

# ***VILLAGE OF HEBRON***

## COMBINED COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING MINUTES

May 18, 2022

6:00 pm

This meeting was held both remotely and in person.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Village Administrator John Trujillo asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Roll Call**

Councilmembers in attendance: Council President Dr. Valerie Mockus, Councilmembers Stacy Stoner, Paige Seymour, Kenney Nauer, Rich Moore and Annelie Porter.

Others in attendance: Mayor James Layton, Village Administrator John Trujillo, Village Fiscal Officer Deborah Morgan, Officer Hannah Looney, and Clerk of Council/Administrative Assistant Christina Furbee.

Visitors: Randy Wolf, Gary Mockus, Chenxuan Yin, Xinyan Gat, Donard Myers, Refugee-Canyon Joint Fire District Interim Fire Chief Ryan Wyse, Lieutenant Clancy, Lieutenant Jason Woods, Firefighter Chris Tucker, Clifford Mason, Rose Mason, Jim Friend, Pam Friend, Marc Weekley

Visitors in attendance remotely: Patty Costello

### **Acknowledge Visitors**

Mr. Trujillo acknowledged the visitors in attendance. Dr. Mockus introduced two Denison Students, Ada and Heather, whose flight back to China was cancelled.

### **Visitor Comments**

None

### **Pending Legislation**

Mr. Trujillo read the titles of pending legislation and said all will be presented for a third reading at the next Council Meeting.

**RESOLUTION 22-05** - A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN THE ODOT ROAD SALT CONTRACTS AWARDED IN 2022- Third Reading

**RESOLUTION 22-06**- A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE VILLAGE OF HEBRON TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE LICKING COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT-Third Reading

**ORDINANCE 05-22**- AN ORDINANCE TO APPROVE CURRENT REPLACEMENT PAGES TO THE HEBRON CODIFIED ORDINANCES, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY-Third Reading

Mr. Trujillo said the Village received a call today about an annexation request for a 72-acre property on E. Main Street. He said more information will be brought to Council as it is received.

Mr. Trujillo said there has been discussion from M.I. Homes and Pulte Group about interest in developing property in Hebron. He said the Village met with both companies today. He said the Village also met with Jim Lenner this morning and discussed TIFs as the price of properties and development is more expensive this year. Mr. Trujillo said Mr. Lenner will come in soon and explain the process.

### **Committees:**

**Finance/Audit** (*Valerie Mockus-Chair, Stacy Stoner, Rich Moore*)

None

**Public Works/Utility Services** (*Annelle Porter-Chair, Kenney Nauer, Paige Seymour*)

Mrs. Porter said she talked to the Public Works Superintendent about installing a stop sign at the intersection of N. High Street and Hope Drive, as Hope Drive is being used a great deal now. Mr. Trujillo said the stop sign has been installed.

**Planning & Visioning** (*Stacy Stoner-Chair, Valerie Mockus, Annelle Porter*)

None

**Other Items not listed**

Council Vacancy

Mayor Layton said Village Solicitor Wesley K. Untied sent out information about the process to fill a Council vacancy. He said Council has 30 days from Councilmember Richard Moore's effective date of June 1<sup>st</sup> to fill his unexpired term. If Council does not appoint someone to fill the vacant seat within that time, Mayor Layton will appoint someone. Mayor Layton said the Village will advertise on June 1<sup>st</sup> and start the process of obtaining letters of interest.

**Safety** (*Kenney Nauer-Chair, Rich Moore, Paige Seymour*)

Fire District

Mr. Nauer said the Village is trying its best to determine the best Fire coverage for Hebron. Mayor Layton said Council has not voted on anything yet. He said Council directed him to meet with West Licking Fire District to get the fine details of a proposal from them.

