



Town Council of the Town of North Judson
Regular Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2025 – 6:30 PM

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: Council President Rowe, Council Vice President Brown, and Councilmember Lewandowski, Banks, and Windbigler, Town Manager Leszek and Clerk-Treasurer Rowe present as well.

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 Councilmembers present concurred.

Council President Rowe asked for approval of the Minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on February 3, 2025. Council Vice President Brown moved to approve those Minutes. Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all Councilmembers present concurred.

Council President Rowe asked for approval of the Minutes from the Special Meeting on February 5, 2025. Council Vice President moved to approve the Minutes. Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all Councilmembers present concurred.

Old Business:

2024 Year End – Gateway AFR: Eric Walsh/Nicole Grzybowski – Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors

Eric Walsh and Nicole Grzybowski were present on behalf of Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors. Walsh stated that there were various state bills affecting local government finances. The first bill was Senate Bill 1 that focuses on tax rates and tax impacts. The second bill was House Bill 1402 that is related to the Max Levy Growth (MLGQ), with some provisions moving into Senate Bill 1. He explained that the LSA (Legislative Services Agency) will send reports on how the legislative changes impact local governments, including property tax losses. Walsh stated that the most concerning issues for the Town would be the potential cap on the Max Levy Growth, which could limit annual property tax increases, affecting budget planning. In the past two years, property tax growth was artificially capped. Without the cap, the growth would have been 5-6%. The proposed caps for the future are 1% for 2026, 2% for 2027 and 3% for 2028. Walsh stated that this change will limit the amount of additional revenue local governments receive, making budgeting more challenging. He mentioned that the local governments do not control property tax rates; they set levy amounts based on state allowances. He also stated that with a lower cap on the levy growth, towns may

need to cut costs or shift revenue burdens to utility rates, fees, trash collections, building permit fees, etc. Currently, county councils control local income taxes. Walsh stated that there is an idea for allowing cities and towns with populations over 5,000 to have some control over local income tax rates to compensate for lost property tax revenue. North Judson may be too small to qualify. With the state capping property tax growth, it forces local government to find other revenue sources like wheel taxes, income taxes and utility rate increases. He explained that the state is trying to present property tax relief. These rising tax bills are due to the increases in property assessments. Property values have significantly increased over the last few years, causing higher property taxes. Walsh stated that the schools are expected to be hit the hardest by the tax limitations, which is why people are starting to hear about the issue more.

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe then presented details and analysis of the Town's 2024 Year-End Annual Financial Report. As mentioned previously, the Town enters 2025 in better financial health than the previous year with fund balance increases on all but a small number of funds, including Local Road & Street. The Town would be leaning on MVH Restricted/Unrestricted and CEDIT funds to assist with street paving and sidewalk improvements along with some capital expenditures planned for the year ahead. Nearly all reporting components of the Town's AFR were completed save for entering some of the grant funding figures received/disbursed being entered for the Park Improvements Project.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to publicize and approve the submission of the Town's 2024 Year End Annual Financial Report. Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe & Walsh then discussed an updated agreement with Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors noted as Baker Tilly Plus which provides for monthly financial assistance, analysis and planning services for the Town's non-utility funds and finances. The agreement includes a block of 180 hours of services billed monthly at \$3750 per month. Planning would include re-prioritizing things through Comprehensive Financial Planning for all Town funds. Discussion was had on previous years' billings and hours, questions were posed regarding the fees and what all the Town would be getting out of the proposed agreement. Given the uncertainties around future revenues on the state level, more comprehensive planning would allow the Town to take a closer look and consider all factors when it comes to budgeting and preparing for five years ahead. It was noted that unused hours could be rolled over into the next year if they're left over at the end of the year. They would be tracked, and consideration would be made if a high number of hours are left over at the end of each year. Discussion continued.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to adopt the updated agreement for Baker Tilly Plus with Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors at the proposed monthly rate of \$3750.00 per month. Councilmember Windbigler seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Resolution No.2025-02: 2025 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe read aloud Resolution No.2025-02: 2025 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan to everyone in attendance. He put the plan up to the Council to adopt the Resolution and asked if Leszek would highlight some of the benefits of the plan. He explained that the County is wanting each town to sign off on the plan in order to keep everyone eligible for FEMA grants. He stated that Knox has already given their approval, and that Hamlet is in the process of doing the same.

Council Vice President Brown made a motion to pass Resolution No.2025-02: 2025 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

New Business:

Planning Commission Appointment Recommendations

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe explained that he had received a letter from the precinct committee in Wayne Township in regard to Tony Dye's interest in joining the Planning Commission. He stated the letter would serve as their consideration for Tony Dye to fill a vacancy on both the Planning Commission & Board of Zoning Appeals. Council Vice President made a motion to appoint Tony Dye to the BZA/Planning Commission. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Town Park Board Member Appointment

CT Rowe explained that there is now vacancy on the Town Park Board with Becky Anderson's passing, and that the seat would need to be filled by the Council. He explained that the Park Board must have no more than two representatives from each political party and that the vacancy would be a republican spot. He was not sure if the (Park) Board would be something Dye would be interested in, but he wanted to get it on the Council's radar.

