

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
AMBERLEY VILLAGE COUNCIL  
MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2014**

The Council of Amberley Village, Ohio met in a regular session at the Amberley Village Municipal Building, 7149 Ridge Road on Monday, March 10, 2014, at 6:30 p.m. Mayor Muething called the meeting to order. The following roll call was taken:

**PRESENT:**

Richard Bardach  
Peg Conway  
Bill Doering  
Ed Hattenbach  
Thomas C. Muething  
Ray Warren  
Natalie Wolf

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Scot Lahrmer, Village Manager  
Lt. Kevin Fryman, Police/Fire  
Nicole Browder, Clerk of Council  
Kevin Frank, Village Solicitor  
Rick Kay, Treasurer

**NOT PRESENT:**

Chief Rich Wallace, Police/Fire

Mayor Muething welcomed everyone to the regularly scheduled meeting of the Amberley Village Council. He then led those in attendance through the pledge of allegiance.

**MINUTES**

Mayor Muething presented the minutes of the February 10, 2014 regular meeting. He asked if there were any corrections or additions. There being none, Mayor Muething stated that the minutes were accepted.

**FINANCE REPORT**

Village Manager Scot Lahrmer presented the January 2013 Finance Report (a copy of which is attached). A summary of this report noted total tax collections for the month of January totaled \$284,054 and the total year-to-date collections are down 4% from the January 2013 year-to-date. The total general fund revenue for the month of January was \$304,675 while expenses equaled \$451,811. At the end of January, the unencumbered General Fund balance was \$2,387,988. The report was accepted as submitted.

**PRESENTATION**

Lt. Kevin Fryman, on behalf of the Police Department, presented a plaque to Village resident Rabbi Karp in recognition of his vigilant efforts to report suspicious activity and details of observations of individuals who committed burglaries. Rabbi Karp's information and later identification of the individuals through a line-up lead to the

conviction of the criminals. Lt. Fryman thanked Rabbi Karp for his cooperation throughout the investigation and commended him for keeping his neighborhood safe.

### **PUBLIC UTILITIES, SEWERS & STREETS COMMITTEE**

Mr. Doering reported that the following road projects were recommended for bidding:

Paving:	
Fontaine Court/Frontenac	\$184,200
Patching:	
Fairhaven Lane	\$17,900
Sagamore Drive	\$12,900
Curbing:	
Springvalley Drive	\$61,700
Gardener Avenue	\$20,500
Fairhaven Lane	\$45,700
Total:	\$342,900

Mr. Doering moved to authorize the Village Manager to proceed with the bidding process of these road projects. Seconded by Mr. Warren and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Wolf noted that the committee also discussed pedestrian projects and she worked with Chief Wallace to create a list of potential project sites. The pedestrian project list will be presented to the committee for review.

Mr. Doering next read, presented and moved to approve Resolution 2014-09, Resolution Authorizing the Village Manager to Enter into Contracts for Mowing Services. Seconded by Mr. Warren and the motion carried with one abstention by Mr. Hattenbach due to his relationship with one of the bidders. The contracts will secure mowing services for the Amberley Green property as well as the Village Municipal Building and rights-of-way for the 2014 mowing season.

Mr. Doering read, presented and moved to approve Resolution 2014-10, Resolution Authorizing the Village Manager to Enter into a Contract to Purchase a Dump Truck. Seconded by Ms. Conway and the motion carried unanimously. Mr. Doering commented that the old truck has become costly to repair, exceeding \$26,000 in repairs over the past few years. The replacement truck will cost \$124,597.

### **COMPENSATION & BENEFITS COMMITTEE**

Mr. Warren reported that the committee met twice to discuss adjustments to the employee holiday schedule and compensation. He took time to re-cap several points in regards to the process that the committee followed for its recommendation to support a 2% base wage increase. Also recommended was moving an existing holiday from Columbus Day to the day after Thanksgiving for improved service.

