

VILLAGE OF OAKWOOD

Regular Meeting Minutes – September 19, 2022

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Village Clerk, Connie Young called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

ROLL CALL	PRESENT	ABSENT	OTHERS PRESENT
Cathi Fritz	X		
Lindsey Light	X		
Bob Parr	X		
Doit Roberts	X		
Robert Wright	X		

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Connie Young asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

Lindsey Light motioned to approve the August 6, 2022, Study Session and Executive Study minutes.

Seconded by Bob Parr.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

Bob Parr motioned to approve the August 8, 2022, Study Session minutes

Seconded by Lindsey Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

Bob Parr motioned to approve the August 15, 2022, Budget Hearing minutes

Seconded by Lindsey Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

Bob Parr motioned to approve the August 15, 2022, Regular meeting minutes

Seconded by Lindsey Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

Bob Parr motioned to approve the August 22, 2022, 5:00 pm Study and Executive meeting minutes.

Seconded by Lindsey Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

Lindsey Light motioned to approve the August 22, 2022, 6:30 pm Special and Executive meeting minutes.

Seconded by Doit Roberts.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X		X	X
Nays					
Abstained			X		

Motion Carried

APPROVAL OF RESIGNATIONS

Connie Young asked for a motion to approve the resignation of Heather McArty.

Lindsey Light motioned to approve the resignation letter of Heather McArty as the Village Mayor, effective September 12, 2022.

Seconded by Bob Parr.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

Connie Young asked for a motion to approve the resignation of Ferrell Stroh.

Bob Parr motioned to approve the resignation letter of Ferrell Stroh as village trustee effective September 12, 2022.

Seconded by Bob Parr.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					

Motion Carried

DEPARTMENT STATUS AND COUNSEL RESPONSE

VILLAGE HALL

- Lindsey Light reported the office has been going through a lot of training with the new GoGov software and will be working with the new Watchfire sign.

PUBLIC WORKS

- B. Parr report he and D. Roberts have been going around town to see what sidewalks are still in need of repair. They will be developing a 1-3 year plan so it can be part of the budget planning the board will be doing.
- C. Fritz reported the stop signs had been ordered. Residents should see these installed at the corner of Park and Oakwood Street around October 1.
- B. Wright reported that the Watchfire sign is installed and will be hung and commissioned. He stated he would be helping the village office with the software and getting content on it in time for the homecoming parade bearing any issues.
- B. Wright reported the PW department is waiting for updated plans to be submitted as the project was planning a three-bay site and plans on going up to 5 bays with one bay available for residential vehicles. Services would consist of tire and oil changes in addition to large trucks. The engineers are looking at the drainage and the footprint of the project. They switched engineers, so there has been a slight delay in the project.

POLICE

- B. Wright reported one unit is in the shop with transmission issues. He also said they would be a meeting with the school district to discuss the needs of the school and the resource officer that is shared with the village police department.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

- C. Fritz reported that C. Darr provided updates on equipment and vehicle services that need to be done. The ATV is back up and running.

LEGAL UPDATE

- No report

DECISION ON INTERIM MAYOR

Connie Young asked for a motion to approve the appointment of Robert Wright as the village interim mayor.

Bob Parr motioned to approve the appointment of Robert E. Wright as interim mayor.

Seconded by Lindsay Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	
Nays					
Abstained					X

Motion Carried

The Village Clerk swore in Robert Wright as the interim mayor until the April 2023 election. Interim Mayor Wright stated that he will not be resigning from his trustee assignment but will also be carrying out the duties of the mayor. The Illinois Municipality League has been consulted. When a trustee is appointed as acting mayor, the appointee still votes in their trustee capacity. No vacancy is created for the appointment seat unless the appointee resigns from that seat. However, they are not entitled to a second vote as acting mayor.

Mayor Wright read a statement that is attached to the minutes. He also stated that he would not be involved in any voting of wages and benefits or position evaluations for his aunts Julie or Janet. The board will be utilizing the board liaisons as part of this process.

