



Town Council of the Town of North Judson
Regular Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2024 – 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; 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 Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all Councilmembers present concurred.

Council President Rowe asked for approval of the Minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on November 4th, 2024. Council Vice-President Brown moved to approve those Minutes. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all Councilmembers present concurred.

Old Business:

Public Hearing – Unsafe Property Notifications

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to open up the Unsafe Building Authority Public Hearing scheduled for November 18, 2024. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Clerk-Treasurer (C.T.) Rowe explained that the notifications had been sent out to six residents alerting them to Town code violations under the unsafe building code; each of them was informed that on today's date there would be a public hearing at which they would be allowed to address the issues for which they are in violation. Leszek informed the Council that they had received complaints about these properties, and they had the police follow up with the owners, but in each case no changes were made. Leszek mentioned that Mr. Whitt, owner of 404 High Street, requested a hearing regarding his property. Thomas believed that Whitt was currently living in his garage since the structural condition of the house made it unsafe. Whitt was asked by Thomas why he was living in his garage instead of his home. Whitt explained that he had some medical conditions and the fresh air helps, and it had nothing to do with the condition of the house. Thomas stated that Whitt had previously spoken with him about not being able to breathe in the house. Whitt stated that, in his opinion, the house was in a livable condition. Leszek stated that the property was

also deemed a fire hazard, hazard to public health, public nuisance, and not maintained in a manner that would allow human habitation or occupancy that is required under state and local code. Whitt disputed all the citations for his property. Council President (C.P.) Rowe stated that Whitt's yard is also listed as not safe due to the myriad items and rubbish piling up in his yard. Whitt explained that he informed previous Town Marshal Fisher that he had some health issues that he was going to a clinic for care, after which time he would work to clean things up, which was years ago at this point. Council President Rowe stated that the Town was not part of any agreement that he might have made with the clinic or Fisher. Leszek stated that Whitt had received multiple violations over the past five years. Whitt asked how much time the Council was willing to give him in order to get his property cleaned up. Leszek stated that they will be giving Whitt two weeks to get his yard cleaned up and that they would be following up with him to see the progress of the yard.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to close the public hearing. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

2025 Town Employee Health Benefits Enrollment

John Howard, the Town's health benefits insurance agent, was present to discuss the 2025 Town Employee Health Benefits Enrollment. Howard stated that the Town's policy with Anthem (medical/dental/vision/life) was experiencing a 10% increase for the same plan year-over-year. C.P. Rowe reminded members that they had seen rates go up by around 4% in previous years, but the price stayed the same last year. He explained that it was one of the bigger increases, but it would still maintain the Town's current plan versus the other options. Howard stated that, in his opinion, it was not worth changing the plan due to cost alone as the benefits were still better with Anthem versus United Healthcare. He also stated that short and long-term disability is still with United Healthcare as Anthem no longer offers those benefits. Councilmembers looking to sign up for insurance benefits in the coming year would need to be enrolled by completing an application in the coming weeks. C.T. Rowe stated that he would be able to help any board member get in touch with John Howard about scheduling a time to meet.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to select Anthem Gold Blue Access Health Insurance Benefits Plan (Contract Code: 8BJ4) for Town Employees in 2025. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

American Legal Publishing – Town Code Supplemental Update

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated that he received an email with the anticipated cost for updating the Town of North Judson Code of Ordinances with ten sets of inserts for the ten copies for Town Hall, the County and to the library. He explained that the cost was going to range from \$1,100 to \$2,100 including the updates. He mentioned that it would cost around \$100 to \$200 for them to be put online with a folio invoice. Rowe explained that they work with American Legal Publishing throughout the year but now every two years the Town will send the company every ordinance and resolution that has been passed since the last update in order to incorporate all changes. Rowe stated that it is not a small task, so the update timeline of every couple years and the price range makes sense.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to approve and carry out the Town Code of Ordinances update with American Legal Publish, including the potential costs associated with the physical copy and online update. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

2025 Fire Protection Services Contracts: Jackson, Rich Grove, & Wayne Township

Town Manager Leszek stated that he and Chief Todd Jackson were planning on meeting with the Rich Grove, Wayne, and Jackson Township Trustees to discuss rate increases in the coming years to help cover the cost of capital expenditures and equipment. Clerk-Treasurer Rowe agreed that the timing of the meetings would help give them a head start when it comes to working on their budgets. Leszek stated that it would give them plenty of time to meet with their Advisory Board to discuss the matter.

