

June 28, 2021

Council President Protem Ms. Riffle called the June 28, 2021 meeting to order at 7:31 PM. If you aren't a member of council and are on ZOOM please mute your computer so it will cut down the background noise. The roll was called with the following members present: Mrs. Drake, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Gant, Mr. Locke, Mrs. Miller, Ms. Riffle and Mr. Shutts present. Also, present was Mayor Lorentz, Safety-Service Director Mrs. Hoblitzell, City Auditor Miss Pittenger (was on ZOOM), City Law Director Mr. Webster, and City Treasurer Mrs. Copeland. Absent from the June 28, 2021 meeting was Clerk of Council Mrs. Meredith and President of Council Mr. Martin.

Council President Protem Ms. Riffle asked that everyone please rise for the Prayer and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. Mrs. Drake gave the invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

A motion was made by Mr. Locke to by-pass the reading of the June 14, 2021 minutes and accept as presented. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

Reports of City Officials:

Mayor Lorentz reported that since our last meeting I met with the Homecoming Committee which I believe has everything in order. Many thanks to all the volunteers that have stepped forward to help with this activity.

Ribbon cutting for Rockland Ridge will be next Monday. Hopefully there will be members of council able to attend.

July 10th is the Belpre Alumni Ice Cream Social and will be held at Howe's Grove Park from 11AM-3PM. I'm the cook so you're on your own. Take your life in your own hands.

Rockland Ridge Open House is July 12th from 4:30-6:30 PM. This will be prior to the next council meeting.

Today I met with a young man who would like to be apart of our Recreation Commission. His name is Reed Byers and is part of the Healthy Kids Running Series. This is for kids from the age of 2 to 18 years old. These kids will run a couple Sunday's a month and will run on the track. We normally don't do this but will need to due so for the safety of the kids. I believe Mr. Byers would need to be approved to the commission.

Safety-Service Director Mrs. Hoblitzell reported the restroom facilities in Howe's Grove Park are being painted and are almost complete. The doors are now orange instead of red.

United Way, Chemours volunteers installed a "Born Learning Trail" yesterday at Depot Park. They installed the signs for the Trail, painted some items on the walking trail to correspond with some of the signs, pruned trees, painted the shelters, painted the bathroom doors and did the weed eating! North Bend Wealth Management installed a book library that contains books of diversity. They put so much effort into these projects. The Park is beautiful!!

As you may have seen, Blennerhassett has been painted. The arrow signs will be painted in the next couple of weeks. Washington Boulevard has been painted from Middle Street where they left off last year, west to the corporation line.

The generator replacement for the police department has been started and will be completed in 2 weeks.

City Auditor Miss Pittenger had no report.

City Law Director Mr. Webster had no report.

City Treasurer Mrs. Copeland had no report.

Communications and Petitions: None

Report of Standing Committee:

Mr. Ferguson Finance/Audit Committee had no report. Mr. Ferguson stated that he knows that tonight the Golf Cart legislation is before us. There are copies of the legislation on the back table. If you did not get one, please feel free to get one. This legislation just came off the printer at 5PM.

Mr. Gant, Police and Fire Committee had no report.

Ms. Riffle Streets, Sidewalks and Storm Sewer had no report.

Mrs. Drake Utilities Committee had no report.

Mr. Shutts, Parks and Recreation Committee reported that the restrooms at Depot Park have been locked. They have been locked due to vandalism again. We would like to get them reopened ASAP. I haven't talked yet with the mayor for a time frame. There is concrete at Civitan Park around the swing that the children run on that is jagged. This will be taken care of this week. There have been a couple of children that have fallen.

Mayor Lorentz stated that the restrooms at Depot Park had been reopened and vandalized again. You will need to get a key to use that restroom. The cameras aren't catching it. Mayor Lorentz stated that the guys that have to maintain that restroom don't deserve what they have to deal with every day.

Mr. Locke Planning and Zoning Committee had no report.

Mr. Locke Economic Development Committee reported that on June 24, 2021 which was last Thursday I met with the Belpre Area Chamber of Commerce Committee. We had twelve citizens attending. The discussing centered around the poll that had been distributed. Many "enlighting" details emerged. There were 117 responses in which 76% were from Belpre Citizens and the other 24% were not. Eighty percent were from the age group 18-64 which was very surprising. The comments from the polls were also discussed. The discussion was around forming a "CIC". This committee has a lot of work to do yet. They meet on monthly bases. Hopefully they are going to bring something to council soon to consider.

