

NEW LONDON VILLAGE COUNCIL

Regular Meeting – Monday, June 8, 2020 @ 7 p.m.

Mayor Toby Thomas called the meeting to order. He then gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call was then taken with the following members present: Myers, Cooke, Gullett, Willis, Jennifer Ball and Steve Ball.

Also present: Chief Marko, Steve Bond, Shawn Pickworth, Ellen Simmons, Marvin McCallister, Bob James, Megan Sherlund and Lynn Phillips.

Toby Thomas then asked for approval of the agenda. Jennifer Ball made a motion to approve the agenda. Cooke seconded the motion. Roll call - All ayes; no one opposed.

The minutes from the May 26, 2020 regular meeting were then presented for approval. Myers made a motion to approve the minutes. Gullett seconded the motion. Roll call - All ayes; no one opposed.

Toby Thomas asked for any public questions or statements.

Ellen Simmons stated she was there representing the New London Community Club. The community club is the organization that puts on Hometown Holidays and does the town event cards. She announced that the club would be going forward with having the community garage sales on June 20th. They also still plan on holding Hometown Holidays in December. She concluded by announcing the club would be meeting the following day at the Wildcat Diner and everyone was welcome to attend.

Toby Thomas noted that no one had posted any questions online so he stated they would move on with the meeting.

Toby Thomas then called for a report from the Administrator.

Shawn then reported the following.

Water

- Park Avenue Water Main Replacement Project – We should hear from the State by the end of this month on funding.
- GIS Project – project continues.
- Tower Improvement Project – Cement work to finish at the base, then paint. Plans are to fill, disinfect and put back into service by the end of the week. We are very pleased with the results of the project.
- Train 4 – We are going to install new media in the Clarifier. Material has been ordered and is expected to ship in a week to 10 days. We feel confident once this happens the train will run as expected.

Wastewater

- Wastewater Treatment Plant Project – Plans submitted to the OEPA for PTI approval.

Storm Sewers

- Crews have been out cleaning some storm sewers.

Sanitation

- No major issues.
- During summer heat, crews might elect to start the routes earlier in the mornings. Make sure you get your trash out early, best by 6:00 am.

Street

- Potholes – with the crazy up and down temps. and the amount of moisture that is under the road we are going to have a lot of potholes. Please feel free to contact our office if you see one that is not getting addressed. 419-929-4091.
- Crews have been out patching potholes.

Other

- Columbia Gas Project – project is in full swing. Ours crews have been busy with locates, catch basin cleaning & storm sewer cleaning.

Janice Myers asked Shawn Pickworth if Columbia Gas would be repairing the streets that are in disrepair due to the project.

Shawn Pickworth answered that yes they would.

Toby Thomas asked Shawn Pickworth if he wanted to discuss the Hileman Building rentals or if he wanted to wait until New Business.

Shawn Pickworth stated that things in Ohio were starting to open back up and he wanted to know council's feelings on renting the Hileman Building. Andy Suvar is considered to be in the same category as retail so he is allowed to start having auctions again. Someone has also requested to have a craft show in the Hileman Building. Shawn felt like these events should be allowed since people would be in and out during the events. While he felt those events wouldn't be a problem, he wondered about council's thoughts on events such as class reunions, graduation parties and wedding receptions. He felt that those type of events would be hard to have with the restrictions in place. He wondered if council would allow them to hold the events that would be allowed or if they wanted to keep the Hileman Building closed to all rentals until everything was allowed.

Council discussed the rules currently in place. Wedding receptions are allowed, but due to the many restrictions some members of council wondered if they should chance opening up the Hileman Building for them. Members seemed to agree that the building should be opened back up for any event that would fall under retail but continued discussing the other types of events held in the building.

Megan Sherlund stated she had recently talked to the Huron County Health Department and the Hileman Building was able to be rented for events that the governor had opened back up. She also stated that the health department had also told her that the village would not be held responsible if someone rented the building for a reception and did not follow the guidelines in place by the governor as long as they had signed something stating they would. It would fall back on the person renting the Hileman Building.

Toby Thomas asked Megan Sherlund if there was a maximum occupancy that should be observed at the Hileman Building.

Steve Ball commented that the guidelines currently in place stated that for any event, the tables would have to be six feet apart. He felt anyone renting the building would need to adhere to those requirements.

Stuart Cooke stated that he had been to many places where social distancing was not being observed and he asked Mr. Bond if he would check into the situation.

