

ST. CLAIRSVILLE CITY COUNCIL

July 17, 2023 Meeting

Jim Velas, Council President
Don Vincenzo, Council, 1st Ward
Kristi Lipscomb, Council, 3rd Ward
Terra Butler, Council, 4th Ward
Linda Jordan, Council-At-Large
Beth Oprisch, Council-At-Large
JC Thrash, Council 2nd Ward
Mike Smith, Council-At-Large

Kathryn Thalman, Mayor
Jeremy Greenwood, Public Service/Safety Director
Don Smithberger, Super. of General Services
Annette Whealdon, Finance Director
Matthew Arbenz, Chief of Police
Tom Murphy, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Elizabeth Glick, Law Director

The meeting was called to order by Council President Jim Velas at 7:00 pm. President Velas led Council in the Pledge of Allegiance. Members of the public were thanked for their attendance.

ROLL CALL:

Butler	HERE	Smith	HERE
Jordan	HERE	Thrash	HERE
Lipscomb	HERE	Vincenzo	HERE
Oprisch	HERE		
	Seven (7) Present		Zero (0) Absent

MINUTES: Council President Jim Velas confirmed all Councilmembers received the minutes from the June 20th Council Meeting. Councilman Thrash made a motion to approve the minutes from June 20, 2023, Council Meeting; motion seconded by Councilman Smith.

ROLL CALL:

Butler	ABSTAIN	Smith	YES
Jordan	YES	Thrash	YES
Lipscomb	YES	Vincenzo	YES
Oprisch	YES		

Roll Call Vote: Six (6) YES Zero (0) NO One (1) ABSTAIN Zero (0) ABSENT

Motion Carried

NEW BUSINESS: None

CITIZEN HEARING: Kathy Vaughn shared a heartfelt story to Council about her and her husband Jeff's close relationship with Stumpy Donaldson. The Vaughns moved to the city in 1986 and felt lost until Stumpy welcomed them and helped them adjust to their new home. Stumpy was always there for them, helping with Jeff's business and ensuring anything they needed was taken care of. Stumpy's wife was also a key figure in the Vaughn's lives, as she worked for the local trash collector when they moved in. The Vaughns were saddened to learn that Stumpy had passed away and that no benches were dedicated to his memory. They decided to purchase a bench like the one in front of the police department and dedicate it to Stumpy and his wife, Polly. The location of the bench is up to the city officials, but the Vaughns are committed to ensuring it is a fitting tribute to their beloved friend.

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Council thanked the Vaughns for their contribution to the memory of Stumpy and Polly Donaldson. Council indicated their wish to see the bench placed at Central Park by the Amphitheater to be enjoyed and remembered by many.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

REPORTS:

Mayor Kathryn Thalman reported that she recently attended the John and Annie Glenn School of Leadership in Columbus, Ohio. She was one of five mayors selected to participate in the Public Leadership Academy, along with other local government officials. Over a week, they attended classes on communication, innovative growth strategies, crisis response, and creating effective support networks. They also toured the Ohio State House and mentored high school students in the John Glenn School. Mayor Thalman was informally elected governor of their class, which was a nice acknowledgment from her peers. Before attending the leadership academy, she attended Community Days before leaving for Columbus and commended the event's coordinator for doing a great job despite concerns about the weather. Overall, Mayor Thalman found the leadership academy an excellent opportunity to connect with other local officials and address common problems facing their communities.

Service/Safety Director Jeremy Greenwood reported he received a phone call from the Ohio EPA to discuss the NOV (Notice of Violation). Since January 2021, the Ohio Water Development Authority has requested that the City close out the Dorothy Water Tank (By Commons Crossing – Dorothy Lane) loan. Mr. Greenwood stated that when he started at the City and was trying to figure out the workings of the new tank that was designed and installed under the last administration, he called their engineers to discuss the tank. He asked how the tank was supposed to function. Mr. Greenwood stated that he didn't get a straight answer. They noted that tanks like these are built all around the country. Furthermore, Mr. Greenwood asked why this tank style was chosen, and they indicated that the former administration told them to do it that way. He reported asking if they had completed a hydraulic analysis of the existing system. They said they had suggested it but were told by the former administration that it was too expensive. Mr. Greenwood reported that he informed them that they would not be paid the outstanding balance of their invoice until after a time when the tank would be useful. Since then, they have reached out to the City twice. Each suggestion to make the tank run smoother was met with the same answer, "We already tried that." Moreover, Mr. Greenwood noted in January of this year, the OWDA reached out again. After discussions with the Law Director, Finance Director, and the Mayor, they decided to close the loan and notified the OWDA of the situation. OWDA reached out to the OEPA and asked about the situation. The EPA investigated and requested additional information from the City. Mr. Greenwood noted that he sent all of the City's information, including the dates on the drawing sets. The OEPA noted that the tank's PTI (Permit To Install) was not revised when the last administration and their Engineers moved the tank from the proposed elevation to the current, as-built elevation. So although the tank would still have been too low if it had been installed on top of the hill, they decided to save \$350k on roadways and retaining walls and moved the tank. Mr. Greenwood noted that this is also not the first time that they did not get a PTI. When they switched from chlorine gas after the gas leaks at the wastewater plant, they installed a tablet system that cost 3 to 4 times more per month than the gas, which did not work correctly. VCV obtained a back permit for the City after the installation. Mr. Greenwood reported that the OEPA has unofficially informed the City of the two options to resolve the issue. 1. Rebuild the tank 2. Mothball the tank and hope that it can be used in the

