

VILLAGE OF CLEVELAND, WISCONSIN
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE VILLAGE BOARD
MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2022
MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL/AGENDA APPROVAL. President Jake Holzwart called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance at 6:04pm on Monday, October 24, 2022, in the Manitowoc County Training Room at Lakeshore Technical College, 1290 North Ave., Cleveland, Wisconsin.

Board present: Jake Holzwart, Village President
John Ader
Jason Berdyck
Debi Cevaal
Jon Hoffman (arrived 6:36pm)
Danielle LaLonde
Barry Nelson

Board absent: None

Staff present: Stacy Grunwald, Director of Village Services

Also participating: Cleveland Fire Dept (Tony Meyer, Chief; Keith Grupe, Captain; Lydia Slotke, Treasurer)

Motion Berdyck/Nelson to approve the agenda as posted; carried without negative vote.

II. CLEVELAND FIRE DEPARTMENT: 2021 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2023 BUDGET REQUEST.

President Holzwart opened the floor to members of the Cleveland Fire Department and explained the Village Board had questions stemming from its work on the Village's 2023 budget. The following points were noted during discussion.

The Department's 2023 budget request was \$2941 higher than 2022, a 2.09% increase in the Department's overall budget and a 3.87% increase to the Village from last year. However, under the State's levy limit law, the Village's tax levy can only go up \$1317 to cover increases for its entire budget. The Board requested information from the Department on how it prepared its budget and the consequences if the Village paid the same amount as last year. Village Board members were uncomfortable cutting police and other services but increasing the payment to the Department without more detail.

The Village Board noted there was no communication from the Department other than its submittal of the annual budget request. The Department noted no one from the Village Board attended the Department's most recent budget presentation, and the Village responded the Department's meeting was on a night the Village Board had its own meeting scheduled. In the past, the Department would contact the Clerk's Office to find a mutually available night, but this had not been done in several years. The Department indicated it would consider coordinating with the President or Clerk.

The Fire Department obtains input from the local municipalities through three Fire Department Trustees that are appointed by the Department, one from each municipality. The Village's representative is former firefighter and Village Board member Mark Johnson. Most Board members did not know Mr. Johnson and he was not in contact with the Village Board to obtain input or report on Department issues. The Department acknowledged the involvement of Department Trustees did not result in communication with the Village Board.

Chief Meyer explained Department members and the three Department Trustees go through each budget item, looking at prior year expenses, year-to-date expenses, and projected needs. Adjustments are made accordingly. The amount paid by each municipality is based on equalized values, with Town of Meeme's share adjusted to reflect the 10 sections covered by the Department. He didn't believe it would be fair to the Towns or Department if the Village were to pay the prior year amount; an increase in the middle would be more respectful to everybody.

The cost for the new concrete parking lot was roughly \$320,000, paid through a mortgage from Cleveland State Bank. (This cost did not reflect donations.) Debt service for the mortgage was identified in the budget as 'Truck/Building Expense.' The Department wanted to pay off the mortgage as quickly as possible so it could invest in new trucks; their fleet included four trucks—1996, 1997, 2000, and 2007—and the 2017 pickup with the ultra-high pressure system.

The Department's SCBAs were failing, with 19 new units needed at an estimated cost of \$180,000 (12 units on the trucks and the remainder at the station as backup or for use by firefighters training at LTC.) The Department was saving excess funds instead of replacing a few units at a time to improve its chance of obtaining a Federal 90/10 matching grant for all units, which was how they were purchased 15 years ago. The Board was concerned the Department chose to install a concrete parking lot around the entire facility while allowing the firefighters' life-saving PPE to degrade and putting their safety at risk. Chief Meyer was encouraged to contact Chief Wuestenhagen of the Howards Grove Fire Department, who had been successful obtaining grant funding for multiple purchases. Captain Grupe noted many grants focused on firefighter health, such as funding weight rooms, which was not practical for Cleveland.

