

VILLAGE OF SARANAC
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 11, 2016

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

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: President Darby, Smith, Straubel, trustees – Doll, Klutman, Mulnix, Simmons, Whorley (arrived at 7:20 p.m.), DPW Simmons

Absent: None

Guests: Robert Rose, Joe Stuck, Mindy Free, Jason Ricket, Walt Downes, Sarah Doll, Amelia Doll

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

Public Comments

Robert Rose, candidate for Ionia County Drain Commissioner, introduced himself as the current Ionia County Drain Commissioner. Rose spoke about his qualifications for the position and provided council members with printed material. Rose is seeking to retain his position, which will be voted on at the August 2nd Primary Election.

Walt Downes, candidate for Ionia County Prosecutor, introduced himself to council. Downes spoke about his qualifications for the position and provided council members with printed material. Downes is seeking to be elected to the position of Ionia County Prosecutor, which will be voted on at the August 2nd Primary Election.

Joe Stuck, candidate for Boston Township Supervisor, introduced himself to council. Stuck spoke about his qualifications for the position and provided council members with printed material. Stuck is seeking to be elected to the position of Boston Township Supervisor, which will be voted on at the August 2nd Primary Election.

Mindy Free, owner of Village Floral & Gifts, was in attendance to inform council of the negative impact that the zoning ordinance (sign section) and sidewalk ordinance has had on her business. Per Free, the size of an allowable sandwich board sign (4' x 2') is not large enough for vehicles to see, when other vehicles are parked in front of her store. Additionally, Free has had to remove her hanging plants from the front of her store, due to enforcement of the sidewalk ordinance. Her hanging plant sales have decreased by 25% since doing so. Customers have indicated that they think she is closed or that she isn't selling the hanging plants anymore. Having products visible to potential customers passing by has proven vital to the success of her business. Free requested that council consider the information she has provided and research a viable solution.

Darby stated that it was never council's intent to deter business for Free or any other downtown business by updating and enforcing Village ordinances.

Darby recommended that the council review Free's situation and research options.

Motion was made by Mulnix at 7:22 p.m., supported by Klutman, to open the Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing regarding an application for a variance from Zoning Ordinance Section 30.17.17 (B) Walls and Fences submitted by Adam Doll of 188 Church Street, Saranac. All yeas.

Sarah Doll stated that they have an interesting situation, due to the fact that 188 Church Street is located on a corner lot. Corner lots are considered to have two front yards.

The section of fence in question is along Vosper Street. The existing fence is in disrepair and the Dolls would like to replace it with a cedar fence, installed by a contractor. The existing fence, which is 6 feet high, is nonconforming due to its height within the front yard setback area. A nonconforming structure can be maintained and repaired but once it is taken down and a new structure put up, it must meet the current regulations of the zoning ordinance. Therefore, the Dolls are requesting a variance to construct a 6 foot high fence along Vosper Street, to replace the existing 6 foot fence that is in disrepair.

Motion was made by Mulnix at 7:27 p.m., supported by Simmons, to close the Public Hearing. All yeas.

Motion was made by Klutman, supported by Simmons, to approve the application for variance from Zoning Ordinance Section 30.17.17 (b) Walls and Fences, as submitted by Adam Doll of 188 Church Street, Saranac.

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

Straubel reported that John VanTholen of Green Valley Disposal Service requested to be on tonight's Agenda, but must have had a conflict, as he is not in attendance. VanTholen was intending to request that council extend the current Refuse Contract until December 31, 2018, which is an option in the contract.

Council discussed whether to seek bids for refuse service, or exercise the two year extension option in the current contract with Green Valley.

Darby stated that she would like Green Valley to review recycling options.

At council's direction, Straubel will ask VanTholen to attend the August 8th council meeting.

Motion was made by Klutman, supported by Doll, to re-appoint Tina Vroman as Tenant Commissioner of the Saranac Housing Board and as Director of the Saranac Non Profit Housing Corporation, retroactive to 5/1/16 and expiring 5/1/2021. All yeas.

DPW Simmons stated (in the capacity of Fire Chief), that he has concerns with the motion that was passed at the June 13, 2016 council meeting, discontinuing public use of the fire station. The language of the motion will not allow such events as the annual Pancake Breakfast that is held at the fire station during Bridgefest. Simmons suggested a dual approval process (fire department and then village council) when public requests are made to use the fire station.

