

## **MARCH 2, 2020**

The Common Council of the City of LaPorte met in regular session in the Council Chambers on Monday, March 2, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

### **Pledge**

Councilwoman Cutler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Cutler, Franke, Vincent, Brown, Feikes, West, Galloway

### **Minutes**

Mayor Dermody stated each Council member received an advance copy of the minutes from the February 18, 2020 meeting and asked if there were any corrections or additions. Councilwoman Feikes moved to approve the minutes as presented; motion seconded by Councilman Franke and unanimously carried.

### **Petitions & Comments**

Sierra Sue Jesch, 204 Jefferson Ave., stated that there is a lack of adequate housing in the City of La Porte that is going to take a multi-prong approach to solve. She stated that the recent news encouraging downtown building owners to turn their second and third floors into livable space was a good idea. Additionally, she suggested that the empty lots that the City owns be advertised for sale, change the setback requirements to allow building on smaller lots and that the City work with owners of other empty lots to allow for additional housing to be built. Ms. Jesch noted that these changes would encourage building housing in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Mayor Dermody agreed with Ms. Jesch and stated that he has asked LEAP to do an inventory of our downtown so that we can see what we can convert into housing.

### **Standing Committee Reports**

**Tree Commission:** Councilwoman Brown reported the Tree Commission met on February 20, 2020 and that last year, an outside company completed an inventory of all trees on tree lawns and rated their condition from one to five, five being the worst. The trees rated a five have all been removed by the Street Department this year. The Tree Commission is now looking at the severity of the trees that are rated four to begin removal. It was also reported that NIPSCO has been removing trees in alley ways and public rights-of-way. Liz Kaminski assisted with inspections. Councilwoman Brown also noted that there is a list of preferred trees for tree lawns in the City of La Porte on the City's website. Also noted, April 25<sup>th</sup> is Arbor Day and the Tree Commission has a seedling giveaway planned at Kesling Park at 8AM. The next Tree Commission meeting will be held Thursday, March 19, 2020 at 5PM at City Hall.

**Traffic Commission:** Councilwoman Feikes reported the Traffic Commission will meet tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. at the Police Station.

**Park & Recreation:** Councilwoman Feikes reported the Park Board held a meeting on February 19, 2020. The Park Board recognized Dr. Seth Philbrook who recently passed away. Dr. Seth Philbrook served on the Park Board from 1973-1983. Councilwoman Feikes also reported Mark Schreiber was given permission to write a grant to have Great Lakes Urban Forestry do an inventory of all park trees. The annual report was unanimously accepted. Kyleen Fuller and Andrea Renner-Miller made a presentation suggesting a print pile and book exchange be placed at the Stone Lake Beach house during the summer months. The goal would be to increase access to book ownership and increase the desire to read in La Porte. Approval was given for the project. For more information, contact [printpilelp@gmail.com](mailto:printpilelp@gmail.com).

**Fire Department:** Councilwoman West reported that the Fire Merit Commission will hold a meeting on Wednesday, March 4, 2020 at 6:30PM at Fire Station 1. The Fire Department is currently accepting applications to formulate their two-year hiring list. Applicants must be between the ages of 21 and 36 as of May 1, 2020. Applications are currently available at Fire Station 1 or the City's website and must be turned into Fire Station 1 by noon on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Plan/Zone Commission:** Councilwoman West reported that the next Plan/Zone Commission meeting will be held on March 10, 2020.

**Code Enforcement:** Councilwoman West reported that Code Enforcement is currently working out a schedule and she will attend that meeting if she can. Mayor Dermody stated that he is looking to begin a Code Enforcement board comprised of, for example, realtors and landlords.

**Police Department:** Councilman Galloway reported the Police Merit Commission will be meeting on March 10, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. at the Police Department. On February 23, 2020, the Police held an agility test held at Purdue Northwest with eight applicants. All but one applicant passed.

