

VILLAGE OF GRAND BEACH
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Harry Walder called the regular council meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. EST. Present in addition to Walder were James Bracewell, Edward Brandes Peter Doerr, and Blake O'Halloran.

ADOPT AGENDA

O'Halloran moved, seconded by Brandes to adopt the regular agenda as presented, motion carried unanimously 5-0.

ADOPT CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approve Village Council Minutes from November 15, 2023
- b. Hall Rental Requests- Kenny Family
- c. Pay Bills with written additions

O'Halloran moved, seconded by Brandes, to adopt the consent agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

COMMISSION REPORTS

COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Walder mentioned that the Pokagon Fund was advertising in the newspaper for new grants from the community and he thought the council should consider the Robin Lane viewing platform improvements as an area to apply for assistance, something to think about. Walder reminded everyone of the Town Hall meeting on January 6, 2024 at 11:00 am EST followed by the regular Task Force meeting at 3:30 pm EST. Walder stated after some discussion with the Clerk and Superintendent, the pay period for Village employees will be changing in January to allow the office more time for payroll tasks. Walder also mentioned that he would like to investigate putting together a finance committee to help oversee Village investments without spending any money on consultation fees. Walder inquired if the council wanted to

look into putting signs at each beach access point for emergency purposes should 911 services be called and need to locate the beach access quickly. Walder is also waiting to hear about the grant application for Trees.

REPORT ON NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP MEETING

Council members discussed whether they should continue designating council members to attend those meetings or is it even worth the time and effort? Doerr stated he will continue going and will pass along any pertinent information.

BUILDING & ZONING

Walder had nothing to report on building and zoning.

PARK & RECREATION:

No report

STREETS & WATER

No report

POLICE

Brandes reported short term rentals are going well and he and the Police Chief have submitted their comments, questions, and suggestions from property owners to the Planning Commission for their review. He will have more to report after the special Planning Commission meeting in January. Brandes said he is getting a lot of feedback from Village residents regarding the \$50.00 fee put on the water bills for the emergency address signs and those will be addressed on an individual basis with refunds issued as needed. Walder added that he has reached out to the Village Attorney to make sure the council handled the application of this issue of address signs and the fee properly.

PRO SHOP & COURSE

O'Halloran stated there was not much to report. Walder added that in regards to the intake line for the golf course irrigation system, Merritt Engineering is going to submit an estimate for what it will take to solve that problem as well as an estimate of their fees. Council members agreed this is a major issue as the golf course will deteriorate badly without the proper irrigation system.

SERVISCAPE REPORT

Clay Putnam reported the golf course finished the year on budget, winter applications are ongoing, leaf pickup is complete and snowmobile stakes are up on the course.

PERSONNEL REPORTS

SUPERINTENDENT: In addition to his written report, Superintendent Bob Dabbs said the generator installation is complete at the Village Hall and is happy to report that it fires up each time he tests it. He added that Pajay Construction installed an isolation valve for them on Walnut Avenue so he could abandon that water main and drain it. Leaf pick-up is still on going and he hopes to be finished in the next three weeks.

POLICE CHIEF: In addition to his written report, Police Chief Ryan Layman reported he is currently investigating check fraud and warned residents to be very careful with their checking account information, especially not giving those numbers out over the phone. He reminded residents that the link was on the website for anyone interested in house checks while they are away for the winter. He also stated there is a joint meeting with the Village of Michiana to discuss the police contract.

BUILDING INSPECTOR: In addition to his written report, Building Inspector Chad Butler stated he was requesting the council upgrade the swimming pool fees to mirror the building permit fees so the whole process is more streamlined. That will make the permits both 1% of the project cost. He was also happy to report that he has finally made contact with a homeowner he has been trying to reach since February regarding cleaning up their property.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

PINE AVE BEACH VIEWING PLATFORM

Walder stated he spoke with John Larkin who confirmed he is donating \$5,000 for the Pine Ave Beach viewing platform as long as the railings are made of glass so views will not be obstructed. Walder asked the council to move forward with the quote from ELD Construction for that project not to exceed \$38,288.00. Doerr moved to approve the request; seconded by O'Halloran and passed unanimously.

CHARTER COMMISSION

Walder reported that Sheila McGinnis has volunteered to serve on the Charter Commission with him and was happy to have her assistance. O'Halloran inquired who will the Charter Commission report to?

Walder answered that they will report to the Council and that he would be coming to the Council at the January meeting to formally appoint the Charter Commission members.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **FEMA Ordinance Request**-President Walder presented the board with copies of one new Ordinance and an Amendment to Ordinance 2006-01 to comply with new flood plain laws that will go into place from FEMA April 225, 2024. Both documents have been reviewed by EGLE and the Village Attorney. The first one is amending Ordinance 2006-01 to update to the most recent flood plain maps. The second one is to create a new Ordinance to comply with new FEMA rules and regulations. This process happens every fifteen years with FEMA. Doerr moved to amend Ordinance 2006-01 and implement the new Ordinance after the proper edits were made and a number assigned; motion seconded by O'Halloran and passed unanimously.
- b. **New Clerk-Treasurer Salary**- President Walder reported that when hiring Kim Wolnik to replace Mary it was agreed upon that she would receive a \$5,000 raise upon assuming that role. She was promoted on December 1st so he asked the Council to approve same. Brandes moved to approve; seconded by O'Halloran and passed unanimously.
- c. **New Television Purchase**-Walder asked the council to approve a purchase of a new television and mount to install upstairs in the hall for construction meetings and other power point presentations. The cost will not exceed \$700.00 and will be paid out of the building fund. Motion made to approve the purchase by Brandes; seconded by O'Halloran with Walder and Doerr voting aye and Bracewell voting nay. Motion passed 4-1.
- d. **Bike Path**-The Village received a draft copy of Abonmarche's design of the bike path from Grand Beach Road over the railroad tracks to Highway 12. The council discussed the newer widened bike path shown on the drawing and said it will get put up on the website for residents to view. The Council is seeking resident input on this new design.
- e. **Revise Pool Permit fees for Zoning & Construction**- Walder recommended the board increase the pool permit fees and subsequent zoning fees to equal those of the building permit fees. Pool permit fees will increase to 1% of the total project with a minimum of \$200, and zoning fees will go from \$50.00 to \$250.00. Doerr moved to approve the motion; seconded by Brandes and passed unanimously.
- f. **Tree Removal by Archway**- Superintendent Dabbs recommended we accept the quote from Kevin Kramer to removed the dead tree by the archway for at a cost of \$4200.00. Bracewell moved to approve the request; seconded by Brandes and passed unanimously.

- g. Social Club Contract-** Brandes and Walder have been working with the Grand Beach Social Club to finalize a new contract with the Village. The Social Club has agreed to a new contract and the significant changes are that the annual fee was increased from \$2500 to \$4500 per year along with their summer calendar of events. Brandes noted there are a few edits to be made but essentially it is completed. Bracewell thought the fee was too high but was informed by Alex Bialk that it has not increased since 2007 so the club felt it was a fair increase. Bracewell also pointed out that the wording about golf carts being returned “immediately” was too vague, but O’Halloran pointed out it says “immediately following the event” which should be pretty clear. Doerr moved to approve the contract; seconded by Brandes and passed unanimously.
- h. Planning Commission Annual Report-** O’Halloran moved to approve the annual report submitted by the Planning Commission; seconded by Brandes and passed unanimously. Bracewell asked where the minutes were from the PC meeting held on November 30th? Clerk Kim Wolnik stated they were on the website.
- i. Opt out of PA 152 of 2011-** Walder explained this is a yearly event for the Village to opt out of Public Act 152 that requires employees to pay 20% of their health insurance costs. The Village must vote on it every year as they charge their employees 5% instead. O’Halloran moved to approve; seconded by Brandes and passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Lynn stood up to inquire what type of signs was the council considering for the beach access points, isn’t the name of the road the beach is on sufficient? She also inquired about the water run off in lagoons or ponds around the golf course and feels it is part of the intercoastal lakes and is against using money to drain those. She then inquired when would she know if she must buy a new address sign for her property. Walder informed her that she would not be installing it herself, the Police Department is in charge of installing them and that’s why each water bill was assessed a fee of \$50.00 for those emergency address signs.

Barbara Kucharski stated she was not happy with the \$50.00 charge and felt her property was properly marked with her address already and has been for over 20 years. Brandes told her that he and Chief Layman will discuss if her sign met the requirements and if so she would be refunded.

Tim Johnson stated he did not think we were in compliance with our current address sign ordinance and that we may have assessed people unfairly. President Walder said he is in touch with our Village Attorney to see if we were in compliance or not. Mr. Johnson said people should have been fined \$50.00 according to our current ordinance and not just arbitrarily charged. He also asked what are residents supposed to do when the entire front yard is all parking and those lots in old Grand Beach are only 50 feet wide. He also asked if he doesn’t pay that \$50.00 charge on his water bill then will he be assessed a late fee for not paying the full bill? Walder recommended he pay the full bill to avoid the late fee. Clerk Kim Wolnik stated she can refund those charges as soon as the council decides to do so.

Alex Bialk stated he lives by a few of the beach accesses and feels we should follow Michiana’s rule of thumb with beach access points by naming them “stop 42, etc.”

Chief Layman addressed the crowd to say that existing address signs were looked at in advance to see if they were in compliance with the double-sided reflective signs he is installing and then if they were acceptable the resident wasn't charged. Some places may have slipped through the cracks but they will be refunded if that is the case. He is flexible and open to work with everyone. Safety is the issue first and foremost.

Angela Trainor was on Zoom and stated she thinks the address signs are going to be hard to install them all in a uniform way as all the properties are different with mailboxes and driveways in different areas instead of the front of each house.

Correspondence

Meg Piper gave the council an update on the Grand Beach History Project and did a detailed amount of work with all her volunteers but the question remains of where to store these treasured documents and pictures that represent Grand Beach. Walder asked the council to put their heads together and try and come up with somewhere to display and store them. Meg also thanked Deb Alch, Mary Kate Bertane, Don Butler, Colleen Dolan, Liz Grim-Vaughn, Sidney Hoover, Katherine Kelly, Paula Kenny, Paul Leonard, Kaye Moriarty, Nancy Roberts, Kenneth Rosenbaum, Ann Sebastian, Mary Squyres, Angela Trainor and Kim Walder for volunteering and working on this project.

Adjournment

Doerr moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 P.M. motion seconded by O'Halloran and passed unanimously.

Kimberly Wolnik

Clerk-Treasurer

