

January 8, 2024

Council President Mr. Martin called the January 8, 2024 Belpre City Council meeting to order at 7:31pm. The roll was called with the following members present: Mr. Ambrozy, Mrs. Dennis, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Godfrey, Mr. Locke, Ms. Riffle and Mr. Seebaugh present. Also, present were Mayor Abdella, City Auditor Mrs. Nolan, City Law Director Mr. Webster, Treasurer Mrs. Cassady and Clerk of Council Mrs. Meredith. At this time, there has been no Safety-Service Director appointed.

President of Council Mr. Martin announced that he has asked the clerk if she would remain our clerk for the next term of council and she has accepted. At this time, I would like to have roll call accepting her appointment. The roll was called with all members of council present voting aye.

Council President Mr. Martin asked everyone to please rise for the Prayer and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. President of Council Mr. Martin gave the invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The first order of business was to elect a President of Council Protem and a Clerk of Council Protem in our absence. President of Council Mr. Martin entertained a motion for a President of Council Protem. Ms. Riffle made a motion for Councilperson Dennis and Mr. Locke made a motion for Councilperson Ferguson. Nominations were closed. President of Council asked for a roll call. Mr. Ambrozy voted for Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Ferguson voted for Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Locke voted for Mr. Ferguson. Those voting for Mrs. Dennis were Mrs. Dennis, Mr. Godfrey, Ms. Riffle and Mr. Seebaugh. The vote was 3-4 with Mrs. Dennis being nominated to be President of Council. There were no nominations for Clerk of Council Protem. Ms. Riffle nominated Mr. Ferguson. Mr. Ferguson declined. Mrs. Dennis nominated Ms. Riffle. Ms. Riffle accepted. All were in favor of Ms. Riffle except for Ms. Riffle who abstained. Ms. Riffle nominated Mrs. Dennis in her absence. Mrs. Dennis accepted in Ms. Riffle's absence. Ms. Riffle accepted the nomination as Council Clerk Protem.

President of Council Mr. Martin asked for a motion for the December 11, 2023 minutes. Ms. Dennis made a motion to accept the December 11, 2023 minutes as presented and by-pass the reading. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

Reports of City Officials:

Mayor Abdella presented her report before council. It is as follows:

Communications:

- Meeting with Staff from all departments last week to introduce myself and hear what they are working on.

- Did you know that if there is a leak or someone needs to have something marked, they call “811” and it alerts everyone at once.

- o We have had our first leak of the year and it is corrected

- o There is a second one that will not be repaired till Wednesday due to 811 marking all lines so they can dig. This beak is on 6th street.

- Parks and Recreation

- o A grant was submitted to ODNR – Forestry for \$50,000. We should hear this month if we receive it.

Washington Morgan County Transit will pick up a Belpre Resident and drop them at an appointment in Belpre or Marietta for \$1.00 per trip. If a resident is going to Parkersburg, they will drop them at the easy rider terminal

Utilities:

- SOPEC – Gas Aggregation- I spoke with SOPEC related to the gas aggregation rate. They are currently looking at 4.09 mcf for 12 months.

- Street

- o We have been notified that we will receive funding from ODOT/ WWWW to pave Rockland Ave from Farson to Middle. This is an 80/20 Match grant. Roger Wright from the County completed the plans and will administer the project if we do a MOU with them.

- Water

- o Water Tower Project- ADR will be in town to review the project in the next couple of weeks.

- Sewer

- o Jeff Carr – EDG would like the opportunity to review the proposed WWTP plans with you in the near future.

Finance:

- Communication Tower – Utilization and Rehab
 - o Working on a lease agreement with Wirt County so their squads will have appropriate reception when coming to the hospital.
- Create Budget for all IT and Software efforts:
 - o This is critical for all the subscriptions we have for software, domains and antivirus.
 - o I received invoices for work completed in 2023 that were noted to be billed in Jan 24. These invoices total \$14,860 .00 I have added this last year expense to the supplemental being presented tonight so that we will start Jan 2024 off clean. However, we have a significant IT expense due to the promotions made in November in order to get all computers and phones switched for everyone. We also spent 12 hours on Jan 2, 2024 rebuilding computers. We have currently incurred \$6400.00 for subscriptions.

