

**Enrolled Memorandum of the Meeting
Study Session/Meeting Convened Electronically
Twenty-Ninth Town Council of Highland
Monday, December 07, 2020**

The Twenty-Ninth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met *electronically* in a study session on **Monday, December 07, 2020** at 6:31 O'clock P.M., in the regular place, the Highland Municipal Building, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana.*

**Special note:* This meeting was convened allowing members of the Town Council to participate electronically without being physically present, to be counted in the quorum and able to simultaneously listen and respond to matters taken up in the meeting, all pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Orders 20-04 and 20-09, extended by Executive Order No. 20-49 allowing meetings to be convened pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 for the duration of the Corona Virus COVID 19 emergency. All members of the Town Council participated electronically with the Clerk-Treasurer participating as well. The electronic platform also allowed the public to be in the room or observe and participate from on-line access.

The meeting was streamed live on the Town of Highland, Indiana Facebook page and participation was supported by the Zoom on-line communication platform.

Silent Roll Call: Councilors Bernie Zemen, Mark Herak, Mark J. Schocke, Tom Black and Roger Sheeman were present (electronically) as indicated. The Clerk-Treasurer, Michael W. Griffin was present to memorialize the proceedings (electronically). A quorum was attained.

Officials Present: John P. Reed, Town Attorney; Mark Knesek, Public Works Director; Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Redevelopment Director; and William Timmer, CFOD, Fire Chief, were also present, all participating electronically.

Additional Officials Present: Larry Kondrat and Ed Dabrowski, IT Consultant (Contract) and Board of Waterworks Directors, (electronically) were present.

Guests: Theresa Badovich and Robin Carlascio of the Idea Factory were also present (electronically).

General Substance of Matters Discussed.

1. Discussion: *Presentation from Idea Factory.*

The Town Council received a presentation from Ms. Badovich and Ms. Carlascio of Idea Factory, regarding content production and hosting the Town's website, and its associated departmental pages. It was noted that the Idea Factory also produces the monthly newsletter for the Town and that the additional responsibilities evolved over time.

The discussion noted that the current website was eight-one percent Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. The discussion included the desire to improve existing graphics, the functionality of existing links, the timeliness of information maintained on the sight and the responsibility of the departments to monitor and contribute to keeping information up to date.

The Idea Factory representatives indicated that they would be willing to provide content if another webpage architecture or software was licensed. Councilor Sheeman reviewed his concerns with the current website, listing many specific

elements of the website that he expressed hopes for modifications and enhancements. It was also noted that a formal pricing proposal was submitted by Idea Factory to the Town Council at its meeting in August.

2. **Discussion:** *Review and discuss the proposed modification for the sanitary waste and storm water rates. (Worksheet provided)* Councilor Herak and the Clerk-Treasurer using a special spreadsheet developed by London Witte reviewed the elements that were being considered by the Board of Sanitary Commissioners regarding a proposed rate modification for the wastewater and stormwater rates.

The spreadsheet illustrated the policy components for spending that were desired at the outset by the Board and the changes that were made that informed the rates that were proposed and published for a public hearing to be conducted at its standing meeting on December 15, 2020. It was noted that the initial rate basis would have rendered if adopted a profound increase in the current rates. As proposed the rates while significantly higher than now, are significantly lower in percentage increase than the original rates considered.

The clerk-treasurer noted that the rates could not be increased from those advertised but could be reduced by the Board of Sanitary Commissioners during the public hearing. In order for the rates to be finally effective, the Town Council would need to approve them at a meeting following the Board's action. It was further noted that the Town Council's actions were constrained to either approving the rates as presented to it or rejecting.

It was still further noted that the desire for a general wage and salary increase dependent on a "return on investment" component in the rates that would produce a surplus that would in turn be transferred to the Corporation General Fund. This income was needed for sustainability of any general increase in wages and salaries.

Finally, the clerk-treasurer, stating that components for the increase possibly could be modified downward as to the revenues desired for the improvement fund. However, it was noted that this was not yet discussed with the Board of Sanitary Commissioners.

3. **Discussion:** *Discuss the enactment regarding group health premium holiday and offering it to workforce.* The clerk-treasurer explained that the board of trustees of the Aim Medical Trust, as provider of the group health program for the Town of Highland, noted that it was closer to its two year reserve target than anticipated. Owing to that, it was declaring a premium holiday for the first month of 2021. It was desirable to share this with the workforce as well.

The clerk-treasurer further noted that many of the participants in the Aim Medical Trust base the employees' premium on a percentage of the actual premium paid by the employer. Highland bases its premium on the percentage of annual pay. Based upon this, the Town Council would need to pass an enactment that would suspend the requirements for a premium in the first month of 2021. The Town Council agreed to placement of such an enactment on the agenda for the plenary meeting of December 14, 2020.

4. **Discussion:** *Discuss agreement with CBL, Inc. for IT Services.* The Town Council President led a discussion regarding renewing the agreement for IT Services with CBL, Inc., which is the business identity for Ed Dabrowski as the IT Contractor for the Town. The Town Council President believed that Mr. Dabrowski's

performance in the past year, particularly noting his work to initiate the Zoom platform and the electronic meeting facility for the boards and commissions during the pandemic, commended him for renewal and for some increase in his pay.

The Town Council and the Clerk-Treasurer then discussed the merits and desirability of sharing the costs for services with the Town of Griffith, where Mr. Dabrowski also is an employee performing computer services and IDACS management for the Griffith Police Department. Councilor Herak indicated that he would follow up with Griffith Council President Rick Ryfa, regarding his openness to the concept.

5. **Discussion:** *Consideration of Cost sharing with the Redevelopment Department the cost of new lighting for the Highway Avenue in the Downtown.* Councilor Sheeman reported that the Redevelopment Director had successfully obtained a forty-thousand dollar grant to offset the costs for installing new low energy high illumination lighting in the Highway Avenue section of the downtown.

Councilor Sheeman noting that the lighting would produce savings of up to \$9,000 in energy costs, proposed that the Town Council identify an exogenous revenue source in the amount of \$10,000 to contribute to the cost of the lighting. The Town Council discussed the idea. There was nothing further.

6. **Update.** The Clerk-Treasurer reported that the application for the Town's full allocation of CARES Act money was filed and that the amount of \$726,156.00 was deposited by EFT in the proper bank account for the town.

There being no further business necessary or desired to be discussed by the Town Council, the *electronically convened* regular study session of the Town Council of **Monday, December 07, 2020**, was adjourned by the Town Council President, at 8:35 O'clock p.m.

Michael W. Griffin, IAMC/MMC/CPFA/ACPFIM/CMO
Clerk-Treasurer