

**CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE NEIGHBORS
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY APRIL 6, 2023 – 7:30 P.M.**

PRESENT Mayor Tommie Pierson, City Attorney Dorothy White-Coleman, Director of Parks and Recreation Jimmy Kirincich, Director of Public Works, and Chief of Police Jeremy Ihler and City Clerk Semmie Ruffin-Hall.

NOT PRESENT Treasurer-Rick Rognan -*EXCUSED ABSENCE*.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY Mayor Pierson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Clerk Semmie Ruffin-Hall called the roll:

- Alderwoman Dinah Tatman-Present
- Alderwoman Theresa Hester-Present
- Alderwoman Peg Warnusz-Present
- Alderwoman Lynette VonSeggern-Present
- Alderman James Thomas, Sr.-Present
- Alderwoman Regina Harmon-Ward-Present
- Alderwoman Alease Dailes-Present
- Alderwoman Alicia Smith-Present

Eight Present -Quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor called for a motion to approve the agenda. **Alderman Alease Dailes** made a motion to amend the agenda with two amendments. I would like to amend the agenda under old business to discuss and vote for approval of \$3,000 for the Health Summit coming up on April 15, 2023 and Juneteenth celebration in June, 2023 and I would also like to ask for a close session after the meeting to discuss legal issues. Second made by **Alderman James Thomas, Sr.** **Mayor** called for an all-in favor of the amended agenda.

8-Ayes/0-Nays. Ayes' have it. Motion passed.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (With 3-minute time limit)

- **Marcie Gooden-94XX Duenke**
 - It is over. Thank you thank you everyone on the board I want call any names but collectively I just want to say thank you for being a productive board by helping the citizens and doing the business of the city.
 - Then I want to talk to the chief, I know us as citizens told you about these shootings that we have and Jeff the building issues and things of that nature we have and I am hoping since spring has blossomed that we are able to work together and get some of those things taken care of.
 - Home issues, not even grass yet, derelict cars and I am not going to talk about speeding. Unkempt homes that we see are issues. Not even trash anymore. We will have to work together residents are just not getting it.
- **Lynn Gordon (representing Image and Beautification) -11XX Donnell Ave.**
 - Having first cleanup of the year on May 6, 2023 at 9am-1pm. Will meet at the Recreation Center. We are asking all the elected officials to join us. We have also reached out to different municipalities to join us on that day to clean up in their area. We received good response so we are hoping everyone will come out. City does provide lunch. Please put on your calendar and join us on May 6, 2023. In case of inclement weather, it will be that following Saturday on May 13, 2023.

PRESENTATION OF UNAPPROVED MINUTES (Regular B.O.A. Meeting Minutes 03-02-23) Motion made by **Alderman Alease Dailes** to approve the unapproved minutes; 2nd made by **Alderman Alicia Smith**-. **Mayor** called for any discussion. **None.** **Mayor** called for an all-in favor

8 Ayes/0-Nays. Ayes have it. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF INVOICES OVER \$500 (03-20-23 through 04-04-23)-Motion made by **Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward** to approve invoices over \$500 for \$269,939.42, 2nd made by **Alderman James Thomas, Sr.** **Mayor** called for any discussion. **Alderman Alicia Smith states she would love to approve the bills that are over \$500 but due to the audit not being done, I just cannot.** **Mayor** called for an all-in favor.

