

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



December 23, 2024

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ORDINANCES

1. Ordinance No. 1506 - Salary Ordinance Y2025

Mr. Recupito noted this item was deferred December 3, 2024 and December 17, 2024. He asked Mr. Austgen if the legals were in order. Mr. Austgen stated no legals were necessary for this item except for posting. Mr. Parker read Ordinance No. 1506 by title only. Mr. Thiel stated he would like to amend the proposed 2025 Salary Ordinance to include the hiring of the Planning Director with a bi-weekly pay amount of \$3,269.24 as well as three weeks of vacation and a start date of December 30, 2024 for Terry Conley with review verification by the Town Attorney. He also stated for the Clerk-Treasurer listing in the posted 2025 Salary Ordinance to only include active positions for consistency with the other departments. A second was made by Chuck Becker. Mr. Austgen asked if that was on the motion to amend. Mr. Recupito stated yes. Mr. Recupito repeated the motion. Mr. Carnahan asked if it was just to amend the ordinance and then they will do the reading. It was stated that is correct. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 7 – 0.

Mr. Austgen noted that from this point forward, they are only considering the amended ordinance. Mr. Parker read Ordinance No. 1506 by title only. A discussion occurred on the reading and motion.

A motion to approve the first reading of amended Ordinance No. 1506 was made by Greg Parker with second by Richard Thiel. Mr. Carnahan asked if someone would explain what it is all about. Mr. Recupito asked if they should do that after the first reading. Mr. Carnahan stated it would be beneficial. Mr. Recupito explained it is long anticipated. They deferred it a couple of times to get it right. He stated they pretty much stuck with what they had in the original salary ordinance for most of the employees. He stated they worked really hard to get the public safety wages up. He asked Sue Haase to give a brief overview. Mr. Recupito stated they were looking at roughly a 21% increase on part-time firefighter/paramedic and 36% increase on part-time firefighter/emt. The overall fire department salary increases of around 9% and police department of 8.5%. Mrs. Haase stated what they said was they wanted to increase the salaries if they could find a sustainable source of revenue. She stated she felt that they had identified a sustainable source of revenue. She stated she worked with the Clerk-Treasurer and Town Council Members, to come up with a spread across the board for positions. There was discussion and review to try and possibly make the division between various classifications wider. In the end, it was decided that the Clerk-Treasurer and Mrs. Haase should do an equal increase for every person in dollar amount. That is how they did it. They identified the additional source of revenue and did not use 100% of it. The concern was what if something else comes up to make a claim on the revenue. She stated they cannot pocket away little pieces in different accounts. This was felt that it was the fairest way to do it. She stated it has been indicated to her that they are looking at this as the first step and they will be looking all year long in 2025 and in anticipation of 2026 to attempt to make more adjustments. She stated also to try some of the other suggestions from the various Chief's to try and make some strides to put more distance between classifications and eventually other benefits. Mr. Recupito stated it is a big first bite on this. He stated sustainability was a big thing. Mr. Carnahan thanked Sue for doing that. He stated he did not want to vote no. They talk about it for the benefit of everyone. Chief Wilkening asked

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about an increase for the Chief's. Mr. Recupito stated there is no Department Head increases right now. He stated they focused on where they were hemorrhaging employees. They focused on the rank and file and will re-evaluate next year. Mr. Recupito stated he had asked for the part-time and they thought they could get really competitive with that to alleviate the overtime and burnout. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 7 – 0.

A motion to suspend the rules and allow for a second reading of Ordinance No. 1506 was made by Chuck Becker with second by Richard Thiel. Mr. Austgen asked Mr. Recupito if he was going to open the floor. Mr. Recupito stated he could Mr. Austgen stated now would be the time. Mr. Recupito opened the floor for remonstrance. There was none. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 7 – 0.

Mr. Parker read Ordinance No. 1506 by title only.