Routine expenses that triggered budget increases included replacing AED packs every 1 or 2 years or after use, whichever was shorter; epi pens, which have skyrocketed in price; and replacing two pagers yearly. 'Truck and Fuel' expense included end-of-year maintenance that typically cost between \$6000-\$10,000. Unspent operating funds were applied to the mortgage. The Board preferred to see unspent operating funds used to reduce the following year's budget request since the money was provided for Department operations, not debt service.

The Department noted it was a private organization and questioned whether the Village reviewed the financials of its other contractors, using snow removal provider Wagner Excavating as an example. The Board responded such a review wasn't necessary for services that were awarded competitively, particularly services paid hourly. Other contractors also were not financed primarily with public monies or exclusively performing public safety, health, and welfare functions.

The annual report indicated the Department responded to many false alarms at a multi-family building in the Village. Chief Meyer explained the term 'false alarm' was to be broadly applied, since each incident involved at minimum smoke, such as from a burnt food item, but the Department had not been needed when it arrived. He indicated there were so many alarms at the location that residents no longer exited their rooms.

The Board asked whether the Department invoiced for false alarms and supplies used in a response. The Department did not bill for two reasons: first, to maintain positive public relations generated when assisting someone in crisis, and secondly, as a volunteer organization, no one was available to manage a billing program. The Board suggested the Village could assist with that.

The Cleveland Firefighter funds were separate from the Department and used to support the Department membership through purchase of items such as shirts and jackets. Chief Meyer believed those funds should be spent on the volunteers, not on equipment, since wages were only paid to Department leadership. (The Chief received a salary of \$1000 per year; other officers were paid less.) His focus was to retain every firefighter due to the difficulty finding new recruits.

The Department used to rent building space to the public but found the firefighters were often left to clean up. The building was open regularly to the 4H and East Wind Garden Club, and occasionally to the Cleveland Athletic Club. It was also used for personal functions by the Department members.

The Board referenced its previous proposal to fund Department capital items through Village debt, which would save interest costs due to the Village's lower municipal rate and provide financial stability and long-term financial planning for major capital purchases. The Trustees believed their questions were appropriate and necessary since the Board was cutting police and other services, and fire services shouldn't be exempt. They were especially concerned with the long-term viability of the Department and the Village's ability to fund it. The Fire Department noted the police department was not 24/7 like the fire department.

The Newton Fire Department was paged automatically for calls in the Department's territory that involve smoke or fire, to supplement the number of responders. Newton's trucks and buildings were financially supported by the municipality.

The Board and Department agreed better communication would ease many concerns. President Holzwart suggested the Department attend Board meetings quarterly, or at least one meeting earlier in the year, so the only conversation wouldn't be the budget request. Chief Meyer added the Department's meetings were held first Mondays about 9pm and were open to any paying member. The Department encouraged those present to complete applications if they were not already members.

III. YEAR 2023 BUDGET PREPARATION. The Board held over discussion to the next meeting.

IV. MEETING SCHEDULE

- A. TUE OCT 25..... PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE, 6PM**
- B. WED OCT 26..... TREE PLANTING AT DAIRYLAND PARK, 9AM**
- C. TUE NOV 1..... MUNICIPAL COURT, 5PM**
- D. WED NOV 2 DEADLINE TO SUBMIT BUDGET FOR PUBLICATION ON 11/07**
- E. WED NOV 2 PLAN COMMISSION, 6PM**
- F. TUE NOV 8..... GENERAL ELECTION**
- G. MON NOV 14 FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE, 6PM. Cancelled.**
- H. TUE NOV 15..... HUMAN RESOURCES AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE, 6PM. Cancelled.**
- I. TUE NOV 22..... VILLAGE BOARD/BUDGET HEARING, 6PM**
- J. NOV 24-25..... STAFF HOLIDAY; HALL CLOSED**
- K. TUE NOV 29..... PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE, 6PM**
- L. SCHEDULE OTHER MEETINGS AS NEEDED.** Village Board special meetings to work on the 2023 budget: Monday, November 14, and Tuesday, November 15, 6pm. Village Board special meeting to adopt budget: Tuesday, December 6, 6pm.

V. ADJOURNMENT. Motion Nelson/Ader to adjourn; carried without negative vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

/S/ Stacy Grunwald

Stacy Grunwald
Director of Village Services