

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
MINUTES OF VILLAGE OF BLANCHESTER REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
December 28, 2023

The Village of Blanchester Council met in regular session on December 28, 2023, 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

Roll Call	Mr. Harry Brumbaugh	Present
	Mr. William Garner	Present
	Mr. Don Gephart	Present
	Mr. Reilly Hopkins	Present
	Mrs. Lynn Lewis	Present
	Mr. Josh Parks	Present

Mayor John Carman conducted Oath of Offices

John Hill
Don Gephart

Chief Robert Houghton conducted Oath of Office

Mayor John Carman

Agenda

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

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

Motion Passed

Guest Speaker

Phil Blankenship explained that the village plan runs from September 1 to August 31. Our current carrier is serious which is Benicare last few cycles. Our contract is a 24/12 under contract under 12 months but would go back 12 months to pick up rears. The specific deductible is 35k which is family deductible. The first 35k comes out of the village then the insurance company starts to pick up. There is an aggregate up to 50k to decrease the cost. The village takes on a little more risk up to 50k range then it pays 100%. The dental is all self-funded all by the village. No deductible no insurance behind it purely a self-funded plan.

There were only three months before we got to the end of the contract. The month of August was the worse month. A lot of people got sick in August but it didn't show up until September. We dodged the bullet because we already signed a new contract. We had a bad, August, September, and October. Last month of November the medical is start to settle down.

Mr. Blankenship continued to discuss the cost for claims and fees and total of plan. We have 9 singles and 18 families insured. There had two people in the box which we don't like to see that to see. The two claimants are 50% of the specific which is over 35k. We had three years of excellent returns on this particular type of situations. We can only hope no one gets sick.

Mr. Hopkins suggested we are not going to get as good of a renewal deal. Mr. Blankenship replied that it depends because at this time they haven't paid out of pocket yet. The village got hit, but if it runs about the specific then the aggregate pockets get hit then renewal fee will be affected. Mr. Hopkins asked if they look at this information. Mr. Blankenship replied they definitely do. They have all the information that we have accumulated over the last 20 years. Their underwriters are looking at this information to make a determination.

Public Comment

James Constable – 135 N. Orchard View Lane, Blanchester, OH. On the village website under facts about the police department has the failed ordinance 2023-006 from November. It should be replaced with the correct Ordinance 2023-021.

After doing some research, he figured out why the village wanted to extend 99-year lease on the senior citizen building it was never signed, never dated after 30 years they corrected. He asked for a public records request for a signed copy and he was told there wasn't one. He has the unsigned copy and undated copy of the website. He stated if we had been honest in the first place, we wouldn't have had three readings. He went to the budget finance committee reading 1.5 million with 1 million coming in 800k going to police department. Do the math, it isn't going to work. If the levy does pass, it goes in affect in July 1, not paid until April the following year. A year and three months with nothing coming in for next year. He suggested we needed to dig in to figure out what we are going to do.

Richard Weis – 502 Center St. Blanchester, OH. Mr. Weis stated he attended the safety meeting and during the meeting he heard Chief say he would be the first to resign if there is a 40% cut. Mr. Weis also commented on Josh Parks Facebook page and how no one agrees on things. If everyone wants to get the 1%, or tax levy cut, everyone needs to come together and not bash each other people in this room on social media to get votes for himself or herself. He doesn't want the police department to go back to the way it was beforehand. He stated there were missing police reports. He spent 20 years in the military and has never had this much trouble in a village. We finally have a good police chief and he gives credit for Mr. Parks for helping finding him because the one before didn't do his job. Mr. Weis would appreciate if we would do better by improving the village.

Reiley Hopkins – 415 E. John St. Blanchester, OH ask to deliver a public comment. Mayor Carman allowed comment. First, he stated to Mr. Weis that no individual from council had anything to do with finding our wonderful Police Chief. It was actually a recommendation from our mayor. Mr. Weis spoke out and said it was what he heard the Chief say. Chief said he would be the first person to resign. Mr. Hopkins agreed that statement was correct. Mr. Weis apologized and stated he must have miss understood something he read on social media.

Secondly, Mr. Hopkins went on to say a lot of nonpositive news gets spread from this podium. He wanted to shed some light on a very positive note. He wanted to be the first to tell Mr. Harry Brumbaugh thank you so much for your 50 plus years. He has served 50 plus years for the Village of Blanchester that is probably undercutting it. For his years volunteer service, being an educator, being a mayor, and being council member. What you don't know about Harry is that he has always rise about service to service on boards. We also should thank his better half, Judy Brumbaugh. Mr. Hopkins went on to say we are losing a great asset and a great friend. He knows this little speech and that from the bottom of his heart if there were a wall of fame for Blanchester you would certainly be the first on there.

Minutes

It was moved by Mrs. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Hopkins to approve minutes from the December 14th regular meeting.

