

MARCH 18, 2019

The Common Council of the City of LaPorte met in regular session in the Council Chambers on Monday, March 18, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge

Councilman Stabosz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Scherer, Feikes, Cutler, Cowgill, Stabosz and Mrozinske

Absent: Fettinger

Minutes

Mayor Krentz stated each Council member received an advance copy of the minutes from the March 4th meeting and asked if there were any corrections or additions. Councilwoman Feikes moved to approve the minutes as presented; motion seconded by Councilwoman Cutler and unanimously carried.

Petitions & Comments

Donna McCleery, 135 W. McClung Road, stated at the last meeting the Council approved a lease with the LaPorte Fire Station Building Corporation to build a new fire station. She stated the Fire Station Building Corporation was formed in 2005 and was only supposed to be in existence for twenty years. She stated the same people that were on the board are still on there. Ms. McCleery stated that goes on people's property taxes and 55% of the people in LaPorte are poor and they can't afford to pay more in property taxes. She reported she has pictures of the boardwalk on Hoelocker Road which will connect the contaminated pond on one side to Clear Lake. She encouraged the Council to put Clear Lake Blvd. back the way it was.

Rob Torgensen, 336 Clear Lake Blvd., stated he owns his home and a business here in LaPorte and has made significant investments in both. He stated he is frustrated that the current residents on Clear Lake Blvd. were not approached prior to the City changing Clear Lake Blvd. to a one-way street. Mr. Torgensen stated it is very difficult to travel and get in and out of driveways. He stated he doesn't object to progress but believes it should be common sense progress and whoever designed Clear Lake Blvd. should have put more thought into it and asked the community what they thought about it. He stated the City doesn't care about current businesses and residents and only cares about bringing in new businesses and residences. He asked the Council to re-open Hoelocker Road and put Clear Lake Blvd. back the way it was.

Larry Bannwart stated his family owns the property between Clear Lake Blvd., the railroad tracks, Detroit Street, and Linwood. Mr. Bannwart stated he agrees with the previous speaker in that making Clear Lake Blvd. a one-way street was not the right thing to do. He reported there are four businesses that operate out of the property his family owns and approximately 30-40 people work there. He stated when there is no thought, no planning

you are going to end up with the situation you have on Clear Lake Blvd. Mr. Bannwart stated he does not understand the point of connecting the mud puddle to Clear Lake and the environmental consequences that may have. He stated he heard the City is planning on closing Detroit and Pulaski Streets with an overpass on Park and Tipton Street for a quiet zone. Mr. Bannwart advised he opposes closing Detroit Street and will fight it if that is the direction the City plans on going forward with.

Brian Kajer, 406 Niesen Street, stated he asked months ago if the construction of Clear Lake Blvd. was done and how bad every corner was on the road. He stated he has also talked to the Council about investing in longevity of the City. If we are going to put money into projects, make sure we are going to get our money value back out of it. Mr. Kajer stated the Council needs to use taxpayer money the way it is supposed to be used, not because of favors, because somebody wants a business or because someone wants to bring property into the City. Use the money so that it benefits the City, not to benefit yourselves or someone else because they own a business or whatever scenario that might be. Mr. Kajer stated Clear Lake Blvd. is a perfect working example of somebody wanting to spend money just to have something.

