

**VILLAGE OF LAKEWOOD  
MINUTES OF THE VILLAGE BOARD MEETING  
MARCH 23, 2021**

The Zoom Village Board Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Stephan. Present via Zoom were Trustees Alexander, Augustine, Berman, Eddy, Odom, and Ulrich. Also present via Zoom were Chief Administrative Officer Jeannine Smith; Village Attorney Michael Smoron; Deputy Clerk Karen Crowe, Interim Chief of Police Rossi, and many members of the public.

President Stephan opened the meeting by saying that there were some rumors and misrepresentations that are being distributed by social media and flyers sent out to our residents. He addressed the employee turnover rumor stating that since 2019 only 4 employees had been terminated and had been terminated for just cause and financial reports. He said that the Village got a clean bill of health with the recent audit. He then addressed another issue. At a meeting in January, a resident alleged that there is money missing. He said that there is no basis for these allegations and that it is part of an ongoing effort to downgrade the Village's Triple A bond rating. He said that residents should be proud of the Triple A bond rating as there are only two municipalities in McHenry County that hold this status; Algonquin and Lakewood... He went on to announce that the Village of Lakewood is one of only 17 municipalities, out of the 1,298 municipalities in the entire state that holds this Triple A bond rating. He then addressed the Village's debt. This administration inherited roughly \$10 million dollars of debt. He explained that the previous administration set up bonds that only serviced the interest on the debt. The Village took advantage of the Village's Triple A bond rating to secure a bond that would address more than just the interest. The principle will be paid over the course of the next 14 years. He next addressed the issue of FOIAs. He explained that Village distractors have generated an excessive number of FOIA requests and complaints to the Attorney General and that these complaints require legal assistance from the Village attorneys that are costing the taxpayers an enormous amount of funds...

President Stephan commended the CAO for obtaining a \$712,000 grant for Haligus Road resurfacing. He then praised the Public Works staff for working tirelessly to remove obstructions in the storm sewers that were unaddressed for decades. Their constant efforts, monitoring and maintaining Village infrastructure only further proves their dedication and commitment to the Village. RedTail Golf club has improved its revenues from a negative position to an estimated \$200,000 net profit at the end of this fiscal year. This was simply due to management restructuring, improving margins and great teamwork from a group of dedicated and hardworking employees. Moving forward with this type of management means RedTail has significant substantial operating reserves and could fall back on this if needed. One final note was thanking Chief Lou Rossi, who was retained as a consultant for the Police Department. President Stephan noted that Chief Rossi has accomplished much in only three months with the Village because of his experience. He rewrote our standard operating procedures, obtained grants

## **Village Board Meeting Minutes**

**March 23, 2021**

**Page Two of Eight**

for police vests and hired three new police officers. His oversight guidance and communication style with the other Village team members is a welcome and needed change.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Resident Tom Lentz of Benoy Court said that he feels that the most recent version of Lakewood Life that came out that appears to be more of a propaganda piece for President Stephan and feels that it is inappropriate.

President Stephan answered that the Village doesn't pay for any of the things that the Lakewood Life magazine talks about and that they approached the Village for information.

Resident Judy Minsley of 436 Wiltshire Lane commented that she is glad to hear about the hiring of new Police Officers. She has been really concerned about the stress and added shift hours on the remaining Officers and hopes that it will enable them to return to routine patrols as she has missed seeing them on the street. She welcomes the new Officers and hopes that they will be equally qualified and experienced and decorated as our old Officers who have left have been. She specifically referenced Ed Pluviose who was recently recognized by the FBI for his work on the AJ Freund investigation. She also thanked our interim Chief Rossi for his service and all that he has done. She then complained that we have no Clerk, Business Analyst or HR person. She hopes that our less than stellar reputation is not going to hurt the close knit reputation the policing departments and won't stop Lakewood from getting the high caliber of Officers we're used to. She then addressed the upcoming budget hearings. She said that the Spring Lakewood Ledger had a reminder about vehicle stickers. The 2019 amended ordinance No 2035-03 states that the proceeds of sticker fees shall be placed into a separate Police Department vehicle sticker account to be used for vehicle purchases, vehicle maintenance, traffic signs, and other traffic control. She said that she is curious why there are separate accountings of revenue and expenditure for RedTail and Refuse but only sees one line item for vehicle stickers under the General Fund. She wonders if a separate account called for and that it appears that the sticker revenue of \$8,260 was about \$2,000 less than budgeted. She said that she saw elsewhere that the vehicle maintenance allotment was underspent by over \$4,700 in a year where many of us became aware of the unsafe condition of our squad cars. She stated that she couldn't find any expense for the traffic sign supposedly purchased from sticker revenue nor how much is left in the mandated account. She saw elsewhere that the vehicle maintenance allotment was underspent by over \$4,700 in a year where many of us became aware of the unsafe condition of our squad cars. She said that she is 100% behind sticker fees being used for Police Department needs but is also 100% against the President or Board deciding how to spend them without direction from the Police Department and not clearly reporting their use. She feels that if she can't find that there

**Village Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 23, 2021**  
**Page Three of Eight**

has been compliance with the Ordinance, she is wondering why she should comply by purchasing stickers.

