

**Enrolled Memorandum of the Meeting
Study Session/Meeting Convened Electronically
Twenty-Ninth Town Council of Highland
Monday, January 18, 2021**

The Twenty-Ninth Town Council of the Town of Highland, Lake County, Indiana met *electronically* in a study session on **Monday, January 18, 2021** at 6:30 O'clock P.M., in the regular place, the Highland Municipal Building, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana.*

**Special note:* This meeting was convened allowing members of the Town Council to participate electronically without being physically present, to be counted in the quorum and able to simultaneously listen and respond to matters taken up in the meeting, all pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Orders 20-04 and 20-09, extended by Executive Order No. 20-52 allowing meetings to be convened pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 for the duration of the Corona Virus COVID 19 emergency. All members of the Town Council participated electronically with the Clerk-Treasurer participating as well. The electronic platform also allowed the public to observe and participate from on-line access.

The meeting was streamed live on the Town of Highland, Indiana Facebook page and participation was supported by the Zoom on-line communication platform.

Silent Roll Call: Councilors Bernie Zemen, Mark Herak, Mark J. Schocke, Tom Black and Roger Sheeman were present (electronically) as indicated. The Clerk-Treasurer, Michael W. Griffin was present to memorialize the proceedings (electronically). A quorum was attained.

Officials Present: John P. Reed, Town Attorney; Pete Hojnicky, Police Chief; William Timmer, Fire Chief; and Mark Knesek, Public Works Director were also present, participating electronically.

Additional Officials Present Robyn Radford of the Redevelopment Commission and Ed Dabrowski, IT Consultant (Contract) and Board of Waterworks Directors, (electronically) were present.

Guests: Theresa Badovich of the Idea Factory was also present (electronically).

General Substance of Matters Discussed.

1. **Discussion:** *Review the group dental insurance and the Workers Compensation Plan IPEP with Tom Brown of Brown Insurance Agency.* Thomas Brown, CIC of the Brown Insurance Agency, reviewed with the Town Council and the Clerk-Treasurer the proposals for the Workers Compensation plan and the Group Dental Plan.

Mr. Brown noted that he recommended remaining with the Indiana Public Employer Plan (IPEP) which is a mutual risk pool. He noted that the premium for 2021 was \$96,595.

WORKERS COMPENSATION – BACKGROUND & RENEWAL SUMMARY

- **RENEWAL:** For 2021, IPEP offered renewal terms of \$96,595. By way of cost comparison:
2017: \$110,099 (audited) 2018: \$109,600 (audited) 2019: \$ 92,132 (estimated) 2020: \$101,465 (estimated)
- **EXPERIENCE MOD:** A business entity's Experience Modification Factor is a complex calculation that essentially results in a safety score that directly correlates to premium cost. This factor has ranged from a debit in years long past to a low of .73 in 2019. For 2021, the Town's EMF is .76, representing a 24% credit.

Mr. Brown also presented his recommendation to remain with MET LIFE as the insurer for the group dental plan. He noted that the Town had just come from a rate lock for two years. He noted that the increase was around six percent (6%).

DENTAL INSURANCE RENEWAL SUMMARY

MetLife is currently one of the largest Insurance, annuity, and employee benefit providers around the world.

Founded in New York in 1868, the company services 100 million customers in over 50 countries. Their offer to the Town of Highland includes:

- 37% more dental access points with MetLife PDP Plus network vs. United Healthcare.
 - Increase In-network utilization lowered cost to some members
- No waiting periods for current or new employees
- Rollover Provision
 - Employees received a first-year rollover of \$250 putting their annual max at \$1,750

Coverage	Current Rates	Renewal Rates	Lives	Renewal Premium	% Change
Dental				\$99,420.36*	6%
Employee Only	\$33.34	\$35.34	34		
Employee + Spouse	\$68.81	\$72.94	23		
Employee + Child(ren)	\$66.14	\$70.11	7		
Family	\$113.09	\$119.88	41		
Total Lives			105		

* Rates remain below minimum premium threshold being offered to new clients

The Town Council agreed to allow these to be placed on the agenda for action at the meeting of January 25, 2021.