Bert Cook, Executive Director of the LaPorte Economic Advancement Partnership, stated he has had the opportunity to work with the City for almost fourteen years now. He stated it is very easy to stand at this podium and treat opinion as if it is fact and that is what people do very often. Mr. Cook reported having worked with Nick Minich, Beth Shrader and the rest of the team, he would completely disagree with the statement that things are done for someone's monetary benefit or without thought or research. He stated that is so far from the truth. Mr. Cook reported LEAF deals with people day in and day out and the feedback he gets on a daily basis and the optimism people have regarding the changes the City is making. He reported at the LEAF Legislative Affairs meeting held last week, they voted unanimously to support keeping Hoelocker Road closed and the impact that doing anything differently might have on our community. Councilman Stabosz asked Mr. Cook how integral the redesign of Hoelocker to the Flaherty & Collins project is. Mr. Cook stated it would be a disservice to speak of just that project. He stated it affects a broader group of businesses. For instance, the Dunes Volleyball Facility chose that specific site based on the infrastructure plan for that area, changing that in a material way right now would go against everything we promised that company. Mr. Cook stated on top of that, Flaherty & Collins chose the City of LaPorte over many other communities based on the infrastructure plan that the City put in front of them. The plan that the City Engineer and City Planner and the rest of the City team put a ton of time and energy into. Mr. Cook stated he understands that a person who has lived in LaPorte their entire life that change is difficult. Councilman Mrozinske stated he understands that, however, we can't lose sight of when the City is investing in our community we have to have balance. Mr. Cook stated he agrees with that. His point was that projects happen and sometimes we agree with them and sometimes we don't but the greater good has to come into play and we have to be willing to understand that change is coming and be part of that change.

Councilman Stabosz stated for the record, the design for Clear Lake Blvd. has problems as the turnouts were not to the Engineer's specifications and will be fixed by the paving company.

Mark Schreiber, 1404 Illinois Avenue, and Director of the City of LaPorte's Park and Recreation Department, stated he understands and sympathizes with those who have had to make adjustments with changing Clear Lake Blvd. to a one-way street. He stated anytime someone comes in and asks you to make those types of adjustments it can be difficult. Mr. Schreiber stated the statement that this change, as well as others, was made for people or businesses who are coming to LaPorte is not a very fair statement. Mr. Schreiber reported when the Park Department does their Five-Year Master Plan they do not speak to anyone outside of the City limits. The only input they gather is from residents who live within the City on the improvements they would like to see happen within City parks. He stated a lot of people don't realize that Fox Park encompasses all of Clear Lake. He reported what the Park Department has been trying to do over the past couple years with the backing of the administration and Council is reclaim some of the recreational potential for the citizens of LaPorte. Mr. Schreiber stated sometimes he has to question our forefathers in that they gave the City many acres in park land which was amazing and we have to take care of those parks and do the best that we can to make them what they can potentially become. But when they laid out roads, that are literally three feet from the water, you have to question what were they trying to achieve, they were trying to get a vehicle from one place to another for industrial purposes, they weren't looking at recreational uses. He reported on an annual basis, the Park Department meets with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding Clear Lake and a 80/20 grant the City receives to treat the milfoil in Clear Lake and every year the DNR tells him that communities across the State would love to have a lake like Clear Lake right in the middle of their City. He stated over the years, Clear Lake has been forgotten and the City is trying to enhance it and make it better.

Jackie Reed, 220 McClung Road, stated she thinks the walking paths should have been done on Hoelocker Road and put Clear Lake Blvd. back to a two-way street.

Tom Burrow stated he isn't sure why they cut that road out and the full plan, but originally they were told that the curve would come up to Hoelocker where it would tee and you could still go all the way around the lake. He stated he thinks Hoelocker should be put back into service. He stated he doesn't understand why closing Hoelocker Road was essential to the plan when there isn't much going on there.

State of the City Address

Mayor Krentz gave the State of the City Address.

Standing Committee Reports

Park & Recreation: Councilwoman Feikes reported the Park Board will be meeting this Wednesday, March 20th at 4:00 p.m. at the Park Office.

School Board Liaison: Councilman Mrozinske reported the School Board met last Monday at which time an update was given on the construction at the Kesling Complex. He advised they advertised for bids for furniture and such for inside the building. Councilman Mrozinske reported that with some of the funds leftover they will be expanding the track facility as well as put turf for the football field. He stated as it appears they will probably have one of the most premier track field facilities in Northwest Indiana as well as the State.

Mayor's Veterans Committee: Roger Galloway, Clerk-Treasurer, advised he is still a member of the Mayor's Veterans Committee and reported the Mayor's Veterans Committee's Annual Brick Dedication will be held on Saturday, June 8th at which time 71 bricks will be dedicated. He noted the Mayor's wife has agreed to sing the National Anthem.

