

Village of Franklin
Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 2, 2021
7:00 pm

Mayor Paul Turpin called the regular monthly meeting of the Village of Franklin Board of Trustees to order at 7:01 pm on Tuesday, February 2, 2021 in the town hall. Trustees present in Village Hall were Abby Flynn, Wyatt Smith, Tami Thompson, Nicole Fromme, and Amanda Ahlers.

Village clerk, Ashley Turpin, swore in new trustee Lauren Anders.

Treasurer Susan Smith presented the Treasurer's Report for January. Tami Thompson made a motion to accept the Treasurers Report for January. Wyatt Smith seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, and Tami Thompson-yes. The motion was carried. Abby Flynn made a motion to accept the Bills Paid and to be Paid. Amanda Ahlers seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, and Nicole Fromme-yes. The motion was carried.

Clerk Ashley Turpin presented the trustees with minutes from January. Wyatt Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from January. Amanda Ahlers seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-present, Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, and Amanda Ahlers-yes. The motion was carried.

Andy Fairless presented his utility supervisor report. Andy said the demolition on the Werries property located on Prairie Street will begin on Monday. The Village workers will go in and remove appliances and other household items needed and scrap it. He also reported a resident on 104 had a high meter reading. When Andy discussed the reading and continuous spinning of the meter with the resident he discovered that they did have a toilet that was continuously running.

Buildings, Roads, and Drainage - Trustee Abby Flynn drove throughout the Village and made a list of roads that needed repaired. The list is as follows: Main Street, Prairie, Maple, Church to Walnut, Blaine, East to Wyatt, Toler Bend, North Railroad, South Railroad, Shirley, Morris, State Street, and Lake Drive. Mayor Turpin stated there is currently \$61,000 in MFT to help with repairs. Andy Fairless will see how much it is to use the tool needed to begin some of the work and Mayor Turpin will call Mike McEvers to come check them and tell us what they believe needs to be done to repair.

Finance/Payroll - Mayor Turpin sent a copy of the annual budget to the trustees via email. According to the budget, the Village should profit approximately \$30,000 in municipal. Sewer should profit \$14,000, gas approximately \$50, and \$22,000 in water. Amanda Ahlers asked if the Village would see any tax return on the Green Walls slot machines. Mayor Turpin said it would take a few months. Wyatt Smith asked approximately how long until the Village

received revenue from the wind turbines. Mayor Turpin said they have to be built, tested, and then generating and selling electricity before that happens. Tami Thompson made a motion to approve the budget. Abby Flynn seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, and Abby Flynn-yes. The motion was carried.

Insurance - There is nothing to report at this time.

Personnel - There is nothing to report at this time.

Utility Reconnect - Reitha Holtman called Mayor Turpin and said the Village was not collecting a reconnect fee when people turned their utilities back on. Also a customer has been shut off since 2018 and it's over \$700 still owed to the Village. The utility reconnect committee will hold a special meeting to discuss both of these matters.

Utilities - Mayor Turpin said rates are doing well, except for sewer. It showed a profit in the Village books but the audit showed a \$3,000 loss. The money from the cell tower going up near the sewer plan will begin coming in this month. That income will help so a rate increase is not necessary for sewer either. Alexander's rate does need to be increased. Wyatt Smith made a motion to raise Alexander's rates to the Village's cost. Tami Thompson seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes, and Wyatt Smith-yes. The motion was carried.

A resident of Franklin who owns rental properties was left with a \$400 water bill when the renter left. The property owner is frustrated that the remaining amount is the responsibility of the property owner. The board discussed three options. First the Village could raise the deposit amount to renters but worry that it will make it more difficult for people to afford moving into the community. The second option would be to see if there was a way to shut-off water earlier than at \$250 or 2 months unpaid. The issue with the second option is the effect it would have on the entire community. It would not just apply to renters but all residents. The other concern with it is the way the billing cycle works. Shut offs occur after the bill is unpaid by the second month, but by the time the meters are read and it goes through the billing cycle, you have to give customers the allotted days to pay the bill by the due date. At that time you are into the 3rd month of water usage. If you push it forward more, they are not going to be very much leniency on paying the bill a little late even. All of that makes it tough on fixed and low incomes. The last option discussed would be for the property owner to have the renter sign an agreement that allows the owner to view the bill and help press for it be paid in a timely manner. Otherwise the owner can take over the billing and have the renters pay them directly. If the renter would get behind on the bill, the owner could then ask the Village to shut off usage. The current deposit is \$100 for water, \$100 for sewer and \$250 for gas. Majority of the rental properties do not have gas. Mayor Turpin will also speak with the attorney to see if there would be any legal issues in regards to the options discussed.