Mr. Bond stated that someone could possibly make a case against the Village of New London over something like that, but it would also be very hard to prove. He continued to say the village also had insurance and sometimes you need to say that is why there is a need for insurance.

Toby Thomas stated he thought all the businesses in town were doing a good job of following the social distancing guidelines. He was happy with the way everyone was dealing with the guidelines for the most part. He wanted to let everyone know he appreciates their efforts.

Stuart Cooke stated he had a question for the mayor. He stated he had met with Toby Thomas about the police chief search and Toby had told him he was going to do one of the interviews over the internet.

Toby Thomas answered that there were three candidates that were over an hour and a half away. He thought he would do the initial interviews by Zoom meeting to make sure they were even in the ball park for the job.

Stuart Cooke asked Chief Marko how far he had driven for an interview when he was searching for a police chief job.

Chief Marko stated he had driven over two hours three different times when he was looking for a position.

Stuart Cooke replied that since he had time to think about things, he thinks that if the mayor does a Zoom meeting with some of the candidates, then he will need to do one with all the candidates. He feels it is a poor way of doing an interview. He feels that if they really want the job, then they should be willing to drive to New London. He continued by saying you can read a lot from a person in a personal interview. He thinks it should be a fair process for everybody.

Toby Thomas stated he would make all six interviews a Zoom meeting to begin with and then for second interviews he would call them in for a personal interview.

Stuart Cooke then commented that initially the mayor thought he and council should work together in the hiring process for a new police chief and he feels that now the mayor has taken council out of the equation.

Toby Thomas stated it was his understanding that it was the job of the mayor to nominate the police chief to council and then get their advice and approve the hire.

Stuart Cooke stated he agreed with that but he didn't understand why the mayor would not take advantage of people who had been through the process already. He asked Toby Thomas if he had been through the process before.

Toby Thomas replied that he had not.

Stuart Cooke explained that many members of council had already been through the process of hiring a new police chief and also the current police chief has a wealth of knowledge to use in the process. He didn't understand why Toby Thomas would want to take on the process all by himself.

Toby Thomas stated he understood what Stuart was saying but he also believes that council should let the village employees do the jobs they were hired or elected to do and it is not council's job to interview every police chief candidate. It is council's job to trust the mayor to do his job.

Stuart Cooke stated he didn't have a problem with that but he doesn't think Toby Thomas has the experience needed.

Toby Thomas replied that he had invited the police chief to be a part of the interviewing process.

Stuart Cooke stated that council had hoped Toby Thomas would have Chief Marko involved in the interviews and he was also hoping that the mayor would bring more than one nomination for council to look at once the interviews were complete. He continued by saying it seemed like Toby Thomas didn't want council to be involved but no one would be approved without council's permission.

Toby Thomas agreed with Stuart Cooke and said he would bring the nomination before council and they would be able to deliberate and ask questions and then make their choice. He then asked Mr. Bond what his thoughts were because when he first started calling the candidates for interviews, some of them had been surprised to hear that members of council would be involved.

Steve Bond replied that he had seen it done both ways. He knew previously in New London; council had been consistently involved with the police chief interviewing process but he had also seen it done with the mayor taking over the interviews by himself. He stated the other thing he wanted to mention was that the environment and whether people at the village get along or not would play into whether someone would want to come to the village and take over the position.

Stuart Cooke asked Toby Thomas what kind of time line he was looking at.

Toby Thomas replied that he had three interviews set up for the upcoming Thursday and they were all Zoom meetings. He is just looking at them as initial meetings. He wants to try to get to know them. He and Chief Marko had gone over the questions and he had invited Chief Marko to be a part of the interviews.

Stuart Cooke stated that council would appreciate it if the chief would attend the interviews.

Chief Marko replied that he had an issue with having Zoom interviews. He would prefer to see them in person. From the police work he has done over the years, he can tell a lot about a person by their body language. He also did not like the fact that the mayor only wanted him to attend for part of the interview. He said his opinion was that council should be part of the interviewing process. He concluded by saying he didn't want any part of the Zoom meetings. If the mayor would like to invite the candidates to a personal meeting with council in attendance, he would make sure he was there too but otherwise, he did not want to be involved.

Toby Thomas stated that Chief Marko would not be involved then since that was his wish.

Toby Thomas then asked for a report from the Police Chief. Chief Marko stated he did not have anything unless someone had something for him.

