

**Town of Vernon  
Vernon Gym  
Executive Session (6:15 PM)  
Regular Meeting (7:00 PM)  
October 7, 2021**

**Executive Session:** The Town of Vernon Council held an Executive Session at the Vernon Gym, 29 Washington Street, Vernon, Indiana 47282, at 6:15 PM, to discuss Safety and Security issues in the Town.

**Regular Meeting:** The Town of Vernon Council meeting at the Vernon Gym, 29 Washington Street, Vernon, Indiana 47282, was called to order by Dan Wright at 7:00 PM.

Town Officials and employees present:

**I. Call to Order – All Members Present**

Amber Fields – Clerk/Treasurer  
Eric Genda – Council Ward 1  
Jeff Walker – Council Ward 2  
Shelly Davers – Council Ward 3  
Dan Wright – Mayor  
Ron Hendershot – Maintenance/Works Manager  
Brit Burgmeier – Town Marshall

**II. Approval of September 2, 2021 minutes**

Dan asked if there were any comments or corrections to the September 2, 2021, Council minutes and recommended approval.

Shelly Davers made a motion to approve the September 2, 2021, minutes. Jeff Walker made the second.

Three Yes votes, 0 No votes.

**III. Petitions or comments by the members of the public present:**

Dan asked anyone from the public wishing to make a comment to sign in and let the Council know what they wished to comment on.

There were no comments from the public.

#### IV. Reports from Committees and Officers

##### 1. Town Mayor – Dan Wright

###### a. 2022 Budget Adoption

Dan asked for a motion to adopt the 2022 Budget as presented.

Jeff Walker made a motion to adopt the 2022 Budget as presented (Ordinance 174). Eric Genda made the second

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

Dan recommended suspending the rules to approve the Ordinance 174.

Eric Genda made a motion to suspend the regular meeting to adopt the Ordinance 174. Jeff Walker made the Second

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

Eric Genda made a motion to accept Ordinance 174, Jeff Walker made the second.

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

###### b. Trail Grant

Dan mentioned that he was preparing the quarterly report for the Trail Project. Still working through the environmental process with IDEM and EPA.

- c. Dan provided brochures for both the **Indiana Bond Bank** Loan program (current Interest rate 2%, maximum of \$2,000,000) and the **Indiana Rural Water Loan Program** (current interest rate 3%, maximum of \$200,000) and asked permission to pursue loans for approximately \$150,000, for the water structure needs, and bring the information back to the Council for approval in November 2021. (Water meters, 2 flush hydrants, re-route a service line, and re-route a dead-end line)

Shelly Davers asked if the items listed were the basis of raising the water rates.

Dan said “Yes”. Shelly recited information from the October 2019 minutes where someone from the public asked the Council if the proposed water meters would have an impact on the water bills, and the Council said “No”. Shelly felt that the Council needed to go back to the Water rate study and pull some of that stuff out. Dan mentioned that the Town could not borrow the funds for a water improvement system without a water rate study. He also said that his intention was to investigate and bring the loan information from both sources to the Council for their review.

Shelly Davers made a motion to allow Dan to investigate the loan programs and bring the information back to the Council for review. Eric Genda made the second.

Three Yes votes, 0 No votes.

- d. Dan asked permission to **close Brown Street from Montgomery to Pike Streets on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October from 1:00 PM to 8:00 PM** for the Vernon Pumpkin Jam.

Jeff Walker made a motion to close Brown Street for the FOHV Vernon Pumpkin Jam on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October. Eric Genda made the second Three Yes votes, 0 No votes.

**2. Ward 1 Council – Eric Genda**

- a. Eric asked about the mowing of the soccer field. He feels like someone should be talked to about keeping the mowing up. Dan said that he would talk to Wayne. Eric also asked about a map of the trail project. Dan said that he would provide one. Eric also asked about the “Rat Row” property and if it had officially been re-named the “Vernon Art Park”. Dan said that Brad would be preparing a lease agreement like the agreement with the Muscatatuck Soccer Club to maintain the property.