Second & Final Reading of an Ordinance Re-Opening Hoelocker Drive to Through Traffic

Councilman Mrozinske read the following statement:

Before proceeding to item eight, I would like to make a couple of comments and acknowledgments.

First, thank you to the Mr. Minich and his department for providing me with the information from INDOT that I requested. I reviewed the 250+ pages of documents and along with my own observations over the past two weeks, I was able to gather the information I needed to make an informed decision on the proposed Ordinance which I will address shortly.

Second, I want to thank those that shared their concerns at the March 4th meeting as well as those who spoke today and those who contacted me either by phone, email or text. Your voice does matter.

Let it be known that my rationale for presenting this Ordinance at that meeting was not to stop development in NewPorte Landing, rather to make a more educated decision regarding the safety of the citizens of LaPorte that I represent. As a member of the Council, it is all our jobs to explore all options and gather all the facts so that we can collectively make the correct decisions.

If I learned one thing from this project and subsequent Ordinance presentation is that this highlighted an ongoing problem, that being communication. Often is the case, we the Council receive limited information and many times it comes late. Had this formation presented at the March 4th meeting as well as the plan from INDOT came earlier, it would have been helpful and possibly would have altered the presentation of this Ordinance.

Furthermore, I feel that the public needs to be more aware of what is transpiring in our community and what happens at our meetings. Our March 4th meeting was finally publicized in the March 16th Herald-Argus. That is unacceptable as it makes it appear as if we are hiding information from the public.

With that said, I understand the importance of developing the Clear Lake area and NewPorte Landing. My record for supporting such development is clear. I commend the addition of the Dunes Facility as it is vital in bringing outside revenue into our community and a great tool to promote further economic development in the area.

I believe that to put LaPorte on the track for success, we must change the culture and we must do so as a team effort.

Let me speak briefly about culture. For example, the success of the New England Patriots, and I must say I am not a New England Patriots fan, is a result of establishing a winning culture. Players and coaches come and they leave, but the winning tradition still exists. Such exits for cities as well, we have lost some key businesses, but we have gained some key businesses as well, but I am seeing positive rebounds.

- 1. Downtown - we have people engaged to revitalize old businesses and I am hoping by the end of the year or by next year at this time we are seeing new businesses open downtown.*
- 2. As the Baseball Capital of Indiana, we experienced a downturn from the glory days of Ken Schreiber ball as our youth turned away from local programs to head out into outside travel teams taking valuable economic dollars with them. However, I will commend the current leadership of Park Superintendent Mark Schreiber, as we are reversing that trend with great efforts to keep our youth in town as well as drawing others to our town.*
- 3. Our school system which helps foster a sustainable workforce is also changing the culture by improving the curriculum needed for success in our ever changing world and making LaPorte a destination for young families to settle here and to raise their children. Better education equals better opportunities.*

So I understand that rebuilding the Clear Lake area as such will help improve our culture. I ask though that we open our lines of communication as well as our decision makers and have them be more cognizant of our citizens who are still struggling. We have around 50% of our population living in poverty, thus they cannot afford much more in the area of taxation. Sound decisions need to be made as the wheel tax, tax on the trash and the new storm sewer fee are challenges to low income earners. It was mentioned at the last meeting it would cost \$40,000 to re-open the road, yet the design of Clear Lake Blvd. was less than par and with all the ruts and such I am certain that will cost more than \$40,000 to correct a flaw that should have been identified in the planning stage. Let's work smarter, not harder.

With that said, in accordance to Robert's Rules of Order, I am withdrawing the Ordinance to re-open Hoelocker Drive to through traffic. But I do want to take this time to ask those that are making the decisions to heed the concerns that our citizens brought forth today. Before you go through with the final planning, listen, maybe not everything is correct. I noticed the hospital with their construction has offered different plans for the EMS building in that he

has heard that even now that has possibly changed. Before we tear up some of these roads, let's take a look and see what is the best that we can work with for both sides and not just on that decision but all over.

