



Common Council Meeting – Minutes for January 22, 2024

Council Members in Attendance: Ben Leavitt, Austin Yoder, Amy Rosa, Dustin Geyer, Kelbi Veenstra

Also Present: Mayor: Phil Jenkins, **City Attorney** Brian Hoffer, **Clerk-Treasurer** Jeff Knight, **Guests:** 9 (8 IP, 1 OL), and two members of the press (1 IP, 1 OL) were in attendance.

- Call to Order: Mayor Jenkins called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance. Council Member Geyer offered the opening prayer.
- Roll Call: Council members listed above were in attendance in person.
- Approval of Minutes from the January 2nd, 2023, Council meeting: Council Member Leavitt motioned to approve the minutes. Council Member Geyer seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.
- There were no petitions or comments by citizens.
- Reports of Committees, Boards, or Commissions: CT Knight presented the amended Resolution 774-24 Year End Transfer of Funds. There were only a handful of corrections that consisted primarily of appropriation numbers that were corrected and a couple of transfers that needed to be added. City Attorney Hoffer suggested that the Council take action on the amended version. Council Member Rosa motioned to approve the resolution as amended. Council Member Veenstra seconded. The amended resolution 774-24 Year End Transfer of Funds was approved unanimously by voice vote.
- There was no unfinished business to discuss.
- New Business:
 - 2024 Appointments: Mayor Jenkins walked the Council through the various appointments made to the boards and committees of the City. There are still four positions to be filled. Once they are, the appointee list will be sent back through. Council Member Leavitt motioned to approve the appointments as presented. Council Member Geyer seconded. The list of appointees was approved unanimously by voice vote.
 - Resolution 776-24 – 2024 Mileage Reimbursement: CT Knight presented the resolution reflecting the increase in the mileage reimbursement increase from the IRS from 65.5 cents per mile to 67 cents per mile for 2024. Council Member Rosa motioned to approve the resolution. Council Member Veenstra seconded. Resolution 776-24 – 2024 Mileage Reimbursement was approved unanimously by voice vote.
- Approval of Accounts Payable Vouchers: City 2024 APV's Totaling \$590,550.20: CT Knight presented the APV's for approval. There was not much to discuss as these expenses consisted of normal course of business expenses without payroll. There were three Chevy Tahoe SUVs that were purchased by the police department totaling approximately \$129,000. \$30,000 was paid to JPR for the work completed on the City Master Plan. There was \$10,000 for Commonwealth for an engineering survey. And there was also an \$85,000 invoice from First Group for engineering work completed on Woodview Dr. Council Member Geyer asked if the new vehicles were in addition to the current fleet or replacing vehicles in the fleet. Police Chief Rulli responded that the SUVs were replacing vehicles in the current fleet. Council Member Leavitt asked how long it took to get the vehicles. Chief Rully responded that he began trying to order new vehicles two years ago. Council Member Geyer asked if the new vehicles were in service at this time. Chief Rulli said no, they are currently at the outfitters. There were no further questions or



comments. Council Member Geyer motioned to approve the 2024 City APV's in the amount of \$590,550.20. Council Member Yoder seconded. The APV's were approved unanimously by voice vote.

- Approval of 2024 GO Bond APVs Totaling \$83,010: CT Knight presented the GO Bond related APV's that were expenses related to getting the GO Bond set up for the City. The expenses consisted of \$40,000 for Ice Miller (Bond Council), \$40,000 for Baker Tilly (Financial Consultant), \$3,000 for Kindig and Sloat (City Attorney) and a \$10 service fee. CT Knight noted that the City has received the Bond proceeds, but nothing has been spent on projects at this point. Mayor Jenkins noted that the City is currently working to obtain the easements necessary for the widening of US 6 out by the airport. It is hoped to obtain those easements this spring and begin road construction when the weather becomes suitable. Council Member Geyer asked if the first payment was due around November. Mayor Jenkins said he believed that to be correct. Council Member Geyer motioned to approve the 2024 GO Bond APV's as submitted. Council Member Veenstra seconded. The 2024 GO Bond APV's were approved unanimously by voice vote.
- Preliminary 12/31/23 Year End Fund Report: CT Knight presented a spreadsheet reflecting where the City stood from a cash on hand and investments standpoint. Council Member Geyer asked when the next CD would mature. CT Knight said that it just did with a balance of \$1.6 million. CT Knight reinvested those funds for 24 months at a 5.12% rate with First Financial.
- Reports by City Officers: Mayor Jenkins presented his annual State of the City speech. The text of the speech is attached.
- Adjournment: Upon completion of the Mayor's State of the City speech, there was no further business to be conducted nor were there any further questions or comments. Council Member Leavitt motioned to adjourn the meeting and Council Member Rosa seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 pm by unanimous voice vote.