2. **Discussion:** *Explore request of Assistant Police Chief Vassar to reimburse workers who on their own paid for a COVID rapid test. The rapid test has a 70-75% of reliable outcome. The test also is rendered in 15 minutes. (I think the Public Works Director has a similar request).*

The Town Council discussed the issue presented in writing from Assistant Chief Pat Vassar regarding a police officer and the department secretary who paid for a 15 minute rapid test and paid a \$75 copay out of their pocket to have the fifteen minute rapid test. The Assistant Police Chief appealed to the town council to authorize a reimbursement of the onsite copay as charged by MD Urgent Care, 9636 Cline Avenue, Highland.

The Town Council noted that there was a similar request from the Public Works Director regarding a worker on his staff.

The Town Council discussed at length the merits of allowing a reimbursement. It was further discussed whether to make this ongoing policy. It was noted note that there was some concern about the efficacy of the fifteen minute turn around. No policy consensus emerged. However, the Town Council allowed that a one-time reimbursement for the workers could be placed on the agenda for the meeting of January 25, 2021.

3. **Discussion:** *Explore alternative uses of the reimbursement from CARES ACT.*
 - (a) \$ 11,725.72 CDBG Funded through Lake County CDD
 - (b) \$ 726,156.00 CARES ACT IFA money

The Town Council discussed the possible uses for the reimbursements from the two sources related to the CARES and COVID pandemic. There was no objection to allowing the CDBG money to be restored to the Police Department.

The Town Council further discussed some initiatives or desirable public purposes for the CARES Act reimbursement that was based upon public safety wages. The Town Council seemed to suggest that it would be desirable to first reimburse departments for the expenses associated with adapting and protecting workers and others owing to the pandemic. The Town Council President suggested that the department heads should work to gather the list of such expenses.

The Town Council also discussed using up to \$250,000 of the CARES Act money to be added to the unused local match of \$250,000 in the Community Crossings Grant Fund, to serve as a local match to support an application in the January application period. T

There was also a discussion of some of the capital improvements associated with the fire department and funding them from these proceeds.

4. **Discussion:** *Discuss the moving capital assets initiative from the Police Department.* Councilor Sheeman prepared a list of possible goals and objectives that she shared with the Town Council.

The police chief reviewed the following needs and where adequacy of the current budget to support them. The Police Chief also showed additional capital needs. There was not determination made regarding where funding would be best sourced. It was noted that it would be desirable to have other departments submit a similar list and proposals.

The below listed initiatives (except vehicles) are discussions had with some members of the Council/Commission (Council President/Police Commission Liaison) in the fall of 2020 and therefore could not be part of the 2021 budget process. Besides approximate costs are some funding sources available for your consideration. If you have any questions please let me know. Thank you for your consideration!

2021 vehicle purchase schedule calls for 2 purchased vehicles/2 leased vehicles
VIPS will receive two (2) of the better vehicles from our fleet and we will trade in four (4) of the least appealing vehicles from both the PD/VIPS VEHICLE PURCHASE

\$31,623.00 Cost of Ford Explorer x 2	=	\$63,246.00
\$56,000.00 MCCD Vehicle Budget	=	-\$56,000.00
		(\$7,246.00) shortfall
Vehicle Trade-ins (estimate)	=	\$4,000.00 approx.
		(\$3,246.00) shortfall

VEHICLE LEASE

\$31,623.00 Cost of Ford Explorer x 2	=	\$63,246.00
\$18,000 budgeted annual Lease	=	\$18,000.00 annually
\$23,300 estimated cost	=	\$23,300 annually
		(\$5,300.00) shortfall annually for 3 years

\$25,000.00 K-9 Program (includes K-9. Training, Equipment)

\$15,000.00 Drone (includes Drone, Equipment, and Training)

\$8,000.00 Bicycle Program (includes bicycles, Equipment)

\$7,500.00 SWAT Membership (includes \$4,000.00 annual membership and Equipment)

It was noted that the Police Commission was not initially in favor of Body Cameras. However, the Police Chief relayed that this is becoming common place in law enforcement. Indiana State Police are going to them this year. Hammond has had them for several years. Munster and Dyer just ordered them. Griffith is looking at making the purchase this year. We should be looking at this as more of a tool to protect our Officers from frivolous complaints/lawsuits from the public.

