

December 12, 2023

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12th MEETING

Commissioners were all present. Staff and Commissioner Candidate Joe Sherman recited the pledge at 9:00. Purchase orders and bills were reviewed and signed. Pending issues were discussed with the following resolutions approved and signed:

- V110-397 Minutes of December 07, 2023:
1st-Rush 2nd-Crowe Roll call; Crowe-yes, Striker-yes, Rush-yes
V110-398 Reallocation: Dog & Kennel, Sheriff, Treasurer
1st-Crowe 2nd-Rush Roll call: Rush-yes, Striker-yes, Crowe-yes
V110-399 Additional Appropriation; Hardin Hills, Board of DD, Law Library
1st-Rush 2nd-Crowe Roll call: Crowe-yes, Rush-yes, Striker-yes
V110-400 Satisfaction of Mortgage-L. Waddle/CDBG
1st-Crowe 2nd-Rush Roll call: Rush-yes, Striker-yes, Crowe-yes

The Treasurer submitted the November Investment report.

Commissioners signed a letter authorizing the Auditor Mike Bacon to audit and manage the financial transactions in the Middlefield Bank regarding the Dog & Kennel.

Commissioner Crowe moved to approve the Village of Forest projects for the catch basin repair with JB Walters and Layne Granite Company for engineering on the new well out of **American Rescue Funds M064-M06**. Commissioner Striker second. Roll call: Rush-yes, Striker-yes, Crowe-yes.

Richard Lawson, **Maintenance Supervisor**, painting at the North Annex should be completed this week. Cramer Flooring continues to take out old flooring and is ready to replace. Johnson Controls will be in after Christmas. He has some electrical to finish up. All but IT should be ready after the first of the year. The toilets had an issue and he has new parts to replace. The sensor in the pit for high water goes off when water drips on it. He will replace the pump when it warms up. The annex has an exhaust fan drive failure on a roof top unit. May be an electronic error. He has Waibel's working on as Jack's Heating does not have experience with those units. He has had outstanding on PM work orders, he called and they say it was done. Richard has no knowledge of them being the courthouse. The terrace caulking is completed and meets his expectations.

Holli Underwood, **Alliance**, the Jones Rd. project is moving along. Mid-Ohio has economic development project funds they offered to Holli. She will use those fund for signage of the Jones Rd. project. Aerial and video of the site will be done. The first application was received for the RLF and she is forwarding to the Governing Board for review. With the Holidays, it is hard to get all together. She will confirm the amount. With the contract renewal the conveyance fees will be capped at \$90,000 and hold the excess in reserve for special projects.

Ken Carlson, complaint issue regarding the **Vets Memorial Park** abandon light fixture within 5' of walking path. He wants it taken down. He was in earlier and spoke with Danielle Gammon. It is not AEP's pole. Commissioner Crowe will speak with Marshall Wolowitz. Mr. Carlson has tried for 5 months to get this issue resolved with speaking with several local officials.

Holli Underwood and **Pine Gate Renewables**; Lorraine Bergman and Matt Boerger. Taylor Creek, Hale and Rush Creek Townships. 250 mgwts with 200 mgwts in Hardin County, remaining in Logan County. Finalizing last parcel sites. They have been to the townships for feedback and concerns. They will use a Road Use Agreement for their project. Tax distribution was another issue with townships receiving a smaller amount. Also met with the OUS Ag, Extension and the County Engineer regarding tile. Two community meetings were held at the Plaza Inn with about 20 in attendance. The biggest concern was the aesthetics and impact on the bees. They sent a study on bees and pollinators. Presentations were given at the schools in the area in hopes of local support and workers. They attended the Hardin County

Fair and met a lot of people in the community. Richard Wallace has been hired to be the local manager who will work out of their office on N. Detroit St. They plan to hold meetings every other month working with the landowners. They are having an EMS meeting in Ridgway tonight. Hope to submit the OSP application by end of 2024. Approximately 200 acres in the project. Commissioner Striker noted there are a lot of Indian artifacts and burials in the area. Lorraine is aware of thru the locals. Those archeological surveys will be completed in the Spring. They will walk every site and document. She does not know how the artifacts are handled if any are found. Barb Wingfield is on the Museum Board and a landowner in the area, she would be a good contact. They feel confident on supply issues to be within their time line. Water drainage into Ridgeway is an issue they may need to talk with the Mayor.

The Commissioner and staff held the annual Christmas Party in Veterans Hall.

V110-378 Commissioner Crowe moved to approve the 2024-2025 **Alliance Agreement** with a \$90,000 cap with excess funds to be used for special projects. Commissioner Rush second. Roll call: Striker-yes, Rush-yes, Crowe-yes.

Nick Bohland, **CEC, landfill consultant** and Luke Underwood, Engineer. They continue to work on the closure of the landfill. No one is exactly sure what all that involves. Nick explained the groundwater and explosive gas monitoring consulting services. Agreement for 2024 as the EPA guides them through the process. Conditions are stable and is in a good spot to reduce their groundwater monitoring. Cost is \$42,640. The closeness of the river has been taken in consideration in years past. More will be known after a meeting with the EPA. One thought the EPA had was shutting down the leachate and see what happens. This could be a savings of \$80,000 year that is paid to the City. Some additional water level testing may be needed. Luke is working on some improvements in the southwest corner. Commissioner Crowe moved to approve the 2024 Agreement with CED at \$44,640. Commissioner Rush second. Roll call: Crowe-yes, Striker-yes, Rush-yes. **V110-401**

Kara Brown, **Superintendent of DD**, Jason Manns, Amy Newland and Cayla Warlock came in to discuss the proposed additional levy for the Developmental Disabilities Board. A different version of the information previously submitted was for review. The grant ends in 2024. A small portion of the salaries, \$200,000, will need to be covered. The \$900,000 ends in 2024 and salaries were qualified under the grant but will then be under the general fund. They have other grants that renew annually. In 2017 there were 3 classrooms with three aides. And now, two classrooms. Still under two teachers. They have one teacher and six students full time with four being worked with thru other schools. A new program was started to get them skills to be able to go back into their home classrooms. They changed their model due to issues with hiring. Commissioner Striker noted the large jump in salaries, over 20%, Kara-some employees were contracted services previously and are now full time. They are asking for a new additional levy for seven years at 1.7 mills. Commissioner Rush-why are the expenses at \$4.9 for 2024 then it dips down in 2028. Kara-The grant was \$1.5 million total with \$900,000 left. Commissioner Crowe-I have a real problem with putting a new levy to the tax payers with the new property levels now. I don't trust the state to not change the rules again. They say use 2024 then 2023 values. If they go with 2023 values, it will generate a lot more money. But with the state changing the rules and it's too late to change the levy, it could be a possibility. Really don't want another levy next year you just passed your renewal. I know it is up to the voters to pass but regardless, there are expenses relative to putting the levy on the ballot, expenses you don't need. I can't support a new levy next year. I've either been on the side seats or up here when you come in where you show if you don't renew, you're in the red and we pass it down; seems the carry-over doesn't change a whole lot. In two years if we see the carryover going down and we see you need to survive we can revisit. I won't be sitting in this seat then. That's my concern. Commissioner Striker- I'm the same way. I'm taxed to death. Each new levy makes me shutter. I have a tough time putting on in the Spring because you just had one. I hear from voters already rumors you and someone else putting stuff on and they aren't happy. Property taxes evaluation up 24%. My personal feeling, we are taxed to death. Close on numbers. Two years before it gets tough with no levy.

