

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**  
**MINUTES OF VILLAGE OF BLANCHESTER REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**  
**January 11, 2024**

The Village of Blanchester Council met in regular session on January 11, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. with the honorable Mayor John Carman, presiding.

All Present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance and had Opening Prayer

<b>Roll Call</b>	Mr. William Garner	Present
	Mr. Don Gephart	Present
	Mr. John Hill	Present
	Mr. Reilly Hopkins	Present
	Mrs. Lynn Lewis	Present
	Mr. Josh Parks	Present

**Agenda**

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mr. Hopkins to approve agenda.

**Vote:**    Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
              Nay – None

**Motion Passed**

**Guest Speaker**

Commissioner Kerry Steed thanked Mayor Carman and council for the last-minute accommodations to speak. He stated that he has been the commissioner for the last 10 years and would like to remain the commissioner. Most people may know him as the pizza man, because he has owned Generations Pizzeria for the last 30 years. The business has been in his family since 1962. As your commissioner, elections happen and Reilly is running for the same seat that I currently hold. This election is bigger than the local race.

**Public Comment**

**James Constable** – 135 N. Orchard View Lane, Blanchester, OH. Mr. Constable suggested that the subject Watercrafts, Chapter 97-97.01-97.36 be removed from the Code of Ordinance Police since Blanchester doesn't have lakes or rivers. At the last council meet, four members voted to not to allow any discussion for six months for items that was voted on and failed. He would like to the solicitor to address that issue. He was disappointed that the appropriations because it doesn't tell you how much money we have. There was a \$54k increase in his increase. The office confirmed that last year's amount was incorrect and this year's amounts were correct. Since 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 changed 9 times, 2022. 4 times, 2023 5 times.

### **Becky Campbell**

115 W. Burrough St. Blanchester, OH-She addressed the roads in front of McDonalds. Who is responsible for the road? Mayor stated that it is an ODOT road, but the Blanchester Street Commissioner works with ODOT to repair the roads. He was planning on working on that one spot. We hope 28 gets resurfaced soon. Who is responsible for the railroad tracks on Wright Street? Mayor responded the railroad is responsible. Some of the railroad crossings are holding up better than others. Ms. Campbell also asked why single people without kids have to pay for the school tax. Mayor Carman stated school tax is based on who lives in the school district and referred her to the Blanchester School Board.

### **Minutes**

It was moved by Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Hill to approve minutes from the December 28, 2024.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

### **Motion Passed**

### **Bills and Reallocations**

Mr. Parks asked if Jasmine Hopkins is related to Mr. Hopkins. She is not. If she was, he would have to sustain to all.

It was moved by Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Parks to approve the current Bills and Reallocations.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay - None

### **Motion Passed**

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Finance Committee**

Don Gephart reported that the finance committee discussed reasons for not getting qualified applicants when we post for a finance officer. They looked for suggestions on who should be on the interviewing committee when hiring a village officer. The finance committee recommended in the future of hiring a fiscal officer that the mayor, finance chair, chairman of board public utilities, finance employee and admin assistant. The finance committee's other recommendation is to have a member of finance attend all department head's budget meetings. Mr. Gephart announced the final recommendation is to hire Regina Johnson as the new fiscal officer based on the offer letter and recommendation of Mayor Carman.

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to hire Regina Johnson as the fiscal officer.

Josh Parks requested to discuss the hiring of new fiscal officer. Mayor advised they would have to enter into an executive session

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mr. Parks to amend agenda to add Executive Session to discuss ORC 121.22G1. To consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, discipline, promotion, demotion, or compensation of a public employee or official, or the investigation of charges or complaints against a public employee, official.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay - None

**Executive Session:**

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to enter into executive session at 7:19 p.m. Mayor Carman, solicitor and council were present.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, John Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Josh Parks  
Nay - None

**Motion to return from executive session at 7:35 p.m.**

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mr. Parks to return from executive session at 7:35 p.m. Mayor Carman, solicitor and council were present.

Roll Call:

Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks,  
Nay - None

**Mayor Carman announced prior to going in to executive session:**

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to hire Regina Johnson as the fiscal officer.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis  
Sustained- Mr. Garner  
Nay – Mr. Parks

**Motion Passed**

**Safety & Service** – nothing

**Cemetery** –

Tom Lee announced that we will not be retaining M.E.L.S for lawn mowing services. We will be retaining D&B Trees and Outdoor Services. They are a local business and Vernon David Daniels. He is related to Paul Daniels that has sustained from all voting.