Mrs. Miller Rules Committee had no report.

Persons Appearing Before Council – Agenda items only.

Per Ms. Riffle the three items to be considered on the agenda this evening are as follows:

Third Reading: **AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING RULES, REGULATIONS, AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS RELATIVE TO THE OPERATION OF GOLF CARTS WITHIN THE CITY OF BELPRE, OHIO** as amended.

Second Reading: **A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE TAX BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2022.**

Second Reading: **A RESOLUTION SUPPLEMENTING YEAR 2021 APPROPRIATIONS.**

William Cassidy 824 Belrock Avenue addressed the Ordinance regarding Golf Carts in the City of Belpre. Mr. Cassidy asked that council vote against this ordinance for a matter of Public Safety. Our own police force is not in favor of this. I recently heard that one council member made the statement that he was voting for the ordinance because he is tired of the issue and wants it to go away. I realize you have a petition with 60 names on it but 60 names only represent 1% of the population of the City of Belpre. His concern is that residents may take their children to school on a golf cart that may cause a safety issue.

Mario Coon 1111 Blennerhassett Avenue presented a hand out to council with statistics from the Ohio State Police from last year with all accidents that have been logged within the past year. What you're going to see is the severity, the location and how many of these accidents were logged by our Belpre Police Department. What you're going to find here is that in the last year there was one fatal accident that

occurred on Farson Street, one fatal accident logged with possible injuries. You are going to see that the vast majority of these were property injuries. There were very few logged regarding the streets that we are requesting to make legal. The vast majority of accidents occurred on Washington Boulevard, Main Street and one on Lee Street. There were very few logged by this organization. Also there have only been two golf cart fatalities across the US. I believe this is a reasonable safety margin for the US.

Anthony Atkinson 1315B Blennerhassett Avenue moved here about 10 years ago. Mr. Atkinson spoke with Chief Clevenger at that time and asked about golf carts in our city. He was informed that there was no problem with golf carts. We have ridden all this time with no problem. Golf carts are safer than a bicycle, jogger, vehicle, mother pushing her child along Blennerhassett Avenue, etc. Also, everyone has been very courteous.

William Cassady 824 Belrock Avenue, Belpre stated that he felt there needed to be separate lanes or roadways for this type of vehicle. Also designated areas.

Karen Locke 726 Tuttle Street stated that we have tried to make Belpre safe as possible. Golf carts are a recreational vehicle. I would like to see this go through. I would like to see this ordinance pass so we can enjoy our beautiful city.

Mr. Webster stated that he has not spoken for or against this ordinance and he will not this evening. Our State Statutes have changed. They have changed to the way they were defined. This is what led to ordinances with municipalities within the State. Municipalities are allowed to enact ordinances to allow golf carts.

Jeanene Atkinson also of 1315 Blennerhassett Avenue stated that she has spoken to a lot of people and in fact she was the individual that actively got the petition. I contacted a lot of the police stations around the City of Nelsonville, Beverly, Parkersburg, etc. The City of Nelsonville sent me a packet for me to bring tonight. The packet explains what is needed to use the golf cart

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Locke brought before council for third reading of **AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING RULES, REGULATIONS, AND REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS RELATIVE TO THE OPERATION OF GOLF CARTS WITHIN THE CITY OF BELPRE, OHIO as amended.** A vote was taken with Mrs. Drake, Mr. Locke, Mrs. Miller and Mr. Shutts voting aye, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Gant and Ms. Riffle voted nay. The vote was 4 to 3.

Mr. Locke moved this be Ordinance #14, 2020-2021 and duly passed. A vote was taken with Mrs. Drake, Mr. Locke, Mrs. Miller and Mr. Shutts voting aye, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Gant and Ms. Riffle voted nay. The vote was 4 to 3. Motion passed.

Mr. Ferguson brought before council for second reading **A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE TAX BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2022.** A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

Mr. Ferguson made a motion to suspend the rule of council on three different days to allow for the third reading of **A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE TAX BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2022.** A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

Mr. Ferguson brought before council for the third reading **A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE TAX BUDGET FOR THE YEAR 2022.** A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

Mr. Ferguson moved this be Resolution #26, 2020-2021 and duly passed. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye. Motion passed.