Kara-end of 2025 we may not make bills first of next year. November 24 is the last we can make bills based on our projections. We still have Harco clients, transportation. Amy-I know how much my property taxes when up. It is up to the voters to pass or not. If we don't get on we close the school and that affects hundreds of people. We've gone back and forth since October. Why didn't you just say then? Has to be to Board of Elections Dec. 20. Nothing changed since October. We knew about taxes going up then. We've wasted a lot of time. We have major decisions to make if you don't put on. The Auditor does not communicate with us. Commissioner Crowe-That problem goes back years. He's been in with same complaint about DD. Cayla-we've tried to bridge that gap. What do you need from us? I've asked to get it right on our end. Kara-that is not our intent to complain about him. Please direct him back to us. We want to make it better. Push him back to our direction. Commissioner Rush-we talked to him yesterday. To make sure all are on the same page. Communication. It goes two ways back and forth. Go in there more often. Amy-I am up here every week sometimes twice a week. I sit at their desk and they act like everything is fine. I go back to my desk and there is an email. Nothing new. You refer us to Mike and he sends us back to you. We have done everything possible and we get nothing back. Kara-Amy is correct, but that is not the issue here. We just ask that you send him back to us. A frustration. Struggle. I ask that you take a vote on the resolution. You do what you need to do. Numbers didn't change. 2023 or 2024 values. Mike confirmed 2023 values. Whatever is passed is the value of 2023. I respect your vote. That is your role. Taxpayers will come to us, why aren't you on the ballot? My request is to vote one way or another. After November we have to make permanent decision. If we won't pass another levy then we have to make cuts. The Board is aware. Commissioner Crowe-in response to taking a vote. The Clerk asked for a motion (12/7). No motion made. If there is no motion you can't take a vote. Kara-what do you need to see to change your mind? Commissioner Crowe-we need to see what the Senate and House are going to do at the state level. It appears they are going to increase the Homestead Exemption. That doesn't seem to help families, just older people. Once stabilized, settled, then we can revisit. Kara-out of our control. Commissioner Crowe-makes me uncomfortable when you make decisions out of our control. Would like to see communications resolved. Hard to justify expenses with a large carryover. We have no control over salaries and benefits. Salaries are more than other county employees. Health Benefits are also different for some employees. Specifically, the percentages paid by at least one of your employees. Commissioner Rush-expenses-what can be done to help out? Jason-we got the grant to help cover those expenses. If we didn't get, it would be easier to justify? Commissioner Crowe-that would have shown up in your carryover. That's the problem with grants and salaries. When they go away, reality sets in. Jason-we sustained because of that. Kara-grant was to regain skills lost in covid. Commissioner Rush-understand, some effort to reduce expense, I don't see that. Kara-projects based on a 3% rate of inflation. Then you say our cash balance too high. With no levy these numbers will change. If we cut services then we hear we are not supporting the public because we don't provide our services. You say cut services to cut cost. Then we hear about that. They want those services. We will reduce \$1.4 million a year that is what it will take. Once our services are stopped, the schools will have to pay for them and then later on say we will take on. That is permanent. We know what those cuts have to be. We make them when we have to. That is our rock and a hard place. We chose not to go on until we had to -cash balance at a bare minimum. Cayla had done a ton of work to make sure nothing more we could cut. Eliminated a nurse secretary position. Another employee left this morning that won't be filled. We evaluate whether we need or not. Not trying to convince you to do anything you are already doing. Just show you how we make our decisions. Commissioner Rush-I'm sorry I'm having difficulty seeing a revenue reduction without a levy. Cayla discussed the levy chart on what a reduction has to be without a levy. Kara-We pay people for services. We are revenue based flat with expenses going up. If interested we can put together reductions in place. Commissioner Crowe-wait until after year end so you'll have actual numbers for 2023.. Kara-when we come back for November what do you need to see other than proposed cuts, projection? Commissioner Crowe-we need to see what state is doing, how it affects Hardin County. Kara-any questions-can you send me questions before the meeting? I need some could have saved lots of hours had I known that. Had I not spoke with your yesterday Fred I would not have known I needed to come back for more questions. I need to understanding.

Commissioner Crowe-for my part, a one on one meeting, questions with the state when to certify-you aren't going to be able to answer then. Waiting on Mike. Kara-I know how to be efficient. Commissioner Crowe-done for the March. Kara-moving forward are you willing to reach out with questions before? I could have had all the answers before. Commissioner Crowe-during our meeting we had two different budget numbers and you couldn't answer. We didn't know to question until the numbers were in front of us. Commissioner Rush-that discrepancy-did they really know what the numbers are? Do we really need a levy? Cayla-we talked about that in Board meetings when you were present Fred. Kara-had I known I would have brought Cayla. Commissioner Rush-we could have asked for you to bring your numbers person. Kara-agree-I had already had two meetings with you. Jason-as a Board our job is to manage the budget. We are asking you guys to go on the ballot and manage the numbers. Multiple meetings. We ae doing our due diligence. Give us the opportunity before the public to make that decision. There are going to be cuts. Perception doesn't go away. We struggle. We did everything we could (when Harco went away) but comes back on us. The numbers are there. I trust them. Give us a chance, think about it. I don't like taxes either. I'm willing to pay for those things. Let the public make that decision. Commissioner Rush-I remember several options at the Board meetings. 1-get things going for a second chance, 2-if it didn't pass, you'd learn from that and adjust accordingly in November, 3-anticipated, I interpreted, it may not go this Spring. Today you say everyone wants this and would probably pass. Kara-I know the data says less than 1% of new DD levies pass. What our plan was to run in March, tell a good story, share, educate and see. If you don't pass you are threatening us with cuts. Pass and give the benefit of the doubt with the public. If it didn't pass, we understand, this is what is cut. Drastic-cuts-no. I'll be back in May. Some cuts yes. Then this is what is cut. Taxpayers either give us new money or we make cuts and will be permanent. Jason-hope for the best, prepare for the worst. Kara-not going on the ballot in March. If it changes could the Clerk let us know? Yes. Thank you. Appreciate your time.

Roll call resulted as follows:

_____, YES/NO
 President of the Board-Timothy L. Striker

_____, YES/NO
 Roger E. Crowe

_____, YES/NO
 Fred M. Rush

Attest _____
 Clerk of the Board

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