

Village of Creston Minutes Tuesday, April 5, 2023

President Byro called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Trustees Hibshman, Hopkins, Katzman, Kerns, and Williams were present. Trustee Ward was not present. Attorney Crull was also present.

President Byro introduced the minutes and asked for additions or corrections. Trustee Kerns made a motion to approve the minutes as read. Trustee Hibshman seconded the motion. Minutes were approved by Trustees Hibshman, Hopkins, Katzman, Kerns, and Williams. Trustee Ward was not present.

Visitors & Communication – President Byro asked if there were any visitors or communications. There were none.

Attorney Crull said that Atty Tess had reached out to the landfill company 3-4 weeks ago because there hadn't been much communication from them. They responded and we received another draft denial that included items that were not in the initial draft denial. These are drafts at this point; there is no official acceptance or denial. This gives both the Village and the landfill company the opportunity to draft changes or make amendments to the application that will appease the EPA when in fact an actual decision is made. The landfill company said it is fairly standard for the EPA to send out a draft denial with a few items on it to buy them some time to then send out another draft denial. Atty Crull said they will continue to check in with the landfill company to make sure that they stay on top of it. Atty Crull said that there are 6 properties in court at this time and 3 of those owners have been served. They have not been able to serve the other 3. He is attempting to reach out to new addresses to serve an alias summons. They have not been able to find an address for the property on Depot St. They attempted to deliver to an address, and she was not there. Atty Crull sent a letter to those homeowners, who he believes are relatives, to see if he can find out how to contact the owner. He asked for help from anyone who might know how to reach the owner. President Byro clarified that Atty Crull was talking about the Wicke property. Trustee Katzman said he found something on that property a couple of years ago, and the tax lien was bought by a company out of Chicago. Atty Crull stated that the company never assumed the deed. The house was last lived in by the spouse of a deceased man who inherited the property. The last deed of record is in the name of two deceased people, so she would be the rightful owner at this point. Trustee Katzman said he heard she was living with her daughter somewhere. Atty Crull said he had heard that, too, but no one at that address answered the door. Atty Crull said he would keep working on it. Casper asked if there had been any judgments entered on any of the properties, specifically 422 W North St. Atty Crull asked if that was the property they were making improvements on. Casper said yes. Atty Crull said that there is no judgment entered on the properties that are making improvements. In those cases, Atty Crull stated he would wait for Casper and the Board to tell him that the properties are in compliance, and he has communicated to the property owners that they have to keep making improvements and they have to show up to court and the cases will not be dismissed until the properties are in compliance.

Casper Manheim commented further on the abandoned properties. He stated that the residents at 422 W North St were the only ones of the 6 that reached out to him, and they have been working on making the required improvements. They have moved 2 cars so far, but there is still a lot of rubbish in the yard they have to get rid of. They are trying to get gravel poured in so they can park the cars next to the garage. Casper said that he is working with another property owner on Depot St that has a construction/remodeling business, and they were parking equipment and vehicles on the property that aren't allowed to be parked there. They got a lot of their equipment moved. They put an addition on their house, and they filled their yard with all the dirt they dug out. The dirt goes against the neighbors' fence, so he is working with them to move the dirt away from the fence and create a natural drainage area. Casper also said he needs to talk to Kevin about the plans for the new library as well as a permit application. He had the architect send Kevin a copy of the plans, and he is reviewing the plans for site plans, water/sewer hookups, drainage on the property, etc. He said it doesn't seem like there is an impact fee for the school, but there is a \$700 water connection fee and a \$700 sewer connection fee. They will need a minimum 2" water main, and most of the ones he has seen in other towns are about \$2500-\$2800. When Casper figures his fees, he will make sure to tell them that is not included as he won't know what that cost will be and that is something they will have to pay for. Once Kevin has reviewed the plans and is happy with everything, then Casper will issue them a permit and let them know what they owe for fees. Tom asked Casper if he saw the email from Kevin that contained half a dozen questions he had. Casper said he did not, and he would look for it. President Byro redirected the conversation back to the houses and he wanted to know about the Waddell residence on North St. Atty Crull said she has been served and has until May 3 to respond and if she doesn't, they will take a judgment on it.

