

VILLAGE OF THORNTON, COUNTY OF COOK
MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING – JUNE 17, 2024

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 Clerk Pisarzewski, and also recorded on social media.

ROLL CALL

Present at Roll Call: Acting President Pisarzewski, Trustees Cunningham, Reynolds, Atkinson; Recreation Director Dunlop; Deputy Police Chief Wesolowski; Public Works Superintendent Roberts; Fire Chief Schweitzer.

Also Present: Administrator Beckman; Attorney S. Dillner; Treasurer Frye; Engineer Kaminsky.

Absent: Trustees Glaser, Kaye.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kathleen Andersen Reingold, Executor for Violet Andersen, 106 East Harriet Street, commented she thought it should be the whole Board that approves a liquor license. Ms. Reingold asked how Administrator Wiak would like to be contacted regarding questions so it didn't take up so much time at the Board meetings. Administrator Wiak stated she would like any questions or concerns forwarded to her in an email.

Ms. Reingold talked about how Robinson Engineer was involved in the building permit process for Skyline Furniture. Her understanding is that money will be covered in the permit costs. She questioned why there is a legal expense from the computer people regarding the website issue.

Ms. Reingold was told there was a list of the trustees and their phone numbers on the bulletin Board in the Village Hall. She was provided a copy by the Clerk but was disappointed because there was no information about the Ethics Commission.

She asked what the applicant's purpose is for 110 South Williams. Ms. Reingold is not certain whether the cover letter for the Appropriations ordinance is a legal document but it shows April 30, 2024 through May 30, 2024. That's not possible.

Ms. Reingold made comments about the chicken ordinance. This topic was discussed at length by the Board last year. The rule for "no chickens" in Thornton was put in place years ago; and although she is not against residents raising chickens, more recently, the Board voted no. Chesterton's Rule says, before changing something, you better know why you are doing it. She felt this ordinance should have gone before Planning and Development first.

Marty Pratscher, 44 Chippewa, stated he is a chicken advocate. He suggested everyone view a video on YouTube called "Why Keeping Chickens is a Bad Idea." It's a spoof; and all the information you need to know about keeping chickens is in this video.

Noel Wiora commented on the points Ms. Reingold brought up in public comment. She is not worried about bird flu. Thornton residents would do a good job in keeping their

chickens safe; and should be given the opportunity to prove it. Homewood does not allow roosters which is a good idea. Other communities are having great success with allowing residents to raise chickens. She is willing to pursue holding a workshop for residents in Thornton held by an agricultural department in a local university or college. This would teach residents how to properly take care of chickens.

Bridgette Griffin stated she has lived in Thornton for eight years. She also owns another property in the City of Chicago. In her opinion, she thought it would be great to allow chickens in Thornton. Chickens make less noise than other things like barking dogs, lawnmowers or motorcycles.

Linda Kammert, 36 Arapaho Drive, Acting President of the Library Board, accompanied by Angie Enright, stated she appeared before the Board about a month ago asking the Village to consider putting Angie on the Village insurance. This past practice has occurred three different times with three different library employees. Angie was on a health insurance plan sponsored by the State of Illinois; but when the library re-organized her hours to give her more of an opportunity to get closer to a middle class wage, she no longer qualified for that insurance. Getting insurance for one employee is not easy. No where in the information she was given did it say it could not happen. Angie Enright added the library is a component of the Village. They have the same audit, they get their PPRT through the Village, their IMRF is paid through the Village. The Village and the library are joined and intertwined. Please reconsider.

Kathleen Andersen Reingold, 106 East Harriet, stated she is not not advocating for chickens. The point is, other Villages may or may not be doing it, with or without experts, there were chickens in Thornton, and there have been chickens in Thornton until an ordinance said no. Ms. Reingold is for education, but she is not for being silly. This should have gone through the Planning and Development Commission first; and the appropriate fees paid for variance of an ordinance. Those rules should be complied with.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FY '25 Budget – Trustee Reynolds reported all the preliminary information has been included in the current budget draft. She would like to go into executive session to discuss issues brought up during police negotiations and personnel. Trustee Atkinson asked if the Board would be interested in adding the library discussion. If it's no additional cost to the Village, and the premium would not be increased, she would be in favor of allowing this to occur. Treasurer Frye commented that adding these two individuals to the Village's insurance would not affect the budget at all, as long as those costs are included in the Appropriations. She also suggested clarifying with the insurance carrier that they are a component unit of the Village. For payroll tax purposes and W2s, the Village is not involved. Basically, the question is what constitutes an employee of the Village of Thornton verses the library. Does the library qualify.

Acting President Pisarzewski asked the Board members if there is any further discussion about the budget that is not personnel related that needs to be brought up? This

should be done in open session. Treasurer Frye stated the Board was given an addendum to the budget that there were a couple of items that had been adjusted since the 6/12 budget draft. One was to remove the real estate tax expense in the administrative department budget because that deals with the land swap with the quarry. That closing has occurred, so that's being removed from the budget. The other item has to do with some formula calculations in the personnel detail worksheet. Holiday pay was not included for some of the police officers. Salaries were recalculated for that. Basically, the net change to the budget document the Board has is \$3,328 in additional expenses.

Trustee Reynolds stated the library appropriation was \$25,207.50. Is this for this year or is it carried over from last year. Treasurer Frye replied that appropriation worksheet is just a worksheet. That is just a place holder. She will update the library's details when the Appropriation ordinance itself is finalized.