Mayor Turpin stated every year since 1999, Franklin Lake gets a bill for water and gas. When the lines were put in the loan amount was \$168,000. The lake paid \$80,000 up front and since receives a monthly bill. The lake rate is suppose to be 50% higher than in town rates to

help pay off the debt. However after the first year, it's gone down. At one point it was as low as 13%. They currently owe a little over \$17,000. It's been over 20 years since they started the loan. At the rate they are currently paying, it will take another 4 years to pay it in full. Once it is finished, the Village can go back to two rates for everyone.

Abandoned property legal action was presented by Andy Fairless in his Utility Supervisor Report. The owner of the house on West Street will be going to court because it is still not cleaned up and the Village learned a couple months ago that the occupant is not the owner.

Panhandle Municipal Defense case was delayed another 3 months and the attorneys believe it could go into next year. It has gone up by 500%, but will hopefully be brought back down a lot and municipalities will be reimbursed.

One of the furnaces in the maintenance building broke. Andy Fairless has not received any more quotes at this time.

Tami Thompson made a motion to reopen the Village office. Abby Flynn seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, and Lauren Anders-yes. The motion was carried.

The Village has not received the IDOT MFT Expenditures back yet.

Wesley Kohler will call Reitha to get finance information to purchase the new webhosting for the Village webpage and he'll begin the design.

Tami Thompson made a motion to purchase five of the four foot zig-zag Christmas tree lights to hang up around the Village next year. Amanda Ahlers seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, and Tami Thompson-yes. The motion was carried.

Mayor Turpin received a letter regarding the cell towers. The first payment of \$500 will be due February 1st to the Village, for the rent of the property.

Currently the Village used a place in Texas to handle billing. Reitha tried calling but was getting sent throughout the company trying to get answers. She then called Community State Bank in Franklin to ask if they provided credit card machines to businesses. The Village already pays the tax fee for running the customers card and would continue to do so as CSB follows the same protocol. The Village will continue forward with using the services provided by CSB for a machine.

Several towns surrounding the Village of Franklin have tried to find ways to help bars and restaurants with the loss they endured over COVID. Many are lower liquor fees to help. Mayor Turpin said the Village could lower the liquor fee and reimburse the money or possible help with some of the utility costs. After discussion, Wyatt Smith made a motion to refund 50% of the liquor license fee to one bar in town. Amanda Ahlers seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, and Nicole Fromme-yes. The motion was carried.

Tami Thompson made a motion to change the April meeting to Monday, April 5th due to the elections. Nicole Fromme seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Abby Flynn-yes, Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, and Amanda Ahlers-yes. The motion was carried.

Wyatt Smith made a motion to adjourn. Amanda Ahlers seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Wyatt Smith-yes, Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, and Abby Flynn-yes. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Village of Franklin
Board of Trustees
Special Meeting Minutes
February 26, 2021
6:00 pm

Mayor Paul Turpin called the special meeting of the Village of Franklin Board of Trustees to order at 6:01 pm on Friday, February 26, 2021 in the town hall to discuss the unprecedented gas prices over the holiday weekend. Trustees present Wyatt Smith, Lauren Anders, Tami Thompson, Nicole Fromme, Amanda Ahlers, and Abby Flynn.

There were several guests in attendance including: Karen Wallbaum, John and Lori Whalen, Scott Duewer, Mayor of Waverly, Evan Durako and Jeff Baines, Trustees of Waverly, Jim Hughes, Richard Henry, Brent Mahan, Joey and Amy Moeller, Doug Edwards, Jim Stout, and Jeff Decker. Each guest was provided with a print off of information upon arrival.

