

MARCH 6, 2024

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Those present:

Jim Smith	Craig Walters	Heather Cruz	Maddie Schultz
Laura Rager	Cam Kissinger	Alex Downard	Eric Christiansen
Allen Miracle	Shannon Carter	Jeremy Hardy	Pam Strasser
Gary Montel	Dave McVicker	Paige Krouse	Bud Burkhart
Chalmer Tobias	Jennifer Hotchkiss	Karen Eberly	Don Coble
Adam Penrod	Dave McManus	Dwight Basore	Michelle Holiday
Carrie Mugford	Ryan Shock	Jim Chinworth	Bob Sklar
Matt Mize	Nate Birch	Sebrena Cline	
Jim Kirk	Kody Cook	Bree Egner	

Those absent: None. A quorum was attained.

The March meeting of the North Manchester Town Council was held at the Public Safety Building, 709 W. Main Street, North Manchester, Indiana, on March 6, 2024, 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 requested item #12, acceptance of new police chief, be added to the agenda. Motion to approve the agenda addition: Rager/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

MINUTES

None.

VISITOR COMMENTS

Don Coble, 105 Hill Street, stated that he notified the town that someone is throwing items on his property and it took two weeks for anyone from the town to come to his property and address the issue. Coble then asked why the residents of 106 Hill Street weren't notified of a potential new park in the area. Council President Jim Smith reminded everyone that council policy is to hear concerns and address them at the next meeting after research can be done.

UPDATES

1. Imagine One 85, Alex Downard – Council President Smith introduced Alex Downard, Director of Imagine One 85. Downard gave an update on the activities of One 85 and the progress on the prioritized initiatives. Downard gave net migration statistics for 2021 and 2022. In 2021 Wabash County had a positive net migration of 185 and in 2022 of 190. Councilmember Allen Miracle asked Downard to explain those numbers. Downard stated that the net migration represents the number of people moving into the county versus moving out. The death rate of the county still outpaces the birth rate but there are more people choosing to move to the county than move out. Downard noted that one of the highest prioritized initiatives for North Manchester is the development of the downtown riverfront area. That initiative is being handled with multiple grant opportunities. The Lilly Endowment Grant application was a year long process of engaging students, staff and residents to define quality projects and move projects forward. That grant application has been submitted on March 1. Downard acknowledged that the Lilly grant process identified the needs of the community as housing and ways to attract and keep young families.

Downard gave an update on the Manchester Alive “The Coop” project. This is a small business incubator space. The first phase will be complete in about 30 days. A new capital campaign is underway to match a Patronicity crowdfunding grant. Downard emphasized that housing is a priority across the county. A group of investors is not only looking for new housing development opportunities but also identifying vacant and blighted homes for revitalization. Downard announced the launch of LiveIn Wabash County website. A web-based platform for people looking to move to Wabash County with all the information necessary to make the decision to move to the area. All Wabash County communities and services are highlighted on this web page. Doward gave updates on other initiatives, including; Wabash County Fellowship Program, Wabash County Small Scale Developer Program, and Stellar Pathways.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Water Rate Increase, GO #1, Second Reading – Clerk-Treasurer Carrie Mugford read general ordinance #1 by title only. Town Manager Penrod stated that the proposed water rate increase is 4.7%. The last increase was in 2020. It’s vital to keep up with the cost of operating the water utility. Motion to approve GO#1 on second reading: Rager/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.
2. Wastewater Rate Increase, GO#2, Second Reading – Clerk-Treasurer Mugford read general ordinance #2 by title only. Town Manager Penrod stated that the proposed wastewater rate increase is 6.1%. The last increase was in 2020. This increase is not project specific, just enough to maintain current services. Motion to approve GO#2 on second reading: Montel/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Manchester Early Learning Center Funding Request Presentation – Town Manager Penrod stated that a funding request application and financials were received from Manchester Early Learning Center. Bre Egner, MELC Board President, gave an update on the current staffing and student population. There are currently 55 students enrolled and a new infant room is open. The school age program for before and after school and holidays has been re-established. Eleven of the twelve spots for the summer program are already filled. A dual language preschool class has been added to align with Manchester Elementary School dual language program. Egner acknowledged the value of the partnership between the town and the center to support the many benefits of early childhood education. Jim Chinworth, MELC Board Treasurer, gave a financial background to the \$50,000 request. The center is willing to do fundraising and pursue tax credits; however, the fees for childcare will never cover the cost of running a quality center. The request presented to the town will allow all staff to be retained while new programs are established. Smith expressed his appreciation of the partnership with MELC. The council will take the request under advisement and consider it at the next regular meeting.
2. Manchester Alive Street Closure Requests – Town Manager Penrod introduced Heather Cruz, Manchester Alive Executive Director. This is an annual request for street closures for 2nd Friday events. Cruz noted that there are 6 business title sponsors from the community and a great committee of volunteers. Cruz thanked the street department and police department for all their work to make 2nd Fridays happen. Cruz presented a list of events and street closures to the council and commented that any streets not needed for an event will not be closed. Cruz requested the approval of the INDOT Hold Harmless form for the closure of State Road 114 through downtown North Manchester in June for the car show and in August for wrestling. Penrod noted that the detour for SR 114 will be Wayne Street. Cruz stated that she works with any local business and the school system to minimize the impact of the street closures. Motion to