APPROVAL OF WAGE INCREASES

Mayor Wright stated the board discussed wage increases for village employees in the executive session. The following are the proposed percentages:

Julie Leverenz	6%	Alan Leach	9%
Kathy Fourez	6%	Caroline Darr	6%
Ron Soderstrom	15%	EMT Paramedics	6%
Anthony Juvinall	6%	EMT Basic	6%
PT Officers	6%	EMR 1st Responders	6%
Denny Witsman	6%	Van Drivers	6%
Dustin Henderson	6%	Janet Hambright	6%

Mayor Wright asked for a motion to approve the proposed salary wage increases.

Bob Parr motioned to approve the August 22, 2022, 6:30 pm Special and Executive meeting minutes.

Seconded by Lindsey Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	
Nays					
Abstained					X

Motion Carried

LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS

Mayor Wright reported the following trustees had been assigned to the following areas of the village. The board also plans on having a planning meeting to develop a one-year, two years, and five-year project plan.

PARKS & PUBLIC WORKS	D. Roberts	EMS	C. Fritz
TIFF, LIQUOR LICENSE	R. Wright	POLICE	B. Parr
VILLAGE OFFICE/BUDGET	L. Lright	SIDEWALKS	B. Parr

BUDGET ADMINISTRATOR

Mayor Wright stated there was a discussion on the possibility of hiring a budget administrator as a contractor. There was a comment made from the floor that this matter had been settled. The Village Clerk presented details that the matter had been discussed in Executive Session, but there was no vote recorded on official action. After some discussion, it was decided with the assignment of the board liaisons and creating a budget committee, the board would reevaluate in the future. Through the last budget process, a lot of the general ledger has been cleaned up and line items removed that haven't been used in years. Mayor Wright pointed out that the budget that was approved was approved at the time with plans for amendment already agreed upon and the budget is merely a guide at this point. A much more formal and descriptive budget will be required in the future. The committee will also look at the reporting provided to the board, which is more of a summary rather than so detailed one.

INVESTMENT OF FUNDS FROM SALE OF WATER COMPANY

Mayor Wright stated the sale of the water company funds was put into a CD that expired in April. In past meetings, it was decided to investigate other options on where to put these funds. There were limited options, but the First Farms bank has offered 2.4% over 12 months. B. Parr stated it needs to be put back into a CD instead of sitting, not making any money, and said there is a penalty for pulling the funds early.

Bob Parr motioned to put the 1.5M dollars into the First Farmers Bank CD.

Seconded by Cathi Fritz.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	
Nays					
Abstained					X
					Motion Carried

POLICE VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION

Mayor Wright explained there had been some discussion that all village police cars have identification outside the vehicles. He asked for a motion.

Bob Parr motioned that all village police vehicles must have identification outside of the vehicle.

Seconded by Lindsey Light.

	Cathi Fritz	Lindsey Light	Bob Parr	Doit Roberts	Robert Wright
Yes	X	X	X	X	X
Nays					
Abstained					
					Motion Carried

PARK BATHROOM

Mayor Wright stated there had been discussion on updating the bathrooms at the park to increase capacity and to bring up ADA compliance requirements. At this point, there have been no figures provided. It was recommended that the architect needed to be part of the discussion so that everyone was on the same page. D. Roberts stated the property is landlocked, and he is not for putting a lot of money into something that doesn't provide a return on investments but said something does need to be done to update the facilities. R. Wright stated this would undoubtedly be an item for discussion at the planning meeting the board will be having.

VILLAGE HALL CONCRETE PROJECT

Mayor Wright stated only one bid was received for the concrete project around the village hall. The project had to be put out for bid again because of the additional basins and drainage issues that were identified. Emily from Farnsworth was in attendance and stated she felt the bid received was much higher than anticipated. She recommended rebidding the project and putting it on their website, where more contracts might bid on it. The board felt they needed to take the recommendation for the engineer and rebid the project to see if any additional bids were received.

RECOGNITION OF VILLAGE CITIZENS

Mike Watson presented to the board documents of a rental property that has been claimed as an owner-occupied home exemption that is not paying for property taxes. They have paid six years of taxes based on this status with it's been a rental the whole time. Mayor Wright stated it would be looked into further.

