

MAY 7, 2025

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Those present:

Jim Smith	Nate Birch	Miriah Tobias	Maddie Schultz
Laura Rager	Matt Mize	Jeremy Hardy	Heather Cruz
Allen Miracle	Ryan Shock	Alex Downard	Sabrina Cline
Gary Montel	Cam Kissinger	Mike Kleinpeter	John Gunn
Chalmer Tobias	Dave McVicker	Joe Sands	Dennis Otten
Adam Penrod	Jennifer Hotchkiss	Dan Krouse	Ben Gleason
Carrie Mugford	Craig Walters	Alex Knollenberg	Jim Chinworth

Those absent: None. A quorum was attained.

The May meeting of the North Manchester Town Council was held at the Public Safety Building, 709 W. Main Street, North Manchester, Indiana, on May 7, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to notice duly given in accordance with the rules of the Council. The meeting was called to order by Council President Jim Smith, who presided.

Town Manager Adam Penrod asked for an amendment to the agenda by adding item #6, Main Street closure request from Manchester Alive. Motion to add new business item #6: Tobias/Rager. Motion passes unanimously.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 03/05/25, 03/25/25 Work Session, 04/02/25, 04/16/25 Work Session meetings were presented for approval. Motion to approve the minutes as presented: Rager/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

VISITOR COMMENTS

None.

PUBLIC HEARING

This is the second public hearing for the downtown revitalization plan. President Jim Smith opened the public hearing. Town Manager Penrod introduced Mike Kleinpeter, grant administrator at Kleinpeter Consulting, to speak about the OCRA Community Development Block Grant that was awarded to pay for the downtown revitalization plan. Zach Benedict, MKM, authored the plan is unavailable for this meeting but will be at the June council meeting to go over the details of the downtown plan. The complete document has been available at Town Hall for review for 60 days. The CDBG grant was \$40,000 with a local match of \$4,495. Four firms responded to the request for qualifications and MKM was selected. Penrod stated that local stakeholders were engaged to form a committee to provide insight and direction for the plan. The town's comprehensive plan and the Imagine One 85 plan were the basis for this work including the large amount of community input already received during those processes. Alex Downard commented that having a current downtown plan is the starting point for numerous funding opportunities. Hearing no additional comments, the public hearing was closed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Consideration of MELC Funding Request – Town Manager Penrod stated that Manchester Early Learning Center presented a funding request in the amount of \$25,000 to support operations at the April council meeting. This request is half of the previous year's request as the facility is nearing capacity with children. Motion to approve the funding request from MELC in the amount of \$25,000: Montel/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Downtown Revitalization Resolution, Res #5, 2025, Mike Kleinpeter – Clerk-Treasurer Carrie Mugford read resolution #5, 2025, verbatim. This resolution approves and adopts the downtown revitalization plan including comments received by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The plan will be available in town hall for review. Motion to approve resolution #5: Tobias/Rager. Motion passes unanimously.

2. Annual Tax Abatement Certification – Clerk-Treasurer Mugford explained that the council receives annual CF-1 forms from local businesses receiving tax abatements. These CF-1's are reviewed to ensure compliance with the original terms of the tax abatement and approved by the council. The forms are then submitted to the county as part of their annual tax forms. Mugford stated appreciation for each entity making investments in their businesses and continuing to be productive members of our community. The tax abatement reduces the tax burden on the investment. Each business was invited to the meeting to give an update on operations.

Precision Medical Technologies, Benjamin Gleason, spoke about new customers and new processes that are keeping the business on the cutting edge of the industry.

HF Group, John Gunn, explained how new printing presses allow improved quality, reduce expense, and reduce production times. The printers can be used for book runs of 25-100 books. The process has been slow getting started but is quickly picking up. HF Group leadership are attending trade shows to connect with new customers and bring in new business. In the past year, 5 full time employees have been hired and retained. Text book refurbishing has diminished but the Library of Congress work is still going strong.

S&T Investments, Joe Sands, noted that the building has been full for a year now. A new tenant has brought some light manufacturing to the facility. Tenants are looking for more space leading Sands to look for another investment property.

Strauss Dairy Ingredients, Alex Knollenberg, talked about the many changes over the last few years; including the name of the business and the addition of the specialized milk drying process. There have been minimal effects on staffing as the demand for this product is worldwide and production is 24/7.

MPS Egg Farms, Dan Krouse, noted that the Krouse family has had business in North Manchester since 1875. Today MPS is the 6th largest egg producer in the country with 13 million hens and 700 employees. The business now has operations in 4 states, but the largest barns are in Wabash County. Business headquarters was moved from Mentone to Manchester and built along the scenic Eel River. That facility was occupied in December of 2019 and is a wonderful location for 33 employees.

Councilmember Allen Miracle expressed his appreciation for the businesses that call North Manchester home. Council considered the annual abatements. Councilmember Chalmer Tobias remarked that businesses and communities are partners and it's wonderful to see everyone working together. Motion to approve each tax abatement as presented: Tobias/Rager. Motion passes unanimously.