6 Ayes/2-Nays (Alderman Smith and Hester). Motion passed.

PARKS AND RECREATION REPORT-DIRECTOR JIMMY KIRINCICH

- **Gymnasium Update:** The outside of the building is roughly 95% completed. We are waiting for the exterior brick to arrive on April 24 to finish brick, install the metal flashing and gutters. The basketball hoops were installed this week along with the piping and wiring for the lights. The painters will continue painting tomorrow and Monday. After they are done the electricians will install all the light fixtures. The hardwood flooring is tentatively set to be delivered on Tuesday, April 25. We are still on track for a May 12 completion date. We received the first grant reimbursement check for the gymnasium for \$255,680.00.
- **Weight Room-** The old weight room equipment was removed on Friday, March 31. The park maintenance staff cleaned the ceiling joists from dust and debris, and cleaned the light fixtures. The new flooring will be installed towards the end of April and the new equipment is set to arrive first two weeks of May. I received the \$7,000 check for the old equipment.
- **Parks-** We are accepting park rentals. The parks will officially open for the season starting April 15.
- We had a broken pipe at Bissell Hills Park that we fixed; power washed the bathrooms, picked up sticks, cut the grass, and replaced all four swings.
- Tangle wood Park was mulched around the playground, fixed a broken swing, repaired a broken pipe at the water fountain, power washed the bathrooms and pavilion.
- The park maintenance staff will be working at St. Cyr next week to make sure that park is ready to go for reservations.
- We cleaned up all the over growth along the creek by Coburg lands and at Wilderness park at Chambers/Bellefontaine. I would like to thank the Street Department for helping us pick up all the piles of trees.
- **Pool Pumps:** The indoor pool pump went out in December. We replaced it with a pump that was used for the outdoor pool. The pump that was sent to be repaired was deemed a total loss from the repair shop. In the meantime, the pump that we used from the outdoor pool to keep the indoor pool going is also breaking now and leaking water. Both pumps will need to be replaced. Unfortunately, to get the same pump is a three-month lead-time. Westport Pools has pumps in stock, but each pump is \$9,800

installed. So a total of \$19,600. I asked Rick and Lori to provide a financial report for my Equipment Maintenance, Aquatics and Building Maintenance accounts. I believe we should have enough money to purchase one pump from the Aquatics account and one from the Equipment Maintenance account. I am waiting on confirmation before getting a PO signed. The current pumps are 14 years old.

- Easter event- The Parks Department held our Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 1, 2023 at Bissell Hills Park. I wanted to thank Crystal Creamery for helping sponsor the event. They provided the candy Easter baskets, eggs, and food truck. Even though it was cold and windy we had, kids show up and brave the weather to collect eggs and play in the bounce house.
- AED- I purchased a new AED and applied to the MIRMA Risk Management Grant to receive reimbursement. Our old AED is discontinued and we could no longer purchase new batteries for it. The reimbursements will be selected this fall.
- Brochure- The brochure will go to the printer by April 21 and hopefully will be mailed out the first week of May. I am currently working on the Recreation Centers brochure information, and will start on formatting City Hall's information next week.
- Staffing: We are looking to hire lifeguards and swim instructors. We will provide free lifeguard training through the American Red Cross.
- Recreation Specialist position- I hired Sarah Pflueger for the full time Recreation Specialist position. She has been with the Recreation center for 12 years part time and grew up in Bellefontaine neighbors. She will start on June 15 once her teaching contract is over.
- Communication Technology contract was approved for the Camera Surveillance upgrade. They submitted all the required documentation before they could proceed. The equipment has been ordered and they have a start date at the Recreation Center on May 1. Once the recreation center is completed, they will then start on City Hall. They will have the work completed in 8 weeks from May 1.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT-DIRECTOR JEFF ROSS

- Street sweeping completed throughout the city (ongoing issue)