Mr. Warren next presented, read and moved to approve Ordinance 2014-05, Ordinance Amending Holiday Schedule for Village Employees. Seconded by Ms. Wolf and the roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Doering, Hattenbach, Muething, Warren, Wolf (7)  
NAY: (0)

This ordinance would exchange the Columbus Day holiday for the day after Thanksgiving which would provide improved delivery of service to the residents and this change is cost neutral for the budget.

Ms. Conway moved to waive the three readings of Ordinance 2014-05. Seconded by Mr. Hattenbach and the roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Doering, Hattenbach, Muething, Warren, Wolf (7)  
NAY: (0)

Mr. Warren presented, read and moved to approve Ordinance 2014-06, Ordinance Fixing Compensation to Village Employees to effectuate a 2% base wage increase. Seconded by Mr. Doering. Mayor Muething asked for discussion on the ordinance.

Mr. Doering commented that council would like to provide a higher increase, however, the Financial Sustainability Report along with the significant capital needs in addition to the average earnings tax revenue trend can only support a 2% increase. He commented that the employee contribution to pension increases for the police/fire department are to fully fund the pension for those employees and it goes into their plan. He noted a higher wage increase is irresponsible.

Ms. Conway commented that a 3% wage increase is appropriate and she has a broader view of the Financial Sustainability Report. The Village has lost 5 full-time employees out of 30 with only 1 being due to retirement. She stated employee turnover is costly to the Village. Excellent delivery of service is part of Amberley's brand. The 2 police officers that left cost the Village over \$20,000 to replace in addition to training for a total of \$45,000 while additional costs for overtime to cover short shifts also impacts costs. An exit interview with an employee who left revealed that a pay cut was taken to work in a less stressful environment without the scrutiny of employees. The Village cannot afford to lose additional people and their experience.

Ms. Conway moved to amend Ordinance 2014-06 to a 3% wage increase. Seconded by Ms. Wolf.

Mr. Warren made additional comments that the 2% proposed increase was generous and a risk to the Village since the history of the earnings tax over the last 5 years is unreliable (2.2% increase +/- 12.9%) and citing Mr. Lahrmer, there remains a need to increase our financial reserves to a safe level of \$3 million. With a 2% increase, over the last 3 years Amberley Village will rank 2<sup>nd</sup> highest among 21 police departments in the County surpassing Indian Hill and Wyoming. Mr. Warren noted that employees leave

for a variety of reasons including retirement, advancement, and less complexity (no fireman's responsibilities). He stated if Council wanted employees to be top paid, then the motion should be for 5-8% pay increase and a rollback of their healthcare contributions.

Mr. Bardach commented that he agreed with Ms. Conway, noting that the increase should represent cost of living and merit.

Mr. Hattenbach stated that the Financial Sustainability Report provides for a 1-3% compensation increase and that when increases are compared to surrounding municipalities over the last several years the total percent increases averages 10% while the Village's increases were totaled at 5.8% during that same period. He noted that comparing percent increases does not show individual position comparisons. A one percent increase costs the Village \$27,250 a year. He also noted balancing retention of highly skilled personnel is important. Finding alternative revenue is paramount and possible options to explore include reviewing existing fees and considering charging for services per use.

Ms. Wolf thanked Ms. Conway and Mr. Bardach. She agreed Amberley is unique in that it is situated around areas that are not as safe as the Village. She stated that staff does deserve a cost of living and merit increase.

Mayor Muething shared that he was appreciative of the rigorous process followed and good debate involved on compensation. He stated that Chief Wallace and Village Manager Lahrmer provided relevant information in this regard. He commented that the council appears to be properly aligned with the Financial Sustainability Report and to fairly compensate employees. His opinion is to provide for a 2% increase.