**3. Ward 2 Council – Jeff Walker**

- a. Jeff asked everyone to come out to the Movie this weekend on the Courthouse lawn sponsored by the Jennings County Historical Society. Jeff also congratulated the Friends of Historic Vernon and Tom Taylor for the successful turnout at the Basketball tournament last weekend. He thought the turnout was great and happy to see a representative from the NBA there as well for the dedication of the gym floor. Dan said that they hope to make the tournament an annual event.

**4. Ward 3 Council – Shelly Davers**

- a. Shelly requested that the Clerk Treasurer send out anything on meeting agendas the Tuesday before the meetings so that the Council has ample time to review. Amber said that was fine. Dan said that we can send out the Agenda “as is” on Tuesday’s before the meeting. Shelly said she was fine to receive her information by email only. Jeff said that he did not have a printer at home, so he appreciated the back-up documents at the meeting. Shelly also requested that Amber send notification to the Council for anyone calling for an Executive session to send out a courtesy email to the Council when that was decided upon.

**5. Clerk Treasurer – Amber Fields**

- a. Amber reported to the Council that titles for both the boat and trailer had finally arrived.
- b. Amber described to the Council a program called “GovCard” where customers would be able to pay their sewer & water bills online. She said that this program was recommended by AIM. She had also looked at the Pay.gov program. Many customers have requested a system where they could pay online. She explained that the initial cost would be \$195 and that would include the training. The customer would then pay a fee to use the system (\$1.75 per payment or 3%).



She asked to Council to consider a program to allow customers to pay online. Shelly asked which option the Town would consider, Amber said the “Online Portal” would be the option considered. Jeff thought the Council should consider a program for online payments. Shelly asked how customers would get to the program to pay. Amber said that there would be a portal on the Town of Vernon Website to get to the payment portal or pay with a debit/credit card at the Town Office. Amber also said this would also be advantageous to get residents to look at the town website. Jeff thought even with the fees, we would get some customers using a system like this. Shelly asked who would be responsible if something went wrong and who would be paying for it. Shelly made a motion to table the discussion until more information was received. Jeff Walker made the second.

Three Yes votes, 0 No votes.

**6. Town Legal Counsel – Brad Kage**

- a. Brad asked Amber if a check had been received from Mr. Gupta for the sewer bill at 215 E Apache Trail. Amber said “No”, that a check had not been received.
- b. Brad let the Council know there was a hearing on September 20<sup>th</sup> regarding the McDonald property on the corner of the Highway and Pike Street. He said the judge gave permission to the Area Plan Commission to hire someone to remove all the junk off the sidewalk. Brad did not know where the Executive Director stood on hiring a company to do that.

**7. Town Marshall – Brit Burgmeier**

- a. Brit informed the Council of the 911 calls for Vernon over the past month.

**8. VVFD Fire Chief – Eric Kirkham**

- a. Eric apologized for the junk cars left on the Town property.

**9. Town Public Works Manager – Ron Hendershot**

- a. **Wreck on Highway 3.** Ron informed the Council that the tractor trailer wreck on Highway 3 last weekend came within a foot of the water meter at that location but did not damage anything.
- b. **Gym Guttering** Ron reminded the Council that the lack of guttering on the Gym is damaging the bricks and the structure of the facility itself.
- c. Ron informed the Council that **Gym Rental** is picking up and currently scheduled 5 of 7 nights per week. The volleyball system has been ordered and should be installed in November.

**V. Unfinished Business**



- A. **Water Rate Ordinance 175** Shelly Davers pointed out a typo and asked about the \$60 reconnection charge. Dan said that the deposit information was not part of the Ordinance, but in a policy. Dan thought the deposit should be a minimum of \$150, split between the sewer and water funds. (70-30 split)

Shelly Davers asked how the \$13.03 number (a 38% increase) listed in the draft Ordinance. Dan said the rate increase was calculated by the accountants at Sherman Barber and based on the rate established in 2013 and included removing the tracker and the increases from North Vernon Utilities of approximately 2% per year. Removing the tracker was a decision by the Council when the information was provided to Sherman Barber, who started the Water Rate study in 2020. Removing the tracker brings the total increase to 20% or 2.5% each year over 8 years since the last increase. Dan also reminded the Council that the increases after the first year will be voted on by the Council each year.