approve the street closures as presented and the INDOT hold harmless form: Tobias/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

3. Creation of 2 Funds for Redevelopment Authority, GO#3, First Reading – Clerk-Treasurer Mugford explained that two funds are required to track transactions of the Redevelopment Authority. The RDA is the lease holder for the downtown sidewalk improvements of 2012. Mugford noted that the lease arrangement is 12 years old but the State Board of Accounts now requires the transactions of the lease to be shown on the town books. The funds will be an RDA Sinking Fund (3311) and an RDA Operations and Reserve Fund (4417). Mugford read GO#3 verbatim. Motion to approve GO#3 on first reading: Rager/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

4. Consideration of K9 Transfer, Resolution #5 – Town Manager Penrod confirmed that our K9 handler, Officer Kody Cook, has been hired by the Wabash County Sheriff's Department. The North Manchester Police Department does not have another officer willing to take on the K9 position and take care of six-year-old K9 Sarge. Penrod has been in contact with the Wabash County Sheriff and they are willing to take Sarge and keep the K9 working with Deputy Cook. The proposed resolution will retire Sarge from NMPD and transfer him to the Sheriff's Department where he will be re-certified with Deputy Cook. Deputy Cook and K9 Sarge will be available to the town when requested. Clerk-Treasurer Mugford read resolution #5 verbatim. Motion to approve resolution #5: Rager/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

5. Request to Purchase 6 SCBA Airpack – Town Manager Penrod explained that Fire Chief Cam Kissinger is replacing all department SCBA over the course of several years. Last year 10 units were purchased and the plan is to purchase 6 this year, 6 next year, and 4 the final year. The cost has grown to approximately \$10,000 per unit. Kissinger received two quotes for 6 units from Hoosier Fire Equipment and Municipal Emergency Services. The price per unit for MES was lower for a total quote of \$67,985.46. Kissinger would like every fire fighter to have their own mask for safety. Kissinger requested permission to purchase 6 SCBA from MES. Motion to approve the purchase from Municipal Emergency Services: Rager/Montel. Motion passes unanimously.

6. SRF Water Signatory Confirmation, Resolution#6 – Town Manager Penrod explained that the council has been discussing upcoming water projects for infrastructure improvements. The State Revolving Fund is a possible funding source. This resolution will allow Jim Smith to be the signatory on those documents on behalf of the town. Clerk-Treasurer Mugford read resolution #6 verbatim. Motion to approve resolution #6: Rager/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

7. SRF Wastewater Signatory Confirmation, Resolution #7 – Jeremy Hardy, Commonwealth Engineers, explained that this is a similar resolution for wastewater. The town has applied to Rural Development for infrastructure improvement funding. However, an SRF application will also be submitted to supplement Rural Development funding. This resolution will allow Jim Smith to sign the required documents on behalf of the town. Clerk-Treasurer Mugford read resolution #7 verbatim. Motion to approve resolution #7: Miracle/Rager. Motion passes unanimously.