Mr. Ferguson brought before council for second reading **A RESOLUTION SUPPLEMENTING YEAR 2021 APPROPRIATIONS.** A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye. This will lie over until the next meeting of council.

NEW BUSINESS: none

PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL:

William Cassady 824 Belrock Avenue addressed the Aggregation Conversion. Mr. Cassidy asked if you choose to opt out you will be covered under the cities plan.

According to Mrs. Hoblitzell that was true if you are already in.

Mr. Cassady asked what do you do if you are not already in.

According to Mayor Lorentz you would need to sign up.

For point of clarification Mr. Locke stated that if your already in you need to go in and fill out the form.

Mr. Cassady asked about the Stimulus money. He stated that he was under the understanding that we received only one Stimulus Package so far and we haven't received any more but we have Cares Act money.

Mrs. Hoblitzell stated that Stimulus and Cares Act are different. COVID money can be spent on a lot of different items. It can't be spent on infrastructure.

Mr. Cassady stated that we have \$70,000 left over in COVID monies. Can it be spent on damaged equipment?

According to Mrs. Hoblitzell it cannot be used for that.

Mr. Cassady asked if it could be used to fix storm drainage problem on Lois Street and Gene Street?

Mrs. Hoblitzell informed Mr. Cassady that it could not.

Mr. Webster stated that they tried to elevate the problem from behind the lumber yard to the pump however when it rains so hard the pump can't handle that much water at once which causes it to flood.

Mr. Cassady asked if the Cares monies or Stimulus money could be used to fix that problem? Is there grants available for that?

Mr. Hoblitzell said you have to have matching money for grants.

Mrs. Drake stated that if it was an existing problem, you could use funds that were available. If they were pre-existing problems, you could not use the money.

Mr. Locke thanked the citizens for support of the golf cart legislation no matter how it turned out.

Mr. Locke also stated that for the last 50 years we have had the same city income tax. Each administration has done a good job keeping us out of the red. It's becoming more difficult to do this. We met a company with our Economic Development Committee and they couldn't believe what they saw. Belpre needs to consider raising our city income tax in order to do the needs for the city.

Mr. Ferguson appreciated hearing from both sides regarding golf carts and citizens' concerns. We are trying to do the best job as we can.

Mrs. Drake stated that it is very difficult to operate the budget on today's cost. People in our community needs to support. People need to honor them with support. Get involved in your community.

Mrs. Miller stated that the Federal Government doesn't make money they take it from us. This is the only place you can try and control the needs of the city.

Mayor Lorentz stated that I appreciate Mr. Cassady's concern about our needs and possible grants. Mayor Lorentz stated that our economy is catching up with us.

Mario Coon stated that he was glad the Golf Cart Legislation passed. I don't want to have to pay more taxes. He asked if there were provisions for non-W-2 taxes.

Miss Pittenger stated that retirees have already paid taxes on their gross income. They do not pay taxes on their investments. They are taxed on net and not on gross. This is based on the tax law that was passed for the City of Belpre in 1976.

Mr. Cassady stated that he was on the School Board for 16 years with Mr. Lorentz. He stated that the best money spent is locally. These needs discussed. We need funding for improvements for our city and school's revenue.

Jeanene Atkinson stated that she appreciated the talk on the golf carts.

Mayor Lorentz asked that the citizens have respect for our police officers. Folks if you go on Washington Boulevard, you'll lose your golf cart. Be respectful of each other. I hope we don't regret it.

Mr. Locke stated that he was disappointed no one asked where to get your golf carts inspected.

Mr. Webster stated the ordinance states you have 30 days.

Mayor Lorentz stated that we have stickers we came up with.

Mr. Locke thanked the mayor for finding someone to inspect the golf carts.

Mrs. Miller stated that she is in hopes that when there is a problem that it is acted on. Don't make a couple of families make it difficult for all.

Ms. Riffle stated that when it comes to taxes it must be voted on by the public. It is not just us.

Mrs. Drake stated that the Superintendent of Belpre City Schools will be holding a Town Hall meeting to discuss the needs for the schools and our changing system.