Mayor Turpin opened the meeting with a discussion regarding the gas prices that occurred over President's Day weekend. He stated, "On Friday, February 12th, gas prices closed on the market at \$3.15/per dekatherm. An hour or two after the market closed, municipalities started receiving phone calls that gas would close at \$225/per dekatherm for the next 4 days. The Village currently buys 75% of their gas to keep on reserve. The other 25% is purchased at market prices. Any gas that is not used within the year has to be sold back to the gas company. We've seen polar plunges like this happen 2 or 3 times before, but never with the gas prices this high. It is estimated the Villages gas bill for February will be \$237,000 because of this situation. Typically the monthly bill is approximately \$40,000. The state of Illinois is offering a 3 year loan to help municipalities pay their bills. It has a 1% simple interest. Tonight our board has to decide what needs to be done in order to pay the bill. If the bill is not paid in full, the Village loses its gas services. The loan would be in the amount of \$200,000 to cover the remaining amount that is not typical for February at the normal approximate bill of \$40,000. In the packet provided to you, you will see the average bill over the last couple months. The Village tried to get the word out to conserve and prevent as much as possible. The school district was shut down, posts were made to Facebook and the Village webpage. Unfortunately we did not have a calling tree to reach everyone. Towns all throughout Illinois and the nation are dealing with the same issue. Unfortunately there are no laws against price gouging, but there are about market manipulation and the government will be looking into that."

The following are questions, concerns, and discussion amongst the guests and Village board occurred.

John Whalen, "What did you mean about options?"

Mayor Turpin, "Options as in how the board will decide to pay the loan off."

John Whalen asked if several towns have talked about standing up against it and refusing to pay. He's afraid if they do it now, they'll do it again. This type of behavior is going to happen again if we don't stand up against it.

Mayor Turpin and Mayor Duewer agreed their communities would lose gas services if the bill was not paid.

John Whalen asked about people who are on fixed incomes and may not be able to afford their astronomical bills from February.

Mayor Turpin said that is what the board has to discuss and take into consideration tonight. The board fully understands people are on fixed and low incomes.

John Whalen asked if the Village of Franklin will see \$3000-\$4000 bills like he is hearing from other local communities.

Mayor Turpin explained how you can read the meter to get an approximate idea of how much your bill might be.

John Whalen asked if the Village had enough in savings, CDs and other forms to pay for the bill.

Mayor Turpin said no.

John Whalen was concerned as to why C.D. Davidsmeyer was not in attendance tonight.

Mayor Turpin and Mayor Duewer stated Mr. Davidsmeyer has been very involved throughout this process.

John Whalen asked, "How come we've had cold snaps before and nothing like this has happened?"

Mayor Turpin explained that it was a perfect storm. It started in Texas with the freeze and then moved into Oklahoma. Both states had their gas lines capped off for the time being and it affected other states.

John Whalen gave a scenario regarding him providing a personal service for Mayor Turpin and then raising the price astronomically by the time Mayor Turpin received the bill and asked if he would pay it.

Mayor Turpin said unfortunately that is the difference for us. The Village of Franklin did not do this to the community. It is not something done locally and the Village now has to deal with the repercussions. Mayor Turpin suggests that everyone, as many people as possible, send letters to their local representatives, senators, etc. IMGA is also working to put a cap on prices to prevent this in the future. He said IMGA has been an extremely big help throughout this experience.

John Whalen asked about the Governor of Illinois giving us a loan, but not helping in any other ways.

Mayor Turpin explained that neighboring states like Missouri are not giving their municipalities any help.

Mayor Duewer said he was worried when he received the word and he asked about using the gas that is in reserve but was told he had to purchase the new gas. If he did not purchase the new gas, he would be fined. He's recently done the math on his home by reading the meter and in his old home, he approximates his bill to be about \$1000 spread out of the next 3 years with the Village's loan. If they did not have the loan, he'd have to pay the \$1000 up front.

Trustee Wyatt Smith asked if it was Panhandle raising the prices or someone who supplies the gas to Panhandle.

Mayor Turpin said it was most likely someone else supplying the gas to Panhandle. Wyatt also agreed because Panhandle is not allowed to store it anymore. Mayor Turpin explained that gas prices have since gone back down and even as low as \$2.89. Today the market closed at \$3.00. The Village will look into storage for gas so that in the future there

would be some stored up. Again, the issue with storage is you have to sell it back at the end of the year and could potentially lose money on it.

Trustee Wyatt Smith asked if there was discussion amongst other towns about what Ameren did.

Both Mayor Turpin and Mayor Duewer said Ameren was hit with the gas prices also. Luckily we were not hit in regards to electricity but we could expect the price for electricity to go up because of the issues in Texas also.

Brent Mahan asked if the Village has discussed a mass text message service to help in times like these. He is concerned about the word regarding serious issues like these reach people who do not have social media or who may miss the information posted.

Mayor Turpin responded by explaining it will be brought back up for discussion. The Village tried for a couple years and did not get enough residents to sign up.

Richard Henry suggested the Village use the schools all-call system to get the word out next time.

John Whalen asked if Mayor Turpin had reached out to a wind farm representative about receiving any assistance.