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future. The OEPA will not dictate how the City can respond to the NOV, but after discussing this with the City Engineer, he agrees that these are the only two options. Mr. Greenwood noted that the second option is a safe gamble, but it is not guaranteed to work. Mr. Greenwood stated that he has been trying to do this with the tank since he has been here. The "New "tank was inspected last year, has several OSHA issues, and requires work. The amount of work is not too expensive in the project's overall costs. Mr. Greenwood estimated the costs for option #1: \$200-250 K for the demo, \$3.5 million to save \$350k, the City and its citizens will have almost \$6 million to correct the issue (\$2.2 million for original construction + \$3.5 Million for rebuild and demo costs). The engineer suggests purchasing additional land and building a new tank. Mr. Greenwood requested an Executive Session with Council to discuss pending litigation.

Councilwoman Oprisch made a motion to enter Executive Session under ORC 121.22 (G)(3). Councilman Thrash seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL:

Butler	YES	Smith	YES
Jordan	YES	Thrash	YES
Lipscomb	YES	Vincenzo	YES
Oprisch	YES		

Roll Call Vote: Seven (7) YES Zero (0) NO Zero (0) ABSTAIN Zero (0) ABSENT

Motion Carried

Executive Session entered at 7:22 pm

Councilwoman Lipscomb made a motion to leave the Executive Session; Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL:

Butler	YES	Smith	YES
Jordan	YES	Thrash	YES
Lipscomb	YES	Vincenzo	YES
Oprisch	YES		

Roll Call Vote: Seven (7) YES Zero (0) NO Zero (0) ABSTAIN Zero (0) ABSENT

Motion Carried

Executive Session exited at 8:01 pm.

During the Executive Session no action was taken.

Mr. Greenwood asked Council if they had any thoughts on how he should proceed with NOV on the tank. Council indicated that the tank should be mothballed and wait to see if it can be useful.

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Police Chief Matt Arbenz [ABSENT] Lieutenant T.J. Stewart has reported that the ventilation hood has been installed and is greatly needed to protect our officers. Lieutenant Stewart said that they also keep Narcan available at our station due to the dangers of the job. The Narcan is located in the basement, which they have transformed into a facility for their safety and physical and mental well-being. Lieutenant Stewart invited everyone to come and see the transformation they had made down there. Lieutenant Stewart noted that the department has dramatically improved and is making a big difference in the City. Lieutenant Stewart thanked everyone for the support; he indicated that they are one of the few departments in the Ohio Valley that does not have vacancies and needs employees. He added that they are doing their best to make a better and safer town for you, and it is evident that they are making a difference.

Finance Director Annette Whealdon [ABSENT] No report.

Planning & Zoning Administrator Tom Murphy reported that Horizon, a telecommunications company, is proposing new fiber at three locations within the City. They have requested permission to connect to our City electric poles. Don Smith Berger reviewed their proposal and has given initial approval, but they still need to submit their final application information. Horizon has been before City Council previously concerning other locations. The Council ultimately approves these proposals, and no ordinance is necessary. Horizon will be before City Council soon, and I will provide more information as it becomes available.

Mr. Murphy reported that all parties had finalized and signed The Comcast wheeling antenna easement. He is currently working with Elizabeth to record the document. The easement runs between Plaza West and the new 17-and-a-half-acre development site on the City's west side. Previously, it did not include electric, so we had that added. Comcast was okay with this addition, and everything has been signed.

Mr. Murphy provided some insight on the North Sugar Street paving project, about two years away. The City applied and was approved for \$500,000 in grant funds from the Local Roads, Oil, and Shale grant program. According to the grant, the only streets eligible for the project are local roads that meet certain thresholds regarding the number of trucks, vehicles, and well pads within a five-mile radius of the street. North Sugar Street met these requirements and was approved for the grant.