- Potholes filled all over the city (ongoing issue). Newbold, Crete, Tappan, Gardo, Edna, Laire, Darr, Hayward, Harden, Wentworth, Foxpath, Forrest home Huntsman, Lebon
- City of Bellefontaine Neighbors was closed for a week in February due to Covid outbreak.
- Rebuilt five barricade signs and replaced three stop signs.
- Repaired chipper truck, street sweeper, and front loader
- Beginning to refresh lawn mowers for the Spring season
- Picked up limbs that fell due to storm damage in February and March. Removed 7 trees and 4 tree trunks.
- In progress:
 - new property maintenance fee table,
 - updated permit user fees
- Developed the Resident Guidelines Acknowledgement for new residents
- Yearly MIRMA program evaluation. Our score improved to 93%.
- Cleaned up garbage and old furniture at vacant houses
- Seven vehicles are being prepared for auction which includes the decal removal. A Purple Wave Auction representative will take pictures and post
- Sent letters to 95 residents and property managers who were delinquent with Waste Management informing them of our contractual agreement
- Retrieved 12 trash receptacles from vacant properties and those without active trash service through Waste Management.
- ~7 sewer laterals have been repaired.
- Bids have been received from Neumayer and United Petroleum to replace city gas pumps with swipe cards.
- 8,000 gallons of fuel was ordered for \$2.50/gallon
- New employee, Matthew Crowder, started 3/23/2023 and will work with the Street Department as a Laborer II
- Tree removal account is nearly depleted. We have 3-4 high priority trees which need to be removed asap. We have requested a transfer of \$5K to the tree removal account from the Equipment Replacement account.
- The following vacant properties have been cleaned (outside):
 - 10256 Ashbrook
 - 10228 Cabot
 - 10107 Ashbrook
 - 1229 Nectar

1127 Laire
10120 Newbold

- We are in the process of getting bids to replace the metal doors on our lower level (police entrance).
- Department of Natural Resources performed our underground tank inspection. Still waiting on results.
- Cleaned up Wilderness Park
- More volunteers have signed up for our Adopt-A-Street program.
- Sinkholes previously deemed by MSD as negative for repair has been now recognized as positive for repair on Acosta, Angeline, Gardo Court and Tappan. Still waiting on their findings for 1200 block of Hoyt and Gardo and another location on Angeline and Elba

That completes our report.

CHIEF OF POLICE REPORT -JEREMY IHLER

- As we transition to warm weather, more people are outside enjoying the weather. There have been a few car break-ins and property damage recently. If you see something – say something. Watch out for your neighbors and call the police for any suspicious activity and crimes in progress.
- Recently, a 3-year old got a hold of a handgun that was left out by the child’s father. The child accidentally themselves. Non-life threatening injuries. The father was charged with felony endangering the welfare of a child. All weapons need to be secured in a place that is out of reach of children. A lockable safe is recommended and the PD has gunlocks for residents.
- Recently hired 3 police officers with an emphasis on diversity. In the process of hiring one, more police officer.
- Explanation of the police non-emergency phone number Intelligent Virtual Assistant (IVA). The use of the IVA is to process non-emergency calls more efficiently. The IVA is not used for emergency 911 calls – a live person will answer the phone in these situations.
- Brought up St. Louis County Dispatcher-trials and tribulations of calling them and chief is not happy with them as well. **(Marcie Gooden-called dispatch and got through with (0 -pound)**

TREASURER'S REPORT- RICK ROGNAN

- *EXCUSED ABSENCE*

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT -DOROTHY WHITE COLEMAN

- **No Report**

NEW BUSINESS: SFY 2023 ARPA SLFRF- POLICE OFFICERS GRANT-CHIEF IHLER

- I included the details of this grant. It is an ARPA Grant and it came out 50/50. We pay 50% and they pay 50%. The state pushed this off for a while. First, they would match it for \$40,000 but so many applied for it they pushed it down to \$20,000. This was the award I just received the other day and the total amount of the funds needed up front, this is a reimbursement grant. I do not know if anyone had time to flip through this but it specifically said it is a reimbursement grant. The total amount needed up front is \$26,681.00 from that account and reimbursed \$13,340.50.
- The purchase of the remaining computers and printers.

Alderman Dinah Tatman made a motion that we make an approval for \$26,681.00 to purchase the remaining computers and printers for our police departments. Second made by **Alderman Lynette VonSeggern**. **Mayor** called for any further discussion. None. **Mayor** called for an all-in favor.

8 Ayes/0-Nays. Ayes have it. Motion passed

OLD BUSINESS: RFQ PRESENTATION-LAWN MOWER PURCHASE -JIMMY K.