**Business Improvement District:** Councilwoman Cutler reported the BID Board will meet Monday, March 10, 2020 at 5PM.

**Urban Enterprise Association:** Councilwoman Cutler reported that the recipients for the downtown façade grants were chosen and work will begin in the next few months. Testing for the presence of lead in some of the buildings will begin in the next thirty days. Several of the business improvement grants were updated and approved. The UEA is encouraging building owners looking to complete second floor residential space to apply for the 50/50 business grant. Contact the LEAP offices to ask about available grants. The next UEA meeting is Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 4PM at the LEAP offices.

**Redevelopment Commission:** Councilman Franke reported the Redevelopment Commission met February 26th and plans have been finalized for the Clear Lake Boardwalk and Trails project. Councilman Franke also reported that the Holliday Property is moving along, as planned, and the next meeting date has been changed to March 24, 2020 at noon. Mayor Dermody stated the bids for the Boardwalk Project came in higher than anticipated and additional support is needed from the Healthcare Foundation to complete the project.

**School Board Liaison:** Councilman Franke reported the School Board will meet on Monday, March 9, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. at the Educational Services Center.

**Presentation Purdue Northwest – Chancellor Keon**

Chancellor Keon gave a presentation to the Council on what is happening at the Westville Campus for PNW. He reported both Hammond and Westville campuses experienced declining enrollments before the unification. Overall population decreases in some areas of Northwest Indiana have impacted enrollment. College and university enrollment nationally, but especially in the Midwest, is down. Indiana Commission for Higher Education no longer allows regional campuses to offer associate's degrees and remedial courses. These programs are now offered at Ivy Tech Community College. Increased admission requirements impacted acceptance rates and overall enrollment at both campuses. Overall, 97.7% of PNW first time in college freshmen are now full time. 80.9% of all PNW students attend full time. Overall student demand for evening courses has declined at both campuses. At Westville, 96.8% of students attend their first class before 4PM.

Ideas for the future of the Westville Campus include providing a residential experience for students with on campus housing. Also, the science labs are severely outdated and the high demand for nursing, health care studies, and engineering warrant new facilities. A Campus Master Plan for PNW is being developed in 2020-2021 which will provide direction for utilization of all facilities.

There are great things still happening at the Westville campus. There are 16 undergraduate degree programs that can be completed 100% at the Westville campus, including: Nursing, Biology, Communication, Electrical Engineering, Computer Information Technology, Health Studies, Social Work, Management, and Psychology. These are among more than seventy academic programs. There are full time admissions recruiters located in Westville and their territory includes counties in Michigan and Indiana. The Social Work degree program is only offered at the Westville campus and has earned national accreditation. Other programs that have earned national accreditation include nursing, engineering, technology, education and business all which have changed the degree requirements to ensure quality and competitiveness.

The engineering programs at PNW have been recognized among the best in the nation by U.S. News and World Report for three consecutive years, of engineering schools whose highest degree is a bachelor's or master's degree.

Purdue Northwest is the home to the Sinai Forum committing to bringing exceptional programming to the community. Past speakers have included General John Kelly, Gloria Steinem, Jerry Ross, Joe Scarborough, Jon Meacham, Lou Holtz and James Comey.

### **Annual Investment Report**

Clerk-Treasurer, Courtney Parthun reported that on an annual basis, the State requires the Clerk-Treasurer to present to the Council with an Annual Investment report. For 2019, The City of La Porte earned \$93,621.80 for 10 different funds that are invested in the State's Hoosier Fund with Lake City Bank. This was an increase of approximately \$26,000 from 2018. The Hoosier Fund is a money market fund allowed by State Statute specifically for units of government per Indiana Code 36-1-7-1. Funds are pooled together in an effort to earn more interest, as advised by Baker Tilly. We earn interest daily and can access the funds, if needed, within twenty-four hours with no penalties. The current rate is 1.8%. The highest that the interest rates have been in 2019 has been 2.42% at the beginning of the year. We have been investing in the Hoosier Fund for the past eight years.

