Thiel

Stormwater Management Board: Julie Rivera

Joint Management Oversight Board – JMOB: Mary Joan Dickson, Richard Thiel

Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission: Robert Carnahan

Lake County Solid Waste District: Nick Recupito

Lake County Community Services: Mary Joan Dickson

A motion to appoint the liaisons as listed was made by Robert Carnahan with second by Greg Parker. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**Town Council Committee Appointments**

Mr. Recupito read off the list of liaison appointments as follows:

Ecosystem Restoration Committee: Greg Parker, Julie Rivera, Robert Carnahan

Council Affairs: Mary Joan Dickson, Richard Thiel

Streets: Greg Parker, Chuck Becker, Robert Carnahan

Planning Committee: Greg Parker, Chuck Becker, Robert Carnahan

A motion to appoint the committees as listed was made by Mary Joan Dickson with second by Chuck Becker. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**Appointments to Boards and Commissions**

Mr. Parker discussed Board of Safety. He stated they are going to reappoint members to Board of Safety so the board may function for the next month. They are hoping to dissolve the Board of Safety and create a Metropolitan Police Commission and Metropolitan Fire Commission. That will separate the two entities. He stated the effort of the Metropolitan Fire Commission will be to see if it is viable to pursue a fire territory.

**TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The funding for the Fire Department, including both Fire and EMS, is continuing to be a financial burden the way it is currently structured. There is nothing that says the Metropolitan Fire Commission or a fire territory would be the end result. He discussed working to see the viability of such as a funding source as well as the pros and cons. He stated they would like for that commission to work with the Hanover Township Trustee to pursue ideas for that and see if there are other communities interested. Discussion continued on the work needed to move forward with those commissions.

Mr. Recupito read off the list of board and commission appointments as follows:

Board of Safety: Norman Stick, James Olthoff

Building Corporation: Cheryl Parker, Margaret Jehle, Tracy Haskell

Park Board: Greg Marquardt

Plan Commission: James Hunley, Jerry Wilkening

Storm Water Board: Benji Kincheloe

Unsafe Building Department: Jeffrey Biel

Council Appointment to BZA: John Kiepora

A motion to appoint the boards and commissions as listed was made by Richard Thiel with second by Robert Carnahan. Mrs. Abernathy asked about the opening on the BZA for Mr. Bunge's vacant seat. Mr. Recupito said they would get through the process with Mr. Austgen and appoint at a later date. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – No, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 6-1.

**3. Authorize Town Council President, to sign the 2023-2 CCMG Grant Agreement and related documents**

Mrs. Abernathy explained the previous Town Manager was the authorized signatory for these items. Since he is no longer with the Town, a new signatory is needed. Previously, it had been the Town Council President. Mr. Recupito discussed the letter included in the packet from INDOT. He stated the community was awarded \$87,200 in Community Crossing Matching Grant Funds for 2023-2.

A motion to approve was made by Robert Carnahan with second by Julie Rivera. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Recupito – Yes, Becker – Yes, Parker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes. Vote 7-0.

**REPORTS**

- 1. Town Council** – Mr. Carnahan reported the Chamber trees must be undecorated by the weekend. This is so the street department can remove them on Monday. He stated Project Love Food Pantry is open tomorrow from 9:00AM to 11:30AM. It is run by the Cedar Lake United Methodist Church. He discussed the number of families served by the pantry. He asked everyone to help spread the word to those who may be in need.
- 2. Town Attorney** – No report.
- 3. Clerk-Treasurer** – Ms. Sandberg stated nothing further as they begin a heavy reporting season.
- 4. Town Manager** – Mrs. Abernathy stated there was nothing new at this time. She stated Jen has been great about making sure anything brought to her is given to the Council. Mr. Carnahan asked Ms. Sandberg about Republic raising rates. Ms. Sandberg stated in June is when the next increase within the contract occurs. Mr. Carnahan stated it is not fit in the contract to where it automatically increases. Ms. Sandberg clarified. She stated the rate ordinance has a set amount for the garbage rate that is charged per dwelling unit in Town. She believes that was last set in 2021. It is \$20. When the contract with Republic Services was approved, it was approved as a five- or six-year contract. She stated she would double check. Each year it increases. Beginning with the June invoice, it will increase to \$19.95 per dwelling unit. The rate remains at \$20.00. The Town does not have a 100% collection rate, that is something to take into consideration. She recommended before June. Mr. Recupito stated when they discussed the Sustainability Plan that was something in the document that was a bit alarming to him. They will have to address it.
- 5. Director of Operations** – No report.
- 6. Police Department** – Chief Fisher stated he will have a year end report at the next meeting.
- 7. Fire Department** – Chief Wilkening asked about the Fire Commission and if they were still under the Board of Safety until then. Mr. Parker stated nothing changes until it changes. Chief Wilkening discussed the position open on the board. Mr. Parker stated they would address that at that time as well.

**TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jerry Conner, 10330 Paramount Way, stated he applied for the Board of Safety. He asked if that application was no good. Mr. Parker stated the application is still good and they will choose from that list.

Carl Sprehe, 7326 W. 143<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, congratulated the Council. He stated there has been turmoil in the Town over the last few years. He stated a number of citizens have felt their voices have not been heard. He stated they felt that the agenda of the Council and specific members was more in line with the contractors than the citizens. He stated he thinks everyone in this room wants to make sure as they move forward, the interest of the citizen is just as important as the interest of the contractor.

Angie Mikolajczak, 12806 Lee Court, asked about Pine Crest and the small portion of land owned by the Town that would be deeded over. She asked how do residents find out about pieces of land that the Town might own and are willing to sell. She stated this is not the first time it has come up. She stated she previously came to the Town and spoke with Ashley about the process. She stated Ashley's response was that it takes months and done via silent bid. Mr. Recupito discussed the parcel by Pine Crest. Mr. Austgen stated it is approximately .058 of an acre and is land locked. Mrs. Mikolajczak stated her question is not that specific one just in general. Mr. Austgen stated in regard to the hundreds of parcels that were part of a previous initiative by Council, to acquire for prospective future public use by way of either trails, waterways, etc. When or how or if they will be used has not yet been determined. Mrs. Mikolajczak continued to voice her concerns with public notification of such parcel sales. Discussion continued on the matter. Mr. Parker stated they have looked at an awful lot over the last few weeks. It will take a little time to get acclimated. They need to figure out what the plans are for some of this stuff. Mrs. Mikolajczak again asked about the process. Mr. Recupito discussed the process taken a few years ago with a couple of parcels. Mr. Austgen stated they did notice sales but did not think they sold anything. Ms. Sandberg stated there was one or two. It was a small list of pretty insignificant parcels. She stated it was noticed and for a time period sealed bids were accepted. Those bids were taken under advisement at a public meeting. Mr. Austgen stated it is a statutory provision that is followed strictly. Discussion continued on the statutory process. Mr. Recupito stated as they have these discussions regarding Town owned property, they will be transparent. Mrs. Abernathy stated after the last bid, a process was started where they keep a list of residents interested. She stated if and when the property goes up for bid, that resident will receive notice directly. Mrs. Mikolajczak asked if it was a new process. Mrs. Abernathy stated no. Mrs. Mikolajczak stated she came to the Town and that is what she was told. She asked if she needed to come back and speak to her directly. Mrs. Abernathy stated she would get her one of the forms after the meeting.

Meg Jehle, 14819 Morse Street, congratulated the new members of the Town Council and stated she looked forward to seeing what they accomplish working together and for the residents.

Mr. Becker stated there is the possibility of more board openings. He encouraged folks not to give up hope. Mr. Recupito stated they would get working on that relatively soon.

**ADJOURNMENT** President Recupito called the meeting to adjournment at approximately 8:15 PM.

**TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL OF THE CIVIL TOWN OF CEDAR LAKE, LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Carnahan, Ward 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Julie Rivera, Ward 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nick Recupito, Ward 3

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chuck Becker, Ward 4

\_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Parker, Ward 5

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Joan Dickson, At-Large

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard C Thiel Jr., At-Large

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer N. Sandberg, IAMC, CMC, CPFIM  
Clerk-Treasurer

The Minutes of the Cedar Lake Town Council are transcribed pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-4(b), which states:  
(b) As the meeting progresses, the following memoranda shall be kept:  
    (1) The date, time, and place of the meeting.  
    (2) The members of the governing body recorded as either present or absent.  
    (3) The general substance of all matters proposed, discussed, or decided.  
    (4) A record of all votes taken by individual members if there is a roll call.  
    (5) Any additional information required under section 3.5 or 3.6 of this chapter or any other statute that authorizes a governing body to conduct a meeting using an electronic means of communication.