Kevin Bunge reported that they have reviewed the library plans through Casper, and everything looked pretty good. Kevin said that there were a couple of oddball things that need to be cleaned up, but those items won't really impact anything. President Byro said he heard the dates have been changed for the library plans. The ad in the paper said that they were supposed to go out for bids on the 7th, but there are questions that still need to be answered so that date has been changed. Kevin said that President Byro told him that the plans had arrived, and they were supposed to go out for bids, but Kevin hadn't even seen them at that point. The engineer said that

that was their error, and that Kevin should have gotten a copy of the plans. Kevin said they reviewed them quickly and responded within 3 days. Kevin said that overall, the plans are good, there were just a couple of minor things that needed to be addressed. Kevin said that regarding the ARPA Water Main Project, they were supposed to have a pre-con that week, but the contractor had to cancel due to the storms. The meeting was rescheduled for Monday, April 10 and they will get started on the project as soon as possible after the meeting.

Kevin said that in relation to the Quiet Zone, the latest exhibit had been sent to the parties that be and he asked when a meeting could be set up. They had to have the exhibit in hand before they could set up the meeting. The parties involved are the ICC, the railroad and several other people.

Kevin opened a dialogue with Layne about the well project and they are trying to set a date. He hoped that they could get together that week and discuss some dates. There were some concerns about discharge piping as there isn't much in the way of drainage in that area. They plan to run a pipe across Main St heading toward the ditch and detour that section of Main St for a few hours. There is nowhere else to take all that water.

Kevin also spoke about IEPA funding for lead service line replacement and potential forgiveness of that loan. It depends on the average income in the Village, or the level of unemployment in the Village, and/or the average water bill as compared to the average income in the Village. Kevin said he doesn't have that data for the Village. President Byro asked where he thought we could get that information. Kevin stated that we could go to the census unless we have newer information available. Kevin said a third possibility is a typical Village water bill. Kevin said that we could send him like 5 of them for comparison. If the Village meets anyone of those 3 points in relation to state average, and if the Village is even 1% below state average, they we would meet the standard. Kevin stated with as old as the water system is in Creston, there must be lead pipe in the ground. He asked Trustee Kerns if he'd seen any of that while digging up mains and Trustee Kerns said he had not. Kevin said some smaller communities still get 1/3 of their services through lead pipes. Curtis Loyd said he had not seen any lead pipes at all in any of the recent digging he had done. Mr. Loyd said back when they put the new drain in on North St, they pulled 2 water services out of the main that were lead, but they were not in service. Kevin seemed surprised by that, but he was happy to hear it. He said that Sycamore just got \$4 million in funds to address their lead pipe issues. Kevin asked if anyone had any questions, and no one had any. President Byro said he hoped that they could find a way to isolate the shutoffs so that the water doesn't have to be shut off to the entire town. Kevin said he hadn't touched that because he wanted to have something to hand out before the meeting and he didn't have it yet. He said he did get prices from a valve supplier and from a contractor. If the Village dug the hole down to the main, we know how much the valves would cost, and how much the contractor would charge to install them, as it takes special equipment. It would basically be "Insert-A-Valve". Kevin said he would get those numbers to President Byro. Kevin suggested budgeting to install a couple of these valves per year and pick the best spots to start with.

Committee Reports

Finance - Trustee Hopkins had nothing.

Streets & Alleys – Trustee Ward was not present.

Water & Sewer – Trustee Kerns said had nothing new.