Shelly again said that some of the expenses used in the water rate study have not been voted on and may not happen (like the GIS system). Shelly does believe the rate should start out that high. Amber said that the Water fund is supposed to be self-sustaining. Amber also said that the Town will not have a positive balance in the Water fund at the end of the year, and asked “didn’t the Council provide the information to a professional to do the study to ensure that the Water fund sustains itself?” Shelly believes that the starting figure should be lower and that if the Sewer & Water Funds should have a budget with buckets. Dan reminded the Council that a GIS mapping program will be mandatory in the future by IDEM and EPA.

Shelly was also asked about the hydrant rental fee increase and thought the Council should vote on an increase. Jeff said that he did not see an increase in the hydrant rental fee. Shelly gave Jeff the page number regarding the hydrant rental fee.

Jeff Walker made a motion to approve the Ordinance 175 with the typo being corrected. Eric made the second if the Council could come back in a year and decide at that time to adjust the rate. Dan reminded the Council that the Town must do a water loss audit each year, and that there must be a certain balance in the Water fund to exist according to the State IC.

2 Yes vote, 1 No vote (Shelly Davers).

## VI. New Business

- B. Brad brought proposed **Ordinance 176** to the Council as requested by the Treasurer for a first reading. This Ordinance 176 protects the Treasurer when paying claims before they are approved by the Council for certain expenditures, ie. Utilities,





insurance, maintenance agreements, etc. Brad also said that the language for the Ordinance 176 was taken directly from Indiana Code.

Shelly didn't remember voting to create an Ordinance to protect the Treasurer on payment of certain claims. Dan said that the Clerk Treasurer or the Attorney are allowed to bring forward an Ordinance. Shelly also did not believe the Town needed such an Ordinance because it was covered under Indiana Code. Brad said that Indiana Code also states that the Town would have to adopt an Ordinance under that code. Shelly made a motion to table the Ordinance until next month. Jeff Walker made the second.

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

Dan discussed creating a policy raising the current Water and sewer deposit from \$50 to \$200 for new customers. (70% to Sewer and 30% to Water) when the new water rates begin. Eric asked about the reconnection fee when customers open the meter boxes themselves. Dan said this would become a greater issue once the new meters are installed. Eric said that North Vernon has a contract for customers stating they understood that if they opened the meter box, they would have to pay a \$200 fine, or fee. Dan asked to get a policy change motion to raise the deposit from \$50 to \$200. Eric made a motion to change the current policy raising the current Water & Sewer Deposit from \$50 to \$200. Jeff Walker made the second.

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

## VII. Claims

### A. Claims

Shelly Davers pointed out that Trish Hendershots salary came out of the wrong account. Amber said it could be corrected. Shelly also thought the trash bin was going to be charged to the Gym fund. Amber and Ron both said that trash from Town is brought to the dumpster located at the Gym, and not used exclusively for Gym trash. Jeff Walker made a motion to approve the claims as presented. Eric Genda made the second.

3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

B. The Clerk Treasurer provided a **Fund Report** for the month of September 2021.

## VIII. Miscellaneous Business

### A. Donations & Other

1. Dan mentioned the **AIM** Roundtable events coming up and said they would be good programs to attend. If anyone was interested, they should let Dan know. Dan said that he would be attending on November 1, 2021.

2. A mistake in the formula was discovered on the **Boyce Water & Sewer program** that caused overcharges to Indian Hills customers using more than 10,000 gallons of water in a single month. Amber asked Boyce to send a spreadsheet outlining those accounts affected. The information was sent to the rate consultant who calculated the over-charges. The total amount came to \$5,112.80. Dan recommended those amounts be reimbursed to the customers who were overcharged. Jeff Walker made a motion to reimburse the over-charged customers. Eric Genda made the second.  
3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

- IX. Eric Genda made the motion to Adjourn the meeting at 8:28 PM. Jeff Walker made the second.  
3 Yes votes, 0 No votes.

**Next Regular Meeting:** The next Regular Vernon Town Council Meeting will be Thursday, November 4, 2021, at the Vernon Gym, 29 Washington Street, Vernon, Indiana 47282. The Regular meeting will begin at 7:00 PM.

**Vernon Town Council**

  
Eric Genda, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward

  
Jeff Walker, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward

  
Shelly Davers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward

**Town of Vernon**

  
Dan Wright, Mayor

  
Amber Fields, Clerk Treasurer