8. SRF Loan Program Wastewater PER Acceptance, Resolution #8 – Jeremy Hardy, Commonwealth Engineers, stated that a public comment period was held in September for the wastewater preliminary engineering report. SRF will accept that as public notification of the PER but requires acceptance of the wastewater PER on their forms. Clerk-Treasurer Mugford read resolution #8 verbatim. Motion to approve resolution #8: Miracle/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

9. Apex Engineering Construction Admin and Inspection Contract Approval – Town Manager Penrod stated that Apex Engineering has been the engineer for Community Crossing Match Grant street projects for the past several years. This contract is for construction administration and inspection of this year's projects with Gaunt and Son Asphalt. The contract is not to exceed \$20,904. Penrod commented that Apex rarely goes up to the contract amount and does very well estimating their contract. Penrod recommends approving the Apex Engineering construction administration contract. Motion to approve the Apex Engineering contract not to exceed \$20,904: Montel/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously.

10. Request to Purchase Cloud Based Car and Body Cameras, Grant Funds – Town Manager Penrod stated that the Maureen Reed applied for and received a grant for new cloud-based car cameras and body cameras. Currently officers have to download camera footage onto thumb drives and save on department servers. The cloud-based system would upload the footage immediately and remove the chance for operator or system errors. It would also be a more efficient way for all officers to transfer their own video. Also, the cameras turn on when the patrol lights are active. Sergeant Nate Birch remarked that it is an easier way for the county prosecutor to access important video for criminal cases. The grant received was \$70,500 and the quote from Axon Enterprise, Inc is \$110,327.70. Birch stated that the quote includes a 5-year contract for cloud storage. Motion to approve the purchase of cloud-based car and body cameras with grant funds and LOIT public safety funds: Miracle/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously. Tobias congratulated the department on getting a grant to cover most of the cost of the purchase.

11. Resignation of Police Chief – Town Manager Penrod confirmed that Police Chief Jim Kirk has submitted his letter of resignation. Kirk's last day will be April 19. Penrod acknowledged and thanked Kirk for his 8 years with the department. Motion to accept the resignation of Police Chief Kirk: Montel/Tobias. Motion passes unanimously. Tobias thanked Kirk for his time of service with the department. Kirk expressed his appreciation of the board and all the employees of the town.

12. Consideration of Appointment of New Police Chief – Town Manager Penrod stated that a hiring committee met with three internal candidates to learn about their ideas and direction for the department. The committee chose Sergeant Nate Birch as the new chief of police. Birch will be sworn in as chief on April 20. Birch is an 18-year veteran of NMPD and a vested community member. Penrod and the committee recommend approval of Nate Birch as the newest NMPD Police Chief starting April 20: Tobias/Rager. Motion passes unanimously. Rager congratulated Birch and commented the council looks forward to working with Birch in the future.

DEPARTMENTAL & COMMISSION REPORTS

Police Dept. – Report included in packet. Police Chief Jim Kirk reported that three new officers have been selected: Braxtin Wilson, Kyle Callhoun, and Griffin Miller. All three new officers are enrolled in ILEA and will start that training soon. Kirk announced that Officer Ray Houser will be leaving the department and thanked him for his service.

Fire Dept. – Report included in packet. Fire Chief Cam Kissinger reported that the training for February was walking through the new renovations at the high school so that all first responders are aware of the layout. On February 25 a mock drowning in-service was put on at the community pool. The Assistance to Firefighters grant was submitted today. This is a regional grant for NMFD, Pleasant Township and Chester Township to purchase communication equipment. Kissinger recently met with Adam Hurley from J&K Equipment to determine a better way to receive 800 MHz signals in this area. It was determined that a

repeater system would work in place of building a new tower. The cost will be around \$18,000 and will be shared by NMFD and Pleasant Township and Chester Township.

Building Commissioner – Report in packet.

