

VILLAGE OF THORNTON, COUNTY OF COOK  
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING – January 21, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER**

Acting President Pisarzewski called the Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Acting President Pisarzewski reported the meeting was being recorded by former Acting Clerk Kitakis, and also recorded on social media.

**ROLL CALL**

Skipped

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Roger Maltrotto made a public comment commending Administrator Wiak on her efforts of the betterment of the community. Mr. Maltrotto also stated when he came into the office earlier it was very busy and the Village would be in a better position if additional staff were hired.

Ted Koch spoke on behalf of the Thornton's Lion's Club. He asked that the board consider waiving the raffle fee for the Lion's Club. Mr. Koch stated the monies raised can only be spent in the Village.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Thornton Fire Department** – Trustee Cunningham – TFD responded to 107 calls in the month of December 2024. 65 calls were in the corporate limits. 3 full time fire fighters have accepted offers and have been given start dates. Both paramedic students have completed their midterms and passed. We have one fire fighter waiting to take their EMT state exam. We have two fire fighters taking their MOD exams.

**Trustee Reynolds-** Nothing to report

**Trustee Kaye** – Nothing to report

**Thornton Police Department** – Trustee Glaser reported TPD received 390 calls in the month of December 2024. Thornton PD would also like to remind residents there is no parking on the streets when there is 2 or more inches of snowfall.

**Building Department** – Trustee Atkinson reported building permits were down the month of December.

**Engineer Kaminsky-** Nothing to report

**Treasurer Frye** – Treasurer Frye went over the December 2024 financial report. It was also reported that property tax payments for 2023-2024 are 91% fulfilled.

Treasurer Frye spoke about water rate increases. Treasurer Frye mentioned the Village has not kept up with the suppliers increase. It was recommended that the rates north of the I-80 expressway be raised to \$18.71 up to 500,000 gallons and to \$17.35 after 500,000 gallons. The water rates for south of I-80 expressway should be raised to \$14.37.

Trustee Atkinson questioned if the sewer rate was also billed at a per 1,000-unit rate as well. Treasurer Frye confirmed it is. Trustee Atkinson also asked for clarification on the increase for north of I-80 expressway. Treasurer Frye explained that the proposed increase covers the increase from the Village's supplier, plus an extra dollar for the increase for cumulative Village operating costs. The properties south of I-80 will only be increased by what the Village's water providers increased. Trustee Atkinson inquired if the capital improvement was also billed by per 1,000 gallons. Treasurer Frye confirmed it is also billed per 1,000 gallons, and reminded the board that the capital improvement cost to residents is what the Village is using to repay the loan for the meter project.

Acting President Pisarzewski inquired if the Village received the forgiveness for the loan. Engineer Kaminsky confirmed the Village do not have that total yet, but is hopeful to have an answer by April 2025. Acting President Pisarzewski confirmed we need to proceed with the increases because the Village has not increased the water rates to be consistent with the water rate increases by the Village's suppliers.

Trustee Glaser asked if the capital improvement cost on residents' water bills will be eliminated after the loan is repaid. Treasurer Frye said that is at the discretion of the Village board. Treasurer Frye recommended having Attorney Dillner draft an ordinance regarding the new 2025 water rates. The ordinance will be voted on at the board's February 3, 2025 meeting.

Trustee Cunningham inquired if the Village could average the capital improvement costs so every resident pays the same amount. Acting President Pisarzewski explained that the Village would not be able to do that because north of I-80 is a different water supplier than south of I-80. North of I-80 is supplied by the Village of South Holland, which is bought direct from the Village at a higher rate, due to the area being primarily industrial. South of I-80 is supplied by the City of Chicago Heights, who, in turn, is supplied by the City of Hammond, Indiana, and is a much cheaper rate.

Trustee Cunningham asked if the capital improvement costs could be a flat rate for all residents. Treasurer Frye explained that would not be feasible as certain residents' water usage is higher than others.

Treasurer Frye advised the board when the loan was taken out from the IEPA, the board settled on the 1.75 per 1,000 gallons capital improvement rate to repay the loan.

Acting President Pisarzewski explained that the Village's water suppliers are also charging maintenance and delivery fees. In the future, after the loan is repaid, the board can revisit capital improvement costs.

Trustee Reynolds inquired if Village owned properties pay water bills. Treasurer Frye explained the Village does not pay for their water, but the consumption is tracked. The Village does pay for all the water loss—i.e. when there is a water main break.

Treasurer Frye recommended that the board approve the rate increase as discussed.

Attorney Dillner explained that the Village needs to change the water rate ordinance.

Trustee Atkinson posed a question regarding annual percentage increases.

Treasurer Frye responded with saying that the way the Village's current ordinance is written, we increase our water rate by the dollar amount that the supplier increased the rate by, but for the future, it should be increased by the percentage.