Items to be Assigned to Council

- Assign to Rules and Utilities - Update Water and Sewer Regulations – Collaborate with Jeff Carr, EDG.
- Transition plan for elected officials - this is to be added to City Ordinance.
- Storm Water Mgt Plan Administration – Washington County Soil and Water – attachment to be sent to law director
- 2024 Manpower
- 2024 Budget
- Annexation to the City when City Utilities are required and property is in current city limits
- The mayor has the ability to apply for and receive grants

Safety-Service Director has not yet been appointed. There have been three resumes received.

City Auditor Mrs. Nolan reported that The State Auditor sent an email Friday, January 5, 2024 stating “we were just informed last week that we need to put all 12/31 audits on the back burner and work on our school audits since they have a federal deadline in

March. Due to the losing of numerous staff in the last 6 months, it has really put us behind and was not something we had planned for. I apologize for your audit taking so long to complete and for your patience during this time. If we are at a standstill on schools, we will work on the 12/31s that we have pending.” This is for the 2022 Audit.

Our Software Solution training is ongoing with 4 hours of training each week via Zoom. We paid 10% at the contract signing in 2022; 60% of the contract in 2023 and have remaining 30% of the total order due at scheduled live date of the first software module which is \$38,970.00 due in 2024. We are anticipating the Go Live to happen in April. The Software Assurance is \$26,932.00 and is not due until 12 months after the Go live date which will be in 2025.

The next few weeks will be devoted to working on the Actual Revenue and Expense figures from 2023 as well as the 2024 Budget.

Each of you have been provided a front and back description/definition of 10 of the 26 Funds we use. If further explanation of any of the funds is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me.

City Law Director reported that he has already received the proposed contract for the Washington County Soil and Water. I will review the contract and prepare legislation to be submitted to committee at the next council meeting.

City Treasurer Mrs. Cassady had no report.

Communication and Petitions:

At this time, President of Council Mr. Martin assigned the following items to committee.

Updating the Water and Sewer Regulations are Ms. Riffle and Mr. Ambrozy working along with Mr. Carr.

Transition for City Officials – Rules Committee – Ms. Riffle

Water and Sewer and Storm Water Management Plan – Mr. Locke and Mr. Ambrozy

2024 Manpower – Finance/Audit Mr. Ferguson

2024 Budget – Finance/Audit Mr. Ferguson

City Utilities (Annexation) Mr. Godfrey

Grants are to be announced.

Supplemental Appropriation – Finance/Audit Mr. Ferguson

Reports of Standing Committee

Mr. Ferguson Finance/Audit Committee made a motion to by-pass committee and add

to tonight's agenda for first reading **A RESOLUTION SUPPLEMENTING YEAR 2024 APPROPRIATION**. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

Mrs. Dennis, Police and Fire Committee stated that she is excited for the New Year and the New Council. At this time, I have no report.

Mr. Locke, Streets, Sidewalks and Storm Sewer Committee had no report. I'm sure in the future I will have a lot.

Mr. Ambrozy Utilities Committee stated that we are trying to get up to speed with the Utility related projects and activities. I met with Mayor Susan to go over the list of projects. This Wednesday we are meeting with Jeff Carr from EDG to review the outstanding projects. The meeting is at 9am.

Mr. Seebaugh Parks and Recreation Committee had no report. Mr. Seebaugh stated that he met with Mayor Susan to discuss ideas for our park.

Mr. Godfrey Planning and Zoning /Economic Development committee reported that his main focus was going through the zoning of the city. Mr. Godfrey asked the mayor for a city-wide zoning map so that he could review and also a map of the city.

Ms. Riffle Rules Committee had no report. Ms. Riffle stated that she would be calling a committee meeting at the next meeting of council.

Ms. Riffle asked about the Wirt County tower that was mentioned in the mayor's report. I was wondering if there were other squads that might need access as well. Mayor Susan stated at this time she didn't know of any. I know that I have talked with Wirt County and they had a repeater up there recently and it has died. As squads are coming in town, they are not able to communicate.

Ms. Riffle added to the comment made in the Mayor's Report regarding the Washington, Morgan County Transit Authority. Passengers that are being dropped off at the Easy Rider Terminal from Marietta and Belpre and going to the Camden Clark Campus can contact dispatch at the hospital Monday-Friday for free transportation to the hospital. Upon completion of their stay at the campus, passengers can be returned to the Easy Rider Bus Terminal at no cost.

PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL – AGENDA items only: none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Ferguson brought before council for first reading **A RESOLUTION SUPPLEMENTING YEAR 2024 APPROPRIATIONS**. Everyone should have a copy of the resolution with Exhibit A attached.

Mr. Martin stated that after council meeting this evening email addresses for all council will be changed. We went to a city-wide email address that will be controlled by the city.

