

**VILLAGE OF BETHALTO
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 27, 2023, 6:00PM
VILLAGE HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Members Present:

Gary Bost	Jeff Mull
Brady Dugger	Tim Tweedy
Maria Perkhiser	Terri Keister
Rachel Sontag	

Also Present:

Village Clerk Sue Lowrance	Fire Chief Brian Buhs
Village Attorney Ken Balsters	Public Works Director Rod Cheatham
Finance Administrator Aleisha Randolph	

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Gary Bost at 6:00pm in the Council Chambers of Village Hall.

Tax Levy

Finance Administrator Randolph provided the board with historical general information regarding the Village tax levy. This year's levy must be passed by December 25, 2023, so will be presented at the December meeting for consideration. Randolph noted that if the levy is increased more than 5%, a truth in taxation hearing will be required. Our estimated EAV for the 2023 year is \$187,316,992, plus the commercial enterprise zone of \$3,904,200 for a total of \$200,782,252 after the 5% multiplier is added. Randolph added that the police pension fund had an unaudited gain of \$79,193 for the year but is still underfunded. Inflation and expected wage increases are anticipated to increase operational expenses by \$240,000. If the same dollars are levied as last year, our tax rate will decrease; if the same rate is maintained, we will be above the 105% level. If the levy is increased by 5%, an additional \$120,280 of taxes will be received; if increased by 4%, an additional \$96,270 of taxes will be received. A taxpayer with a house valued at \$150,000 pays approximately \$559 in real estate taxes to the Village, or about \$1.55 per day. It was noted that a taxpayer in the Village pays real estate taxes to 8 taxing bodies including the Village, with the School District receiving almost 60% of the total tax bill. The Village receives approximately 16% of the total tax bill. Randolph added that the Village currently has \$5.63 million in unrestricted cash (as of 10/31/23). It is Randolph's recommendation to increase the levy by 5%. Trustee Keister asked why we are increasing taxes; Mayor stated that inflation will cause expenses to be higher in the coming year, and Randolph added that the Village hopes to increase its contribution to the police pension fund to cover some of that shortfall as well. Keister expressed concern that residents hear "increasing the dollar amount"; Randolph noted that their actual rate will be decreasing. PW Director Cheatham added that nearly every municipality increases by 105% annually when they can. Keister stated that the Village really needs to promote growth and bring in new businesses. Bost added that with a tax rate of 1.27% we are below surrounding communities, and people

move here due to the lower tax rate. Bost added that the increase in tax revenue likely will not cover the increased costs due to inflation. Trustee Tweedy stated he would like to see the Village hire a couple full-time firemen somewhere down the road.

Knox Box

Fire Chief Buhs explained that a Knox box is a tamper-proof box that allows quick access to a building in case of emergency and stated that he feels requiring each business in town to have one would be a wise investment. Currently, crews must wait for a key-holder to arrive before entering an establishment and that can cost precious time in some cases. Buhs stated that our current code does not require them, and a few businesses in town have them but a majority do not. Mayor Bost added that to update the code to require these boxes would require board action, and that there has been pushback from several business owners in the past. The cost of a small Knox box (which would be sufficient for most businesses) is about \$530 plus installation. Only our FD would have access to each Knox box. Trustee Keister asked Buhs to provide an informational packet she can distribute through the Chamber of Commerce. Bost noted that discussion of using business district money to help fund the installations was brought up, but with some businesses already investing in them, there is no fair way to go about that. Bost added that this will come up for further discussion at a future date, so trustees should give it some thought for when the time comes to move forward with it.

Business District Change

There are two potential parcels along Route 111 (the old Wayside Estates subdivision and the Ferrell property next to the water tower) that are not included in our current three business district zones. The Ferrell property has not been annexed into the Village, and a developer is currently interested in that piece of property. The Village is seeking to annex that piece of land into the Village, and if successful, would want to add it to the current Route 111 business district. In researching this potential move, it was suggested that both pieces of property be added to one new, all-inclusive business district within the Village. This would eliminate the previous three separate districts and start the 23-year clock on a new business district. There would be a cost of approximately \$25k to do this, although business district funds could be used for the expense. The cost would be the same to add either parcel to the district—so doing it all at once will save the Village money in the long run. To have the new district completed by the July 1 start of a new business district fiscal year, we would need to have the annexation and business district consolidation completed by the March meeting, so time is important. Attorney Balsters stated that we would enter into a consulting agreement at the December meeting, and that would start the ball rolling on the process. Mayor Bost stated that Mr. Ferrell seems to agree with voluntarily annexing the property into the Village, so we are looking to receive that petition soon as well. Bost will keep everyone informed.

Village Hall updated office hours

By current ordinance, Village Hall administrative office hours are set at 9am-5pm. With the relocation of the water office to Village Hall, there has been concern that this may cause some confusion with two different office hours; therefore, we will be asking to update the office hours of Village administrative offices to 8:30am-4:30pm to mirror those of the water office.

Having no further items for discussion, the meeting was adjourned by Mayor Bost at 6:28pm.

Sue Lowrance, Village Clerk