Health & Safety - Trustee Hibshman stated that Skylar Sarver had asked him if the Village had looked at the tree. Trustee Katzman explained that part of the tree fell off and damaged their roof and the question is whether it is on Village property. It is believed it is on Village property. The sidewalk is buckling at the base of the tree, which is also a hazard. Trustee Hibshman stated he believed that the Village should take the tree down. President Byro asked for a motion. Trustee Hibshman made a motion to take down the tree between Village Hall and Midwest Signs. Trustee Katzman seconded the motion. President Byro asked for questions or discussion. There was none. Trustees Katzman, Williams, Hibshman, Hopkins and Kerns voted yes. Trustee Ward was not present. President Byro asked Mr. Loyd to get in touch with A-1 and get an estimate and schedule the service.

Zoning & Planning – Trustee Katzman said the only thing he had was the library.

Subdivision - Trustee Williams said he had nothing new.

New Business – President Byro thanked Trustee Hopkins for filling in for him at the last meeting.

President Byro congratulated Trustees Kerns and Hibshman for their re-election. Trustee Hopkins was inadvertently excluded and did not make the ballot. President Byro recommended that Trustee Hopkins stay on for a 2-year term. He asked for a motion to re-appoint Trustee Hopkins. Trustee Kerns made a motion, and Atty Crull clarified that President Byro would make the recommendation and the Board would accept said recommendation. President Byro reiterated his recommendation that Trustee Hopkins continue for another 2 years. He asked for discussion. There was none. Roll call vote taken. Trustees Kerns, Hibshman, Williams, and Katzman voted yes. Trustee Hopkins voted present. Trustee Ward was not present.

President Byro discussed the water operator position. He said he researched different possibilities, and he decided to stay with Jeremy Lin, who is now running MGD Water Operations. President Byro stated that Mr. Lin would be charging us the same price that Mike Megurdichian charged us. President Byro recommended that we hire MGD Water Systems to take over as our water operator at the same rate that Mike Megurdichian charged. The gentleman that worked for Mike now works for Mr. Lin. His name is Ed and he lives 15 minutes from the Village. Roll call vote taken. Trustee Hopkins made a motion to hire MGD Water Systems as the Village's new water operator. Trustee Hibshman seconded the motion. President Byro stated that if anyone had any questions, Mr. Lin was present to answer any questions. President Byro is confident that Mr. Lin and MGD will do a good job. Mr. Lin said that he is grateful for the opportunity to work for the Village, and they are working on making the transition as seamless as possible. They also operate the Village of Maple Park and the Village of Hillcrest as well as other communities. Roll call vote taken. Trustees Hibshman, Williams, Kerns, Hopkins, and Katzman voted yes. Trustee Ward was not present.