Mayor Turpin said that is a good idea and he will do so.

Mayor Duewer said he came in support of Mayor Turpin and the Village board. This is not easy on anyone and everyone is worried. They've been on calls every day for hours trying to figure everything out. It's happening to so many and is not something that happened because of local decisions.

Mayor Turpin said IMGGA will provide the Village with an average bill of what it would be like without the substantial price increase and also an actual bill of what it is with the increase. The Village has spoke with the billing company it currently uses and there is an option for keeping track of these types of things on the regular bill card residents receive already. It would be a separate line item.

Amy Moeller asked if residents will be expected to pay their portion in one month if the Village is going to span their loan throughout 3 years.

Mayor Turpin said no. They would not expect residents to pay it all up front. It will be discussed tonight on how the Village will handle it.

Karen Wallbaum said the Village should have emergency contact information for every single gas user in the town. She said Village workers should've gone door-to-door to spread the word and looked up or tracked down gas users phone numbers to individually contact people who it would affect.

Doug Edwards said there is a resident on 104 that turned their thermostat down to help but then experienced frozen pipelines. He said they've been without water for 15 days now and are forced to sell a car to pay for the repairs. Andy has been down that direction working and knows about the residents. The trustees have seen people working near the house but had not heard of any issues from the Village workers. Doug Edwards also believes there is a water leak on Morris Road.

The Village board then began their discussion regarding the utility bills and what options were available.

IMGA is getting the Village reading from Panhandle at 9 am on Monday, March 1st. Trustee Nicole Fromme said the Village cannot afford to pay the bill, but payment will be due eventually. The Village is going to need to start charging gas customers immediately. Mayor Turpin said the customer's bill card they currently receive will show a line item for how much they owe, what they've already paid and what is due. Next week the board will have a special meeting to approve the loan. The state believes it should be ready on Wednesday, March 3. The Village is most likely going to lose a lot of money from this. It could cost the Village around \$50,000. Trustee Abby Flynn asked if there was a contract we could have people sign that would hold them accountable even if they move out of the Village. Mayor Turpin said lots of people move away and you don't know where they go. He'll have to talk with the attorney on how the Village can handle those types of situations. Mayor Turpin said there are different options available on how to charge customers. They are as follows: 1. The Village would average what businesses use and put them into a bracket, followed by high usage residents, middle usage residents, and low usage residents into each of their own brackets. They would divide the percentage of usage up evenly amongst the people in that one bracket. For instance, say businesses in Franklin use 20% of all gas usage on an average basis. The businesses who are in the business bracket would have that 20% split amongst them and pay the same amount. The same would apply to the 3 other brackets for residents. 2. The Village would get the exact usage from each gas user and they'd pay for their own, exact portion of the gas used. The Village would have to track the usage and amount owed and the amount paid. 3. Everyone who uses the gas would receive a flat surcharge. For example: the Village has 292 gas customers and dividing the \$209,437 amongst each would be approximately \$717.25 for each user. If you divide that amount over the 36 months it would be \$19.92 per customer for 3 years. Wyatt Smith expressed he feels more comfortable with option 2 which holds each user accountable for their own usage. The other trustees agree that they do not like a single surcharge for every user. They are also not sure the bracket idea is the best option either because even within one bracket you could have a big gap in the amount of usage but the high end user and low end user in the same bracket would be paying the same. The trustees agree plan 2 seems like the best. Each gas user will be responsible for their own usage in February. The Village and the billing company will keep track and document it on the monthly bill. There will be a 1% simple interest added to each users bill. Users will also have the opportunity to pay their bill in full upfront and if they do so, the Village charge of \$4/per dekatherm will be given at a discounted rate of \$2/per dekatherm. If the user does not want to pay it up front, then they will still have the \$4/per dekatherm charge. There will be a letter sent out with the bill explaining it all. The letter will also provide the customer with what they owe and what the monthly payment is for the next 36 months. It will also show what the amount would be if they decided to pay it all up front at the discounted rate. The Village board will also create a FAQ sheet regarding commonly asked questions about the utility bills. The Village board will vote on the payment option at their regularly scheduled meeting Tuesday, March 2, 2021.

Wyatt Smith made a motion to adjourn. Tami Thompson seconded the motion. The voting was as follows: Lauren Anders-yes, Tami Thompson-yes, Nicole Fromme-yes, Amanda Ahlers-yes, Abby Flynn-yes and Wyatt Smith-yes. The motion was carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm.