

January 23, 2023

Council President Protem Mr. Ferguson called the January 23, 2023 Belpre City Council meeting to order at 7:30 PM. The roll was called with the following members present: Mrs. Dennis, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. McClead, Mr. Millhone, Mr. Null, Ms. Abdella and Mr. Wallace present. Also present were Mayor Lorentz, Safety-Service Director Mrs. Hoblitzell, City Auditor Mrs. Nolan, City Law Director Mr. Webster, Treasurer Mrs. Cassidy and Clerk of Council Mrs. Meredith. Absent from the meeting was Council President Mr. Martin.

Council President Protem Mr. Ferguson asked that everyone please rise for the Prayer and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Lorentz gave the invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

President of Council Protem Mr. Ferguson asked that everyone turn off cellphones or turn them to vibrate so they don't interfere with the recording.

If you address council this evening, please state your name and address clearly so that the clerk can record it for the minutes.

President of Council Protem Mr. Ferguson asked for a motion to accept the minutes of January 9, 2023. Mrs. Dennis made a motion to accept the minutes of January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023 as presented and by-pass the reading. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

President of Council Protem Mr. Ferguson asked for a motion to accept the minutes of January 12, 2023 Special Meeting. Mrs. Dennis made a motion to accept the minutes of January 12, 2023 Special Meeting as presented and by-pass the reading. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

#### **Reports of City Officials:**

Mayor Lorentz reported that with the suspension of our EMS service, we have spent much time trying to get a plan together. Both the Chief and Ryan Varian have been quite helpful. We had the need to contact our attorney in Columbus for guidance.

WWW sent word that Farson and Rockland Avenue can be added to the TIP for 2025 and could possibly be added next year if council approves. Shelley and Sands worked up the estimate on Friday.

Our Police Chief and I sat through a presentation on E-911. Chief Stump can explain this and his position.

The Civil Service Commission will administer the Sergeants test on January 30<sup>th</sup>. We have four (4) candidates for the promotion.

Chief Stump and our dispatchers have just about completed the new console work in dispatch. It looks so much better and more efficient. A lot of old wiring and connections were removed and cleaned up.

Contractors have started the patio area for our Sr. Center. Everyone seems excited for the outdoor space.

Council should have received an invitation to the America 250 Ohio meeting coming up. The Roseland Coffee is open and tentative date for Wings Etc. is February 28<sup>th</sup>.

Again, I remind you of the Ethics report that needs completed.

Council President Protem Mr. Ferguson asked if anyone had any questions regarding the Mayor's report.

Mrs. Dennis asked if we are going to have a presentation this evening on the E-911. She was informed that the chief wasn't available this evening to present.

Ms. Abdella asked who would give the E-911 presentation. It would be the chief.

Safety-Service Director Mrs. Hoblitzell reported that the Tree Commission met on January 10. The Tree City USA application has been submitted and awaiting approval.

Kathy Davis, with Washington County Soil & Water, and I met and are working on a document to give to citizens inquiring about stormwater permits. It has been confusing and we want to be able to give the citizen or the person building an instruction document showing everything they need to obtain the stormwater permit.

Administration, Lyndsay, Tom and Susan have been meeting regularly to discuss the EMS. We are putting a lot of time into this and will advise when we come to a conclusion to move forward.

City Auditor Mrs. Nolan reported that the past weeks have been busy compiling the 2022 Actual Expenses/Revenues for the 2023 Budget. These figures are taken directly from our Budgetary software system.

The 2023 Estimate of Resources was completed and forwarded to the County. There are copies on the back table. The Official Certificate was received from the County today.

Friday, January 20, I spent 3 hours attending RITA's Annual Webinar which was informative. The Law Director and I plan to visit the new business's/restaurants to introduce ourselves and answer any RITA questions they may have.



The Mayor, Safety Service Director, Law Director and myself are in the process of reviewing City contracts.

Per Julian & Grube's request, we have begun the process of collecting and sending data they will use for our 2022 Audit.

The December Utility Adjustment report is on the back table and needs approval from Council.

Mrs. Dennis made a motion to accept the December Utility Adjustment Report as presented. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

City Law Director Mr. Webster announced that each member of council should have received my State of the City Report for 2023. Copies are on the back table. His report is as follows:

With the business growth we are seeing I believe the City of Belpre is in a better state than ever before. Over the past few years there has been over 400 new jobs added to the city. The hospital now being our biggest employer with another expansion announced that will add some 200 additional positions. Two new chain restaurants, a new pharmacy under construction as well as the old shopping center being totally renovated with one store front adding some fifty jobs. Our little city has been blessed with this growth but, gives us cause to also expand and or correct any issues we have with infrastructure. If you follow the minutes and reports historically for the city you will find we are in better financial shape than ever before.

The forced main sewer line on the west end should resolve any issue we had with the county line from the city limit to our wastewater plant. A new 10-inch water line on Farson will enhance the water volume for the hospital and when the new water storage facility is complete it should raise our water pressure so future multi-level buildings should not need boosters to satisfy sprinkler systems as they do now. Plans are being discussed to correct sewer lines north to possibly Blue Knob Road. This would not only add revenue to the city but also help with development in this area.

With new hires due to retirements and or promotions I feel our city government teams are as strong as ever before. Our leaders in the maintenance ranks truly have the cities best interest at the forefront when it comes to maintaining the streets, waterlines, sewer lines and Police Department. Our Police Officers are by far the best around. Chief Stump is actively working to get our guys well trained as well as getting us to full shift requirements. At this writing we are still two officers short. Civil Service is conducting tests for Sergeant on the 30<sup>th</sup> of this month. They will then start advertising for a working list for upcoming openings throughout the city manpower requirements.

Also, we are trying to make headway with the State of Ohio on the EMS issues and licensing. We are making progress with the State of Ohio.

City Treasurer Mrs. Cassady reported that the November, December and Year-End Treasurers Report is still in review.

**Communication and Petitions:**

Council President Protem Mr. Ferguson announced that the Ohio Ethics Financial Disclosure forms are due May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Reports of Standing Committee**

Mr. Ferguson reported that his committee met prior to this evening's meeting at 6:30PM to discuss the final budget for 2023 expenses/revenues. I would like to call another committee meeting for January 30, 2023 at 6:00 to further our review on the 2023 budget.

Mrs. Dennis, Police and Fire Committee had no report. Mrs. Dennis announced that she plans to move forward with EMS.

Ms. Abdella, Streets, Sidewalks and Storm Sewer Committee had no report. Ms. Abdella called a Streets, Sidewalks and Storm Sewer Committee meeting for 5:45 pm on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 to discuss snow removal at the schools.

Mr. Millhone Utilities Committee reported that he had three items this evening and he would like to defer to the law director.

Mr. Webster introduced Jesse Rauch who is with the Southeastern Ohio Port Authority. Jesse discussed the sewer project extending up Route 7 to Blue Knob Road. We were contacted by one of the businesses in September that they would like to expand the corridor. In order to do so they will need a sanitary sewer. They will be able to create 100 jobs. It looks like we will be able to pull this off. We are targeting an April time frame for funding from Congressman Bill Johnson's Office. There shouldn't be much cost to the city.

Ms. Abdella asked if this is part of the Debt Service we are paying on. Ms. Abdella was informed that it was not part of the Debt Service because it was a different line.

Mr. Null asked about industrial customers with further discussion.

Ms. Abdella was concerned about accepting our own community before accepting something else.

Mr. Millhone stated that 3 other citizens in his ward had contacted him. One was Cecil Hinton who appeared before council about a month ago regarding sewage in his rental house at 615 Lambert Street. He has presented me with an estimate for total material and labor totaling \$3879.56.

I was also stopped by Carol Muscari and was asked about a tree at 4<sup>th</sup> and O'Neil Street that had yellow paint on it. The tree was to be removed several years ago however it has been so long the paint has faded.



Another gentleman Jeff Hill who owns the Hitchman in the curve on Maple Street sent me a letter in regards to an ongoing problem with the trees on railroad property falling onto his property. The falling trees are damaging his new fence. Mr. Hill wants to get the problem taken care of before there is more property damage or an injury as a result of these trees falling. Mr. Hill enclosed pictures of the damage to his fence and a picture of the tree which is currently broke off and lodged in an adjacent tree. Any help from the city would be most appreciated in resolving this matter. Copies of the letter is on file in council chambers.

Mr. Webster stated that this is between the property owner and the railroad. We have no authority because we don't own the property.

Mrs. Dennis stated that the owners of the railroad lives in Florida.

Mr. Null talked about the poisonous hemlock near the railroad tracks.

Mr. McClead Parks and Recreation Committee had no report.

Mr. Wallace Planning and Zoning Committee reported that his committee met at 5:10 PM this evening to talk about taking the property from ODOT. Everyone was in agreement to accept the property.

Mr. Wallace, Economic Development Committee had no report.

Mr. Null, Rules Committee had no report. Mr. Null stated that he would have legislation for Save the Kitty.

**PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL – AGENDA items only** ((President of items.)) None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** ((President of City Council will recognize that there is or is not any Unfinished Business this evening)). None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Steve Null addressed paying a full-time fire chief. I would like this to be assigned to committee.

Council President Protem Mr. Ferguson asked that we hold this until we get through the budget and then let the President of Council Mr. Martin assign to committee.

**PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL:**

Kenneth Cobb 1011 Florence Street addressed an alley needing maintained near his property. At one time this alley was active but has now turned to grass. If the city

isn't willing to maintain the alley, he is seeking permission from the city to gravel from Matheny Avenue to the end of the property that has no other access Mr. Cole stated that he needs some kind of coverage in order for him to get into his lot. I talked to Connie the other day and she informed me that because it was city property, I couldn't do anything. Mr. Cobb doesn't want the alley closed because there would be no way for him to access the property.

Mr. Wallace stated that a gentleman did contact him about closing the alley.

There was further discussion on the topic.

Bill Locke 726 Tuttle Street asked if they were talking about the lots where the house burnt down a couple of years ago. He was informed that yes it was. The lot was divided 2 years after the fire.

Ms. Abdella asked if he was wanting to gravel from Matheny Avenue to the end of the property. Per Mr. Cobb this was his intentions.

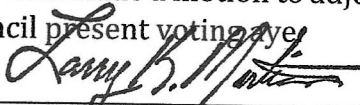
Mr. Webster stated that the Safety-Service Director would have to determine the specs. There may also be a drainage issue. Additional information would be needed in order to fix the problem.

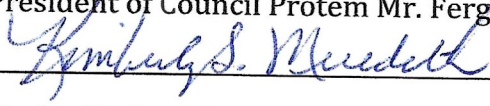
At this time, Council President Protem Mr. Ferguson stated that this would still be between the property owner and the safety-service director.

Bill Locke 726 Tuttle Street made a positive comment on work being done around the city.

**ADJOURN:**

Ms. Abdella made a motion to adjourn at 8:11 PM. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

  
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President of Council Protem Mr. Ferguson

  
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Clerk of Belpre City Council Mrs. Meredith