Trustee Atkinson responded by questioning if the supplier is raising it by 5%, but the Village is only giving out COLA increases of 3%, then we are increasing the rate by an unnecessary 2%. Treasurer Frye responded by saying there is more that needs to be considered than just COLA increases. The board would also need to take into consideration that the water might have to be increased twice a year. Once in January when the suppliers increase the rates, and then again when the budget is passed for COLA increases for employees who are paid from the water fund.

Trustee Reynolds asked that proposed water rates be discussed in October for January implementation. Treasurer Frye indicated the water rates will take effect during the next water billing cycle, which is March 2025. Trustee Reynolds also inquired if residents will be getting notified of the water rate increase prior to the next bill. Treasurer Frye responded with saying the increase is not that significant.

Trustee Cunningham questioned the water bills regarding the new water meters. She received her water bill, but it was only for the minimum amount. Interim Clerk Kitakis

explained that the new meters that were changed out have not been read yet. There is currently only one employee trained to read the new meters and he is out due to a family death. She went on to further explain that new software has also not been updated to read the new meters. The software is currently setup to read to nearest 1,000<sup>th</sup> and the new meters read to the nearest gallon, so some system updates also needed to be completed. Interim Clerk Kitakis also went to explain that some of the residents with the new meters will have a larger bill next time because their meters were not read so instead of only have 6 weeks on their bill, they will have closer to 10 weeks on their bill. Trustee Atkinson recommended all of route 4(the new meters) being read, and then sending out new bills.

**Attorney Dillner** – Attorney Dillner asked the board to consider extending Harco's Chemicals class 8. First class 8 was issued in 2014. Harco's current taxes are at about \$150,000.

Acting President Pisarzewski said Harco's has done a great job, and the Village should extend it. Trustee Atkinson asked how many times should the board allow for class 8 extensions. Acting President Pisarzewski agreed this is something the board should look into, and set some limits.

Trustee Cunningham questioned the term limit, and if the Village is able to change the term limit. Attorney Dillner explained that this is set through the Cook County. Trustee Glaser asked if we denied the extension, how much more would the Village receive from Harco's? Trustee Atkinson replied the Village would not get any more than is already given.

Trustee Cunningham asked is Harco's mainly for storage? An employee from Harco's spoke and said they are not storage, but production. Harco's currently has 12 employees working there. Since 2017, Harco's has given back nearly \$821,000 into the communities; roughly \$117,000 a year. Trustee Reynolds questioned how these monies have been given back. The Harco's representative said through purchases and things of that nature.

Trustee Reynolds recommended imposing a limit of 2 class 8 uses. Trustee Reynolds also stated she thought the business that received 4 extensions previous was because they were expanding. Trustee Reynolds recommended that instead of trying to make an example of Harco's, that the board start implementing limits, and set a criterion for class 8 extensions; such as giving back to the community, expanding production, and increasing staff. Trustee Atkinson agreed with Trustee Reynolds on this front.

Trustee Reynolds inquired if the Village receives the sales tax from Harco's. The Harco's representative replied that they do mainly wholesale transactions.

Attorney Diller went on to explain the min/max resolution for the insurance renewal. Attorney Dillner explained that the resolution for 5/3 signatories is to remove the former clerk and add Chief Wesolowski, Treasurer Frye, and Acting President Piszczewski.

Attorney Dillner went on to explain item D & E on the meeting are the MOU vehicles agreement. This is giving an ISATT employee permissions to use the ISATT vehicles and equipment.

**Administrator Wiak** – Administrator Wiak explained the FY25 line-item transfer for the fire department. Administrator Wiak also stated the Thornton's Lion's Club is hoping to have the raffle fee waived, and she touched again on staffing needs for the office. Administrator Wiak asked that the board consider the possibility of hiring a full-time treasurer. Treasurer Frye weighed in stating the board should really consider getting a full-time treasurer / accountant due to retirees IMRF constraints. There needs to be 3 people up front. The workload is too much for two people alone, and if someone is off for any extended period of time, one person cannot do it. For this office to adequately staffed there needs to be 3 people. There should be a treasurer here at every meeting.

**Old & New business:** Trustee Reynolds asked about the funding that Thornton township receives from Thornton for the senior citizen programs, but since they are not doing the senior programs any longer how would Thornton go about getting those funds to be able to help our own seniors?

Attorney Dillner said he would look into this.

Trustee Reynolds also asked for Attorney Dillner to look into our garbage and dumpster ordinance.

Acting President Piszczewski asked for a motion to adjourn the committee meeting.

Trustee Atkinson made the motion seconded by Trustee Reynolds.

Motion was passed meeting adjourned at 8:32pm.

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Nikki Kitakis, Interim Clerk