Bob Jennings questioned the board on a six-foot pole in the backyard in the middle of his rental property. When he inquired about this, he was told it was placed there so everyone was aware of the easement. B. Jennings requested to remove this pole and sign because anyone who plans to build anything over the easement would have to go through the building permit process to identify any issues within this area. Mayor Wright stated the village would look further into this.

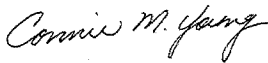
Jim Cisco introduced himself as the new owner of the Pit Stop property north of the village. He appreciated Heather McArty for her dedication, time, and effort in this project. He wanted the board to know he needed help to turn this location into a cafe. He plans to make it into a family-friendly atmosphere. There would be gaming, but it would be located where it cannot be seen as you are dining. With the bar, he eventually would like to turn it into an old fashion soda fountain and ice cream bar. Mayor Wright stated there had been a new TIF attorney assigned, and they wanted everything in a different format with different questions.

Doug Tool came to the board regarding several programs that are coming up. One is a tire waste opportunity for villages to dump tires off. This is not open to the public, but the town can pick up and drop off the tires. There is also a free electronic collection day on October 15. The board was also asked to be a member again for 2023 to Keep Vermilion County Beautiful.

TRUSTEE AGENDA REQUESTS

- Purchasing Policy
- More extensive IT Policy
- More structured communication with residents. Improved social media appearance as the current FB page is a community page in general.
- Village website updated

Submitted by,



Connie Young, Village Clerk

Approved 10/17/2022

Village of Oakwood Residents,

I appreciate having the support of the current Trustees, former mayor McArty, former trustee Stroh, and former mayor Woodard in accepting the role of the Interim Mayor of Oakwood, IL. I hoped to not come to this position in this manner and my sincerest wish that it would not be necessary. I have extended my respect to Mrs. McArty and Mr. Stroh for their work and dedication to the village. Further, it's my belief that the trustees I will be serving alongside are very caring and dedicated individuals who sincerely want the best for current Oakwood residents and those who will join our community in the years to come. Our motto of "Generations of Pride" is upheld by all. However, we've had a division of spirit and continuity that led to this change which deserves a response.

Like most boards, a village has cycles and customary tasks that are improved over time, but also some tasks that happen once in a lifetime, or maybe once ever. This creates a duty on a part-time Mayor, part-time Trustees, and limited full-time staff to be good at anything that arises while considering the feelings and interests of local stakeholders for generations. Often, we collaborate with professionals in legal, engineering, and financial fields for advice. Over the past eighteen months we've completed most business very well and made sound decisions. However, the root cause where we've had issues or conflict in accomplishing goals is also where we've struggled to communicate effectively among the board, staff, and professionals. To complicate matters, there is an opinion among some in the community that past boards did not handle matters correctly many years ago when the water company was sold or more recently when building the new village hall to name a couple examples. Heartfelt hard feelings were born in some current and former board members, but I believe that shows they did the best they could and felt that it was the right action at the time. That is all we could possibly ask of anyone willing to serve their community receiving no personal gain and very little appreciation.

Even so, because of this combination, the current board attempted to go far above and beyond the standard due diligence to ensure the whole community over these past eighteen months. Although, the trust but verify method has also slowed progress and at times required additional work. If so, then so be it to ensure we're correct on the once in a lifetime decision(s) entrusted to the board. However, we have let that method of operation encroach on the customary business of the village that is not a once in a lifetime decision and it can be misinterpreted as distrust where none was intended. Fueled by ineffective communication, I'm sure you see how frustration can grow and lead us here.

There is a correct tool for every job, and we will improve on the right approach to the various tasks by employing several ways to communicate effectively, document status, and proceed to make correct decisions. I've been on several boards and committees. In my experience, the number one issue is getting enough people to volunteer their time. In this case, I have never served alongside a group of people so willing to get involved and do whatever is needed to ensure success for their community. I have no doubts that we will channel this enthusiasm to move past this situation and provide service to the community at a high level of satisfaction and understanding among the residents. I welcome any Oakwood citizen to consider joining the village board and apply their industriousness to our future. It is only by the selfless nature of those willing to serve, and dedication to integrity and proficiency that we will succeed in upholding the honor and dignity that our village was founded and built.

Respectfully,

Robert E. Wright