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

Motion Passed

Bills and Reallocations

Josh Parks asked Mayor Carman if he could explain why there is more coming in than going out in the general fund? Mayor suggested he look at the other spots. He would have to ask Jack who was in the finance meeting. The number zero's out at the bottom of the reallocation spreadsheet.

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

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

Motion Passed

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Don Gephart reported finance had a special meeting to review the appropriations for next year. He also stated finance would like to recommend that Paul Daniels get a two-step raise starting next pay period.

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mr. Hopkins to give Paul Daniels a two-step raise starting next pay period.

Josh Parks questioned the amount of the step raise since a motion was presented. Mr Gephart answered no because it was already discussed to give him a two-step raise. Mayor Carman presented the village pay rate and explained it was a bi-weekly \$60.00 versus \$120.00. Mayor Carman mentioned Paul's worked ethic and he puts in more time than most, doesn't complain and has to be pushed to take a raise. He thinks of his people first and he is just like our police chief.

He applies for grants on his own and he probably took a \$20.00 hour pay cut to come to the village. Mr. Parks asked what kind of grant he applied for. Mayor Carman explained he applied for a \$75k salt barn. Mr. Hopkins also commented that Paul helped get \$15k for the sidewalk stuff that will be coming next year. Mayor Carman replied that Paul made a deal with Clinton County Solid Waste. Paul and his crew, BPA will put in the pad that Clinton County Solid Waste paid for.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis,
Nay - Josh Parks

Motion Passed

Don Gephart also recommended Donnie Sturgill a one-step raise. He also would like it known that the raise comes out of the Parks and Recreation Fund not the general fund just like Paul Daniels' raise comes out of the Street Department fund not the general fund.

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mr. Hopkins to give Donnie Sturgill a one-step raise starting next pay period.

Mayor Carman made it known that Donnie was one of those employees that goes out of his way if he sees something whether it's his job or not, he takes care of it. Mayor added in the same light as our Chief and Paul, Donny is another employee that goes out of his way if he sees something whether it is his job or not, he takes care of it. Josh Parks asked when Donnie received his last raise and Mayor Carman explained the last time anyone got a raise was last year for cost of living. Donnie Sturgill is at step H last raise 1/1/2023.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis, Josh Parks
Nay - none

Motion Passed

Don Gephart recommended that the Temporary Appropriations to be approved. Don asked if a motion is needed. Mayor Carman stated that ordinance 2023-024 is the 2024 Temporary Appropriations which will take us through April. We have to pass a permanent appropriation at the end of March. Chief got 65k cut out of his budget. Police Department can sustain additional cut and people better hope the levy passes. Josh Parks ask 865k that isn't a cut. It is a cut because we are only giving him \$800k. Josh Parks questioned the time and date that the appropriations were turned in. It was turned in today at 2:00 p.m. Josh Parks asked if we need to pass as an emergency. Mayor Carman stated basically nothing has change this year from last year. The Chief is going to have to make up the difference with grants or donations.

It was moved by Mr. Gephart and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to approve Ordinance 2023.024 to set up as an emergency order.

Vote: Yea – Mr. Brumbaugh, Mr. Garner, Mr. Gephart, Mr. Hopkins, Mrs. Lewis,
Nay - Josh Parks

Motion Passed

Safety & Service – Josh Parks added that a safety meeting was held today. Chief ask us to change ordinance on codification list 32.02 form having to live in the county to put no residency required.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Parks to allow the solicitor to review and correct Ordinance 32.02 sub section B only police policy.

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

Motion Passed

Chief asked that we raise the handicap fine \$250.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Parks to approve allow the handicap fine be raised to \$250.00

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

Motion Passed

Sidewalk by flag pole needs to be repaired to eliminate trip hazard. Reily Hopkins asked Paul Daniels to review area and repair. Paul Daniels suggested jacking up the slab.

Cemetery – Solicitor suggested council to speak about 2023.026 Cemetery Amendment. Don Gephart spoke about he hasn't had a time to speak about the cemetery ordinance. He asked to have it tabled until next meeting.

About buying plots back at 20% below the price they were purchased at. Plots maybe repurchased at the 20% less purchased price. Mr. Hopkins asked to have the wording changed to make it sound less as a mandated buyback. Solicitor agreed he would change the wording. Tom Lee spoke about the new regulations to remove all decorations from cemetery by March 31, 2024. The decorations have to be on the stone because it is impossible to mow. Mr. Hopkins

asked if the cemetery board considered if they would keep the decorations for 30 days. Mr. Lee stated once this is past the regulations will be placed in the news paper and if the decorations isn't removed by March 31, 2024, we will discard them. Most cemeteries already have these regulations in place.

Old Business

Hiring an Administrator:

Mayor Carman reported on the request to hire an administrator. Mr. Parks asked if anyone wanted to talk about hiring an administrator. ORC states we cannot put it on ballot the residence would have to petition to put it on the ballot.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Garner to allow the solicitor to draft an ordinance to be presented at next council meeting.

Mayor Carman asked if there is a discussion. Mr. Gephart announced he would like to discuss the same as he did at the last discussion. He thinks the BPA does a good job for us and they are elected by the people to hold that office. We have a top-of-the-line water plant, the electric doesn't break down like it does everywhere else. Ram Reddy saves us millions. The septic and water plant are up to date. The water tower will need to be replaced. He is happy with BPA. Reilly Hopkins stated that if we are going to do something as important as this we should done just and brought to us in a legislation format whether than a free motion. Mayor Carman spells out in terms, what people want, wants expected.

The solicitor read from the statue that, "The legislative authority of the village may establish the position of village administrator by ordinance." It can't be done by motion this would be a motion to draft an ordinance to establish an administrator. The first reading would take place after the ordinance is presented.

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

Motion Failed

Chickens:

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by Mr. Garner to have the solicitor draft a new chicken ordinance allowing chickens in the village and to sell their eggs in the village.

Discussion:

Josh Parks have had residents asked about having chickens in the village. He is bringing up the request again because he believes residents should be able to raise chickens. Due to the cost of eggs, the residents should have a right to raise chickens, except roosters. He suggested a document to be draft with perimeters and have a permit. A \$20.00 permit was mentioned. The solicitor commented that the ordinance was draft in February and the permit was \$25.00. Josh Parks thinks there should be a limit of chickens allow. Solicitor stated the last ordinance allowed 6 hens per residence chickens no roosters, and no selling of eggs.

Harry Brumbaugh asked if the ordinance would include where they can put it and how far from another person's property, because the last time we talked about it the cost would be around \$1500.00.

Mr. Hopkins spoke up to allow formality because Mr. Garner wasn't clear what was on the first motion. The solicitor explained that this ordinance was discussed in February with the same issue but wasn't passed. Mayor Carman stated the selling of eggs would be new to the ordinance. Mr. Parks stated his opinion on the boxes, but he just wants them enclosed.

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

Motion Failed

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Gephart to put moratorium on any new discussion for six months on items that have failed.

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

Motion Passed

New Business

Ordinance 2023.025 imposing a moratorium on the cultivating, processing, and retail sale of adult use cannabis in the Village of Blanchester, Ohio.

The solicitor explained that the Ohio revised code gives municipalities the right to limit or restrict dispensaries. Blanchester is going to do conduct additional research to the cost benefit analysis of allowing dispensary in Blanchester or alternative zoning specific areas. This will allow time before dispensary are already set up. This is like a permanent hold. This ordinance is by emergency.

It was moved by Mr. Parks and seconded by no one to suspend this and add a 6 months period. Motion failed due to no one second.

Motion Failed

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mrs. Lewis to approve by emergency Ordinance 2023.025 Imposing a moratorium on the cultivating, processing, and retail sale on adult use cannabis in the Village of Blanchester, OH.

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

Motion Passed

Department Reports

Solicitor – Jim Barbieri looked into the zoning issue discussed at the public hearing for the properties that fall under the category of not in use or conditional permissible use. If people can continue on living in the house. He also looked in to the removable of the building coving cost. The cost can be done through the Municipalities certify the auditor. He has the instructions to certify the auditor so a lien can be put on the property. Mayor Carman will work on the estimates and present it to council.

Parks – Paul Jackson reported they still need to schedule the gym construction. Mayor Carman asked if the auditorium is locked up. Mr. Jackson stated the auditorium is all booked up. He thanked council for Donnie Sturgill's raise.

Police – Nothing to report

Street – Nothing to report

Zoning – Jeff Hurst stated that the food pantry can start putting their supplies in his office. There are two freezers being delivered January 9th.

Fiscal – Carla Flannery explained that she is aware of the delay in getting documents to council. She ensured everyone that Jack, Lindsey and herself are doing what they are supposed to be doing and they will work with the new fiscal officer to get a routine process down. Mr. Hopkins acknowledge the work that is done.

Mayor – Quotes for carpet, not enough squares to cover space, Mayor will be working for Jeff to get the material and install carpet. Mr. Hopkins stated a professional installer should be hired.

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mr. Gephart to spend up to \$5,000.00 on improvements on zoning office flooring.

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

Discussion: Mr. Hopkins noted that Mr. Brumbaugh had some strong feelings about the zoning department remaining on the first floor. Mr. Brumbaugh stated when considering the type of people coming in to the zoning department it would be much easier. The engineer room belonged to the zoning department when the building was purchased. That room didn't always belong to the BPA.

Motion Passed

It was moved by Mr. Hopkins and seconded by Mrs. Lewis that the meeting be adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Vote: Yea – All
Nay – None

Motion Passed

Approved: January 11, 2024
Mayor: John M. Carman
Attest: Carol J. Henry