Mayor Muething stated that the motion to amend Ordinance 2014-06 to 3% including fire pay has been seconded and a roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Hattenbach, Wolf	(4)
NAY: Doering, Warren, Muething	(3)

Mayor Muething then stated a roll call vote would be taken for Ordinance 2014-06 as amended which was moved by Ms. Conway, seconded by Mr. Bardach and the roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Hattenbach, Muething, Wolf	(5)
NAY: Doering, Warren	(2)

Ms. Conway then moved to waive the three required readings for Ordinance 2014-06, seconded by Mr. Bardach and the roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Doering, Hattenbach, Muething, Warren, Wolf	(7)
NAY:	(0)

Mr. Hattenbach moved to pass Ordinance 2014-06 as an emergency measure for implementing wage adjustments for the Village employees as soon as possible to

ensure a productive workforce and to apply such adjustment on April 1, 2014.  
Seconded by Ms. Conway and the roll call showed the following vote:

AYE: Bardach, Conway, Doering, Hattenbach, Muething, Warren, Wolf (7)  
NAY: (0)

### **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

Mayor Muething reported the One Stop Drop recycling event will include paper shredding, electronic recycling by Cohen and shoe recycling. The event will take place at Amberley Green on April 6 from 12-4 p.m. Details will be shared on the Village website.

Arbor Day in Amberley Village will be recognized on April 22 at 6 p.m.

April 28 Scott Beuerlein will be the guest speaker to give a talk about trees at 7 p.m. in the community room.

The committee will sponsor a new program named "Adopt-A-Tree" which will allow volunteers to perform very minor maintenance on a grove a trees on Amberley Green.

The next Environmental Stewardship Committee will be held on March 24 at 7 p.m. in the community room.

### **MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mr. Lahrmer provided a summary of the maintenance department's statistics for the busy snow fighting season. In response to the salt shortage, the Village was able to borrow salt from the communities of Mason and Symmes Township through the long-standing contacts that employee have developed. It is notable to have employees in leadership positions that can assist the Village in such situations. Crews responded to 24 snow and ice events, most of which occurred outside of normal business hours. Over 55 inches of snow and ice were recorded at the maintenance department facility. Salt and supplies along with personnel time cost the Village \$79,033 this winter season.

Randy Newsom, a part-time dispatcher in the police department, recently filled the vacant full-time dispatcher position.

The building restoration work is approximately 60% complete and the administration offices are 90% complete. The lower level of the building has the most work to be finished. Completion of outstanding restoration work should conclude in 2-3 weeks.

The deer culling program ended due to scheduling conflicts, weather not cooperating, and reduced staff. The program will be revisited in late fall or early winter this year.

The March newsletter for the Village will be mailed this month. The Village delivers the newsletter twice a year by mail.

Ms. Conway asked Mr. Lahrmer to elaborate about the Financial Sustainability Report being featured at an upcoming forum. Mr. Lahrmer reported that he, Mayor Muething and Tom Peterson with the Village of Silverton will present the Financial Sustainability

Report to a forum of councilpersons and administrators and take questions about the process to develop the report. This forum will be held at the Sharonville Convention Center and allows governments to share experiences related to fiscal challenges.

Mr. Doering took a moment to commend the employees on the maintenance crew for their efforts to keep Village streets clear this winter season.

### **MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Muething moved to change the April 14 regular council meeting to April 10 due to the Passover observance. Seconded by Ms. Conway and the motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Muething noted that the council held 5 committee meetings and 1 Environmental Stewardship Committee meeting since last month's council meeting. He reminded everyone that these meetings are open to the public. He stated that scheduling the meetings does require a balance of staff availability, committee member availability and that advance notification of when the meetings are scheduled can be emailed to individuals registered on the website to receive such notifications.

Mayor Muething stated that he attended Mayor's Court training recently. He noted that he chose to operate the court with a Magistrate which is a model followed by most communities. While he attended the training he noted that the best practices shared were procedures already in place at Amberley Village. He stated that he does attend this training since he is ultimately responsible for the operation of the court. He commended Magistrate Gibson, Lt. Blum, Stacy Lefton, Robin Kemp, and the officers for operating the court in a professional manner and it does reflect well for the Village.

Mayor Muething reported that he also attended the District Advisory Council of Public Health. He noted key issues discussed were hoarding and infectious diseases. He pointed out that this entity does serve Amberley Village and encouraged residents to connect with its resources.

Mayor Muething also met with the Executive Director the Cincinnati Parks. The status of the improvement plans for French Park was discussed and the project is seeking funding in order to go forward.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Nicole Browder, Clerk of Council

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Mayor Thomas C. Muething