Mr. Locke asked if this supplemental would square us up with Greg on the IT he is doing. Mayor Abdella stated that she has all the invoices that are prior to January 1, 2024 and those will be handled tonight with the supplemental. Anything incurred after January 1, 2024 which will be a larger amount due to all the work that he completed for me my first week.

Mr. Ferguson was struggling with paying the invoices from 2023 and paying them with 25% of the 2024 Appropriations. Mayor Abdella stated that the intent was not to utilize the 25% but by doing this it will allow us the additional funds to pay these invoices and to square us with the Permissive Fund that will show up in the budgeting process as we go forward. This will not take away from the 25% for the first quarter. Mr. Ferguson confirmed that the books have been closed for 2023 by Mrs. Nolan. Any funds that we take out now will come out of the 25%. Mayor Abdella said that this was the purpose of the supplemental so we could add to the 25%.

Miss Pittenger 813 Ashberry Drive explained the bills that were not paid. This money will be used to add on to the budget and will not be shown until the end of the 2024 Audit. We have not ever supplemented a supplemental. We have a standing fund in the Permissive Tax.

Mrs. Nolan stated that if you go to the explanations that I handed out, it explains this. Every time you purchase your licenses from the county \$5.00 comes to the city and \$5.00 to the Permissive Tax account. Mr. Martin asked if she knew how much was in the account now. Mrs. Nolan stated that she didn't have that figure but would have to check on it. Last year she stated that the city received \$50,000. Mr. Martin asked her to check about it and find out how we go about getting that money if needed. Mr. Martin stated that the Permissive Tax Shortage is \$27,500 however Mrs. Nolan stated it was \$27,800.

Mr. Ferguson made a motion to withdraw **A RESOLUTION SUPPLEMENTING YEAR 2024 APPROPRIATION**.

Mr. Ferguson call for a committee meeting on January 22, 2024 at 6:45PM for the purpose of discussing **A RESOLUTION SUPPLEMENTING YEAR 2024 APPROPRIATION** and the 2024 Budget.

Ms. Riffle requested proof of monies from that fund.

PERSON APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL:

My name is Jim Nelson 529 Wirt Street, Belpre. I'm here because I owe it to the 514 people who voted for me in the last election to point out items, I noticed going over the city budget. While running for mayor all I heard from candidates was how much they understood finances. Being retired from a bank I took a close look at the city's finances. On October 16 we had \$5.1 million at one Bank, \$859,000 in another Bank. We had \$201,000 in an Ohio State bond paying 5.8%. On Sept 30 Bank statement, the city received the total of \$69.04 in interest. \$69.04 in interest on the \$859,000. It's obvious some candidates talk about understanding finances but truly don't. Belpre city council has a Finance committee and a treasure's report is read at every council meeting. John Ruth resigned as a councilman in November 2022 we have had several new councilmen since then. If one of them would have noticed this money drawing less than .0001 percent and put it with the state of Ohio bond. The city of Belpre would have drawn \$77,400 in interest. But instead, the city earned less that \$900. The previous auditor elected to take money from one Bank to another Bank. I'm sure this was a good move and making better interest but when you elect to use a new bank you close the old bank account. On Oct. 16 again this account had \$859,000. Why weren't these funds put with the bond in Columbus paying 5.8% This bond in Columbus would earn \$168.43 a day. How much money has the city lost in interest since it was left at the old Bank. The previous auditor and city council at some point should have recognized this mistake and corrected it. The city has lost several hundred thousand dollars in interest that could have been earned if this money would have been properly invested. This mistake should have been found out a long time ago. Not just someone going over the city budget and finances.

A city council has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the citizens money the best they can. You run for office hoping to do your best. The citizens elect you expecting you to do what is best for Belpre. That's all we can expect. With the 5.1 million being used as operating funds why was the \$859,000 left in an account drawing almost no interest. As a citizen of Belpre, I cannot tell you what to do with this money, but I can make a suggestion to place it in the state bond. Now that I have brought this to councils' attention, I will be at the next council meeting to see what you have decided to do with these funds. Thank you for your time.

Mrs. Nolan informed Mr. Nelson that \$600,000 was moved from that one account into our active account in late November, early December.

ADJOURN:

Mrs. Dennis made a motion to adjourn at 8:16 pm. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James B. Martin", written over a horizontal line.

President of Council Mr. Martin

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kimberly Meredith", written over a horizontal line.

Clerk of Belpre City Council Kimberly Meredith