New Business

Council Member Resignation – Jane Ellen Felchuk

C.T. Rowe stated that it is with a heavy heart that they receive Councilmember Jane Ellen Felchuk's resignation letter. He stated that the letter was received on November 6th, 2024, and that it had been transferred over to the Democratic Party Chairman the following morning. Rowe explained that there will be advertisements published the following week for the caucus that they will be holding in order to fill the position. He stated that Felchuk resigned due to personal issues and that the Town will be honoring her wishes and thanking her for her long service on the Town Council. Rowe stated that he would be putting something together in order to thank her for her service.

Town Resolution No.2024-04 – Transfer of Funds

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe presented Town Resolution No.2024-04: Authorizing the Transfer of Funds From the General Fund (101) to the Town Redevelopment Commission Fund (406) for the Incorporated Town of North Judson, Indiana. Resolution No.2024-04 remedies a situation where the grant reimbursement funds were placed in the Town's General Fund instead of the Redevelopment Commission Fund. Whereas the Town is now desirous of transferring the Department of Natural Resources – Land & Water Conservation Fund Grant Reimbursement funds in the amount of \$445,052.33 from the Town's General Fund to the Redevelopment Commission Fund (the fund from which all project expenses have been paid).

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to approve Town Resolution No.2024-04: Authorizing the Transfer of Funds From the General Fund (101) to the Town Redevelopment Commission Fund (406). Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion and all members present concurred.

Recognition of Guest

Bill Ramp was present to discuss adding more speed limit signs to Vine Street since there were still people speeding down his road. Council President Rowe stated that they could have Interim-Town Marshal Thomas assess the situation on Vine Street and determine if additional signage would be needed.

Department /Representative Reports

Clerk-Treasurer - Andrew Rowe

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

P.O. 2682 to Recreation Insites, LLC for Forever Lawn Playground Grass, Freight, Greensoft EWF System, and installation, Invoice 1209, in the amount of \$97,138.50.

P.O. 2683 to Gary and Sons for mowing at Pioneer and Highland Cemeteries on October 6th and November 3rd, in the amount of \$4,000.00.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to approve P.O. 2683 to Gary and Sons for mowing at Pioneer and Highland Cemeteries on October 6th and November 3rd, in the amount of \$4,000.00. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Rowe mentioned that Billing Clerk Lewandowski and Deputy Clerk Chaja had been working on setting up the “2025 Light up North Judson” home holiday decorating contest. He explained that there would be three awarded homes. The awards would be first place: the “Griswald” award for \$125.00; second place: the “Buddy the Elf” award for \$75.00; third place: the “Charlie Brown” award for \$50.00. Rowe also stated that they will be using the same point system from the previous home decorating contests when they go out on December 14th and 15th to look at the homes. The winners will be announced at the December 16th at Regular Council Meeting. Rowe thanked Billing Clerk Lewandowski and Deputy Clerk Chaja for all their work on setting up these contests. Council Vice-President suggested adding homes that are not eligible to the map so that they can be enjoyed as well. He also suggested that the address of the homes get put on the map for people to find them more easily. Rowe asked for permission from the council to carry out the home decorating contest.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to approve the “2025 Light up North Judson” home decorating contest. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated that he received the 1782 notice for the 2025 Budget and that their budget had been approved. After following Baker Tilly’s analysis and recommendation, they had to make two smaller transfers from the MVH & Park Funds into the General Fund. Rowe did reaffirm that the 2025 Budget had been approved with the updated figures by the Department of Local Government Finance.

Rowe explained that Billing Clerk Lewandowski and Deputy Clerk Chaja had been in charge of looking into caterers for the Holiday party. They were able to get prices from 10:56 Brewery, Christos and Scoops and Smiles. Billing Clerk Lewandowski and Deputy Clerk Chaja decided on Scoops and Smiles to cater on Saturday, December 14th, 2024, at 5:30 PM. at the Town Hall. He also mentioned that they would be borrowing some round tables from the Heartland Christian Center for seating. He mentioned that he is looking forward to all of the games and everything the girls have planned.

