



MINUTES
Winfield Town Council Meeting
Meeting date: Tuesday, September 8th, 2020

Call to Order: A meeting of the Winfield Town Council was held at the Winfield Government Center, 10645 Randolph Street, Winfield, Indiana on September 8th, 2020. The meeting convened at 6:52 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Rick Anderson conducted roll call:

Members in attendance: Gerald Stiener, Tim Clayton, Jon Derwinski, and Zack Beaver

Members not in attendance: Dave Anderson

Also in attendance: Attorney David Austgen from Austgen Kuiper Jasaitis P.C.; Rick Anderson, Clerk-Treasurer; and Nick Bellar, Town Administrator/Planning and Zoning Administrator; Mike Duffy, Town Engineer.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Agenda Items): None.

CITIZEN REQUESTING PLACEMENT ON AGENDA (Non-related to the Agenda): None.

UNFINISHED/DEFERRED BUSINESS:

1. *Consideration of Pay Application #4, Gough Inc. Randolph Street Park Project, Retainage \$28,716.03.*

Gerald Stiener asked if the concrete work is finished. Mike said it is but the Town had to do the restoration work. Nick Bellar explained damage was done to one of the park benches by someone using a metal stake used to hold the forms in around the new concrete. He had the Street Department remove everything and the contractor's equipment is being stored at the Street Department garage for now. Mike informed the contractor. He recommended playing the application now that the work is complete. Tim Clayton made the motion to approve Pay Application #4 to Gough Inc. in the amount of \$28,716.03. Zack Beaver seconded the motion, the motion carried with all in favor 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. *Park Impact Fee Study Committee Appointment.*

Attorney Austgen stated these are Town Council Appointments. Tim Clayton made the motion to appoint Phil Metzger, Pete Metlov, John Dawson, Tricia Smith, and John Freyek to the Park Impact Fee Study Committee. Zack Beaver seconded the motion, the motion carried with all in favor 4-0.

2. *20201 Budget Presentation.*

Rick Anderson recapped the number of funds and budget amount from 1996. He also noted this is the first year he has budgeted sewer operation funds, sewer debt service, and storm water utilities as well. The public hearing is schedule in two weeks and the budget has to be adopted by October 27th. There is still flexibility in the budget and if anyone has any changes or would like to review anything, they can talk to him about it. Rick explained the original tax rate adopted by the Town for the 1996 budget was \$1.09 because the original Council wanted to keep the tax rate as low as possible. This is why the current rate always varies between \$.30 to \$.40 each year. The former Clerk-Treasurer at the time was against this low initial tax rate and warned against how it will financially hurt the town's ability to maintain its growth in the future. He read a letter from that time voicing the former Clerk-Treasurer concerns and makes



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mention of services the town did not even have to provide at that time but is now necessary like police, snow plowing and road maintenance. Gerald Stierer asked if there was any way to appeal through State Legislature to get a rate adjustment because of that. Rick stated the only way to go about it would be through special legislation and there have been levy or growth appeals in the past. Gerald said they would have to talk to a State Representative in order to get that done. Rick stated that is correct. He has reviewed the general tax rates in the other Lake County communities to compare to the \$.07 tax rate of Winfield and the next closest rate to Winfield is St. John at \$.27. If they had the same rate as St. John, instead of getting \$320,000, they would receive \$836,000 per year. Compared to Crown Point they would receive \$1.8 million a year. Gerald Stierer stated this is the problem and will only continue to get worse as they grow. Currently they mostly rely on Building Department Fees to stay afloat. Gerald said they have no choice to try to get this changed, he will discuss how to go about accomplishing this with Attorney Austgen. Rick explained the difficulties in purchasing new vehicles and the cost of the Police Department which should be paid out of the general fund. He stated recent changes and restrictions to funds like CCD and MVH have also made the allocation of funding more difficult than it was in the past. Rick reviewed the changes from this past year to next year's budget. He was able to budget additional hour increases and targeted wage increases, if necessary, for next year but he will not be able to include any new employees for any departments for next year. He cautioned the Council against hiring anyone new for the Building Department because if there was to be another housing market crash the Building Department fees are not as reliable of a revenue as property tax. Gerald does not believe they are in the position to have to hire any new people and the Street Department has been contracting out seasonal work recently. Rick anticipates the possibility to add more funding for the Street Department in 2022 when the data from the 2020 Census comes in, it should factor into MVH and Local Roads and Streets funding. Rick reviewed the various department needs and budgeting on other on-going capital projects. He stressed they do need to get going on their General Obligation Bond issue soon. Gerald asked about the RDA financing Rick stated that will be set up through another board and will go towards the improvement project for 109th and Grand Blvd. He has worked with financial consultants on this as well and because they are not that far along on that schedule, he has not started the amortization schedule for this year, but they could still start the process and just have to pay capitalized interest. Gerald stated the GO Bonds could still be used for right of way for passing blisters along 109th Ave. Rick stated that is correct they would also need to use the GO Bonds to match if they were also to go out for any big projects with the Community Crossings Grant. He has not heard any news on the Community Crossings Grant yet, they are supposed to make an announcement this month. Gerald would like to pay more attention to improving the Street Department as its been neglected in the past. Rick also explained the tax cap in 2021 and the town will be hit with a \$37,550 reduction that will come out of General, MVH, CCD, RDC and Cumulative Fire Funds. Rick explained this was due to older debt in the school system and Lake County that was not included with the tax cap previously. Rick reviewed the controlled budget town appropriations for 2021. The total 2021 budget will be \$5.5 million with a tax rate of \$.43. Rick reviewed the 2021 property tax levy and operating costs for the next year for all departments compared to the previous years. Rick reiterated that we are different from all the other communities around us. We have never been able to recover from the adoption of the lower tax rate. Attorney Austgen stated it is actually constitutional, the levy was frozen and now the town is stuck. Attorney Austgen stated it should be possible to advocate for a change with State. Gerald stated it will only get worse and the only way they can afford anything is to continue to grow which also adds to the problem. Gerald said it does not make sense to continue with the short-term



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financing options they have had to use. A brief discussion was also had on salaries and competitive rates to maintain employees and affording the replacement of employees they have lost. Gerald thanked Rick for the informative presentation and instructed the Council to talk with Rick before the next meeting if they have any questions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Gerald Stiener noted the various upcoming meetings.

ADJOURNMENT:

Gerald Stiener entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tim Clayton made a motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Zack Beaver. All were in favor, the motion carried 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Gerald Stiener
Town Council President

Richard C. Anderson, Jr.
Clerk-Treasurer

Kim Wachowski
Recording Secretary

Date of Approval _____