

VILLAGE OF SARANAC
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 14, 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, Whorley
Absent: Mulnix, Talcott
Guests: Sgt. Pattok, Sarah Doll, Annmarie Yerke

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

Public Comments – None.

Annmarie Yerke, Youth Group Director for River's Edge Youth Center, was in attendance to answer any questions council may have, regarding the opening of the youth center at 79 N Bridge Street in the Village of Saranac. River's Edge is a subsidiary of Branch Adventures, a non-profit day camp for youth, located in Boston Township.

Yerke attended the August 2nd Planning Commission meeting, to inquire if she needed to apply for any permits prior to opening the youth center. Yerke explained that the youth center would be sharing space with Three Crowns Music Academy.

Trustee Day, Ex Officio member of the Planning Commission, reported on the August 2nd Planning Commission meeting that Yerke attended. After discussion and with input from Jeanne Vandersloot, Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission members concluded that River's Edge Youth Center is a "use permitted by right" in the Central Business District and therefore is not required to obtain any permits from the Village.

Per Yerke, the current hours of operation for the youth center are Mondays and Wednesdays, 4 – 8 p.m. and Saturdays, 2 – 8 p.m. They also plan to have special events periodically, on Friday nights.

Darby inquired if the youth center has any current needs. Per Yerke, they would like to obtain a refrigerator, television, books, and art supplies, to name a few items.

Straubel inquired if Yerke has plans to contact neighboring businesses to inform them about the youth center and address any concerns they may have. Yerke indicated that she plans to do so.

Law Enforcement Report

Council members reviewed Ionia County Sheriff Office stats for Village of Saranac patrol for the month of July 2023.

Sgt. Pattok was in attendance, as Deputy Macklin is in training. Pattok informed council members that there has been an uptick in attempted break-ins at businesses in neighboring communities.

Sarah Doll, Saranac Village resident, was in attendance to follow up on her August 7th email correspondence regarding the decision to change the date of trick or treating in the Village of Saranac from October 31st to the last Saturday in October.

Sarah began by thanking Straubel for providing a quick and thorough response to her email.

Straubel explained in her email response to Sarah, that the idea of switching the date of trick or treating in the Village from October 31st to the last Saturday in October, was discussed within the groups Better Together for Saranac (BT4S) and the Saranac Community Association (SCA). Members of these groups agreed that when Halloween falls on a weekday, it affects school and work schedules. Members of these groups supported the idea of changing the date to the last Saturday in October and requested that the Village Council consider making the change official.

The topic was discussed during two Village Council meetings (November & December 2022), at which a majority of council members indicated support for the date change. Based on these discussions and the request from BT4S and the SCA to change the date, Straubel changed the date of trick or treating to October 28th on a flyer that was mailed to all Village taxpayers (with their property tax bills) at the beginning of July.

Thus began the social media conversations regarding the date change, and ultimately Sarah's email, questioning how the decision was made, if input from Village property owners was sought, and whether the Village has the authority to direct homeowners when to observe Halloween.

Discussion on the topic ensued between Sarah and council members.

Darby noted that the Village Council wants to support the schools and values their input on subjects such as this. Darby also mentioned that the SCA sponsors the Harvest Festival event which is held on the last Saturday in October. There are Halloween-based activities at the event and it made sense to SCA members to have trick or treating on the same date.

Sarah spoke to several residents and received mixed opinions on the topic. Sarah also brought up the fact that no other surrounding communities have changed the date of trick or treating from October 31st.

Day pointed out that if we change the date to October 28th, we may have an influx of trick or treaters from other communities. In addition, having trick or treating on a weekend, could potentially encourage mischief and mayhem, as Halloween participants are more likely to be out later.

Council members concurred that it would be best at this time, to keep trick or treating on October 31st.

Since a flyer was mailed to all taxpayers (with their property tax bills), noting that the date of trick or treating was changed to October 28th, council discussed the best way to retract that. Darby suggested the use of yard signs in late October, announcing that trick or treating will be on October 31st from 6 to 8 p.m. Council members concurred with this remedy.

Motion was made by Doll, supported by Klutman, to accept the minutes of the July 10, 2023 Regular Meeting. All yeas.

Motion was made by Doll, supported by Day, to accept the Treasurer's Report of July 31, 2023. All yeas.