\$150,000.00 Body Cameras (approx.) *if we build upon our Watchguard system (car-cameras).*
\$ 10,000.00 Annual User Fees

In comparison Munster is spending over \$800,000.00 on body cameras/car cameras. However they are starting from scratch and getting all new equipment.

While the Chief provided a list of possible funding sources, there was an understanding that this needed to be reviewed and it was desirable to get similar lists from other departments.

5. **Discussion:** *Appointments – Liaison assignments.* Councilor Sheeman suggested a rearrangement of liaison assignments noting that some councilors had as few as one. After some discussion, the Town Council President affirmed the following liaison appointments:

*(This does **not** include councilors as members of commissions or boards)*

Bernie Zemen: Fire Department, Liaison; and Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals Liaison.

Mark A. Herak: Budget Committee Chairman; Town Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners Liaison; Economic Development Commission Liaison; Public Works Agency Liaison and Board of Sanitary Commissioners, Liaison.

Mark J. Schocke: Park and Recreation Board Liaison.
and Tree Board Liaison.

Tom Black: Board of Waterworks Directors, Liaison.

Roger Sheeman: Town Executive (I.C. 36-1-2-5-(4);I.C. 36-5-2-2;I.C. 36-5-2-7)
Board of Trustees of the Police Pension Fund, Chair (By law)
Chamber of Commerce Liaison; Community Events Commission, Liaison; IT Liaison; Redevelopment Commission Liaison.

6. **Discussion:** *Appointments – times to interview prospective applicants.* Council President Sheeman and the Town Council discussed the desirability of conducting interviews with applicants for appointment. After discussion, it was determined to set aside time beginning at 5:00 p.m. before the plenary meeting on Monday January 25 and a time beginning at 11:00 on Saturday, January 30, for interviews.
7. **Discussion:** *HRGov USA Leased Worker Agreement.* The Clerk-Treasurer discussed with the Town Council the agreement he commissioned for a leased worker who was engaged to work while the deputy clerk-treasurer was on extended leave. The Clerk-Treasurer noted that he would like to retain the worker who is working out well even after the return of the deputy. He noted that there were some long undone tasks such as converting the recommended State board's chart of accounts.

Further the Clerk-treasurer shared that he wanted to have a worker trained to perform the work he actually regularly performs to allow continuity of service in the event of the Clerk-Treasurer's departure. He noted that when signed, the agreement would not likely exceed \$15,000. However, extending it would possibly reach that number. The Clerk-Treasurer noted that the purchasing code requires authorization by the purchasing agency if the cost of the goods or services exceeds \$15,000. The Clerk-Treasurer was requesting the approval of the HRGov USA agreement to approve the service in the event it costs more than \$15,000.

There was no objection to adding this to the agenda for the plenary meeting on January 25.

8. **Discussion:** *Discuss merits of a Town Manager.* Council President Sheeman and the Town Council discussed the idea of seeking and appointing a Town manager. The Councilors shared the desirability of it and also considered a review of whether there were resources to support such an appointment.

No express objection was voiced but no final expression of a policy choice was evinced.

There being no further business necessary or desired to be discussed by the Town Council, the *electronically convened* regular study session of the Town Council of **Monday, January 18, 2021**, was adjourned by the Town Council President, at 8:51 O'clock p.m.

Michael W. Griffin, IAMC/MMC/CPFA/ACPFIM/CMO
Clerk-Treasurer