Rowe presented a Special Event Permit Application for the 4-H Snowball Walk at Norwayne Field on Friday, January 17th.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to approve the Special Event Permit Application for the 4H Snowball Walk for January 17, 2024 submitted by Laura Leszek and to waive the fees. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Rowe mentioned that a few Town employees are attending the Henry Schricker Awards Dinner on Thursday, November 21st. Rowe inquired about the 2024 CCMG program to which Leszek informed him that the contractors will be finishing up before the year ends since they are under contract. Rowe stated that he is currently getting additional appropriations together in order to have Baker Tilly look them over prior to year-end. He mentioned that they will likely have some due to the nature of the MVH Project Reimbursements. Rowe also explained that he would like to schedule a meeting prior to the December 16th meeting in order to discuss the salary ordinance and employee reviews. He explained that this would give

them time to have the first and second reading done so that they can adopt the new 2025 Salary Ordinance at the Council's year-end meeting.

School Board – Doug Wilde

Nothing Presented.

Building Inspector – Nick Radtke

Leszek informed the Council that he had been in touch with Radtke regarding some permits for new construction within town limits. He also was able to answer questions a few questions Leszek had for him.

Code Enforcement – Interim Town Marshal Frank Thomas

Nothing Presented.

Unsafe Hearing

Town Manager Leszek asked Attorney Schramm what the next step would be after sending out the Unsafe Letters to the property owners. He explained that they had received some positive feedback with the owners' plans on how they are going to address the issues. Leszek stated that the owner of 404 High Street came in and questioned the violations against his property. He stated that they gave the owner two weeks to get the property cleaned up, but Leszek wanted to see what the next phase would be if the owners fail to get their property cleaned up. Schramm explained that they fail to remediate the properties then the Town would need to file a complaint and ask for a court order to remedy the violation. Leszek wanted to confirm that Schramm was going to draft a letter regarding the removal of a shipping container on a residential property. Schramm informed him that he is currently drafting the letter and that he will inform them of any updates once he receives them.

Leszek also asked about a property located on 615 Simmons Street, that had been sent an unsafe letter that was sent back. He stated that the property had been put into a Land Trust, but they were able to track down a rumored corporation called Alex H LLC that is based out of Fort Wayne and tied to the property. Clerk-Treasurer Rowe mentioned that the house is in such bad condition that the structure is falling over. He stated that they would continue to try and reach the owner of the property. Schramm asked how the first notice was delivered. Leszek explained that they got certified letters returned for this property. Schramm explained that the final step would be to have the properties published in the newspaper since all the other methods failed.

Thomas then spoke about Whitt's High Street property stating that he was unsure of the condition of Whitt's house since no one had been allowed inside. Schramm explained that they will have to file for inspection warrant and be prepared to take the next steps. He informed the council that if the house is deemed unlivable then the structure will need to be torn down. Leszek asked if there was a chance that Thomas could try and convince Whitt to let him in the house to take photos for the council. Thomas stated that he would be able to send one of his officers to the property to see if Whitt would be willing to let them inside. Jackson stated that they would need to have photo evidence to prove that the structure is unsafe and that it would be best if the Building Inspector would go with since he would know what is not up to code. The council agreed with his statement.

BZA/Planning Commission

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated that they will need to schedule their beginning of the year meeting. He explained that during the meeting they will be setting their board officers for the year ahead.

Redevelopment Commission

Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated if they had bills or park updates then they would be meeting before the next meeting scheduled. He would keep an eye for any updates that would need to be brought to their attention.

Park Board – Nick Radtke

Leszek stated that they are still working their way down a punch list of items that need taken care of at the park but nothing too big or serious needed to be done. He explained that he was going to stay on top of the list to make sure everything was finished before they release anymore retainage or funds.

Police Department – Interim Town Marshal Frank Thomas

Interim Town Marshal Thomas stated that Deputy Stoll's training has been going well and is currently on track with releasing on his own in a few weeks. He stated that they were able to get all the newer vehicles out on the road and assigned them to their officers. Thomas explained that the Explorer still needed some smaller items, but the car was good to be on the road. Council President Rowe stated that he had been discussing the Town Marshal's pay with Leszek. He stated that Leszek would be doing some research regarding the Town Marshal having an hourly rate instead of a salary rate. Rowe explained that after the research is done then Leszek would give the Council his recommendation for them to discuss.

Bill Ramp asked what the Town's regulations regarding open carry firearms. Council President Rowe stated that they follow the State's laws regarding open carry codes.