Highland & Pioneer Cemetery Caretaker – Request for Proposals & Agreement for Services Discussion

Town Manager Leszek stated that they are getting ready to begin advertising for their normal Cemetery Caretaker agreement for the year ahead, but they discussed potentially having a two-year or three-year contract instead of a one-year contract. He explained that potential Caretakers would have an easier time planning the Cemeteries work for more than just the year ahead, and possibly at a better rate. Rowe stated that he would put the paperwork together to be approved at the next meeting.

Donna Henry – 2025 Mint Festival SEPA

Donna Henry introduced several members of the Mint Festival committee including Summer Galbreath, Robin Prater and Christina Alexander. Henry stated that she emailed a copy of the SEPA application as well as an explanation of the festival's setup/events. She mentioned that the Mint Festival would be held on June 13th through the 15th and that this year's theme would be "Making Mint Memories". Henry also stated that their next meeting would be on Thursday, February 20th at 6:30 pm at the North Judson – Wayne Township Public Library.

Town Manager Leszek stated that they have not been able to walk do the Electric Norwayne Field due to the winter weather conditions, because of this he did not believe the SEPA application was ready to be approved. He explained that if the Council waited to approve the application, then there would be no worrying about going back and forth with any changes or amendments. Henry agreed with his statement and informed the council that they usually start sending out emails for the Green Paper in March. CT Rowe informed her that the next council meeting would be Monday, March 3rd, which would give them enough time to work to schedule the electric walk through at Norwayne Field.

Council President Rowe wanted to follow up with key concerns that had been addressed at a previous meeting. He emphasized the importance of these issues, particularly regarding vendor pricing, electric costs, and ensuring fair charges for multiple vendor spots. There were concerns that the previous discussions were not documented or followed up on adequately. A key point was made that there needs to be better communication and accountability between the Council and the Festival Committee. There was discussion about aligning vendor fees with other festivals, possibly increasing rates gradually to generate more revenue. Henry was concerned about potentially losing vendors due to the price increases. Leszek explained

that by raising the price it would help cover the cost of any lost vendors and potentially attract new vendors. Council Vice President Rowe suggested that Councilmember Eric Lewandowski should be the liaison between the Council and the Committee. Lewandowski agreed to take on the role.

Vice President Brown made a motion to make Eric Lewandowski the Mint Festival liaison for the Town Council. Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all members present concurred. Henry stated that she would be on the lookout for the missing notes that Council President Rowe requested and that any unresolved topics would be discussed at their next committee meeting.

Recognition of Guest

Nothing Presented.

Department /Representative Reports

Clerk-Treasurer - Andrew Rowe

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe presented the following Purchase Orders for Council Approval:

P.O. 2754 to 1st Choice Insurance Services for Renewal of Town of North Judson Insurance policies, Invoice 20902, in the amount of \$67,923.00.

P.O. 2755 to Datacrates LLC for Website Hosting and Maintenance, Invoice 457, in the amount of \$1,260.00.

P.O. 2757 to Starke County Economic Development Foundation for Platinum Sponsorship for Starke Tank 2025 – The Countywide Business Pitch Competition, in the amount of \$1,000.00.

P.O. 2758 to HWC (Hyperwave) for Yealink T54W Phone, Laptop, and Onsite IT – CAT Network Drop, Invoice 19846, in the amount of \$1,251.00.

Councilmembers Banks made a motion to approve the following Purchase Orders:

P.O. 2754 to 1st Choice Insurance Services for Renewal of Town of North Judson Insurance policies, Invoice 20902, in the amount of \$67,923.00.

P.O. 2755 to Datacrates LLC for Website Hosting and Maintenance, Invoice 457, in the amount of \$1,260.00.

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P.O. 2758 to HWC (Hyperwave) for Yealink T54W Phone, Laptop, and Onsite IT – CAT Network Drop, Invoice 19846, in the amount of \$1,251.00.

Council Vice President Brown seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Rowe stated that he will be working on the Annual Financial Management Reports (AFMR's) for the Water & Wastewater Utility. He explained that they would be getting the publication of the year-end reporting set for 2/27/2025 in The Leader. He also mentioned that he would be finishing up the grants portion of the AFR during the week and he will have everything completed for submission mid-week.

School Board – Doug Wilde

Superintendent Kelly Shephard wanted to extend an invitation to the Town Council, Clerk-Treasurer Rowe and Town Manager Leszek to join him in a vocational endeavor and the possibility of purchasing a building. He explained that Nan Wellman invited to tour OTES at 10:30 AM on Wednesday, February 19th. Wellman would also have Congressman Yackim in attendance for the walking tour.