**Old Business**

**Hiring an Administrator**

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Hopkin to table the hiring an administrator.

**Vote:** Yea – Mr. Gardner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Lee, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

**Motion Passed**

**New Business**

ORC 731.10

At the first meeting in January of each year, the legislative authority of a village shall immediately proceed to elect a president pro tempore from its own number, who shall serve until the first meeting in January next after his election. The legislative authority may provide such employees for the village as it determines, and such employees may be removed at any regular meeting by a majority of the members elected to such legislative authority.

It was moved by Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Gephart for nomination Reilly Hopkins for pro tempore for 2024.

Mayor Carman asked if there were any other nominations. Josh Parks nominated Lynn Lewis, she declined, Josh Parks nominated John Hill, he declined. Josh Parks stated he just wanted to give someone else a chance.

**Vote:** Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Lee, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay –

**Motion Passed**

Village of Blanchester Email for council:

Mayor Carman asked IT to provide council members village emails which make it easy for us. This will be best used because you are not subject to public records on your person accounts. Instructions were sent out to each member.

2024 Appointments:

Finance: Don Gephart/Chairman, Reilly Hopkins, Lynn Lewis

Safety/Service: John Hill/Chairman, William Garner, Josh Parks

Fire Board: Don Gephart, Mayor Carman-alternate

EMA: John Carman once year meeting with an elected community

Solid Waste: Reilly Hopkins

Planning Commission - Lynn Lewis to replace Harry Brumbaugh

Clinton County Community Action: Cindy Sutton

Chamber of Commerce: Don Gephart

Street Commissioner: Paul Daniels

Regional Planning: Mayor Carman

Reilly Hopkins motion to approved presented proposal.

Josh Parks stated that he would like to sit on Finance Committee. Mayor Carman noted Mr. Parks' comments, but these are the appointments that he would like to stand.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Gephart to accept proposal for 2024 appointments.

Vote:     Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
              Nay –

Motion Passed

Parks and Recreation 2024 Schedule:

Reilly Hopkins offered his full support to the Park Board schedule as they do so much for the community.

Planning Commission:

John Carman, Cindy Sutton, Lynn Lewis, Verona Sester, Richard Braley

Cemetery:

Tom Lee, Paul Daniels, Carla Flannery

### 2024 Schedule

Mayor Carman presented the second and third Thursday of the month, except in June, July and August will be second Thursday, September, October back to two meetings and November and December 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Open to discussion. Reilly Hopkins asked if an exception could be strategically be split in the middle of the month. December 30<sup>th</sup> was voted on to allow departments to prepare for end of month and end of the year reporting.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Hill to accept 2024 Council Schedule including December 12<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> schedule.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Parks  
Nay –

### **Motion Passed**

### **New Business:**

Ordinance 2024.001 Establish limits and setting amounts for the fiscal officer to pay the limits and establish amounts. Set as an emergency.

First meeting of every year

Follow for accounting purposes 2024

Amounts to pay bills

Set amounts for council members and council

Reestablish pay scale

BPA to pay 33% common areas

Fiscal officer to pay \$3000

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Hopkins to accept Ordinance 2024.001 Establish Limits and Setting Amounts for the fiscal officer.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Parks  
Nay –

### **Motion Passed**

2023.027 Ordinance 2022.009 to amend adding cemetery rules and declaring emergency

Gephart, reached out to other township, 20% less purchase price, authorized.

We are not looking to buy any back. We have plenty of room for additional graves.

Urn building is a popular service and the cemetery board should look into the cost.  
Tom Lee follow up with estimates.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to accept amending Ordinance 2022.009 adding cemetery rules and declaring emergency.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Parks  
Nay –

**Motion Passed**

Reducing electric charges:  
Council doesn't have any say over electrical charges. Should reach out to BPA. Asked why he was made of aware of this. Mayor reminded him that he has.  
Mr. Hopkins, suggested he ask for a memorandum Josh asked for someone to come to the meeting to explain the amounts.

6 million dollars in carry over. Police budget issue we are running out of money.

Take the burden off by reducing electron charges.