Fire Department – Fire Chief Todd Jackson

Fire Chief Jackson explained that they had their monthly meeting in November which included elections for their officer positions. He stated that the officer will hold their positions now through next December. Jackson stated that he retained his position as Fire Chief and Nathan Henning retained his position as Chief Assistant. Joe Leszek still had his position as Captain with Doug O'Donnell as his Chief Assistant, and Eric Wappel was voted in as Lieutenant. Jamie Salkeld is the secretary and Brian Readings came back as Treasurer. Eric Wappel chose Tyler Tunis to be his Assistant Lieutenant.

Fire Chief Todd Jackson presented the following Purchase Order for Council Approval:

P.O. 2684 to Waterway for Hose Testing/Hard Suction/ Ladder Testing/ Ladder Heat Sensors, Invoice 10604, in the amount of \$4525.81.

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

P.O. 2684 Waterway for Hose Testing/ Hard Suction/ Ladder Testing/ Ladder Hear Sensors, Invoice 10604, in the amount of \$4525.81.

Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members presented concurred.

Utility Department – Utility Supervisor Kimberly Kapp

Utility Supervisor Kapp stated her crew has been busy with leaf pickup around Town. She explained that they had gotten the north side of town finished and they would be back at it on Wednesday to finish the rest. Kapp explained that they want to run leaves on Mondays and Fridays if nothing comes up. She stated that they had to pull several pumps at James Street Lift Station, one had been clogged and the other needed

to be replaced. Kapp explained that her crew was able to winterize the splash pad, sprinkler meters, and Highland cemetery.

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

P.O. 2685 to Flow Technics for Lift Station pump rebuild parts and labor, Quote QTE 00003577, in the amount of \$1,656.00.

P.O. 2686 to USA Bluebook for Lab supplies and Lift Station basket, Invoice INV00528699, in the amount of \$804.97.

P.O. 2687 to Heinold & Feller for Little Wonder Blower, Invoice 2189504, in the amount of 2,079.20.

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

P.O. 2685 to Flow Technics for Lift Station pump rebuild parts and labor, Quote QTE 00003577, in the amount of \$1,656.00

P.O. 2686 to USA Bluebook for Lab supplies and Lift Station basket, Invoice INV00528699, in the amount of \$804.97.

P.O. 2687 to Heinold & Feller for Little Wonder Blower, Invoice 2189504, in the amount of \$2,079.20.

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

Town Manager – Joe Leszek

Town Manager Joe Leszek stated they had been working on some end of the year budget for the Fire Department. He mentioned that he was able to attend the Indiana Finance Authority meeting which was required in order to remain eligible for SRF grants. He stated that they have been working on INDOT Right-of-Way items for their DES and CCMG Projects. Leszek explained that all of their CCMG have to be scheduled in the year prior to when they can be done. He stated that the state of Indiana and INDOT has awarded the town \$261,000.00 for their 2024-2 project which will be starting the spring of 2025. Leszek informed the Council that they have been approved for the 2024-02 project including the repaving of Town streets and sidewalks down Main Street. He explained that it was a \$360,000 project that the town would only have to pay \$104,000. Council President Rowe asked if 2027 would be the year that park sidewalks would be being paved. Leszek corrected that the park sidewalks would be done in 2026, and Hubeny would be repaved in 2027. He stated that it was exciting that they were awarded the grant, and they would be plugging away to keep finding ways to benefit the Town and the community.

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

P.O. 2688 to North Judson San Pierre School Corporation for Rightaway DES#2003029, in the amount of \$1,000.00.

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

P.O. 2688 to North Judson San Pierre School Corporation for Rightaway DES#2003029, in the amount of \$1,000.00.

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

Legal Updates – Town Attorney Justin Schramm

Schramm informed the Council that the County Council voted to move all of their 2025 meetings to the third Monday of the month at 6 PM. He stated that he would not be able to attend the Town's second meeting of the month going forward. Schramm explained that he would be adjusting his retainer agreement accordingly. He stated that the retailer agreement would go down by a third in order to account for the few morning meetings he attends for the town which would come out to be about \$8,000 for the year. Council

President Rowe stated that it should not be a problem as long as they kept up with the communication. Clerk-Treasurer Rowe stated that he will put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

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 \$110,135.98. Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Council Vice-President Brown made a motion to adjourn, Councilmember Lewandowski seconded the motion, and all members present concurred.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 P.M.



John Rowe, Council President

Attest:



Andrew J. Rowe, Clerk-Treasurer

Next regular scheduled meeting – Monday, December 2nd, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.