3. Wastewater Bond Ordinances, GO #2 & #3, First Reading, Dennis Otten – Town Manager Penrod noted that water and wastewater infrastructure is vital to the health of our community. The wastewater facility was originally constructed in the 1960's and some of the infrastructure has been in the ground longer than that. These structures don't regenerate themselves and

occasionally have to be replaced and improved. Penrod emphasized that the town has done an incredible amount of due diligence to ensure each process is correct for our system and the best use of our funds. Penrod read a prepared statement:

The town was put under a Long Term Control Plan agreed order in 2008 with IDEM and given a 20 year compliance plan. Since then, the town has completed 8 of 10 projects.

Preparations for project 9 started in 2021 with lining up financing options with the help of Jones & Henry Engineers. The Town had Jones & Henry create a preliminary engineering report for project #9 and submit for Indiana Finance Authority SWIF (State Water Infrastructure Fund) grant for Federal Covid dollars. Town did not score high enough as our sewer rates were too low. We turned our attention towards securing SRF funding in 2022 for the LTCP projects and treatment plant improvements. SRF required the creation of an Asset Management Plan (AMP) by Town. The Town applied for funding but did not score high enough to qualify for the traditional funding due to current utility rates being too low.

After creating the AMP, many more deficiencies were discovered and the age of current equipment was determined to be past its useful life. In 2023, the Town hired Commonwealth Engineers (who has a good reputation with funding through the USDA Rural Development program) to take a broader look at the sewage treatment operations and capacity to determine three alternatives to consider in the required Preliminary Engineering Report for the Rural Development (RD) application. RD offered longer term loans and possible lower interest rates so that the impact on the rate payers would be reduced. In addition, there was the possibility of grant funding. A hydraulic study was completed on the east side of town to determine if the previous 8 LTCP projects matched what models showed back in 2008. The results showed that the current LTCP project #9 was undersized to meet compliance so additional improvements had to be made.

When applying for the RD application, the Town leadership decided to make major improvements that were identified in the Asset Management Plan that called for replacement of equipment that has been in operation since 1998.

In 2024, the Town applied for SRF funding and USDA RD funding to check what the best funding option would be. The Town scored well in the SRF application and was offered an RD loan in March 2025. In both instances, no grant funds were offered as the Town's current sewer rates were considered by both agencies as too low. Only low interest options and extended terms(30-40yrs) were given.

A few months ago, the Town accepted the RD offer of ~\$28M to make the treatment plant improvements and LTCP #10 improvements at the sewage plant. Commonwealth is communicating with IDEM to see if we can get an extension on project #10 since there is additional work required to meet the hydraulic modeling needs that were found in 2023. We are asking for an additional 3 yrs. If IDEM does not extend the Dec 2028 LTCP deadline, the Town will be forced to get an SRF loan for LTCP project #9 to finish the work within the original time frame.

Jeremy Hardy, Commonwealth Engineers, confirmed that an application has been submitted to SRF if IDEM does not give the three year extension. These projects have grown but will get the plant in a better position for the next several decades and potential commercial expansion. Dennis Otten, Bose McKinney & Evans, reiterated that two bond ordinances are presented tonight for SRF and Rural Development as a back up to each other. Each funding agency has unique covenants and the ordinances cannot be combined into one and remain compliant. Both are not to exceed \$37,161,000 with contingencies built in and tax exempt provisions. Otten explained the bond covenants and time frame. Otten remarked that RD does not issue bonds until after the project is completed. This means the town will have to issue large bond anticipation

notes from the bond bank to finance the project until it is complete and RD bonds can be finished, if RD funding is utilized. Councilmember Allen Miracle emphasized that the council is doing the best they can to maintain and improve the infrastructure for the best of the community with the resources available. Otten confirmed that the town can refinance this debt in the future if it would create potential savings. Council Vice President Laura Rager expressed her appreciation for the utility departments getting the long term control plan done, that seemed insurmountable at one time. Copies of the full bond ordinances are available at town hall. Motion to approve general ordinance #2 and #3 on first reading: Miracle/Rager. Motion passes unanimously.

4. Baker Tilly Contract for Financial Capabilities Analysis – Town Manager Penrod stated that part of the process to be awarded a three year extension from IDEM is to prove the financial capability of the wastewater utility to pay for the additional expense. Baker Tilly has presented a not-to-exceed contract of \$10,000 for this work that will take about a month. Penrod recommends moving forward with this contract. Motion to approve the Baker Tilly contract: Rager/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

5. Surplus Equipment Bid Opening – Clerk-Treasurer Mugford stated that there are two town vehicles that have been determined to be surplus. These vehicles were advertised for sealed bids and the bids will be opened tonight. The first is a 2015 Chevy Impala, former police car, and a 2012 Chevy Colorado, former meter reading truck. Two bids were received for each vehicle. Impala bids were \$1,021 and \$675. Colorado bids were \$2,575 and \$1,500. Bidders will be contacted with the results. Winning bidders will sign a bill of sale and be sold the vehicles as-is.