DPW Simmons specified that he feels that decisions regarding the use of the fire station should be made by fire department members as a whole, not the fire chief alone. Council concurred that as Fire Chief, Simmons holds certain decision making responsibilities. He may choose to consult with all members, if he desires to do so.

Darby pointed out that council took action last month on the advisement of the village attorney, so as not to discriminate against any potential user of the fire station.

Doll voiced concern that discrimination issues would not be addressed if public use of the fire station was re-opened and approved as Simmons suggests.

Jason Ricket inquired if the fire station is owned by the fire department or the village. Straubel stated that the building is owned by the village. The village and the fire department operate under the same federal identification number and are essentially one and the same. However, a separate property & liability policy exists for the fire station, in the fire department's name.

Straubel suggested that the fire department's Standard Operating Guide (SOG) which gives certain decision making power to the Fire Chief, be amended to include a statement such as; "within the guidelines provided by the village attorney."

Council concurred to table the topic to allow for further research on the correct terminology.

Motion was made by Mulnix, supported by Doll, to accept the minutes of the June 13, 2016 Regular Meeting. All yeas.

Motion was made by Simmons, supported by Klutman, to approve the Treasurer's Report of June 30, 2016. All yeas.

Various Accounts Payable items were reviewed.

Motion was made by Klutman, supported by Mulnix, to approve the Accounts Payable of July 11, 2016, in the amount of \$100,403.62.

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

The Zoning Administrator's Report was reviewed.

The Planning Commission plans to meet on August 3, 2016.

Committee Reports

Public Safety

Darby reported on recent vandalism and graffiti on the Rail Trail. Council discussed deterrent options.

Budget – No report.

Parks & Recreation

Straubel reported that Tamara Jorkasky, MDNR Grant Coordinator for the Village Trailhead Grant Application, conducted a site visit in June. Straubel and Simmons accompanied Jorkasky during the visit and felt it went well.

Straubel also reported that she received a letter of invitation from the MDNR, to attend their Trust Fund Board Meeting on August 17th in Port Huron, and to give a presentation on the Village Trailhead project. Per the letter, attendance is strictly voluntary and does not reflect on the grant application process.

Per Straubel, the Village should consider the invite an honor, as the MDNR only invites a small sample of applicants to present their project to the Board.

Darby stated that she would be willing to attend the meeting and give a presentation on the Trailhead Project.

Straubel reported that Robert Brown, newly appointed Chairperson for the Friends of the Fred Meijer River Valley Rail-Trails (Friends of FMRVRT), suggested that his organization hold one of their monthly meetings in Saranac. Their meetings fall on the same date/time as Village Council meetings, so Brown suggested that they re-schedule one of their meetings for 6 p.m. at the Village Office, prior to a Village Council meeting at 7 p.m.

This would allow members of Friends of FMRVRT and the Village Council to attend both meetings. Brown suggested this arrangement for the month of August, September or October. Council agreed on September. Straubel will relay the information to Brown.

Buildings & Grounds – No report.

Streets

A discussion was held regarding whether the Streets Committee had intended to chip seal any village streets during the 2016/2017 budget year. DPW Simmons will contact Fleis & VandenBrink.

DPW Simmons reported that several village streets have recently been crack sealed.

DPW Simmons reported that he received a request to place a memorial bench in front of the fire station. Darby explained that due to a miscommunication a few years ago, this same person's request to place a bench in front of the Legion was denied. At the time of the denial, a decision had been made not to place any more benches downtown. Since that time however, a bench was placed in front of the Legion, upon request of a different party, and without the knowledge of the decision made not to place any more benches downtown.

DPW Simmons inquired if council would allow for the placement of this bench, due to the circumstances discussed. Council members concurred that honoring the request to place a bench in front of the fire station would be appropriate in this situation.

Darby suggested updating the map of existing bench locations and developing a master list of available locations that can be referred to upon future requests.

Water & Sewer – No report.

Personnel

Straubel and DPW Simmons have been supplying weekly activity reports to Personnel Committee members, which is working out well per Darby. The committee will be able to refer to these reports for performance reviews.

Additional Business

Klutman voiced concern that many issues are being discussed for the first time and voted on the same night at council meetings. He feels that more topics should be researched and discussed at the committee level first and a recommendation brought to council to vote on.

Public Comments

Jason Rickett thanked council for their decision regarding the placement of the memorial bench.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roberta Jo Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roberta" and last name "Smith" clearly legible.

Roberta Jo Smith, Clerk