Phil Jenkins, Mayor

Attest: _____
Jeff Knight, Clerk of the Council



PHIL JENKINS
Mayor
pjenkins@nappanee.org

2024 State of the City Celebrating 150 Years

In 1874, a new railroad was built that would forever change this area of southwestern Elkhart County. Access to the new railroad provided better access and opportunity for local entrepreneur's to provide goods and products on a regional and national level. The railroad not only attracted individuals, but many businesses from Locke. Some of the buildings themselves made their way 2 miles south to what is now the center of Nappanee.

2024 marks the 150th year since the building of the new railroad and the founding of our community. Looking back, I am grateful for the roots that were established, allowing Nappanee to not only survive, but to thrive. Many individuals and families took the opportunity provided to them and built successful businesses, provided necessary services, and established a strong and willing spirit to work hard and care for one another. Looking forward, I am excited to see what we can accomplish together over the next 50 years. What will future generations say about us? Will we have the same entrepreneurial spirit and continue to improve the quality of life for all residents of Nappanee?

As I begin my third term as your Mayor, I would like to point us back to all of the previous Mayors and leaders that have laid the solid foundation for a promising today and a brighter tomorrow. I would also like to thank all of our residents, businesses, and churches that provide for and make up our great community. It seems as though these last eight years have flown by, but when I look back, I am reminded of the collective work we have done to make Nappanee better and more resilient. I am humbled and honored to lead this great city for another four years and look forward, with excitement, to what we are yet to accomplish.

The State of the City allows us to celebrate our collective successes, identify challenges and opportunities for improvement, and set a course for a better future. I would like to thank our elected officials, volunteers, various board and commission members, and city employees for their dedication and sacrifice to serve our community. I would also like to thank all of our partners in the community, around our region, and across the State of Indiana that share in the vision of a stronger, safer, and more prosperous environment to start a business, raise a family, and share in the joys and challenges of life.

Thanks to our Clerk-Treasurer, Jeff Knight, his staff, and the City Council, we are pleased to report that we continue to be in a strong financial position. Through a history of balanced budgets, healthy cash reserves, and conscientious spending, we are able to complete larger capital projects and provide necessary services to continue to enhance our quality of life.

2023 was another successful year in Nappanee as we continue to improve our City through enhanced services, improved infrastructure, and new growth. The largest and most visible project this past year was the reconstruction of Woodview Drive. We appreciate the patience of all of the residents, students, and teachers affected by this project. Now substantially complete, my desire is that those impacted can say the headaches were worth the outcome. Thank you also to Street Superintendent Brent Warren, contractors Phend and Brown and HRP, our Engineers from First Group, and INDOT for their work in keeping the project on schedule and informing affected individuals on a regular basis. Once the weather warms up this spring, we will hold a ribbon cutting to celebrate with all of the partners who made this project possible.

The Parks Department completed a crowd-funding campaign through Patronicity that will be bringing pickleball to our community in the spring of 2024. Thank you to all who contributed and to the Indiana Housing and Community Development Agency (IHCDA) for the matching grant dollars that allowed us to raise the funds needed. This is an example of residents identifying a need, and us, collectively, implementing a way to make it a reality.

Thanks to the partnership of JBK Investments and the Nappanee Redevelopment Commission, Nappanee is adding a new residential subdivision. Wellfield Subdivision utilized Tax Increment Financing to assist with infrastructure for the new 55-unit residential development. The public-private partnership is another example of how creative approaches are solving problems in our community. The infrastructure was completed in late 2023 and we are seeing new homes being built.

Another example of partnership is between the City, WaNee Schools, and the Northwood Soccer Club. After several years of planning and projects, Wellfield Park is complete. Thanks to the cost-sharing between the City of Nappanee and the schools, the soccer complex is one of the best venues in northern Indiana. The addition this year of a press box, team dugouts, and final paving enhances our ability to host regional tournaments, IHSAA Sectional and Regional competitions, and college matches.

In 2023, we made the decision to move away from a recycling center, formerly supported by Elkhart County, and move toward residential curbside recycling. The City of Nappanee applied for and was successful in securing a \$100,000 grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to aid in the implementation of this program. For now, the city will continue to pay for residential refuse and recycling. We will continue to monitor the costs associated with these programs and determine the best path forward. We appreciate our partnership with Borden and look forward to working with them as we recently entered into a new 5 year contract.

Regional partnerships are a key to community growth and success. In late 2022 and through 2023, the Nappanee Wastewater Department partnered with the Elkhart County Regional Sewer District on a solution to eliminate septic systems for several unincorporated areas in the southwest portion of Elkhart County. To assist the county, the city offered to treat the sewage and reduce the risk of contaminating drinking wells for these areas. After careful analysis of our current capacity at our treatment plant, the decision was made to accept and treat this sewage and add some additional revenue to our utility.