18.50 electric charge

Spoke tax commissioner Mathew Hollis about transferring funds. This request does have to go to state. Resolution with a reason why we need these funds.

AARP- RELEASES THIS GRANT YEARLY. TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL community members and senior members. and elderly. He knows the pickleball Mr. Lee. Educated him that we have applied for this grant three – four times. People have asked him about pickleball. Hopefully if we go joint ventures on the legacy grant, we would have better success with this grant. The municipal is such a great location and the parks have had several events behind the municipal. They have done the basketball court and the upfront. The intension to put a single pickleball on the west side of the people. The parks board pulled some figures on it. The average grant amount is 11, 900. The estimate cost is 18k and hopefully if 20% down and divide it among our immunity it's a low cost. Tom Lee four times in a row and haven't been awarded. However, it is worth working into. Josh parks asked if a match was offered. Tom Lee replied yes 25%

Combine with another grant.

Department Reports

Solicitor – Nothing to report.

Parks Dept – Met with flooring company for the gym and the contractor. Next two weeks. Flooring representative came in we may have to take up 360' that is buckled. Hold the flooring at last year's cost. Possible savings on lighting. Need stuff moved out. Hallway too. 4-5 chalk board can be tossed.

Mr. Hopkins rezoning upstairs would like the desk. Mr. Jackson decline due to the weight. No one wants to lift the desk so maybe a moving company can move it.

Police – Chief Houghton compiled an end of year report for council. A copy of the presented report will be filed with the minutes.

#### Report Highlights:

Admission Statement

Remodeling

Cruisers replaced with reliable vehicles

Office remodeling

Claimed used office furniture from Hamilton County

Currently using trust fund money to replace upstairs training room for community, officer training

Neighborhood watch program meetings

Codification of Ordinances chronological order translate into a usable manual. Officer can utilize to enforce

2023 drug sweeps/safety sweeps

Senior center talks about trust fund-levy

5k grant fixed hallway going upstairs

Firearms training-got with water department and put a range out and the heartland donated a building. The table was donated from Mayor's employer Airborne MX.

The Tahoe cruisers were free to the village by implement the USDA grant.

Computers legacy fund

Police Officer position open, but hard to fill

Officer investigates homeless encampments

Participate hope land Blanchester family

No shave November- donating 300 to exchange

Recognized local hero with Councilman Hopkins

Parks is awesome what they do with their events

Activity 2023:

Yearly call records 1205, annual incident reports 434, traffic crashes 59, traffic stops 464, assisting other agency 413 totaling 2575 activity.

Yearly criminal arrest 114, traffic citations 101, all most 400 warnings, security check 10,000 and patrolled 10k miles.

Thefts, fraud, domestic, rape, suspicious person or vehicle, child endangering.

Retention of Offices:

Utilized Academy reimbursement

Officers concerned about upcoming levy

Competitive wages and holidays off



Street – Took care of trip hazard in front of Municipal Building. Performed maintenance on street sweeper, scrapped rust out of the hopper, and will paint the inside. The cold planner was returned from being repaired and next week they will work on the area in front of Taco Bell. Paul is looking forward to the new year with a great crew.

Josh Parks asked about the parking spots in front of UDF. Paul replied it is too cold to paint. Josh Parks asked how the salt is looking for the winter time and if the crew works after hours to prepare streets. Paul replied the salt stock is good and the last cold day they were out spreading material out at 3:00 a.m. They always prepare ahead of winter storms.

Josh Parks asked about the street repairs for 2024. Paul replied he will present a list of streets to be prepared in 2024 in the spring.

Don Gephart asked about the plate in front of CVS. Paul replied he wasn't exactly sure but it was moved over. Duke Energy is waiting on parts before some of the areas can be resurfaced.

Zoning –Jeff Hurst stated once the communication is moved upstairs, he can move his office.

Fiscal –Carla Flannery reported Spectrum quoted a \$1000 to run wire to the new zoning office. Mayor Carman asked to keep him updated and there might be another line to reuse. Reilly Hopkins suggested I call Spectrum and ask where is the customer service because Alta-Fiber wants a letter of support. She also reported that Jack is working hard on completing the end of month reports.

Mayor - nothing

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Parks that the meeting be adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hill, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Mr. Parks  
Nay – None

Motion Passed

Approved: January 25, 2024  
Mayor: John M. Carman  
Attest: Carla Flannery