On a positive note, Mr. Murphy reported that Lance Schultz, a former Belmont County resident who now does consultant work for the County, recently met with him regarding the state of planning in Belmont County. He gave the City kudos for the planning we do through subdivision guidelines, the planning code, property maintenance, and historic district guidelines. He said that after being away for 30 years and driving around St. Clairsville, he thinks it's even improved. He said what we do here as a community, council-wise, mayor-wise, and administration-wise, sets us apart and makes it a friendly community. If council members wanted to discuss this further, they could call him.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

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Finance Chair Don Vincenzo reported a Finance Committee meeting before the Council meeting and that Annette joined and provided an overview of some important figures. Appropriations are at 35%, which is a positive sign. Additionally, revenue is at 48%. Annette also mentioned that the auditors were present three days last week, and things look suitable for the audit.

Utilities Chair Terra Butler No report.

Police Chair Mike Smith reported that they started the meeting by asking Matt if there was anything the committee could do to help. They discussed several topics, including the possibility of getting cameras for the city, which is currently on hold while they explore better options. They also talked about the hood, which was mentioned multiple times, and the status of the dog wash. The committee provided an update on the drone and shared that they allow other law enforcement agencies to use their facilities. Matt mentioned that they loan out the drone and, as mentioned by TJ and the mayor, they are open to allowing others to use the dog wash and possibly the hood. Overall, Councilman Smith believes that the committee is doing an excellent job.

Streets – North Side Chair Mike Smith No report.

Streets – South Side Chair JC Thrash No report.

Safety Chair JC Thrash No report.

Buildings and Grounds Chair Beth Oprisch No report.

Planning Commission Chair Kristi Lipscomb No report.

Fire Chair Linda Jordan No report.

Recreation Chair Kristi Lipscomb reported that Eric wanted to thank everyone who helped during the community day. It was a huge success. The Keep It Cool Summer Festival is on July 29th. There will be two bands and food trucks. Um, it's a free event at the amphitheater; the first band starts at 5:45, first, the next band goes on at eight. Kids' fishing tournament registration is now open. That is for kids ages three to 16. you can register online. The cost is \$5. catfishing registration is also available. It takes place at 6:00 PM Friday, August 11th, and will end Saturday morning, August 12th. If you're a St. Clairsville resident, the fee is \$15 non-resident, \$20. You can call the rec center if you have any questions. They are taking registration for girls' volleyball open to grades three through six. Registration is open for flag football. It is available to everyone in grades K through six. Registration is open for Boys and Girls Baseball and Softball Fall League. The Rec Department will host a softball tournament at the junior sports fields this Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. All the information can be found online at the website or by giving the Rec Department a phone call.

Park District Chair Linda Jordan No report.

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ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS: Law Director Elizabeth Glick

No Ordinances or Resolutions

Councilwoman Oprisch has proposed that the council take some time to consider potential changes to their public meetings. While she appreciates the current organizational approach, she has concerns about certain process aspects. Specifically, she questions the requirement for an individual written summary and the limitations on discussing issues brought up in previous meetings. She believes that people should be able to express their opinions multiple times as long as they maintain decorum and respect for others. While she understands the potential for longer meetings if many people want to speak, she feels it is vital to allow passionate individuals to have a voice. Ultimately, Councilwoman Oprisch is asking the council to revisit its resolution and consider changing it to address some of these concerns.

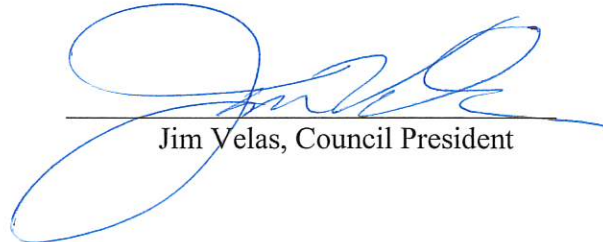
Council President Jim Velas discussed the importance of following ordinances. He emphasized that ignoring an ordinance when it's convenient and following it when it's not, is not viable. Velas mentioned that the ordinance could be modified, changed, amended, or rescinded. He also stated that the council should discuss potential guidelines for open meetings where citizens can attend but may only have the right to speak if given permission. Velas reminded everyone that the council has limited power to address specific issues that citizens bring up, so any discussion should focus on actionable items. He suggested considering time limits and other regulations to ensure that meetings remain productive and effective. Ultimately, the council should consider all aspects of potential changes to ensure they are fair and effective for all parties involved.

Councilwoman Lipscomb expressed her concerns about the public speaking ordinance. While she understood the importance of a time limit, she believed it could be improved. Additionally, she reminded the public that if they have any concerns they want to bring to the council's attention, they can contact any council member directly. While social media can be helpful, citizens must reach out to council members personally for their concerns to be heard. Council members are committed to advocating for the citizens and doing their best to address any issues.

ADJOURNMENT: With no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Oprisch made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Councilwoman Butler. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 P.M.

The next meeting will be Monday, August 7, 2023, at 7:00 P.M. All Councilmembers will be present at the City Building for the next meeting. Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meeting in the Council Chambers.


Jacob DeBertrand, Council Clerk


Jim Velas, Council President