

**VILLAGE OF BETHALTO
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 28, 2024, 6:00PM
VILLAGE HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Members Present:

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

Also Present:

Village Clerk Sue Lowrance
PW Director Rod Cheatham
Finance Director Aleisha Randolph
Fire Chief Brian Buhs

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

BYOB Liquor License

Mayor Bost presented the proposed BYOB/Brown Bag liquor license ordinance, as discussed at the previous committee meeting. The ordinance was written to include permissible BYOB alcohol defined as “not to exceed 12% volume”. This ordinance also increases the video gaming annual fee to \$250 per machine. There were no questions, and the ordinance will be considered for passage at the November board meeting.

Solicitor’s License Increase

The Village has seen an increased number of applications for solicitors’ licenses over the past several months, largely from solar and electricity suppliers. A background check is done on each applicant, and once approved the permit holder must always carry the certificate on them. We have received many complaints about these solicitors ignoring “no soliciting signs” or generally not following our code and knocking on doors without a permit. We currently charge a fee of \$10 per person, per day, for a permit. Some neighboring municipalities charge \$25 per day. Bost recommends we review our fee structure and raise our daily fee. There is no minimum number of days for a permit. Clearwave fiber internet has been our most frequent applicant recently, but we’ve had no complaints about them, and they pay in full for each permit monthly. We’ve had the largest number of complaints about solar and electricity suppliers, who sometimes use tactics that are misleading to residents. Bost added that some have questioned why we allow soliciting at all; to ban it would affect our local organizations as well. Trustee Perkhiser asked what penalty is imposed for solicitors who don’t follow our rules; their permit is revoked and another one would not be issued. Trustees agreed that an

increased daily fee of \$25 would be a good place to start, so an ordinance will be drafted for the November meeting.

Short-Term Rentals

The Planning & Zoning Board has been working on a short-term rental ordinance for the past couple of months, as interest has been expressed in offering short-term housing rentals to accommodate the needs of West Star and Piston Aviation at the airport. The P&Z board held a public hearing last week with no one in attendance opposed and two in attendance in favor of the proposal. Bost noted that there is a minimum stay of 3 nights (to deter “house parties”) and a maximum of 90 nights written in the ordinance. There are three different rental types: owner occupied, non-owner occupied, and bed & breakfasts. It was noted that the owner would be responsible for any hotel taxes as incurred, although the Village does not currently impose this tax. A business license and annual occupancy inspection would be required of the permit holder. Trustee Perkhiser inquired if West Star is wanting to purchase a home for a short-term rental; Bost stated that the request was made by a private homeowner, but that Piston had expressed possible interest for their flight school attendees. Attorney Balsters explained where this would fall in our code and that it would cover several zoning districts. There were no questions, and the ordinance will be presented for consideration at the November board meeting.

Administrative Salaries

Mayor Bost stated that administrative salaries cannot be changed mid-term, so that the increase in trustees’ pay as discussed at the last committee meeting would be staggered so that those whose terms don’t end until 2027 would not see an increase until after the next election cycle. Everyone acknowledged this and was fine with the proposed increase for trustees as written. Trustee Keister asked for clarification from Trustee Dugger about his question regarding what the unions may expect during negotiations if our administrative salaries are increased; Dugger responded that police negotiations have already begun, and his concerns are about the initial bump in pay, not the proposed annual increases. Dugger stated he doesn’t want the unions to think they should be entitled to an up-front bump in pay if administration is given one. Trustee Mull stated that he’s never seen the unions play off what the administrative increases have been but agreed that could use any tactic. Trustee Tweedy stated that in his union experience he has never seen an issue with supervisor raises vs. labor raises. Keister asked if historically all other supervisory positions receive the same raises as per contracts; they do. Trustee Perkhiser again stated that we do not know who will be in these supervisory positions, as we do not know how an election will end, and that newcomers don’t provide a resume to determine if they are qualified for a position. Mull rebutted that we need to consider the responsibilities of the position itself and that pay should mirror those responsibilities. Keister asked Perkhiser if she believes the Village should investigate a manager type of government and going through a hiring process for a city manager; Perkhiser responded that in reviewing the Glen Carbon survey provided, that municipalities with city managers are growing whereas Bethalto is not. Perkhiser also compared the Village to her employer, Olin Corp, and stated that there were times the Village was in a position that we didn’t know if we could pay the bills, and that we “shouldn’t make up for when years were bad”, stating that if