Building Inspector – Todd Jackson

Building Inspector Jackson explained that he's working on the first iteration of some revised building ordinances, including the fee structure. He stated that they would be reviewing the changes at the next Planning Commission meeting. Council Vice President asked when the next meeting would be. Clerk-Treasurer Rowe explained that they were working on setting a date and that they would need to post the notice 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Code Enforcement – Town Marshal Frank Thomas

Town Marshal Thomas stated there has not been a lot to report on due to the freezing temperatures. He mentioned that Bill Ramp has been keeping him up to date on the progress being made at his property.

Unsafe Hearing

Nothing Presented.

BZA/Planning Commission

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated that he is working on scheduling the meeting for next week.

Redevelopment Commission

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated that he would like the Town to have a tent to set up information booths at events like the Mint Festival and the Maker's Market. He explained that the Town would have flyers, information on utilities, and calendars. Rowe stated that he would be looking into prices for the canopies to present for the Council.

Park Board – Nick Radtke

Council President Rowe explained that they are currently starting to look for a new park board member. Rowe stated that if anyone had any leads to be please let them know.

Police Department – Town Marshal Frank Thomas

Town Marshal Thomas stated that he had been working with the County on 40-hour pre basic stuff, which is what they will utilize to redevelop the reserve program. He explained that they would like to get some bodies in line in order to help out with the Mint Festival. Council President Rowe asked if he had any leads on a fourth officer. Thomas replied that he did not have any leads.

Fire Department – Fire Chief Todd Jackson

Fire Chief Todd Jackson presented the following Purchase Orders for Council Approval:
P.O. 2750 to Macqueen for Engine 1 Valve Repair, Invoice W04291, in the amount of \$2,521.00.

Council Vice President Brown made a motion to approve the following Purchase Orders:
P.O. 2750 to Macqueen for Engine 1 Valve Repair, Invoice W04291, in the amount of \$2,521.00.
Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Utility Department – Utility Supervisor Kimberly Kapp

Kapp stated that her crew had been at the park in order to try and get some of the fallen trees cleaned up, weather permitting. She also mentioned that they have been doing some maintenance on the RAZ pumps at the Wastewater Plant. Kapp informed everyone that they had to pull the Oakwood pump again due to the flushable wipes. She had to replace the CD Joint on the One Ton again.

Utility Supervisor Kapp presented the following Purchase Orders for Council Approval:

P.O. 2751 to USA Bluebook for DR 3900 Spectrophotometer, Invoice INV00614988, in the amount of \$6,6456.20.

P.O. 2752 to Utility Supply Company for Water Fitting, Invoice 1510708, in the amount of \$2,487.90.

P.O. 2753 to USA Bluebook for WWTP Lab Supplies, Invoice INV00620248, in the amount of \$923.30.

Council Vice President Brown made a motion to approve the following Purchase Orders:

P.O. 2751 to USA Bluebook for DR 3900 Spectrophotometer, Invoice INV00614988, in the amount of \$6,6456.20.

P.O. 2752 to Utility Supply Company for Water Fitting, Invoice 1510708, in the amount of \$2,487.90.

P.O. 2753 to USA Bluebook for WWTP Lab Supplies, Invoice INV00620248, in the amount of \$923.30.

Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Town Manager – Joe Leszek

Town Manager Joe Leszek stated he has been working with new Building Inspector, Todd Jackson, over the last week trying to get him settled in and starting to go through some of the ordinances that they need to potentially put in front of the Planning Commission. Leszek also mentioned that their contact at HWC, Bob Barcus, had taken another role and will no longer be available. He explained that HWC is now reorganizing and working on getting the Town back in touch with someone. He stated that the Town's video equipment would be getting installed within the next 30 to 60 days. Leszek stated that they are also working on getting the Town Hall phones and website updated. He also mentioned that they are still in the process of getting our website transitioned over from Datacrates to HWC.

Town Manager Leszek presented the following Purchase Orders for Council Approval:

P.O. 2756 to Fleis & Vanderbrink for DES #2003029, Invoice 72503, in the amount of \$540.00.

Council Vice President Brown made a motion to approve the following Purchase Order:

P.O. 2756 to Fleis & Vanderbrink for DES #2003029, Invoice 72503, in the amount of \$540.00.

Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Legal Updates – Town Attorney Justin Schramm

Nothing Presented.

Additional Business Deemed Necessary by the Council:

Nothing Presented.

Payment of Claims:

Council Vice President Brown made a motion to pay Payment of Claims in the amount of \$149,060.04.

Councilmember Windbigler seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Councilmember Lewandowski made a motion to adjourn, Councilmember Banks seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.



John Rowe, Council President

Attest:



Andrew J. Rowe, Clerk-Treasurer

Next regular scheduled meeting – Monday, February 17, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.