

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE VILLAGE BOARD**

**STATE OF ILLINOIS)  
COUNTY OF HENRY)  
VILLAGE OF ORION)**

The regular meeting of the President and Board of Trustees was held on December 6, 2021, at Village Hall, 1202 4<sup>th</sup> St., in the Village of Orion, County of Henry, State of Illinois. President Cooper called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the board in the Pledge of Allegiance. Attendance at the meeting was as follows:

Present: Jim Cooper, Mel Drucker, Jim Hickerson, Neal Nelson, Steve Newman

Absent: Mike Dunlap and Bob Mitton

City Attorney John Ames, Street Superintendent Neil Dahl, Sewer Superintendent Chris Lundburg, and Water/Parks Superintendent Arnie Sandberg were also present.

**I. DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR**

None

**II. COMMITTEES**

**A. Streets**

Trustee Nelson reported that Lakewood Electric repaired two out of the three broken streetlights on Main Street last week; however, two more are out this week. According to Mr. Dahl, the parts necessary for the repairs have been ordered.

Mr. Dahl is ready for inclement weather—the rock salt is in and equipment ready to go.

Mr. Nelson is aware that the radar signs by the schools are not working. He is working on getting them repaired.

Mr. Nelson talked to Shane at Hutchison Engineering about the engineering services agreement for the 5<sup>th</sup> Street reconstruction project. Shane says it will be finalized and available for signatures soon.

Mr. Cooper thanked Mr. Dahl, Mr. Lundburg, and Mr. Sandberg for putting up the Christmas decorations in Central Park and along Main Street. He also thanked the board members and high school football players for helping put up the Christmas tree in the bandshell.

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*Minutes of the meeting on December 6, 2021, continued:*

**B. Sewer**

Trustee Hickerson had nothing to report.

**C. Water**

Trustee Drucker said everything was good in the water department and had nothing further to report.

**D. Finance**

1. Expenditure approval

Trustee Newman moved to approve the following expenses:

- (a) 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. water main project: \$371,312.78;
- (b) 12<sup>th</sup> Ave./13<sup>th</sup> St. main break: \$15,815.18; and
- (c) General: \$25,005.83; General Depreciation: \$8,002.98; Water Operation & Maintenance: \$2,572.37; Sewer Operation & Maintenance: \$2,671.52.

Mr. Drucker seconded the motion and Mr. Cooper invited discussion. Mr. Nelson asked if the 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. water main project went over budget. Mr. Drucker responded that there were additional expenses, but they were mostly line items, e.g., a gas line needed to be repaired after being run over by a large piece of equipment. There was also the leak at 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. and 13<sup>th</sup> St., but that was covered by water depreciation. Mr. Newman thanked Mr. Drucker and Mr. Sandberg for their work coordinating and supervising the project. Mr. Sandberg said Miller Excavation was easy to work with. Mr. Cooper said the Village communicated well with the affected residents; he did not receive any complaints despite intermittent water outages and boil orders. There being no further discussion on the motion, the board voted to approve the expenditures as follows:

Ayes: Drucker, Hickerson, Nelson, Newman

Noes: None

Absent: Dunlap and Mitton.

The motion passed.

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2. FY 2021 Audit

Tom Engelman, auditor for the Village of Orion, was invited to summarize and answer any questions about the FY 2021 Annual Financial Report. The only issue identified by Mr. Engelman related to the segregation of duties; more specifically, the lack of sufficient financial oversight. However, as in previous years, the budget is not large enough to justify hiring more employees. Mr. Engelman emphasized that this is the “natural order of things” for a small municipality like Orion, and the Finance Committee is a sufficient work around. The Finance Committee is doing a good job, but Mr. Engelman cautioned the members to remain skeptical, keep asking questions and holding regular monthly meetings. Mr. Cooper thanked Mr. Engelman for his work.

3. 2022 Property Tax Levy

Mr. Newman moved to set the 2022 property tax levy at \$193,155. Mr. Drucker seconded the motion and Mr. Cooper invited discussion. Mr. Newman clarified that the tax levy has not increased since 2011. The board then voted as follows:

Ayes: Drucker, Hickerson, Nelson, Newman

Noes: None

Absent: Dunlap and Mitton.

The motion passed.

**E. Recreation**

Trustee Dunlap was absent. Nothing to report.

**F. Police**

Trustee Newman reported that the radar signs by the schools are not working because they are not being charged properly. Deputy Chad Baze is aware that the batteries need to be charged more frequently, especially during the winter months.

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**G. Buildings & Grounds**

Craig Shehorn and Grant Barnard asked to be heard on behalf of the Cornhole Snowmobile Club (“CSC”). Mr. Shehorn and Mr. Barnard are the president and secretary of the club which is based out of Orion. The CSC is one of the largest snowmobile clubs in the area. There is a snowmobile route through town which CSC members maintain, mark, and “police.” Part of the trail-marking process includes obtaining landowner permission to travel through private property. The club is self-insured through the state.