A motion to adopt Ordinance No. 1506 was made by Richard Thiel with second by Chuck Becker. Mrs. Rivera stated she would vote no because she believes the Department Heads should get some sort of raise. She stated she believes it would have had a minimal effect on the raises overall. She stated she did agree the police and fire department raises have been a long time coming. She thinks the Department Heads should be given a raise now. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – No, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 6 – 1.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Town Council Appointments

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

Plan Commission: Greg Parker, Chuck Becker, Robert Carnahan
Board of Safety Commission: Chuck Becker, Robert Carnahan
Park Board: Mary Joan Dickson, Julie Rivera
Unsafe Building: Richard Thiel
Stormwater Management Board: Julie Rivera
Joint Management Oversight Board: Richard Thiel, Mary Joan Dickson
Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission: Robert Carnahan
Lake County Solid Waste District: Nick Recupito, Alternative Robert Carnahan
Lake County Community Services: Mary Joan Dickson

A motion to appoint the list as stated was made by Mary Joan Dickson with second by Greg Parker. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – No, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 6 – 1.

2. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mr. Recupito read off the appointments as follows:

Board of Safety: David Villalobos, Barbara Littles
Board of Zoning Appeals: John Kieपुरa
Park Board: Gayle Brannon
Plan Commission: Heather Dessauer
Stormwater Board: Robert Groszek
Unsafe Board: John Hojek
Park Foundation: Kathy Broomhead, Cheryl Parker

A motion to appoint the list as stated was made by Greg Parker with second by Richard Thiel. Mrs. Rivera stated she believes Sarah Miller and Pat Conlon should stay. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – No, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 6 – 1.

3. Appoint a liaison for Community Heart & Soul

Mr. Parker nominated Meg Jehle. A second was made by Richard Thiel. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 7 – 0.

4. Town Road Committee recommendations for Y2025 Road Projects

Mr. Carnahan commented on the Road and Street Committee meeting. He stated there is a lot of stuff here. He stated they are going to apply for \$3 million to Community Crossing Grant. Most of that will cover streets east of Morse. Most of those have never

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been paved since the sewers were put into Town. He stated that means if they get approved for the \$3 million dollars, the Town will be responsible for \$1.5 million dollars. He stated they also have the NIRPC East Lake Shore Drive/Morse Street Sidewalk that they are working on. He stated they are considering switching engineers. Mr. Parker and Mr. Becker concurred with the statement. Mr. Carnahan reported the 133rd Avenue Road raising is another NIRPC project. He discussed the Founders Creek Multi-Use Path. He stated it is programmed for design in 2026. He reported the 141st Avenue/Norfolk Southern Railroad Crossing preliminary plans were sent on May 2nd for PE engineering. The engineering agreement was received on June 12th. It is estimated \$24,612 for review fees for 30/60/90/100 plan review. Pedestrian signals are not preferred by Norfolk Southern. He stated subdivision overlays were discussed for Murton Drive, 129th Place, Colfax, Fulton, 129th Lane, and Morse Lane. He stated 130th Place, 131st Place, 131st Avenue, 132nd Avenue, 132nd Place, Morse Street, and Edison Street were discussed. He stated 144th Avenue, 145th Avenue, Hobart Street, Colfax Street, Wheeler Street, Windsor Street, Fairbanks Street, and Bell Street were also discussed. He stated those are part of Shades. He stated Birch Street is listed but he thought they scratched that. Mr. Parker stated he did not think so. Mr. Bunge stated it worked out to be the lowest priority depending on how much money they got. He stated it is in the planning stages. It has been earmarked and obviously is a concern. Mr. Carnahan discussed the culvert replacement on 147th Avenue and the 133rd Avenue Sidewalk from Faith Church to Robin's Nest as well as the Morse Corridor and water main. He also discussed several railroad crossings in Town. He briefly discussed the USDOT Safe Street and Roads for All Annual Call and USDOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Annual Call. Mr. Carnahan stated they are going to try and do one in Robin's Nest. Mr. Becker stated they would see. They have to get an estimate first. He also mentioned Utopia. Mr. Carnahan stated those are the recommendations and a copy is in the packet. Mr. Recupito asked Mr. Austgen what sort of action do they need to move forward. Mr. Austgen stated to move forward and authorize whatever the next steps are such as grant application and submission. Mr. Recupito asked if they have a clear path from Don one by one. He stated it seems like there are a lot of moving parts. Mr. Parker stated he did not know if they did. He stated it is broken out. Mr. Carnahan stated the direction was from Town Council to Don to move forward with what he had on the sheet. Mr. Bunge stated if they go back to the fourth item, future non-allocated projects, that was going to be the next topic. There is a short window of opportunity. Maybe approval or blessing to move forward with the funding opportunity that goes along with it. The window is very short. It opens January 2nd and is only open for the month of January. Mr. Recupito stated Ms. Sandberg had asked in the past for some direction from the Council on what projects they want to do in 2025. He asked her for her recommendation with what is presented. He stated the one for CCMG seems pretty urgent because of the window for funding. Ms. Sandberg stated she needs a clear idea from them that way they could sit down and figure out the actual funding sources. She stated they already have the CCMG 2024-2 project being paid for out of the General Obligation Bond. That is the last she heard. That project would be covered. She stated what they put into the 2025 budget was approximately \$300,000 out of the Motor Vehicle Highway Fund based on anticipated Motor Vehicle Highway revenues. That is only \$300,000. They would have to figure out where the rest of the match would come from. Mr. Carnahan stated they need to work on that. Mr. Recupito stated they may have more flexibility with the GO Bond and freeing up monies. Mr. Parker stated that is what they have talked about so far. Mr. Recupito asked if they are ready to act on it tonight. Mr. Carnahan stated he thinks they need to act on it so Don can prepare to submit stuff for the Community Crossing Grant. Mr. Recupito asked about NIRPC. Mr. Bunge stated he did not believe it was eligible. Mr. Carnahan stated some of those are already approved. Mr. Recupito stated the most pressing would be the CCMG 2025-1, which have no direction right now. Mr. Carnahan stated other than the streets east of Morse. Mr. Austgen stated perhaps the Town Manager and engineering consultant could get together and give them more formal direction for the first meeting in January. A brief discussion occurred on the application window.