Toby Thomas asked for a report from Fire. Chief John Chapin absent.

Toby Thomas then asked for a report from the Ambulance. Jennifer Ball stated that she had the report for May. There were a total of 56 calls. There were 31 in the Village of New London; 7 in New London Township; 10 in Fitchville Township; 4 in Troy Township and 4 in Ruggles Township. She also stated that they would be able to resume ambulance training in June for EMT's. They would be practicing social distancing but they are able to start the training back up.

Toby Thomas then asked for a report from Zoning. Bob James stated he wanted to update council on Tax Ease LLC acquiring seven properties in the village. Shawn had discussed the situation with council at the last council meeting. Since then, Shawn Pickworth had sent Bob James a copy of the contract the county has

with Tax Ease LLC. Bob James learned that Tax Ease only owns the liens on the properties until they are actually foreclosed on. Until then, the property owner still owns the property. Once the property is foreclosed on, Tax Ease LLC takes ownership. Two of the seven properties have been foreclosed on so Tax Ease LLC has ownership of the property at 33 Park Avenue and at 137 High Street. Bob James stated he had given Tax Ease LLC a copy of the zoning ordinance because they are responsible for those two properties. The problem with the old parsonage on Park Avenue is that the owner is deceased so they can't get ownership of the property. It needs torn down because it is a safety hazard. It's a big problem. Bob James wondered if council was willing to take on the liability for the five other properties in the village that had not been foreclosed on yet.

Shawn Pickworth suggested they call the county because the county's contract with Tax Ease LLC was up at the end of the year. He wondered if the contract was up, would the properties go back to the county.

Bob James explained why the county would not get the properties back and stated that the county had basically washed their hands of the properties.

Shawn Pickworth was upset because it seemed like the county messed things up with these properties.

Bob James added that many counties in Ohio were in the same boat as they were.

Shawn Pickworth asked if there was an ordinance the village could pass forcing the owners to do something with the properties.

Mr. Bond stated they were already in violation of the ordinance the village has in place. They can file a citation against them and get a court order. That would work with the two properties that Tax Ease LLC had ownership of but not with the other five.

Shawn Pickworth wondered if the county had any liability for putting the village in the mess with these properties.

Mr. Bond asked Shawn Pickworth about the Land Bank.

Shawn Pickworth answered that since the Land Bank was so new, they did not have a lot of funds available but the village will continue to work with the county and the Land Bank to come to a solution.

More discussion was had on the subject and Shawn Pickworth concluded that it was frustrating because the Land Bank would have loved to have all of the properties. There are people who are interested in the properties and several of them have a lot of potential but the county makes it so that the Land Bank cannot get their hands on the properties.

Toby Thomas stated they would continue to work on the issue but the village didn't want to spend a lot of money on the properties especially not knowing if they would get any of it back.

Toby Thomas then asked Megan Sherlund for a report for the Recreation Department. Megan Sherlund shared the following report.

1. There are three sites that have not paid for the 2020 season. Two of those sites are empty and one has a camper. He has contacted myself and the mayor with a problem with the provided discount of a daily rate for 25 days. I will call him again tomorrow to inform him of the amount due and that he will be asked to leave the campground if he cannot pay that amount in full by Wednesday.
2. After reviewing the rules and regulations given for small town festivals, the Recreation Committee and myself believe the 2020 New London Firelands Labor Day Festival should be cancelled. We are not able to secure a ride company. We are hoping to still host events separately this fall after

restrictions have lifted but we are already behind in the planning process and the funds are just not available for deposits and other upfront costs.

3. We have had some electrical work that has been beyond our capabilities but BCU has come in and completed those things.
4. We are getting ready for baseball/softball. We have some lights that will need replaced on the softball field and Steve Ball installed new speakers.
5. We have a few people from the community stepping up and hosting events in the parks this past weekend and for future dates and I want to thank them for taking the time and energy out of their own businesses and personal lives to try and help the parks and the people of New London.

Members of council discussed Labor Day. Steve Ball commented that it would be a huge financial gamble to hold it. The Recreation Committee recommends that it be postponed until 2021. There is still a chance there could be a three-day softball tournament or possibly a parade or fireworks, but the traditional Labor Day Festival that the village knows and loves would be postponed until next year. Even though camping is open, they would not be able to allow as many campers as they usually have for Labor Day. There were so many unknowns at the time they thought it would be best to postpone it.