The club currently meets and start group trail rides at the O. Mr. Shehorn and Mr. Barnard are asking for permission to use the old bowling alley property as a meeting place instead. This property is not being used, has plenty of place for parking vehicles and trailers, and would be a more centralized meeting place. It is also a good place to start on the snowmobile route and would reduce the amount of snowmobile traffic through town. The CSC is also an alternative source of emergency rescue during winter storms. Local communities, including Andover and Galesburg, use “snow ambulances.” Allowing the CSC to park at the bowling alley would help facilitate this service in Orion.

Mr. Newman moved to allow the CSC to have parking privileges at the old bowling alley property during the 2021-2022 winter season. Mr. Hickerson seconded the motion and Mr. Cooper invited discussion. Mr. Drucker suggested that parking privileges should be limited to daytime hours and overnight parking should be prohibited. Mr. Dahl said there should be an exception for emergency services. Mr. Nelson asked whether the Village will be responsible for plowing. Mr. Dahl volunteered to plow the property.

In light of the above-discussion, Mr. Newman made an amended motion to allow the CSC to have parking privileges at the old bowling alley property during the 2021-2022 winter season, subject to the following: (1) the CSC must comply with the existing noise ordinance; and (2) overnight parking is prohibited except when members of the club are providing emergency ambulance services. Mr. Hickerson seconded the amended motion and the board voted as follows without further discussion:

Ayes: Drucker, Hickerson, Nelson, Newman

Noes: None

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Absent: Dunlap and Mitton.

The motion passed.

Mr. Shehorn also asked whether snow could be plowed on the snowmobile route such that snowmobilers won't need to drive off the side of the road and onto private property. Mr. Cooper continued this issue for future discussion.

**H. Human Resources**

1. Lori Sampson's resignation letter

This item was reserved for the President's Agenda.

2. Appoint Erin Lange as Clerk/Collector

Mr. Drucker moved to approve Resolution No. 2122-5 appointing Erin Lange as Clerk/Collector, effective December 7, 2021. Mr. Nelson seconded the motion and the board voted without discussion as follows:

Ayes: Drucker, Hickerson, Nelson, Newman

Noes: None

Absent: Dunlap and Mitton.

The motion passed.

3. Renew employee health insurance plan

Mr. Drucker moved to renew the current United Healthcare employee health insurance plan. Mr. Newman seconded the motion and explained that the renewal carries a 6.45% increase in the annual premium. The Finance/Human Resources committee reviewed the alternative United Healthcare plans and determined that the current plan is still the best choice in light of employee needs. The board voted on the motion without further discussion as follows:

Ayes: Drucker, Hickerson, Nelson, Newman

Noes: None

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Absent:           Dunlap and Mitton.

The motion passed.

**III.    PRESIDENT’S AGENDA**

**A.     Landscape waste site & burn pile**

The Village has received several complaints about the landscape waste site/burn pile. While several residents have complained that the landscape waste site is not open enough, a complaint was made to the EPA about the burn pile.

The EPA complainant, who lives downwind of the burn pile, filed the complaint after an unmanned, smoky fire burned overnight. According to EPA regulations, municipal brush fires must be manned by a municipal employee. Mr. Dahl explained that he must not have completely smothered the fire at the end of his work day and the fire was reignited by strong winds overnight. After consulting with the EPA and Mr. Cooper, Mr. Dahl has implemented the following protocols to prevent any smoky, unmanned burns:

- (1)     the Village will maintain two separate brush piles at the landscape waste site;
- (2)     only dry, seasoned brush piles will be burned;
- (3)     all fires will be started first thing in the morning and only when the weather is calm.

Mr. Cooper concluded that the landscape waste site should stay open as the benefits to and demand by residents outweigh the costs. The board agreed that the site should remain open, but only on limited days and times as determined by the board from time to time.

**B.     Lori Sampson’s resignation letter**

Mr. Cooper read into the record Lori Sampson’s official letter of resignation as Clerk/Collector:

December 6, 2021

Dear Village President & Board of Trustees:

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*Minutes of the meeting on December 6, 2021, continued:*

I thank you all for the open house and dinner held in my honor along with the beautiful flowers, etched glass plaque, and bonus recognizing my years of employment with the Village of Orion.

You made the decision to take time from your lives to help shape the future of the community, and your actions have become a permanent part of Orion's history. It has been my pleasure to record the actions of the Village Board, Plan Commission & Zoning Board of Appeals, and various committees over the past several decades.

Though my official title was clerk/collector, my job required far-ranging knowledge acquired only after a lifetime of service to the community. Village Hall is an important place, where the busyness of paying bills, printing bills, producing payroll, and recording financials takes place in addition to acting as Information Central. Residents enjoy coming through the door to a familiar face and getting to know those behind the desk. We get to know them too. My service has been not only to the President and Village Board but also to Orion's residents, business community, and anyone who might have stepped in the door seeking answers to questions or reaching out for help.

On this day, December 6, 2021, I resign my elected position of village clerk and embark down the path of retirement. I wish you well and am confident that you will continue to serve with the best interests of the community in mind.

Sincerely,

Lori Sampson

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the board, Mr. Drucker moved to adjourn. Mr. Nelson seconded the motion, and the board voted as follows:

Ayes: Drucker, Hickerson, Nelson, Newman

Noes: None

Absent: Dunlap and Mitton.

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The motion passed and the meeting was duly adjourned.

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Erin Lange  
Village Clerk