Village Fiscal Officer Deborah Morgan said Mayor Layton contacted her and asked her to go back over the numbers for Fire District options. She said Mayor Layton forwarded her a letter from Clifford Mason and she wanted to address a couple points he made in that letter. She presented a copy of the ledger from Refugee-Canyon Joint Fire District and said it matched up to her previous report of Fire District expenditures in 2020 & 2021. She said in 2019, the amount received from the contract with Union Township for south of the railroad tracks was \$907,183.60. The total from Hebron alone was \$435,959.89, so the revenue received was \$1,343,143.49 which was higher than the two figures, so the extra needed was pulled from the carryover and any small, miscellaneous revenue we received throughout that year. Since the levy in Union Township failed, Union Township is receiving \$820,948 per year for the entire Union Township area, and that number comes from the Licking County Auditor, with an amount taken from that from Granville Township to service north of the railroad tracks, which clearly does not leave the amount we had received from Union Township. So that leaves us short and Union Township has stated that they do not have any money to provide, so we are left looking for more letting money.

Mrs. Morgan said since current Hebron levies are producing just over \$400,000, to accomplish more funding to run the Fire Department by itself, Hebron would have to attempt to pass a levy. She said to get \$1 Million more, a 12-mill levy would need to be passed in addition to what Hebron is currently paying. To get \$1.5 Million, an 18-mill levy would need to be passed.

She said if Hebron chose not to try to attempt to pass a levy, then the option would be to pull from the General Fund, but the Zoning, Economic Development, Police, Public Works and Parks would all be affected by that. She said in 2021, the Village only had a difference of \$343,744.20 between what was received in the General Fund and what was expended.

Mrs. Morgan said the other option is to join the West Licking Fire District. She said West Licking's effective millage is 8.9, and in order to gain what the Fire District is looking for as a Hebron-only Fire Department, West Licking has a much bigger tax base, and a much bigger voting area than we do, so it would seem to produce a better attempt at passing a levy. She said has been asked to offer her opinion about the best financial option for the Village, and with the information she has been provided, joining West Licking looks to be the best option financially for the Fire Department as a whole.

Mrs. Morgan said Mayor Layton also asked her to speak about the building bond. She said she called Dinsmore & Shohl LLP, who is our bond counsel, and they are also the bond counsel for West Licking Fire District. They said since it is a tax-exempt bond and West Licking is another public entity, one option is for West Licking to assume the bond and take over the debt. They would do a debt analysis for West Licking and transfer the bond. She said it would be within debt limitations but it is doable. Mrs. Morgan said the other option, which in their opinion is the best option because it is an easier process, is to lease the Fire Station to West Licking. She said West Licking would pay the bond payment, but it would still be the Village of Hebron's building. She said the debt is scheduled to be paid in full on 12-1-2032 so we could do a lease to reflect that and any other terms that the entities agree upon, but the station would remain the property of the Village of Hebron. She said a similar process could be done with the equipment and everything in the station as well.

Mr. Wolf said the West Licking Fire Chief was receptive to either option. Mayor Layton concurred.

Mayor Layton said Fire Lieutenant Chris Clancy noticed at the last Fire District meeting, Mr. Sharps and Mr. Moore seemed to have different thoughts about the time frame to retract from the Fire District and he would like to get some clarification about when it might take place. Mayor Layton said the Village is dealing with Village Solicitor Wesley K. Untied to determine the process. He said the first issue we need to address is to make a decision about what it will take to get out of the Fire District. He said that has to be completed by August 15<sup>th</sup>, and if we are going to decide to go with the West Licking Fire District, we need to make the decision by September 1<sup>st</sup> so that the taxes collected can be paid to West Licking in 2023.

Mayor Layton said a comment was made that Council has already made its decision. He said no decisions have been made yet.

Mayor Layton said Hebron resident/previous Fire Chief Clifford Mason spoke at the last meeting about the Fire District. He said Mr. Mason went over numbers and his opinion is that with Union Township's 6 mills and the Village of Hebron's 4 mills continuing levy, maybe Hebron would support an additional 3-4 mills. Mr. Mason said over 40 years went into the Fire District and he hates to see it go away. Mayor Layton said he hates to see it go away too. Mr. Mason said most of the citizens are not in favor of giving away the Hebron Fire Department.

