

310 LANE STREET
NORTH JUDSON, IN 46366

P:574 896-3340
F:574 896-2153



Town of North Judson
Special Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2025, 5:00 P.M.

The North Judson Town Council met in Regular Session at the North Judson Town Hall, 310 Lane Street, North Judson, IN on the above date and time with the following present: Clerk-Treasurer Rowe, Council President Rowe, Council Vice President Brown, Councilmembers Lewandowski, Banks and Windbigler were able to attend.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Council President Rowe asked for approval of the agenda. Council Vice President Brown moved to approve the agenda. Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all Council members present concurred.

Business

Building Inspector – Candidate Interview & Appointment

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe explained that they had received two letters of interest but only one candidate was interested in being interviewed for the position. He stated that Todd Jackson maintained interest in the position. Rowe passed around Todd Jackson's letter of interest for the Council to review. Council President Rowe stated that Council was able to come up with a few questions that they would like to ask Jackson. Councilmember

Councilmember Alex Windbigler asked what previous experience Jackson had with building inspections. Jackson explained that he had been part of the Starke County Planning Commission for the past seven years and had held the presidency for the past four years. Since being on the Commission, he has overseen all ordinances and permitting processes throughout the entire unincorporated areas of Starke County as well as a two-mile jurisdiction of Knox. He stated that they have done inspections for footings, foundation, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, roofing and remodels. Jackson mentioned that they also monitor the unsafe buildings and environmental public nuisances within the County. Jackson stated that they do around 150 every month. Jackson has helped the County's Building Inspector, Bose Willaims, whenever there are inspections in the San Pierre/North Judson area. Jackson stated that he does 20-30 inspections every month. He stated that he does not have any certifications, but he has taken multiple classes through Purdue, Kankakee Valley REMC, and NIPSCO on how to properly inspect those items and what are the current building codes.

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Councilmember Banks asked what Jackson would do if he needed to address an issue during an inspection. Jackson replied that if the builder was not up to code, then he would hold them accountable to fix the issues. Councilmember Brown asked how he would be able to collect accurate information while out on inspections. Jackson stated that he makes sure to take photos of everything he does while inspecting the properties so he can see what progress has been made. Council President Rowe asked how familiar he was with state and local codes. Jackson emphasized his extensive experience in construction, having built numerous structures in Starke County, including his own home. He highlighted the importance of being informed about all local, state and federal buildings. He stressed the need to be more knowledgeable than those they oversee to ensure compliance with proper regulations. Lewandowski had questions regarding the difference between Town and County building ordinances. Jackson explained that while a few regulations overlap, there are key differences in setbacks and grading requirements. He also clarified the distinction between unsafe building ordinances and environmental public nuisance regulations. Jackson advised that classifying these issues separately provides the Town with more legal leverage to enforce ordinances on property upkeep. Jackson expressed his desire to review and refine the existing ordinances to ensure effective enforcement. Rowe stated that with the help of Leszek and himself then together they would be able to tackle any necessary updates.

Jackson explained that he is going to hold everyone accountable to the same regulations whether it be a stranger or a friend. Council President asked how he would be able to have a balance work schedule with a full-time job. Jackson explained that he anticipates that the first six months will be intensive, as he plans to thoroughly review the Town's ordinances to ensure proper understanding and enforcement. He also discussed potentially recommending an increase to the cost of permits since they are lower than the ones in surrounding counties. He emphasized the importance of improving these ordinances, which would take time due to the necessity of the approval process from the different Town boards. He aims to align the Town's policies with the County's in order to leverage the existing legal framework and the shared Town and County attorney for efficiency.

Regarding his schedule, he mentioned that he will have to travel for one week a month for business but plans to coordinate with the Town Hall office before leaving to ensure any pending permits are addressed. He also noted that Nick Radtke offered to assist with any urgent matters during his absence. Jackson also explained that he works from a home office without set hours, he remains mobile and is often working from locations like the firehouse. Councilmember Rowe wanted to address some concerns he had regarding delays in permits and inspections. He emphasized the need for more responsiveness and flexibility in the turnaround. He stated that he did not think residents and contractors should have to wait a week or more for the Building Inspector. Jackson acknowledged that building projects vary – some involve contractors with set schedules while other are done by homeowners after work or on weekends. He stated that inspections and permit approvals need to accommodate different schedules. He emphasized the importance of flexibility and proper documentation while inspecting. The current process lacks good tagging and documentation, making it difficult to track inspections properly.

Jackson stated that he is willing to accommodate different schedules, such as inspecting after work hours or on weekends for homeowners who can't be available during the day. His goal is to create a more fluid and responsive system that prioritizes communication and efficiency. He stressed the need for an educational approach when dealing with property owners. He believes that the inspectors should help homeowners understand the correct procedures, ensuring compliance without unnecessary fines or permit reapplications. Jackson stated that the Inspector does not have the authority to issue fines or enforce legal action – that would all be up to the Town Council. He also explained that the Planning Commission and

Town Council ultimately make decisions on disputes or policy changes, but he hopes to work with all of the boards for the safety of the town residents. Jackson plans to step down from the County Planning Commission to avoid any conflicts of interest. He informed the Council that he is not concerned with balancing multiple responsibilities such as his full-time job, Fire Chief and now Building Inspector since he works well under pressure.

Council Vice President made a motion to appoint Todd Jackson as the Town's Building Inspector. Councilmember Banks second the motion, and all members present concurred.

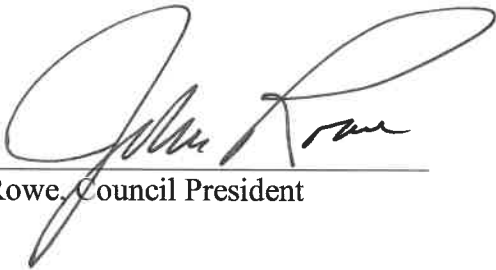
Additional Business Deemed Necessary by the Council:

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe explained that they have two properties soon to be vacant lots. He requested permission to have the meters removed and eliminate water service from each location. Council Vice President made a motion to remove the meters and eliminate water services from the properties. Councilmember Windbigler seconded the motion, and all the members present concurred.

Adjournment

Council Vice President Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Windbigler seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Meeting adjourned at 5:46 P.M.



John Rowe, Council President

Attest:



Andrew J. Rowe, Clerk-Treasurer