- **Received three bids:**
 - Art Lawnmower-\$17,373.00
 - Bi-County Small Engine-\$17,819.00
 - Lawn Care Equipment-\$17,894.00
- I recommend we move forwards with the first bid, Art Lawnmower with the specifications that were listed in the RFQ.

Alderman Alease Dailes made a motion to accept Art Lawnmower for \$17,373.00 for a new lawnmower. Second made by **Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward**. **Mayor** called for any further discussion. None. **Mayor** called for an all-in favor.

8-Ayes/0-Nays. Ayes' have it. Motion passed.

Alderman Alese Dailes ask if the board would approve \$3,000.00 for **Health Summit** on April 15, 2023 and \$3,000.00 for the **Juneteenth Celebration**, which will be on June 17, 2023. I know we have at least \$10,000.00 we have recovered from the vacant houses. This is not asking to go into our budget this is what has come in from November until now. She asked for a motion from the board.

Alderman Alicia Smith made a motion to approve the \$3,000.00 for the April 15th, 2023 **Health Summit** and \$3,000.00 for the **Juneteenth Celebration** on June 17, 2023. Second by **Alderman Theresa Hester**. **Mayor** called for any further discussion. None. **Mayor** called for an all-in favor.

8-Ayes/0-Nays. Ayes' have it. Motion passed.

Mayors Report

- Congratulated Alderwoman Tatman for winning the Mayor's Race and I want to say to her, *if I cannot help, I will do no harm.*
- I live in this city, I do not want to harm it, and I do not want to harm its leader.
- I will be available to help when and wherever I can.
- I am not moving, I will not stop coming to board meeting.
- I will be here as a supporter not a heckler.
- Life is about winning and losing and I have learned about handling them both.
- This is the last meeting I will preside over fully. The next board meeting I will open the meeting, roll call for a quorum and then I will make a final statement and then we will swear in our new mayor.
- I have had a good run. I am proud of some of the things I have done, and not proud of others. No one is perfect.

ALDERMAN'S REPORT

Alderman Alicia Smith

- Thank you Mayor for service. Thank you citizens for showing up and staying. Alderwoman Dailes and I will continue to serve our community as well as ride.
- We are available constantly morning, noon and night for any issues, questions or complaints. Anything regarding the city.
- Congratulations as well.

Alderman Alease Dailes

- Thank you Mayor for your service, I appreciate you.
- Congratulations Madam Mayor
- As you know, we talked about the Nexus Group, which will be the grocery store at Lewis and Clark and Jennings Station Road in Ward 4.
- Erica put on Facebook that she is asking the public for a snazzy name.
- Commercial kitchen up there to teach people how to cook healthy.
- We have many good people in this neighborhood.
- We have many children in our neighborhood who are not being cared for, a lot. Someone in the school district brought it to my attention years ago. Do you call the police and family services and put that child in the system or do you keep them at home with someone they are familiar with. I don't have the answer to that, but that is a lot in this neighborhood.
- Dinah, we had a good run. For me it is not a loss, it is a promotion. I believe when one door does not open what it means that I have something for you in a better season. That is the attitude I have about anything in life.
- Thank you my treasurer and Alicia and my supporters. It is just love in this neighborhood.

Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward

- I would like to thank everybody for coming out.
- Piggy backing off Ms. Alease again. I have worked in Social Services for many many years and we do have a problem. One of the problems is our villages have crumbled. That makes it so hard. It is a tossup between the system and home. We have to weigh it out.
- I have worked 28 years in the juvenile system and I have seen what is out here. The juvenile system has crumbled. I have been a victim of the juveniles out here.
- It is a vicious cycle.
- We have to come up with something, we are losing our kids.

- I want to thank the Mayor for your services and I would like to congratulate Sister Dinah.
- We have to come together to get this job done, we are nothing without each other.

Alderman James Thomas, Sr.