While 2023 did not see the number of permits and buildings increase as in years past, we continue to see modest growth and activity. All sectors, including Industrial, Commercial, and residential saw significant growth. A new hangar was built at the airport and several new structures were built or are in the process of being built.

2023 saw the retirement of longtime Utilities Superintendent and community volunteer, Gale Gerber. After giving nearly 37 years of service to Nappanee, Elkhart County, and the State of Indiana, Gale decided to retire on December 31, 2023. Every community needs a Gale Gerber. Gale was a leader who was responsible for several utility infrastructure projects, many of which received state or federal grants. Anyone who knows Gale knows that he would give you the shirt off of his back to help someone in need. We want to wish Gale all the best in his retirement.

As we moved from a contracted Redevelopment/Chamber Director, the City of Nappanee hired Mark Collins as our new Director of Development. Mark works with the Planning Department and oversees the Redevelopment Commission. We look forward to Mark's contributions as he works with new and existing businesses to remove obstacles and provide technical assistance to retain talent and work with business owners looking to locate or expand in Nappanee. Bill Dutkowski was hired by the Chamber of Commerce to serve as their new director. We look forward to collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce and all of our local business partners.

So what does 2024 and beyond look like? The City continues to work on several capital projects and looks forward to completing some master planning that will shape our future. Preliminary design and pricing on the new fire station is progressing as we hire additional full time staff. As a location has been established on State Road 19 north, we are focusing on the details with three design-build teams who are competing for the final design and construction of the new fire station. We intend to have more details to share this spring and be able to secure funding to be able to start construction this fall or early next spring.

Road and Streets are looking at a few short-term and long-term projects. We will add a center turn lane along US 6, near the airport this spring/summer. The extension of Jackson Street south to CR 1350N is still a priority as we look at potential financing options to make that a reality. The Street Department and Planning Department are working with Elkhart County and regional planning to explore alternatives to long-term solutions for CR 52 and the West Industrial Park. The City also continues to work with the Federal Railroad Association and CSX on our grant for improving our train crossings.

The Redevelopment Commission has hired a consultant and is working on a master plan for our downtown. Many great things have occurred in our downtown and it continues to be a focus of my administration. Downtown is the heartbeat of our community and we want to see that success continue for many generations. We invite downtown businesses and community members to get involved in this master plan to make sure it is inclusive and a true representation of the collective vision of Nappanee. Please look for upcoming opportunities over the next few months to get involved.

Nappanee has hired a consultant to assist our Planning, Street, and Park Department to conduct a feasibility study for adding sidewalks and paths that will connect parks and neighborhoods in a more efficient way. Our goal is that this process will move forward into a phased construction plan for creating better access to amenities and destinations around Nappanee and enabling greater physical fitness opportunities and a healthier lifestyle. We will also continue to partner with Wakarusa and Connect In Elkhart County to establish a trail between our two communities and tie into the network of other trails within the county.

As we continue to look at overall long-term growth, the Planning Department will work with our regional area planning agency, Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) for assistance on our overall master plan. This plan will look at land use, zoning, utilities and transportation, to provide an updated roadmap to current and future challenges and opportunities.

While we focus on Nappanee, we recognize the various partners that share in our collective goal of embracing the place. These partners are a key to our success: Wa-Nee Schools, the Nappanee Public Library, the Boys and Girls Club, the Chamber of Commerce, The Centre, Open Door, our local churches, Visit Nappanee, the Apple Festival Committee, Elkhart County Government, MACOG, South Bend-Elkhart Regional Partnership, Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Vibrant Communities, the State of Indiana, and the United States.

Your feedback and suggestions are critical to making adjustments and improvements to our services and facilities. We continue to look for opportunities to engage and share information with our residents and businesses. Whether it is electronic through email or our website, nappanee.in.gov, by phone, by letter, or in-person, through a scheduled meeting or attending one of our City Chats, we value your feedback and plan to hear your opinions on how to make Nappanee the best it can be.

2024 is gearing up to be a great year for Nappanee. I am excited to focus on the past as we schedule the opening of two time capsules this fall. One is from the Centennial Celebration of 1974 and one is from 2000. We will be finalizing the planning for the opening of these two time capsules as well as some other events to celebrate and commemorate this great milestone for our community. Please stay tuned for more information and opportunities to participate as we celebrate our history.

I am so grateful and honored to be your Mayor and look forward to the next four years with you as we shape our next 50 years. The success we have seen in these last eight years has inspired me to reach for bigger and better things in the years to come. I believe in Nappanee and offer you my best, to work with you, as together, we “Build a Better Nappanee!” May God continue to bless Nappanee!

Embrace the Place

300 West Lincoln Street • P.O. Box 29 • Nappanee, IN 46550-0029
574.773.2112 • www.nappanee.org

Nappanee is an Equal Opportunity Employer