Trustee Reynolds asked where the \$25,000 goes that the Village received from SOS for rent. Treasurer Frye remarked it goes into administration, into the general fund. In the budget, in anticipated revenue, under rent, it's included there.

Discussion was had regarding the returned checks and fees that have been occurring. Treasurer Frye explained those are checks that have been returned and re-issued. When the Village changed banks, there is a checklist sent to the bank with name, check number and amount. The bank will not clear a check unless it matches that list. In the transition, part of the problem has been the check doesn't match – i.e., the check may say Reynolds, Maxine but the checklist sent to the bank is Maxine Reynolds. The two don't match so it doesn't get cleared. The Village is then reimbursing the people whose checks haven't cleared and their bank is charging them. Staff is working with the bank on getting this issue resolved.

Trustee Reynolds asked about the interest charge on the American Express. Clerk Piszewski will check into this and report back to the Board.

Treasurer Frye brought up one additional item in the budget which is a line item in the police department for salaries/overtime. There was \$100,000 submitted for overtime in the '25 budget. From what she has posted in FY '24 for police overtime, it's going to be closer to \$150,000 for overtime. She asked for permission to increase that line item to \$150,000 to be consistent with the last two or three years. A consensus of the Board was to increase the overtime to \$150,000; and the rest of the budget as a whole is good except the personnel discussion in executive session.

Building Report – Trustee Atkinson stated the building report is in the packet. There was a building permit issued in May for \$180,000; so the town is still improving.

ENGINEER'S REPORT

No report.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Financial Report – Treasurer Frye provided the Board with the May revenue and expense report. This is a preliminary report based the FY'24 expense; but as part of her year-end, she will go through all the check registers from May, June and July to capture any FY'24 vouchers that were put in later.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT

110 South Williams – Attorney Dillner reported he has for Board approval the agreement for the sale and redevelopment of 110 South Williams. This was an abandoned, tax-delinquent building that the Village acquired. There has been an offer from Ken Zamperelli to purchase and rehab the building. He is paying a total of \$5,000 with all the closing costs to be paid by buyer. He will have a year after the closing to rehab the property. He is going to keep it as mixed use with residential on the second floor and business on the first floor. He understands there is limited parking there.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Coper Agreement – Administrator Wiak reported this agreement was worked on by Administrator Beckman regarding the replacement of six Village copiers. She was told Impact was the best deal. They come out for any type of maintenance issues staff may have. Acting President Piszewski asked if there were any other proposals. Administrator Wiak responded there were others, but this is the company that Administrator Beckman and IT tech Dave Watson recommended. Acting President Piszewski liked the idea of having one vendor for all the machines, but would like to see other proposals. Trustee Atkinson thought the cost was high, and agreed with wanting to see an additional proposal. Trustee Reynolds thought it might be wise to have the switch over begin the first of the year, but possibly sign the contract now.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Water Tower – President Piszewski reported the water tower is completely painted, new cathodic protection installed, and a new ladder. It looks very nice. Public Works Director Roberts stated the portable tanks are scheduled to be removed Thursday.

Thornton Women's Auxiliary – Acting President Piszewski reported the Village received a Certificate of Recognition from the Thornton Women's Auxiliary for their help and contributions to their Poppy Program.

Acting President Piszewski stated the issue of the chickens will not be discussed by the Board this evening due to there being two trustees missing. One asked it not be discussed until she is present. Trustee Reynolds commented, 10-3A-2D states it shall be unlawful to keep any farm, wild, untamed or exotic animals within the Village. She questioned where keeping bees would apply. She would like the trustees to think about that, and add this issue to the chicken discussion.

OLD BUSINESS

Trustee Cunningham asked the status of NG Distillery and Mr. Garcia. There are weeds all around the building and it looks abandoned. Attorney Dillner stated Building

Inspector Habecker should contact him regarding the status of his project. That building was sold under contingency.

Trustee Cunningham stated she works for a huge company that was hacked four years ago. Her company has 400 employees nationwide. It took about two weeks before their email was back and four weeks to have the company up and running. The Village has been hacked for months with no progress after paying “boatloads” of money. She wants IT to come to a Board meeting, explain what they’ve done, what their plans are and how much longer it’s going to take. She is afraid of another hack because she doesn’t trust the computers in the Village. With the money that’s been paid, the trustees need to see what has been done so far. Trustee Reynolds complained she doesn’t have access to her laptop. Trustee Atkinson commented there is a lot of data recovery that still needs to be done and there should be a plan.

Trustee Cunningham remarked that there is no protection at the Village; and if she tried hard enough, she could get through the current firewall. Trustee Reynolds asked where the school computers went that were donated to the Village for the training room. Discussion was had regarding updating the Village software. It was suggested to maybe pursue grants for this.

Trustee Cunningham stated, before the Village was hacked, there was a lot of discussion by the Board about fees. She would like to continue that discussion before the new calendar year. Attorney Dillner commented a lot of that was put off until the new ordinance code book was completed. Rather than modifying 15 old ordinances, it would all be done at once. When available for review, the trustees asked it be provided to them.

Attorney Dillner commented that the Tanis’ have applied for a well and sewer permit for at least two of the houses.

NEW BUSINESS

No comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for the good and welfare of the Village, a motion was made by Trustee Atkinson, seconded by Trustee Cunningham, to adjourn the Committee meeting.

All in favor.

Motion carried.

Acting President Pisarzewski adjourned the Committee meeting at 8:22 p.m.