Adam Gullett made a motion to postpone the New London Firelands Labor Day Festival until 2021. Steve Ball seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Stuart Cooke asked Megan Sherlund what kind of electric work had needed to be done.

Megan Sherlund replied that they had an underground line go bad. They had Firelands Electric come and they found it. BCU along with village employees did the work to fix it.

Shawn Pickworth commented that they basically had a short under the ground.

Toby Thomas then presented Ordinance 2020-12 An Ordinance Amending Various Provisions of the Income Tax Code to Incorporate Revisions Already Adopted in the Ohio Revised Code. Third Reading. Steve Ball made a motion to approve the third reading. Cooke seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then presented Ordinance 2020-14 An Ordinance Authorizing Agreements with Special Counsel and Chicago Title Agency of Huron County, Inc., in Connection with the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades Project, and Declaring an Emergency. Second Reading. Myers made a motion to approve the second reading. Jennifer Ball seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then presented Ordinance 2020-15 An Ordinance Authorizing the Village Administrator to Execute an Agreement for and Participate in the Ohio Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network. Second Reading. Gullett made a motion to approve the second reading. Willis seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then presented Ordinance 2020-16 An Ordinance endorsing the State Policy Against Using Public Funds for Political Actions and Amending the Village's Employee Handbook Relative to the Same. First Reading. Myers made a motion to approve the first reading. Gullett seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then presented Resolution 2020-03 A Resolution in the Matter of Determining Emergency Management Service for the Political Subdivision of the Village of New London. Third Reading. Steve Ball made a motion to approve the third reading. Gullett seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then called for Old Business.

Shawn Pickworth wanted to revisit the Dairy Bar at the recreation park. The Recreation Committee wanted to recommend someone to take over the Dairy Bar, but since it was already June and they would have considerable startup costs, they would like council to consider a multiyear contract. Due to the late start of opening, they would like council to consider a 3-5-year contract instead of a year by year contract.

Council discussed the contract. Steve Ball stated the new renters would like to have a chance to make a return on their investment. Mr. Bond added that the contract was set up that they would be making a contribution to the village. Stuart Cooke voiced some concerns considering what had happened with the previous person running the stand.

Toby Thomas asked if the previous renter had submitted a proposal?

Shawn Pickworth answered that he had chosen not to.

Steve Ball added that even when they had opened the Dairy Bar back up for proposals, the previous renter did not submit anything. He told council the hours the new renters were planning on having.

Shawn Pickworth asked if the parks closed at dark.

Steve Ball thought they closed at 11:00 p.m. He continued by saying the candidate they would like to recommend is willing to stay open later for special events being held at the recreation park. They also will not close early when there is a lack of events at the Recreation Park.

After more discussion, Janice Myers and Jennifer Ball thought it would be okay to allow a three-year contract.

Steve Ball made a motion to allow a three-year contract with the new Dairy Bar renters. Gullett seconded the motion. Roll call: Jennifer Ball, Yes; Cooke, No; Myers, Yes; Willis, Yes; Steve Ball, Yes; Gullett, Yes.

Shawn Pickworth concluded Old Business by saying the auditors had been at the village for four days the first week in June.

Toby Thomas then called for New Business.

Stuart Cooke wanted to discuss Hileman Building rentals. He thought the village should allow the building to be rented for any event but he felt they should have to sign something related to COVID 19 stated they knew they were having the event at their own risk. He asked Mr. Bond if he would write up something.

Stuart Cooke made a motion to allow the Hileman Building to be rented for all events with the understanding the renters would know they were having the event at their own risk. Steve Ball seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then presented the monthly bills for approval under Schedule A. Myers made a motion to approve the bills as presented. Cooke seconded the motion. Roll call - All ayes; No one opposed.

Toby Thomas then presented the monthly bills for approval under Schedule B. Jennifer Ball made a motion to approve Schedule B. Steve Ball seconded the motion. Roll call: Gullett – yes; Steve Ball – yes; Jennifer Ball – yes; Willis – yes; Cooke – abstain; Myers – disqualify herself.

Toby Thomas then presented the Then and Now bills for approval under Schedule C. Jennifer Ball made a motion to approve Schedule C. Myers seconded the motion. Roll call – All ayes; No one opposed.

Steve Ball made a motion to adjourn. Jennifer Ball seconded the motion. Roll call - All ayes; No one opposed.



Nancy Howell
Fiscal Officer



Toby Thomas
Mayor