Introduction of an Ordinance to Amend Ordinance 30-2014 to Modify the Schedule of Service Charges for Municipal Refuse and Garbage Collection Under Chapter 86 of the Municipal Code of the City of LaPorte, Indiana

Councilman Stabosz moved to introduce an Ordinance for the first time; motion seconded by Councilwoman Feikes and unanimously carried. Councilman Stabosz read an Ordinance to Amend Ordinance 30-2014 to Modify the Schedule of Service Charges for Municipal Refuse and Garbage Collection Under Chapter 86 of the Municipal Code of the City of LaPorte, Indiana in its entirety.

Councilman Stabosz asked if someone could summarize what the net effect is with regard to the rate. Clerk-Treasurer Galloway reported there is a decrease in the rate. Nick Otis, Attorney for the City, stated the rate went down a little less than 50 cents per month. He advised past Ordinances there were increases every year over the length of the contract and this new contract the rate will be flat for four years, no other changes were made to the Ordinance. Councilman Mrozinske inquired if there is some way to make sure the public has the contact information for the new provider. The Clerk-Treasurer stated he believes it is on the water bill but will make sure that it is. Councilwoman Cutler inquired about the reduced rate for low income households and wondered if this is something new. Joanne Layman, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer, advised this is something the City has offered for at least the last two trash contracts. She reported there are only a handful of residences who take advantage. Councilwoman Cutler asked if there is a way we can get this benefit out to the public. Ms. Layman reported it can be included in the flyer that goes out with the utility bill.

Mayor Krentz asked if there were any other questions. Seeing none, he stated this Ordinance will be placed on the next Council agenda.

Public Hearing and Introduction of a Resolution for an Additional Appropriation for Kiwanis-Teledyne Park Fund

Councilwoman Feikes moved to introduce a Resolution; motion seconded by Councilwoman Cutler and unanimously carried. Councilwoman Feikes read a Resolution for an Additional Appropriation for Kiwanis-Teledyne Park Fund in its entirety.

Public Hearing – Additional Appropriation

As this Resolution requires a public hearing, Mayor Krentz declared the public hearing open and asked if anyone wanted to address the Council regarding this matter. Clerk-Treasurer Galloway presented proof of publication in the LaPorte Herald-Argus on March 7, 2019 for the public hearing.

Mark Schreiber advised the Council this is a non-reverting fund for the Kiwanis-Teledyne Park and is money that has accumulated over the years through donations and fundraisers.

Mr. Schreiber advised the money will be used toward a local match for a grant from Clean Water Indiana to address an erosion problem in the park. He advised the County MS4 is contributing \$15,000 and the LaPorte Lake Association is contributing \$1,000. He advised normally \$15,000 is appropriated annually in case something comes up that needs to be fixed in the park. This year only \$5,000 was appropriated which is a result of miscommunication with the Clerk-Treasurer's Office on the timeframe for the work to be done. Mr. Schreiber answered questions from the Council.

Motion/Vote – Adopt Resolution R=5-2019

Councilman Mrozinske moved to adopt the Resolution as presented; motion seconded by Councilwoman Feikes.

Mayor Krentz asked if anyone wished to address the Council regarding this Ordinance. As no one came forward, he declared the public hearing closed.

The motion to adopt the Resolution was unanimously carried.

RESOLUTION R-5-2019

RESOLUTION FOR AN ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION FOR KIWANIS-TELEDYNE PARK FUND

Other Business

Councilman Stabosz requested the Traffic Commission, independent of the City Engineer's Office, do a traffic count on Detroit Street. Councilwoman Feikes stated she will take the request to the Traffic Commission.

Adjourn

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

Approved: _____

Mark A. Krentz, Mayor

Attest: _____

Roger A. Galloway, Clerk-Treasurer

Approved: April 1, 2019