

**VILLAGE OF BETHALTO  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
APRIL 22, 2024, 6:00PM  
VILLAGE HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**Members Present:**

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

**Also Present:**

Village Clerk Sue Lowrance	Fire Chief Brian Buhs
Village Attorney Ken Balsters	Public Works Director Rod Cheatham
Police Chief Jason Lamb	members of the Fire Department

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

**Verizon Lease Agreement Discussion**

Verizon is seeking to renegotiate our current lease agreement for the cell tower lease on the Fifth Street water tower, which expires in 2027. We currently receive \$25,282 per year, which will increase to \$27,345 by the end of the current lease term (with current annual increases of 4%). They are offering a new lease rate of \$17k per year starting in 2027, with a 10% increase every five years (with 4 5-year options on the new contract). The Village must decide if we want to renegotiate now or wait it out; Verizon states that standing firm will “chase Verizon off the tower”. Balsters noted that it will take Verizon two years or longer to find another site and move their equipment; PW Director Cheatham agreed and stated that it will cost them more to move locations than it is worth to them. Other current leases bring in approximately \$30k each with 4% annual increases, but those lessees are likely going to be seeking renegotiations soon as well. There was discussion of the effect the equipment has on each tower; Cheatham stated the presence of the equipment on the towers is not ideal, but that any damages done by removal of equipment is the responsibility of the lessee and that we would hold them accountable. Cheatham added that he doesn’t believe they would remove the equipment, though, with the amount already invested in its installation. Mayor Bost stated we will hold off on any renegotiations for now and see where they lead.

**Update on Real Estate at 58 N. Williams**

We received the property appraisal for 58 N. Williams, with a gross appraisal value of \$15k and \$5k allotted for demolition, leaving a net value of \$10,000. By statute we must receive a minimum of 80% of the appraised value, so \$8,000 would be our minimum asking price, which would cover our expenses to this point. Attorney Balsters stated he could draft a resolution for the May meeting authorizing sale of the property. Notices would need to be published and no auction required if a minimum of 80% of the appraised value was received. Mayor Bost stated

he believes selling the property at a reasonable price to cover our expenses and get out from under it is the way to go. We will move forward with seeking a buyer.

### Salary Ordinance Review

The proposed salary ordinance for 2024-2025 was presented; this ordinance lists salaries for non-Union employees for the upcoming fiscal year. The Ordinance reflects an across-the-board increase of 3% for most personnel except for Firefighter/EMT and Firefighter/Paramedic (each will receive \$1 per hour increases) and Finance Administrator/Treasurer who has an additional amount included as compensation for her work with the Police Pension Fund. Mayor stated that the previous Finance employee received additional compensation that was paid by the Police Pension Fund; Bost is in discussion with them for reimbursement of a part of the annual Finance Administrator salary. Proposed Department Head appointments were reviewed as well; these will be presented at the May meeting. There were no questions.

### Budget Preview and Timeline

Finance Administrator/Treasurer Aleisha Randolph presented a budget summary worksheet; as the fiscal year still has a couple of weeks remaining, she wants to have the final numbers in place prior to distributing the full budget line items, which will be sent out and the budget reviewed at the May committee meeting. We are a full month ahead of schedule at this point, with the plan to hold the required public hearing and pass the Appropriation Ordinance at the June board meeting. Randolph reviewed the summary sheet as presented, noting the anticipated revenues and proposed expenses by department. Mayor noted that the proposed Fire Department budget has been increased by 25% to include updated wages and ten new sets of gear rather than the five requested. It was noted that the municipal building budget amount includes the funds of which the museum was named as beneficiary by the Fowler Trust. The sewer fund budget includes the remaining ARPA funds, and the TIF fund budget decreases due to the payoff of the TIF loan next year. Randolph stated that the complete budget worksheet will be emailed out after April 30; Bost asked the board to review this summary for now and once the full budget is released to review it in depth and contact him or Randolph with any questions.

### Fire Department Request

Chief Buhs stated that the number of calls the department runs annually is increasing and the fleet of trucks is aging. ISO ratings are based partially on equipment and anything over 20 years is considered non-compliant and can be a detriment to a department's rating. Jay Grant added that there is one specific truck that won't start and has had \$10,000 in repairs already, when it is worth only \$20,000 and is already considered non-compliant. Grant stated that nobody can determine what is wrong with it, and they don't want to continue to pour money into it when it's worth so little. Grant has found a stock truck that we can purchase right now for \$717k, so the department is asking for an additional \$150k in its annual budget to cover the payments for this new truck and any additional equipment that may become outdated. Mayor Bost asked for an update on the new rescue truck, which we are making payments on but have yet to receive. Buhs stated they are meeting with the company later this week to discuss the situation and try to negotiate a partial refund or some sort of compensation for the delay, but we still have no

anticipated delivery date. Trustees asked for clarification that this would give the department two new trucks if the additional loan of \$717k was approved for the purchase of the stock truck. Buhs & Grant responded yes, one new Class A pumper truck and one rescue truck. Trustee Keister asked what the department is doing now with one truck inoperable; Grant responded "struggling". Mayor noted that as the summary budget sheets show, this budget is only anticipated to be \$20k "in the black", so he's unsure if an additional line item is feasible. Bost further noted that the rescue truck loan will be paid off in two years and then that amount would be available in their budget again, if a fix could be found until then. Bost stated that the department had mentioned looking into forming a Fire Protection District; Grant answered that the projected revenue by doing so came in lower than they expected so that it would not be worth it. Bost stated we could review the budget again but added that their proposed budget amount has already been increased, they receive all the fire-specific funding and taxes, and that their requested new equipment would be paid for from the general fund. In response to Trustee Dugger, Grant confirmed that they're seeking an additional \$150k per year over 7 years. Keister asked for an explanation of a village Fire Department versus a Fire Protection District; districts are a separate taxing body run by a separate Board of Governors. Trustee Tweedy asked that the board take a hard look at the numbers, stating we are similar in size to some other municipalities and run the same number of calls, but he understands that we also have less funding. Grant reminded the board that if our ISO rating falls, residents' insurance rates are likely to rise.

Having no further items for discussion, the meeting was adjourned by Mayor Bost at 6:34pm.



Sue Lowrance, Village Clerk