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The regular meeting of the Village of Divernon Board of Trustees was held at the Village Hall on Wednesday December 27, 2023. Mayor Jim Copelin called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Clerk Gail Hedges called roll: Craig Busch “Here”, Joe Bukantos “Here”, Chuck Apgar “Here”, Randy Olson “Here”, Dianne Brenning “Here”, and Larry Baer “Here”. Also present was Sergeant Mike Lavin and Superintendent Jeremy Rhodes.

A motion was made by Baer, seconded by Apgar, to approve the amended minutes of December 13, 2023. The motion passed 6-0.

Baer made a motion, seconded by Brenning, to approve the bills. The motion passed 6-0.

*Visitors*

Mayor Copelin presented $100.00 checks to the winners of the Christmas decorating contest. The Best Light Show went to Ryan Woker, the Best Theme went to Brent Bearden, and the Best Traditional, which is awarded by the Divernon Fire Department, went to James Newbold. Thank you to all who participated.

Ed Cleeton was present to discuss a trash service contract beginning in May 2024. Cleeton shared that the monthly fee for weekly trash pickup is $25.00 for non-seniors and $22.00 for seniors. The monthly fee for recycle pickup every two weeks is $15.00 a month. Cleeton stated that other services have cameras and charge additional fees for items that are discarded that aren’t trash. These fees can quickly add up. Cleeton asked why the Village has a contract with a sole source service? Why not allow multiple haulers? Baer stated that by having a contract with a sole source hauler, the Village can get better rates for the residents. Cleeton stated that he would really love to serve the Village.

Red Helmkamp was present to discuss an ordinance violation he received for burning in the alley. Someone called and complained about the burning garbage smell and the heavy, black smoke. Helmkamp said he had used gasoline and oil to help start the fire. Discussion followed. Busch said he didn’t feel the incident warranted a fine, but rather a warning. Bukantos agreed. Baer stated a warning should be given. Copelin reported the ordinance stated that burning can’t take place on Village property. Busch asked if this was a consistent violation. Copelin stated people are burning garbage and other refuge all over town, it’s out of control. Busch made a motion, seconded by Bukantos, to waive the fine and issue a warning. The motion passed 4-2 with Brenning and Apgar voting present.

*Public Works:*

Superintendent Rhodes reported that the Stop sign at State and Dodd has been moved to be in line with the other stop signs. Rhodes reported that Goddard was upset and stated that the pole would be hit, and it was in the way of trailers coming in. Vehicles often park in the pedestrian cross walk which is illegal. No Parking signs may need to be posted. Olson asked who is responsible for the upkeep of the road out to the Wiseman property. Copelin stated that it’s the property owner’s responsibility to maintain the road, which is really a lane, as the property line runs across the road and to the railroad tracks. Brandon Packard’s probationary period expired in July. No pay increase is due, but earned time should be made available immediately. Fiber optic companies have already come through Auburn and will soon be coming into Divernon. Rhodes shared that Auburn had issues that could have been

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avoided if proper controls had been set up in advance. Copelin said he wasn’t sure there was anything the Village could do to control damage to public and private property. To avoid some of the issues Auburn has had, Rhodes is to contact the Public Works Superintendent from Auburn to learn of the issues and ask if documents that have been developed to protect Auburn could be shared.

*Police:*

Sergeant Lavin reported that Divernon has 922 homes/businesses. The Board is still working to address the issue of pedestrians crossing Brown St. at State St. The ILCS states that vehicles must stop and allow pedestrians to cross if they are in the crosswalk. More investigation is necessary to determine what can be done to keep the pedestrian safe while crossing. Lavin informed the Board that Officer Porter was planning to stay with the Divernon Police Department.

*Committee Reports:*

*Economic Dev., Zoning, TIF, Building Permits:*

Busch reported that the end of year business district funds are as follows:

* North District - $176,000
* South District - $ 54,000

Busch stated that Tabitha Bock Photography needs to be added to the south business district. Busch also reported that the new Mexican restaurant is scheduled to open in January 2024.

*Public Utilities Water, Gas and Sewer*

Nothing to report.

*Finance, Personnel, GIS:*

Baer made a motion, seconded by Olson, to approve the purchase of LIV360 health insurance through Health Alliance. The motion passed 6-0. Baer made a motion to purchase from UCB 2 - three-month CDs in the amount of $125,000.00 each with a 5.30% rate, and to open an Eagle Savings Account from Bank of Springfield in the amount of $250,000.00 at a rate of 4.85%. Olson seconded the motion which passed 6-0. The following persons named have the authority to open/sign on the accounts: Jim Copelin, Mayor; Larry Baer, Trustee - Finance Committee; Dianne Brenning, Trustee - Finance Committee; and Gail Hedges, Clerk. Baer brought up that Heather Rideout stayed at the Vangieson home while here providing training to the temporary office manager. Because more training is necessary, the matter was tabled until all training is completed. A check was found in the bottom of the file cabinet drawer which hadn’t been cashed. The check was to reserve the park pavilion for a party months ago. Since the area was cleaned up after the party, the check should have been returned to the party reserving the pavilion. The check either should be returned to the reserving party or shredded. Copelin asked if any other charges were coming out of the MFT fund by year end. If not, every effort should be made to reduce the balance to a minimum early in the new year.

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*Public Safety, Health and Safety:*

Olson stated that vehicles are parking on the sidewalk in front of the old Mason’s building. Since this is the only sidewalk between 1st St. and the railroad tracks, it’s unsafe for pedestrians who may have to walk in the street to get around the vehicles. Public works did a great job cleaning up behind the old Mason building. Olson stated the IML website addresses nuisances which he will look into more in order to be proactive in 2024.

*Public Works, Streets, Alleys, and Sidewalks:*

The vote on garbage pickup was tabled until the next meeting.

*Village Communication/Building, Grounds & Lights, Parks, Recreation*

Busch reported that Com Microfilm came down and met with the public works and police department to determine if additional digitization is necessary. Very little was identified.

Old Business:

Copelin stated that Mike Patterson, from Taft Appraisal, feels appraisals can be prepared for both gas station properties, which are needed to sell the properties. Remediation paperwork has been approved so work can begin soon. Brenning reported that she received angry phone calls from a resident complaining about the purchase of the canine. The resident used foul language and was very disrespectful. The resident stated that Divernon is a quiet community with little trouble and no drug problems. The resident went on to complain about the black cars always driving around, and why would the Village hire a former Springfield police officer.

New Business:

Apgar made a motion, seconded by Baer, to approve the amendment to the Engineering Service Agreement in the amount of $80.00. The motion passed 6-0. There was a discussion on whether a change in the Village’s legal firm was in order. There are several outstanding issues that are yet to be resolved. Copelin posed the question as to whether a part-time person is needed in Village Hall to supervise staff and assist others when needed. A decision will be made at a later meeting.

Apgar made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:10 p.m. Olson made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:33 p.m. Apgar made a motion, seconded by Baer, to release the following Executive Session minutes: July 14, 2021, April 13, 2022, February 8, 2023, March 22, 2023, April 12, 2023, April 26, 2023, June 7, 2023, and August 23, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned with a motion from Brenning at 8:34 p.m.

Jim Copelin Gail Hedges

Mayor Clerk