Mayor Layton said there have been 16 meetings so far where Fire District discussion has taken place, and all of those meetings, along with the agendas, have been publicized. He read statements the Village received from citizens who noted that they want the Fire Department to stay in Hebron. He read aloud a letter received from previous Mayor Mike McFarland who noted he feels the best decision would be for Hebron to join the West Licking Fire District. He read aloud an email received from Mr. Mason who encouraged Council to do its best to keep the Fire Department in Hebron. Mayor Layton said Mr. Mason encouraged Mrs. Mockus to endorse a citizen's committee for Hebron, similar to the Union Township citizen's committee that she was a part of. Mrs. Mockus said it was a group of citizens with representation from the Village, the northern part of Union Township, the central part of Union Township and the unincorporated Township who met 3-4 times to discuss what options exist for the Township. She said the group submitted a letter to the Township Trustees requesting to continue Fire service in the method of Hebron running the Fire Department and the Township contracting with Hebron. She said the second suggested method was the Township running the Fire Department with Hebron contracting. She said this option would be great for the Township because they would pay less than Hebron would pay, as they currently have been.

Mayor Layton said one comment was that the Fire District should keep running on 9 mills as they have been. He said in order to raise enough money in 2024 to make sure the Fire

Department has enough to operate on, they would have to pass a levy in November and their history with getting a levy to pass has not been good. He said a Fire Department could be run without a levy, but there would not be many people on staff. Mayor Layton said he and Mrs. Morgan have put numbers together a few times and it all comes out the same.

Mayor Layton said Interim Fire Chief Ryan Wyse sent a letter and he just got it this morning. He said he will read it over and get answers to his concerns. He said the date to get our equipment back in the contract according to our Attorney is 2022. Mr. Mason said the original plan was 3 years. Mayor Layton said this November will be 3 years.

Mayor Layton read some concerns from Mr. Mason's most recent letter about Fire District Board members, losing equipment and the Fire House, creating a Citizen's Group, the cost of operating a Fire Department,

Mayor Layton said if someone could present a way to run the Fire Department like it is now and financially support it, he would be happy to keep it that way, but if we tried to make the Fire Department whole out of the general fund, several departments would be financially strapped. He said he attended a Fire District Board Meeting a few months ago and said it looks like the Fire District is not going to make it. He asked if there was a plan to save it, but was not presented with a plan so he asked Council what they wanted him to do, and Council directed him to talk to Union Township, Heath and West Licking Fire District. He said he and Mrs. Morgan have worked together on the numbers and keep ending up with the same information. He said there have been several people involved in the Fire Service discussions, trying to find the best outcome. He said Union Township has not been very receptive and do not want to put on a new levy, and he does not feel comfortable trying to pass a levy at the end of 2022 to fund the Fire District for 2024.

He said he would like to provide Councilmembers an opportunity to make a statement.

Dr. Mockus shared a message from resident John Carruthers who supports moving to West Licking Fire District as well as conforming Hebron's boundaries.

Mrs. Stoner thanked Mayor Layton for the information and said she found it very helpful. She said it is hard to prioritize over all of the departments. She said she is concerned that taking money from the departments would be taking away from Hebron.

Mr. Moore said he is not in favor of West Licking Fire District taking over the Fire Service. He said he hates the thought of giving away taxpayers' money and losing the Fire equipment. Mayor Layton asked if he would feel better if we retained the equipment and leased it to West Licking Fire District? Mr. Moore said he would feel better about that, but he still does not feel going to West Licking Fire District is the best option.

Mrs. Porter said Fire Service discussion is a difficult subject. She said putting a levy on the ballot is a lot different than getting it passed. She said it is important to talk about reality and not emotion.

Mrs. Seymour said she is taking everyone's comments and opinions to heart and doing her own research to do the best she can for Hebron.

Ms. Karen Weekley, Dennison Street, said she does not understand why all of the departments are paid out of the General Fund except the Fire Department. Mayor Layton said for the past three years, the Fire District has not been part of the Village of Hebron. Ms. Weekley said if three cruisers pull one car over, they call the Sheriff for assistance. She asked if this is being budgeted in a way that we could rethink to fund the Fire Department.