- Thank everyone for coming out and participating in the American process.
- The problem with in my opinion in what we are going through right now can be capsulated. We as legislators can be more involved in the community. That is what is going to bring the different aspects back to where they need to be. In addition, we have to come together as one as a community as a north county cooperative. You know this area is larger than sometimes what we look at.
- I always say I would always bring a quote. This time from **Booker T. Washington** *“If you want to lift someone up lift up someone else”*.
- Thank you.

Alderman Lynette VonSeggern

- Thank you Mayor for your service.
- The short time I have been up here it has been very rewarding.
- Congratulations Alderwoman Tatman.
- I look forward to this next chapter for this city and us.
- We will do great things.
- Everyone have a Blessed Easter and stay safe.

Alderman Peg Warnusz

- Congratulations Mayor. You and I have taken rides to a few houses here and there, and that has always been very beneficial.
- I think our children are just, it is just hard to describe to anybody how some of these children live and what their expectations are. I taught for 43 years and most of those years were with kids that either in jail in a hospital somewhere they just surviving. I live on Crete Drive and it is a period that goes into Family Dollar and all of the issues with Family Dollar_and they come out in the morning and they have their breakfast there, as soon as As soon school is out they are over there getting their red-hots and I have just made it my point to connect saying good morning how you are today. One boy I have been talking to for 20 something years invited me to his

wedding the other day. I was just in awe. Therefore, I think our connection, yes, we can be formal, yes, we can put committees up, we can do all those things, but the connections need to be made with these kids at least with another adult, if it is not their parents to live a life that is satisfying. Something that is near and dear to my heart. My husband and I plan to stay here forever. Just think about what your relationship is to the children in your neighborhood.

- I am looking forward to what is to come. I think the possibilities are there we just need to make it happen.

Alderman Theresa Hester

- Thank you. So much has been said and thank you all for coming out and staying. I like to also piggyback off Peg. It is definitely about the relationship you build with the people in the community and yes we are elected to do a job in the community but those connections mean the world. I plan to be out there knocking on doors and meeting people and it is not just knocking doors or building those connections when you are running for race, because that is transactional that is not building a relationship so you need to know those people that have elected you into the position that you are in. That is going to be my mission on top of other things moving forward.
- I am so excited. Thank you Mayor for your service. Congratulations Mayor elect and I want to say thank you to Jimmy and Jeff for the work that you guys do in the community. We need committed people as you do in the community.

Alderman Dinah Tatman

- Good evening everyone.
- I want to say I am excited about the journey. I am excited about this team. After the election of the last four people that came on, I was excited. We have a strong, committed and passionate group of people. Along with staff and police department. I think we can be a model city. So I am looking forward to the challenge, I am looking forward to use the talents I have and to learn something. I think all of us working together pulling on each other strengths reaching out to people around us who want to help. We can be

that beacon of light or that spring well. Bellefontaine Neighbors, beautiful fountain.

- I want to say to my brother, because I can. What you said tonight meant a lot to me when a person can say that nobody's perfect. We are not either, but to say that, meant a lot because I am not perfect. Therefore, I want to say thank you for that and I look forward in serving with you. I am glad you are still going to come here. You have strengths, each one of us have weaknesses, and we are supposed to cover for each other not uncover. Those who are strong bear the infirmities of the weak and we all win. So thank you.
- For those of you who came tonight I hope you encourage others to come. On the trail, what I said to the people, yes, you elected us, you are our employers and when the employers are absent, something is missing. So I am hoping that you encourage more attend. I want to thank the chief and our police officers, because when we were campaigning we saw them everywhere. That meant a lot to the people.
- I am looking for nothing but great things, so thank you.

Alderman James Thomas, Sr. made a statement in his haste in giving his comment he did not congratulate the mayor and I would be remiss if I did not. I have known the mayor a long time, I have served with him and I look forward In serving with the new leadership. I feel the same way you do, this team as we go forward into this next phase we are going to see some changes in Bellefontaine Neighbors because we are going to build another cooperative because as we leave and as we transition, because I do not plan on being an alderman for 30 years. However, as we transition and continue to live in this city, we can see it grow; as we see the new gymnasium, the streets become vibrant again.