Interest earned on the City's checking accounts for 2019 was \$146,006.34 between 18 checking accounts at local banks which was an increase of approximately \$75,000 from 2018.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun stated that no action is needed from the Council and that this is for information purposes only.

### **Two-Year-Old Check Report**

The Clerk-Treasurer reported checks issued by the City are good for two years. At the end of each two-year period, State Statute requires the Clerk-Treasurer to present a list of those outstanding checks. When possible, the office of the Clerk-Treasurer attempts to contact vendors to see if invoices are still outstanding and if so, reissues the checks. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun stated that she is requesting the Council authorize her to redeposit the funds back into the accounts where they were originally written from.

### **Motion/Vote – Two-Year Checks**

Councilwoman Feikes moved the two-year-old checks be redeposited into the accounts that they were originally written from.; motion seconded by Councilman Vincent and unanimously carried.

### **New Fire Station/Rescue Boat**

Andy Snyder, Fire Chief, gave a presentation to the Council regarding the new fire station that is being built as well as some background information on a request to purchase a new rescue boat for the Fire Department. Chief Snyder reported the current Eastside Fire Station was built in 1966. The bids that were received at that time to construct the fire station came in higher than what was expected and therefore the plans for the new fire station

were cut in half. During the past few years there was talk of adding on to the current fire station, however, there was interest from someone to purchase the property, but they wanted to take possession right away. Chief Snyder reported the City then began researching the possibility of building a new fire station at another location and selling the property. Moving forward the City received bids to construct a new fire station on property the City already owns on Daytona Street. The financing for the new fire station was done through the Fire Station Building Corporation with a bond for a total of \$2.3 million. He advised the bid that was awarded was from Larson-Danielson in the amount of \$1.8 million. The Chief reported the project is currently ahead of schedule and they don't expect there will be significant change orders so that will leave extra funds available to purchase a new rescue boat to replace their current boat which is twenty plus years old with only a 15 horsepower motor. The Fire Department would like to purchase a new boat with a 200-horsepower motor and will include a fire pump at a cost of \$100,000. The Chief reported this is a demo model and has been discounted with a savings of \$75,000. Discussion was held regarding the purchase of the boat and the response time it will save as it will be in the water at Unity Park as soon as the weather breaks in the spring and will stay there until the fall when the weather gets bad. Other areas of discussion were the DNR and Sheriff Department patrol boats, how many firefighters are trained in water rescue and to what degree, are there overtime dollars needed for training and an agreement dated back to 1996 with the Center Township Volunteer Fire Department. Councilwoman Cutler stated she has concerns that if the City spends the money now for a new rescue boat and then there are change orders that exceed the amount left in the bond where are we going to pay for these additions. Chief Snyder stated he does not believe there will be significant change orders that cannot be covered by the bond. He advised the current response time with the rescue boat they have that is housed at Fire Station 2 on Eastshore Parkway is anywhere from nine to thirteen minutes as they have to physically hook up the trailer to the fire truck, drive to wherever they are needed, unhook the boat and get it into the water. With the new rescue boat, it will already be in the water so it is just a matter of getting from the Fire Station to Unity Park which will substantially cut down on the response time.

Mayor Dermody stated this is not something the Council will need to approve as the financing for the project was approved last year, however, because this is a new Council, he wanted them to have the information and to be able to ask questions. The Mayor advised the approval of the purchase of a new rescue boat will be brought before the Board of Public Works and Safety at their March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### **Other Business**

Councilman Franke reported before the March 16, 2020 Council Meeting, there will be a workshop in Council Chambers at 4:30PM regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences. A special agenda will be posted, as is required by State statute.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business, Councilwoman Feikes moved to adjourn; motion seconded by Councilwoman Cutler and unanimously carried.

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Thomas P. Dermody, Mayor**

**Attest:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Courtney Parthun, Clerk-Treasurer**

**Approved: March 16, 2020**