her employer had a year that wasn't profitable, salaried positions went without raises. It was noted that over the past 12 years, administrative raises have been 1% annually. Keister stated that strong leadership has changed the dynamics within the Village and we're sitting in a stronger position now. Keister then noted that the Village maintains one of the lowest tax rates in our area and that we pay \$14.55 per capita for our administrative services which is very low compared to surrounding municipalities. Keister agreed that whereas Bethalto is not currently growing, we are moving in the right direction, with the airport looking to promote growth and other areas of town being sites of interest for economic development. Keister stated that she believes an annual 3% raise is appropriate, along with an initial bump to correct the lack of increases over the past several years. She noted that we need to look at the work that is being done by our staff; Trustee Tweedy agreed and stated that "you get what you pay for" and that we've come a long way from not being sure how to pay the bills. Tweedy further stated that we can't match the service we're getting for what we're paying, complimenting our department heads and noting that he'd like to see a little more attention paid to our fire department but that he believes that is also on the horizon. Mull stated that it takes a team to make it work and agreed that the Village is moving in a positive direction. Mull then asked if a 6% bump followed by 3% increases over the remaining three years would be acceptable to the Board. PW employee Tom Sontag asked if he could speak, then stated that he's seen the Village do way more with fewer employees over the past several years, and that is a testament to good leadership. Trustees Dugger and Keister stated they would agree to a 6/3/3/3 increase. Trustee Perkhiser balked, stating that most of our residents are seniors, and that social security is only increasing by 2.5% in 2025. Perkhiser expressed concern over taxes that seniors pay as well; Attorney Balsters noted that seniors are entitled to several property tax assessment deductions and freezes which help lower their tax burden, and that our EAV decreases substantially from these benefits. Perkhiser noted we must also consider the entire compensation package, noting our medical insurance just increased substantially. Mull noted that the insurance increase was both anticipated and budgeted for, and Keister added that our situation is no different than other municipalities who also pay rising costs and that these positions need to be compensated fairly. Keister also noted that the Village does not have stagnant property and houses in town sell quickly, so there is potential for growth. PW Director Cheatham added that we are not far removed from pumping sewer water into the streets and that we've done major infrastructure improvements over the past several years and that by getting out of debt related to ball fields, etc. we are moving in a positive direction. Cheatham added that there had been stagnant leadership at the airport and that their situation is also improving, but that development will take time.

Trustee Mull returned the discussion to the proposed salaries; again, asking how the board felt about 6/3/3/3. Dugger and Keister again stated they agree. Sontag asked if Mull came to those figures by cutting the proposal from the last meeting in half, and he responded yes. Perkhiser stated that she "could tolerate 6/3/3/3 more than the initial proposal" from the last committee meeting. Resident Rose Bickmore asked what if the mayor, clerk, etc. doesn't do his/her job—could the proposed raises be nullified? Since the salary must be fixed at least 180 days prior to the start of a new term and cannot be changed mid-term, the answer is no per state statutes. Bickmore also noted that the Village may have a cushion now, but what if? Keister noted that

the Village must be run like a business, and that the goal is to be fiscally responsible, but we aren't in it to make a profit. Mull further noted that his response to the concern of "we don't know how an election will go" and thus who could be seated in the elected officials' positions can be answered with all voters need to do their due diligence to be sure a qualified person is elected to do the job.

Attorney Balsters noted his preliminary calculations of 6/3/3/3 and asked everyone to verify those and let him know of any errors. The ordinance will be prepared for consideration at the November board meeting, which meets the 180-day statutory requirement.

Having no further items for discussion, the meeting was adjourned by Mayor Bost at 6:50pm.

Sue Lowrance, Village Clerk