It was noted that Straubel added a page to the Treasurer's Report which provides the current status of budgeted Capital Outlay and other non-typical items.

Various Accounts Payable items were reviewed and questions answered.

Motion was made by Whorley, supported by Doll, to approve the Accounts Payable of August 14, 2023, in the amount of \$80,417.45.

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

Zoning Administrator Report

The Zoning Administrator's Report of Services for July 2023 was reviewed/discussed.

Planning Commission Report

The Planning Commission meeting minutes from August 2nd were reviewed/discussed. Day noted that the Planning Commission discussed River's Edge Youth Center (as discussed earlier tonight) and the Wellhead Protection Program Plan that is currently being updated by Fleis & VandenBrink and the WHPP Team.

Straubel informed council members of Dollar General's request to store product carts outside their building, before, during, and after interior renovation of the store in September. The Planning Commission will schedule a Special Meeting to hear Dollar General's request.

Committee Reports

Budget – No report.

Personnel – No report.

Buildings & Grounds – No report.

Public Safety – No report.

Parks & Recreation

Straubel reported that the plans/specifications for the Scheid Park Improvements project have been advertised for bidding. Bids will be accepted until Monday, August 28th at 2:00 p.m. at which time they will be publicly opened. If an acceptable bid is received and approved by the MDNR, council will award the bid at their September 11th council meeting. The construction timeframe will be September 2023 through June 2024.

Koster reported that he researched the cost of a new swing set and merry-go-round for Scheid Park. The merry-go-round has been removed due to it being unsafe, and the swing set will need to be removed soon. Council members concurred that replacements will be budgeted for in the 2024/2025 fiscal year. The amount budgeted will depend on whether the Scheid Park Improvements project is over or under budget, and whether the Village is successful in obtaining the grants they have recently applied for.

Darby reported on the status of a \$5,000 donation from a Village resident's estate, which is to be used for a specific, tangible item that can be marked with signage.

Streets

Koster reported that he received a quote in the amount of \$47,000 to extend Weeks Street to the Village limit, and resolve the drainage issue in that area.

Snyder Asphalt suggested a valley gutter approach, which would cost approximately \$1,000. Council members concurred to try Snyder's idea at this time, given the fact that \$47,000 to fix this issue, is not in the 2023/2024 budget. If this approach is not successful, the topic will be revisited prior to establishing the 2024/2025 budget.

Koster reported on the status of the culvert/sink hole north of the Bridge Street bridge. The cost to line and down-size it is estimated at \$14,000. It is unknown at this time, what permits would be needed. Grand River Excavation suggested that the culvert may not be needed anymore and could possibly be abandoned. The cost to remove the culvert and fill the hole is estimated to be \$4-5,000. Koster is still investigating options and will report to council as he learns more.

Water & Sewer

Koster reported that the cement pad for the generator at well #4 has been poured. The DPW crew has been working on valve maintenance, flushing of hydrants and cross connection testing.

Additional Business

Darby reported that she attended a meeting regarding the Lower Grand River Water Trail Development Plan. In the Plan, 36 river access sites along the Grand River were analyzed and classified (A, B or C) based on their quality of amenities and accessibility. Six of the 36 sites received an "A" classification, one of those being the Saranac Village Boat Launch. Darby reported that she is very proud of this accomplishment!

Darby reported that she was approached by an individual who questioned the design of the Village logo which is prominently displayed on the cover sheet of the annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR).

Council members received a copy of the CCR cover sheet as well as a copy of the description of what each detail of the Saranac Area Centennial Seal (Village logo) means. The Seal is a symbolic rendering based on Saranac's legend and history. The long, curved "S" represents the Grand River. According to legend the Indian word Saranac means "rock closed." These rocks are portrayed by the 3 circles in the "S". The pine tree depicts the legendary pine tree on the ridge due north of Saranac, under which a young maiden is believed to have been buried. The Indian centered in an arrowhead signifies longstanding, legendary connections between Saranac and Indian lore. Symbolizing both the past and future is the hour glass. Stalks of grain denote the importance of farming in the area.

Darby posed the question; given the fact that Saranac schools changed their mascot from Redskins to RedHawks, should the Village consider changing their logo?

Council members agreed to not change the logo, but to reduce its size on future CCR reports.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Becky Straubel,



Treasurer/Deputy Clerk