Everyone congratulated Lynette VonSeggern with applause.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (3 MINUTE TIME LIMIT)

- **Barbara West-97XX Calumet Drive**
-Congratulated Lynette VonSeggern and congratulated Mayor-Elect Tatman. Congratulated Alderwoman Dailes on a campaign well run.

- I would like to say when I was on board we went through a very very rough period. And there were a lot of things said by citizens that did not know a darn thing about what was going on. We tried, some of us to come together. I asked for a meeting for us to hash it out some people did not want to do that. Asked for a mediator some people did not want to do that. Had a meeting with Tommie that did not work out. Therefore, there were things in emails going back and forth people were not aware of. I said all of that to say. Keep people out of your business board, keep them out. That includes me. If you have problems on the board keep it on the board, work it out amongst yourselves. In addition, if you find out you cannot do that, do not be too proud or have too much of an ego to get help from the outside. Get a mediator. Get somebody. However, do not let what happen when I was on the board happen again. Because that tore me up, it really did. I wanted to come back but there was too much of a mess and it was a mess. A lot of it was your fault. It really was. When you would not let your alder people take part in the legislative process you are tearing them down and you tore me down. You really did Tommie, you tore me down, and you had help from this woman right here and she is not your friend. No, No, No you all tore me up in every meeting (Mayor intervene and said address me). I was a gang of facts, I was an insurrectionist. I was made fun of because of different things. I was talked about and I had to take it. I tried to everything I could because I loved this city; I tried to do everything that was right. But it went unappreciated. I want to say that if you love what you do, do not let anybody stop you from doing what you want to do. This lady is not your friend and do not think she is. She is a back bitter and a troublemaker (Mayor intervene and said your time is up). I do not care as you let her talk I am going to keep talking. Please, thank you. We made up and I hope you meant it. I do not hold grudges but I do not like to be picked on, talked about and people to continuously go after me. I do not deserve that from nobody. I will continue to try to do whatever I can. Yawl do well and work hard. Work together.

- **Wanda Lane-99XX Martingale Road**

-First of all thank you so much for your comments of still being involved in the city. Because we so much have seen that does not happen. We have seen everything change on this board through when a person does not win

reelection we don't see them ever again and some of them still live here in the city, so thank you so much.

-Alderwoman, Mayor Elect. I met you campaigning for someone else. Now I am going to say I reacquainted myself with you because we have known each other for a long time and yes you do live in the back of the woods and I drove up anyway. I am very confident you use the words you said you were going to do.

-Mayor typically I do not address mess and I am quite when mess is addressed to me. I recall on the first day that you were here on the swearing in ceremony. It was standing room only. It was packed. People were all out there. It was tons of people. Went through the program and after the former mayor sat down and you took your seat. There came a point of the program for all the people to make a comment. And we started at ward number one and the very first comment, the very first comment that was made by an elective official was from the alderwoman in ward one. And her very first comment was "Yawl know I like to keep it real and Tommie I don't think you should have been elected mayor know that. That was the very first comment that was spoken. (Comments interjected by Barbara West). I never said a word when you were speaking, so please.

Resident from Ward 4 stood up and stated hey you all this is my first meeting. I have been in Bellefontaine for 24 years and I am not happy about what is going on here. This should not be happening. Not professional. I am here because I am not happy with the decline that I have seen and representing the people of Bellefontaine and so I will be coming here. You guys work for us and this should not be happening at a board meeting. We put you in here and we can take you out.

ADJOURNMENT-Alderman Alease Dailes made a motion to adjourn and go into closed session, second made by **Alderman Lynette VonSeggern**. **Mayor** called for an all in favor:

8-Yays/0-Nays Meeting adjourned at 8:56pm into closed session

ATTEST:



Semmie Ruffin-Hall, City Clerk

Approved by the Board of Aldermen on April 20, 2023