Plan Commission – No meeting in February.

Board of Zoning Appeals – No meeting.

Traffic Commission – No meeting.

Parks & Recreation – Report in packet. Parks Director Jennifer Hotchkiss reported that February was a busy month. The daddy/daughter dances sold out with 107 attendees at each session. Last week sixth graders were at the pool for swim lessons. A life guarding class is getting ready to start. The Easter egg hunt will be March 23. Hotchkiss thanked the fire department for being part of the mock drowning training.

Town Life Center –

Tree Advisory – Report in packet

Grow Wabash County – Town Manager Penrod stated that the 2024 State of the Community breakfast went well. Penrod thanked Smith for speaking for the town.

Redevelopment Commission – Town Manager Penrod reported that the RDC met in February to discuss potential upcoming projects.

MEDCOR – Did not meet.

Solid Waste – Councilmember Gary Montel reported that recycling at the street department has been opened up. It appears to be going well so far.

Storm Water Board – Did not meet.

Public Works – Street Superintendent Craig Walters reported that winter was not, in fact, over in January. The department did some snow plowing in February.

Wastewater Superintendent Shannon Carter had nothing to add to his report.

Water Superintendent Ryan Shock reported that the department would normally be doing preventative maintenance but they have been busy with repairing leaks. Pumping from the plant is moderating so hopefully most of the leaks have been repaired.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Penrod reported that the notice to proceed was signed with Guant & Son Asphalt for this year's Community Crossing Match Grant projects. A preconstruction meeting is scheduled for March 15 to get a better idea of schedule. Concrete ramps and sidewalks will be the first work done.

Penrod has been notified by the INDOT contractor that the letting for the SR 114 bridge has been moved to September. A meeting is being set up with all interested parties to determine traffic flow while the bridge is under construction for almost 2 years. The plan is to have half the bridge open at all times with a traffic control device at each side. Penrod will release information to the

public once a plan is finalized. Penrod noted that other bridges in the area are also planned for construction at the same time. Travel in the area will be interesting for the next few years. Penrod stated that trash and recycling contract bid proposals will be advertised in the March 13 newspaper. The current contract expires July 1. Three contractors have been in communicating with Penrod. The plan is to have a vendor under contract by May 1. Penrod confirmed that the Lilly Endowment College and Community Collaboration grant application was submitted. Penrod thanked the community for their involvement and pledges to the project. Penrod stated around \$600,000 was pledged in 5 weeks. Penrod feels there is opportunity for something transformational for the community. Penrod attended a Stellar Pathways workshop along with Alex Downard, Tenille Zartman, and Kristie Bone. This two-day event is a requirement to completing the Stellar Pathways application for a potential seven-million-dollar investment in the county. A letter of intent is due May 1 with 4 regional applicants being selected from those letters. A \$50,000 grant will be awarded to come up with a strategic investment plan for your communities. Penrod noted that several counties were looking at Wabash as an example of how to collaborate across the county. Our efforts have put us at the top of the list to implement the work that has already been started. Penrod presented a repeat street closure request from Miriah Tobias for a community movie night at Warvel Park on May 31. Market Street will be closed from 7th to 9th from 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm. This was a big success with the community. Penrod approved the street closure.

CLERK-TREASURER'S REPORT

1. Financial Reports – Approved subject to audit.
2. Claims - The Town claim docket totaling \$611,620.36 and the Public Works docket totaling \$204,676.67 were submitted for payment. Motion to pay our obligations: Tobias/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.
3. Annual Report – Clerk-Treasurer Mugford stated that the 2023 annual report was completed and submitted on February 19. Copies are available at town hall for review.

VISITOR COMMENTS

None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Jim Smith thanked Police Chief Jim Kirk for his work to keep our community safe, friendly, and crime free. We appreciate all you have accomplished in our department. Allen Miracle echoed the thanks and appreciation. Miracle noted that there were very good candidates to interview from the department because of Kirk's leadership. All candidates felt like they had the freedom to do the work that needed to be done.

Jim Smith confirmed that the April meeting will be a week later on April 10.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18 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