6. Manchester Alive Street Closings – Heather Cruz, Manchester Alive Executive Director, presented plans for Alive by the River events. There will be a total of thirteen events offered to the community this season. Road closure requests are for familiar events on State Road 114: the car show on June 13 and wrestling on August 8. Penrod confirmed that the state required hold harmless form declares that the town will hold the state harmless for any damage on town streets while the state road is closed to traffic. Cruz has been working extensively with INDOT to coordinate with bridge closure dates. Motion to approve the submitted road closure request: Tobias/Rager. Motion passes unanimously. Cruz thanked the council and is excited to present family friendly events for the community.

DEPARTMENTAL & COMMISSION REPORTS

Police Dept. – Report included in packet. Police Chief Nate Birch reported that it has been another busy month. Officers Skeens and Morrow have begun the academy and will graduate in August. Officer Calhoun and Maureen Zinn have resigned their positions from NMPD. Interviews for two open officer positions and the records clerk will be conducted this week.

Fire Dept. – Report included in packet. Fire Chief Cam Kissinger stated that the department has received the second version of fire truck specifications and will be investigating other manufacturers to partner with.

Building Commissioner –

Plan Commission –

Board of Zoning Appeals – BZA will meet on May 27.

Traffic Commission –

Parks & Recreation – Report in packet. Park Director Jennifer Hotchkiss reported that a new sign for Holderman Park has been ordered and should be installed around the first of June. The local American Legion is raising funds for a patronicity grant matching grant for a statue, flag poles, and additional landscaping. Hotchkiss reported that May 16 will be the last day for senior meals at Scout Hall due to decreasing numbers of attendees.

Town Life Center – Park Director Hotchkiss reported that two office suites are available for rent.

Tree Advisory – Minutes included in packet.

Grow Wabash County –

Redevelopment Commission – Town Manager Penrod reported that the RDC will meet May 14 to allow overlapping taxing districts to speak about TIF districts.

MEDCOR – No meeting.

Solid Waste – Minutes included in packet.

Storm Water Board –

Public Works – Street Superintendent Craig Walters reported that spring clean-up was a smashing success that took 85 tons of trash out of the community.

Water Superintendent Ryan Shock reported that new valves have been installed to facilitate installation of new water main in conjunction with the State Road 114 bridge project. The highway will be closed a few days next week to allow for the water main connection. The new water meter installation project is requiring a multitude of data. Shock and the utility office are hashing out how to best navigate the necessary data. Penrod noted that the current meter reading system is continuing to fail and the department is borrowing equipment from other communities.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Adam Penrod reported that the pickle ball committee is within reach of raising all the funds necessary to be awarded the patronicity grant through the state. This will complete the funding and get the courts built this year.

The Community Crossing Match Grant projects for this summer have begun with sidewalks on West Fourth Street. Residents are seeing the work being done and inquiring about the local sidewalk program to get more sidewalks replaced.

The State Road 114 bridge will be shut down to one lane in August. Once the water and sewer mains are relocated, the project will be completely in INDOT hands.

The South Market Street bridge is still scheduled to be closed starting in October or November at the earliest. The closure could be 5-8 months with no traffic allowed. There will be coordination of services to ensure all residents continue to get required services.

Commonwealth Engineers has sent out right of entry access letters to allow residents to opt in to having their water service into the house replaced. This is for residences that have been identified as having lead or galvanized service lines. Residents can opt out but will be subject to certain parameters such as disclosing the lead lines at time of sale. There are many benefits to having the service line replaced at this time.

New water meters have been ordered and Vanguard will begin switching out the meters very soon. All meters west of Market Street are to be installed by August and east of Market Street to be installed by December.

Penrod noted that Commonwealth Engineers provided a monthly project update report which is included in the packet.

Penrod, Mugford, and Smith attended a legislative update today with Senator Zay and Representative Sweet. This was a busy legislative session with Senate Bill 1 being center stage and making sweeping changes to municipal finance. The impact of this bill is being analyzed by numerous financial advisors.

CLERK-TREASURER'S REPORT

1. Financial Reports – Approved subject to audit.
2. Claims - The Town claim docket totaling \$787,270.97 and the Public Works docket totaling \$501,356.32 were submitted for payment. Motion to pay our obligations: Tobias/Rager. Motion passes unanimously.
3. Preliminary Budget Schedule – Clerk-Treasurer Mugford presented a preliminary budget schedule for the 2026 budget season. Department heads will be gathering numbers in June and council will meet with department heads in July. This budget cycle definitely has many unknowns.

VISITOR COMMENTS

None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Tobias thanked all the people who stuck it out to the end of the meeting. There is a lot going on in town and it all requires its own time.

Smith commented on all the positive work being done in the community and thanked the many consultants who are working along side of us. Smith expressed his appreciation for the department heads during this busy time. Smith thanked the local businesses who are continuing to invest in North Manchester and Manchester Alive who bring entertainment and community events. Smith thanked Penrod and Mugford for the work that is done every day to keep all these projects moving forward and make North Manchester a neat place to live.

The next regularly scheduled town council meeting will be June 4.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

TOWN COUNCIL, TOWN OF N. MANCHESTER

Jim Smith, President

Laura Rager, Vice-President

Allen Miracle

Gary Montel

Chalmer Tobias

ATTEST

Carrie Mugford, Clerk-Treasurer