President Byro spoke about solar energy. He wanted to know where the Board stands in relation to solar energy. President Byro wasn't looking for an answer at this meeting, but he wanted people to start thinking about it. He invited Reid Elliot to give some information about solar. He got into the solar business about 3 years ago. He said there is a lot of information out there, and what is right and what is wrong depends on who you are getting your information from. There are also a lot of misconceptions and there is a lot of good and a lot of bad depending on who you are dealing with and what is trying to be accomplished. Mr. Elliot spoke about the different kinds of solar systems. PV Solar is photovoltaic and those are the black panels that you see on roofs and on the ground that harness the sunlight to create electricity. PV solar is dominating the market currently. Solar is all the rage right now because solar equipment is much more efficient than it was 15 years ago. 15 years ago, it was around \$20 per watt and today it is about \$3-4 per watt. It's 20% efficient, which is much better than it was a few years ago. The costs of equipment have decreased except for supply chain issues caused by COVID. A lot of money is tied into solar in the form of financial incentives. Illinois is heavily invested in solar, and they are giving a lot of incentives to people who install solar. Everyone gets the federal tax credit. Carbon credits are available in Illinois, and they are worth a lot of money. The carbon credits are being used to create a lot of union jobs and bring a lot of solar business to the state. Illinois is rated 15th as far as solar is concerned. Last year, Illinois had 2036 megawatts of solar and the growth projection is up to 5700 within the next 5 years. Illinois has a goal to be 25% renewable energy by 2025. Illinois is currently at 1.48%. A lot of people want the incentive money in their pockets, so that is what is driving the market. Mr. Elliot asked the Board where they wanted to go with that. If there is an opportunity for the Village to make some pretty good money over a 25-year period with a solar farm, do they want to take it? Mr. Elliot spoke about private versus utility grade and what goes into making those decisions and how they impact people. 3-5 people deciding is much easier than 500 people making a decision. The solar farms are like a dart at the target in relation to what gets approved or does not get approved. Whether it is good or bad is up to each person to decide. Mr. Elliot talked about the property the Village will get back from the landfill and how that might be a good option for solar. He said that the Village would need to decide what they want to do for their own usage. There are a lot of moving parts and many things to consider when making these decisions. The Village needs to ask what its goals are regarding solar. When the money runs out, the door will slam shut. If the Village wants to get something that is going to create long-term revenue, then solar is something to think about. Trustee Katzman asked how it would work. He asked if it would all have to go back onto the RMU grid. Mr. Elliot said that there was a ComEd grid not far from the Village that it could go to. Trustee Katzman said that he understood that RMU and ComEd were only taking 4% back and it could possibly go up to 10%. RMU is its own animal, and RMU was doing practically nothing for a while. Right now, you can install solar and what you use when you're producing solar during the day you will get full credit for, but when the sun goes down and you don't use it all, they will only pay you wholesale pricing for that. The real money is in carbon credits. Trustee Kerns said that it is best to use what you produce, or as close as you can. Trustee Kerns asked how the S-racks would work with a government agency. Mr. Elliot stated that it is all based on the size of the utility and what you put in. If the Village leased the farm out, the solar development company we lease it to will get the carbon credits. If the Village installed, for example, a 100-kilowatt system, then the Village would get the carbon credit money, but he wasn't sure how it would work with the Federal tax credit money. Trustee Kerns said if you produce what you use, you are better off. A lot of due diligence needs to be done before a decision is made. President Byro said they did a 6-month study and the Village spends about \$50,000 in a 6-month period on power. Trustee Katzman asked what the magic payback is in years. If it lasts 25 years, does it take 15 years to pay it off? Trustee Kerns said he's heard 7 years, and he's heard 10 years. Mr. Elliot said it depends on what is involved in the project. Casper suggested revisiting the Village's solar ordinance. In the last 6 months, he's had 4 towns revising ordinances regarding residential versus commercial, fee structures, etc. He said he could bring in a copy of the ordinance for us to look at Walnut already implemented it, Mount Morris just adopted it, and Oregon and Hillcrest are looking at it. Mr. Elliot said that equipment maintenance is pretty low. He also said that one of the keys is what RMU would allow the Village to do to offset its use.

Old Business – Cleanup Dumpster. President Byro said it was discussed at the last meeting and he asked if a decision was made. It was not. President Byro said that they would just drop it.

President Byro asked about the garbage contract. Clerk Payton reported that she read the contract and there were no specific hours listed in the contract regarding pickup times. She said she would look again to be sure, but she did not see anything listed when she read through it.

Treasurer's Report – Trustee Hopkins made a motion to pay the bills. Trustee Katzman seconded it. President Byro called attention to a bill from A-1 that was related to the ice storm we had. He asked if anyone else had any questions. Roll call vote taken. Trustees Kerns, Katzman, Hopkins, Hibshman and Williams voted yes. Trustee Ward was not present.

President Byro stated that there was a problem with the emergency generator. He had to have someone come over and look at it. It had not been serviced since 2017 and there were a couple of issues with it that needed to be addressed. Trustee Kerns asked how often it should be maintained. President Byro said that RMU keeps an eye on it as to whether or not it is running okay, but it hadn't been inspected since 2017. Mr. Loyd said it runs about 50 hours per year, so service/maintenance on it is minimal. He didn't know if the Village wanted to set up a schedule for service/maintenance. It is pretty expensive to have it serviced.

President Byro said he had nothing else. Trustee Williams made a motion to adjourn. Trustee Hibshman seconded the motion. All voted in favor. President Byro adjourned the meeting at 8:02:21 pm.