Jim Friend, 708 W. Main Street, said having three people on duty with the West Licking Fire District solves nothing. Dr. Mockus asked how many are on staff at the Refugee-Canyon Joint

Fire District now. Mr. Moore said there are four on staff at this time. He said having three people on staff leaves the Village exposed and would put a burden on other Fire Departments around us as well. Mayor Layton said the proposal is for three people on staff to begin with, and then review after a few months. He said a Village representative will be on the Board and we can request additional staff at the time of the review. He said West Licking has the staff and resources to make that happen. Mr. Friend said if we partner with Union Township, we could have enough staff on duty. Mayor Layton said he believes that if there were a need for one of our vehicles to make a lengthy run, West Licking Fire District would have someone to fill in on standby. He said there is more discussion like this to be had with West Licking Fire District. Mrs. Morgan said the goal is to get to five people on duty, and they believe this will happen quickly. Mr. Friend said he is not pushing for any certain outcome for the Fire District, except for the level of service and he does not believe the level of service can be maintained with only three staff members on duty.

Clifford Mason, Dennison St, Hebron, said he sent out emails to all Councilmembers but has not received a response. He said the Fire District numbers that Mrs. Morgan discussed for 2021 involved staffing of 8 employees, two fire stations, etc. He said he also heard Mrs. Morgan say Union Township is currently collecting \$829,000 minus \$150,000 that they have given to Granville Township which leaves \$679,000 and the Village of Hebron with \$435,000. He said he believes with the right people staffing the positions, a little bit of money from the General Fund and additional millage, the Hebron Fire Department can exist. He said he doesn't believe the Village is taking into account EMS revenue. He said the Citizens' Committee that Mrs. Mockus served on recommended that the Fire Department go back to Hebron Fire Department with Union Township, and Granville Fire Department for the northern portion of Union Township. He said he feels Mrs. Mockus should fashion a committee to represent Hebron. He said there are people interested in preserving Fire Service that is operated by the Village of Hebron. Mr. Mason said he applauds Mr. Moore's comments as he originally thought West Licking Fire District was the way to go but he is rethinking that. He encouraged the rest of Council to rethink it as well.

Patty Costello, 3982 Canyon Rd, said Mr. Moore does not seem to like any of the proposed solutions. She asked what is his solution to fire protection. Mr. Moore said his solution would be to put a 12 mill levy on the ballot for Hebron and contract with Union Township.

Mayor Layton said he will try to answer Mr. Wyse's concerns once he has had time to review the email.

Dr. Mockus asked Mr. Wolf, 107 Sands Drive, Hebron, if he has served on the Refugee-Canyon Joint Fire District during its entire existence. Mr. Wolf said he has served on the Board for all but two months. Dr. Mockus asked how many Citizens' Committees the Fire District formed to find out what the citizens wanted before they began asking for 8.5 mills, and when the levies failed. Mr. Wolf answered "none" to all questions. She asked Mr. Wolf how active the Fire District was in going out and seeking resident feedback to figure out how to move forward. He said to get feedback, none, but they did submit postcards and mailings to inform voters. Dr. Mockus said she is trying to understand why Mr. Mason is now taking the position that we desperately need feedback.

Marc Weekley, 118 Dennison Street, asked how many years Dr. Mockus has served on Village Council. Dr. Mockus said she has been a member of Council for two years. Mr. Weekley asked what she has done to get the Fire District levy to pass. Dr. Mockus said it wasn't her levy to pass.

Mr. Mason said there was a committee formed from Refugee-Canyon Joint Fire District with the initial levy. He said many Village and Township residents donated money and the committee filed the reports. He said Mrs. Mockus' questions should have been directed to him, and it is very difficult to run a Fire District and commission such a committee. Mr. Mason said it appears Mayor Layton and Council are leaning towards going to West Licking

and he finds that bothersome. He said he strongly encourages Mayor Layton and Council to keep the Hebron Fire Department and not give it away.

Mrs. Seymour asked what if another levy is placed on the November ballot and fails. Mr. Mason said we can't look at that, we just need to keep looking forward. Mrs. Seymour said in order to look forward, we have to look at "what ifs". Mr. Mason said he feels the Village is catering to what Union Township wants.

Dr. Mockus said the Village passed both fire levies that were previously on the ballots. She said Union Township voters did not pass them, but Hebron did.

**Open Discussion**

None

**Visitor Comments**

None

**Adjourn**

Mrs. Porter moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:09pm , second by Dr. Mockus. A roll call vote was taken with all Councilmembers present voting in favor.

\_\_\_\_\_ (on file) \_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor James Layton

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_ (on file) \_\_\_\_\_  
Deborah Morgan, Village Fiscal Officer