Mr. Carnahan made a motion to approve the Community Crossing Grant 2025-1 projects with it contingent on Jeff and Don's review of it and come up with some verbiage that clarifies the report sent to them. A second was made by Richard Thiel. Roll Call: Carnahan – Yes, Rivera – Yes, Becker – Yes, Dickson – Yes, Thiel – Yes, Parker – Yes, Recupito – Yes. Vote 7 – 0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jerry Connor, 10330 Paramount Way, commented on the public safety department heads not getting a raise. He asked how they justify that. Mr. Recupito stated they are justifying it exactly how he explained to Chief Wilkening. They have an issue with people leaving. They are focusing on increasing those wages so they can retain and attract talent. He stated the Council did not take a raise, boards and commissions did not take a raise, and department heads did not take raises. He

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stated his opinion is they need to lead by example. Mr. Connor stated he agreed with Mrs. Rivera. He asked how many there are. Mr. Recupito stated four or five. Mr. Connor stated they are the people running the town. He asked if they had discussed it with them and they were aware. Mr. Recupito stated they are aware of it now. Mr. Connor continued to voice his disagreement with excluding the department heads. Mr. Recupito stated it does not mean that they do not re-evaluate it next year. Mr. Becker stated last year the department heads got a 5% raise. Mr. Connor asked if the other employees did not get anything. Mr. Becker stated the other employees got a 3% raise. Mr. Becker stated they are making \$89,000 and last year they got a \$4,400 raise for 2024. The average employee made \$66,000 last year and only got the 3% raise so they only got about \$1,800 for the year. Mr. Becker stated they basically doubled what the employees did last year. Mr. Connor stated they are now behind this year. Mr. Becker stated they are trying to do what they can for a majority of the employees. Mr. Connor asked if there were any increases to benefits. Mr. Recupito stated that is all stuff they are working on. Mr. Connor stated in his opinion that is a message sent to the department heads. Mr. Recupito stated it is for sustainability in the departments because they have heard from all department heads that they are losing people. They are trying not to lose people.

ADJOURNMENT President Recupito called the meeting to adjournment at approximately 7:42 PM.

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, IAMCA, 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