

VILLAGE OF SARANAC
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
February 20, 2023

The Saranac Village Council Regular Meeting was called to order by President Darby at 7:00 p.m. at the Saranac Village Office, 27 N Bridge Street.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: President Darby, Straubel, DPW Koster; Trustees – Day, Doll, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley

Absent: None

Guests: Lieutenant Pieters, Jason Ricket, Jeanne Vandersloot

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Whorley, to approve the Regular Agenda. All yeas.

Public Comments – None.

Kevin Klutman took the Oath Office as Village Trustee with a Partial Term expiring November 20, 2024.

Law Enforcement Report

Council members reviewed Ionia County Sheriff Office stats for Village of Saranac patrol for the month of January 2022.

Lieutenant Pieters was in attendance to provide council with an update of village law enforcement items of interest, and to answer any questions council may have. Deputy Jacob Sommer is being promoted to Sergeant and will no longer be specifically assigned to Boston/Saranac. Deputy Kyle Macklin will now be Boston/Saranac's day-time officer.

Jason Ricket was in attendance to request that council consider adopting an ordinance to allow the keeping of backyard chickens for egg-laying purposes. Ricket provided a sample ordinance from the City of Grand Rapids.

Ricket pointed out that there are many restrictions in the sample ordinance. Some (not all) of the ordinance restrictions, are as follows: only allowed on single-family lots at least 3,800 square feet in size, coop has to be in the back yard and cannot cover more than 50% of the back yard or be closer than 10 feet from any lot line, only 4 to 6 chickens allowed (dependent upon lot size), coop regulations regarding design, construction and fencing, and NO roosters allowed.

Council members discussed the idea and agreed that enforcement of the ordinance would be the largest hurdle, as the village does not have a full-time Zoning Ordinance administrator/enforcer.

Straubel likened the situation to the Dogs and Cats Ordinance that council repealed in 2009, mainly due to the fact that the village did not have the man-power to enforce the ordinance.

Mulnix inquired about USDA regulations. His place of employment restricts him from being within so many feet of chickens. Mulnix is also concerned about the village's close proximity to Herbruck's Poultry Ranch, as well as village residents that work for Herbruck's. Ricket and/or Koster will contact Herbruck's regarding the topic.

Council members concurred that they are not opposed to village residents keeping chickens for the purpose of laying eggs, but are concerned about limited enforcement resources, USDA regulations, and distancing requirements.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Klutman, to further research Ricket's request to adopt an ordinance allowing the "Keeping of Backyard Chickens."

Roll call vote: yeas – Day, Klutman, Mulnix, Whorley, Darby; nays – Doll, Talcott; absent – none.

The Zoning Administrator's Report of Services for January 2023 was reviewed.

Vandersloot was in attendance at council's request, to discuss how to proceed with regards to unlicensed/inoperable vehicles (zoning violations) at two businesses in the Central Business District.

Council discussed the topic at length, without a definitive resolution, other than to refer the topic to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation.

Motion was made by Klutman, supported by Doll, to forward the unlicensed/inoperable vehicle topic to the Planning Commission to research further and provide a recommendation to Village Council. All yeas.

Motion was made by Mulnix at 7:56 p.m., supported by Whorley, to open the Public Hearing to set the 2023 property tax millage and approve the 2023/2024 budget. All yeas.

No public comments were offered on the proposed budget and/or the millage rate to support it.

Motion was made by Mulnix at 7.57 p.m., supported by Doll, to close the Public Hearing. All yeas.

Prior to tonight's meeting, Straubel provided council members with budget reports as follows: Summary and Detail Budget (with notes) for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, Cash/Reserve Balances by Year and Fund, Net Income/Loss Estimates for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 and Projected Vehicle/Equipment Replacement Timeline with Projected Costs.

Darby and Straubel went through the detailed budget by line item, highlighting for council members, all major changes and/or new line items.

The proposed 2023/2024 budget projects that General Fund will have to dip into reserves by approximately \$578,337, due to the Scheid Park project and contributions to Local Street for the Church Street project. It is projected that Major Street will have approximately \$1,315 to put into reserves after a \$20,000 contribution to Local Street for the Church Street project. It is estimated that Local Street will receive \$528,289 from General Fund and \$20,000 from Major Street to fund the Church Street project and balance their budget.

Water Fund is expected to use approximately \$426,118 in reserve funds due to water portion of Church Street project, rehab of the water tower & purchase of a generator for well #4. Sewer Fund will have to dip into reserves by approximately \$241,538 due to sewer portion of Church Street project and proposed sewer system improvements (clean/line/repair) per SAW project recommendations.

Darby reported on the Personnel Committee's proposed wage increases for village employees. Increases would begin 3/1/23, concurrent with the new fiscal year, and are incorporated into the proposed 2023/2024 budget. They are as follows: Straubel – 6%, Lake – \$1.50/hr., and Darby – \$1/hr. Darby explained that a portion of Straubel's increase is in replacement of a decrease in in-lieu-of insurance payment (from \$350/mo. to \$200/mo.) and Lake is receiving \$0.50 more per hour than Darby, as Koster is appointing him DPW Lead. Darby further explained that Koster and Stickney's wages will remain the same, as Koster was promoted to DPW Director at the end of October 2022 with a negotiated wage increase and Stickney has only been employed with the Village since the end of November 2022.

Talcott stated that he would like to suggest adding \$5,000 to the 2023/2024 budget, for maintenance on Erv Taylor parking lot. Council members concurred.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Doll, to approve property tax mills for 2023 of 13.9321 as well as a 1% administrative fee, and to approve the budget for fiscal year March 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024 in the amount of \$3,582,727, which includes an additional \$5,000 for repairs to Erv Taylor parking lot, as suggested by Talcott.

Roll call vote: yeas – Day, Doll, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley, Darby; nays – none; absent – none.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Whorley, to accept the minutes of the January 9, 2023 Regular Meeting. All yeas.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Klutman, to accept the Treasurer's Report of January 31, 2023. All yeas.

Various Accounts Payable items were reviewed and questions answered.

Motion was made by Doll, supported by Day, to approve the Accounts Payable of February 20, 2023, in the amount of \$110,711.53.

Roll call vote: yeas – Day, Doll, Klutman, Mulnix, Talcott, Whorley, Darby; nays – none; absent – none.

Planning Commission Report

Council reviewed Planning Commission minutes from their 2/1/23 meeting. Mark Schaafsma was in attendance and provided Planning Commission members with an update on the Harker Place project.

Committee Reports

Klutman will be joining the Water and Sewer, Buildings and Grounds and Budget Committees. All other committee appointments shall remain the same.

Budget

The Budget Committee met and recommended the budget that was approved tonight (prior to the additional \$5,000 for Erv Taylor parking lot) after the Public Hearing that was held to received public comments on said budget.

Personnel – No report.

Public Safety

Darby reported on the annual Fire Board meeting. Board members approved the purchase of 800 MHz radios and pagers in the amount of \$122,482, as well as \$9,240 for spec writing services. The department is preparing to purchase a new fire engine during the 2026/2027 fiscal year. Per Chief Koster, there is a 450 to 850-day lead time for a new engine after the fire department accepts a bid. Per Darby, Boston Township's Fire Millage will be able to fund the Village of Saranac and Boston Township's share of operating expenses, as well as capital outlay items for the 2023/2024 fiscal year. Darby noted that the number of calls for the Village increased significantly from 2021 (128 calls) to 2022 (175 calls). The townships of Boston, Keene, Easton and Berlin all saw a reduction in number of calls.

Parks & Recreation

Per Straubel, the Village was not awarded a SPARK grant, which would have allowed for additional improvements (above and beyond the new restroom/concession facility) at Scheid Park. There are two more rounds of the SPARK grant planned. The Village will submit an application for the second round when the MDNR announces that it is open.

Straubel shared a project timeline she received from Fleis & VandenBrink, for construction of a new restroom/concession facility at Scheid Park; a \$500,000 project, \$300,000 of which will be funded with a MDNR Trust Fund Grant. The timeline proposes a construction start date in the fall of this year and an end date in 2023 or spring of 2024 (dependent upon weather).

Streets

Straubel reported that the reconstruction of Church Street, from Bridge Street to Vosper Street, is included in the approved 2023/2024 budget. The Village has not been successful in obtaining a grant to assist with costs, as the pool of money is small and the applicants are many. Per correspondence from Todd Richter of Fleis & VandenBrink, we will plan for a project start date this fall, but it will depend on bids and availability of materials. The project may have to be held until the spring of 2024.

Straubel also reported that the 2023/2024 budget includes design engineering costs for the Main Street project which is slated for spring of 2024. The Village will receive funding in the amount of \$377,000, administered through MDOT's Rural Task Force, from the federal STP (Surface Transportation Program) and state TEDF (Transportation Economic Development Fund).

Buildings & Grounds – No report.

Water & Sewer

Koster reported that the timeline for receiving the generator for well 4 is ten months and six months for a transfer switch.

Public Comments – None.

Additional Business

Council members received a copy of, and discussed an anonymous letter regarding the condition of a certain property in the Village.

Mulnix stated that he would like to see the Village pay more attention in the upcoming year, to this type of violation.

Klutman added that he would like to see more attention given to weeds in the downtown sidewalks.

Darby requested that Koster complete performance reviews for the DPW employees.

Whorley reported on a Keene Township meeting that he recently attended.

Mulnix mentioned that he saw a report indicated that an estimated 10,000 people will move into Lowell in the next 10 years. He believes that we should start brainstorming now, about what can be done to bring people/business from that influx, to Saranac.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.



Becky Straubel,
Treasurer/Deputy Clerk