Resident Tricia Babischkin at 8404 Trevino Way reported that there was \$123,000 missing from the Impact Fee Fund, which was a very specific place. She stated that she found that there was a double entry that removed that \$123,000 from the account. She doesn't know if it was missing from the Village but does know that it was not where it was supposed to be. After attempting to discuss this with the CAO, the board chose to amend 18 month old minutes to change what actually occurred in the meeting. She found that the tying out of January to October expenses, the financials were off by \$90 something thousand dollars. She thanked Trustee Augustine's hours of work showed that he was able to track down most of the issues but that the summary pages still have typographical errors. The RedTail revenue per round error is still there for October and November. However, there are still two items that were not explained, both in RedTail, including a bill paid in October that was booked to September for \$23,000. Because of this, she feels that the September financials should be restated. She maintains that they should be restated correctly and accurately as opposed to destroying the audit trail and ignoring the errors that needed to be corrected and subsequently approve other financials. She ended by thanking the Public Works Department for clearing the earthen dam on Lake 2 and looks forward to the dam being fully inspected

David Stavropoulos at 7425 Bonnie Drive commented that voting is a big deal to him. When he turned 18 in 1986 he voted in the second term for Ronald Reagan's Presidency. He remarked that he and President Stephan agreed last Thursday, that any type of libel, defamation, or mudslinging has no place in local politics. He stated that it is not fair to infer or otherwise suggest someone was embezzling money. He ended by suggesting that every resident please vote early or vote on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

President Stephan thanked him and said that he is denouncing the negative Facebook comments and ads and that it has no place in the Village politics...

**CONSENT AGENDA:** The following were considered and enacted on a single motion by Trustee Berman, seconded by Trustee Alexander.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** February 23, 2021 Village Board Meeting

**APPROVAL OF BILL LISTS:** Accounts Payable Invoices Dated March 24, 2021 in the Amount of \$91,772.08

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:** Village Financial Statements for the Periods May 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020; Village Financial Statements for the

**Village Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 23, 2021**  
**Page Four of Eight**

Periods May 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020; and Village Financial Statements for the Periods May 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

Voting Aye: Trustees Alexander, Augustine, Berman, and Eddy. Voting Nay: Trustee Odom.  
Motion declared carried.

**APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 2021-R(04) – A RESOLUTION APPROVING AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF ILLINOIS AND THE VILLAGE OF LAKEWOOD APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE HALIGUS ROAD RESURFACING PROJECT:** President Stephan noted that it has already been approved but that this is the final step to where we're approving the resolution to enter in the agreement with the state of Illinois.

Trustee Augustine, seconded by Trustee Alexander, moved to approve Resolution No. 2021-R(04). Voting Aye: Trustees Alexander, Augustine, Berman, Odom, and Eddy. Voting Nay: None. Motion declared carried.

**APPROVAL OF MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH GPS TECHNOLOGIES FOR UPGRADED UNITS:** President Stephan explained that other golf courses are installing GPS units in the golf carts, partially to keep people where they're supposed to be, but also to save money repairing damaged greens with people driving over them.

Trustee Augustine, seconded by Trustee Alexander, moved to approve Resolution No. 2021-R(04). Voting Aye: Trustees Alexander, Augustine, Berman, Odom, and Eddy. Voting Nay: None. Motion declared carried.

**REPORTS:** CAO Smith addressed Tricia Babischkin's earlier comments by saying that she had offered to meet with her on several occasions, once at RedTail Golf Club, by phone, probably in either November or December. CAO Smith stated that Mrs. Babischkin finally requested time with her at the end of January which is really busy time for her. CAO Smith asked Mrs. Babischkin to be patient so that she could find a day to devote the time as Mrs. Babishkin was requesting two hours of time. CAO Smith said that she is more than happy to sit down with Mrs. Babischkin and asked her to send an email so that they can figure out a date and time that would work for them both. She then addressed an email from Trustee Odom asking about the status of the Inverway property that had burned down in a fire in late October. CAO Smith stated that the owners have a demo permit and that architectural plans are completed as the owner is planning on rebuilding. They will be pulling permit for a new single family residence

**Village Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 23, 2021**  
**Page Five of Eight**

soon. CAO Smith knows the builder and has worked with him for many years and guarantees that the house will be beautiful. The second issue in Trustee Odom's email was that she said the Public Works was working on a water main at 7104 Inverway and wanted to know when will that be finished. CAO Smith said that Public Works said that they will be out in the Spring or in a few weeks when it warms up.

President Stephan noted that he had spoken to the resident, and that what people don't realize that hot mix asphalt is not available until April 15 and you don't want to really put it down before that. The plants won't open until April. So it will be the end of April.

Police Chief Lou Rossi commented that he received a letter from Sarah Locker, the residential manager for the Pioneer Center for Human Services. The letter stated " To Lakewood Police, I wanted to extend a big thank you to the officers that assisted with a behavior situation on the evening of February 15 2021 at our Lakewood Pioneer Group Home for individuals with autism at 455 Huntley Road, Lakewood. There were two Officers present to assist, and they did an amazing job. Unfortunately, I didn't get their names, but I'm sure with records in the system, they can be identified. The client that was being aggressive attempted to lash out at the Officers, and the response was spot on. I know it was a traumatic night and incident for everyone involved, since ultimately the client had to be put in handcuffs. But they did what had to be done to keep themselves, the client, and everyone else on the site safe. What really blew me away was that once they were able to secure this client, one of the Officers started to count to 20 with him and it gave him something to focus on, so that he could start to de-escalate. Our individuals with autism are tricky and don't always respond to what a typical person might and often that extra commotion of police presence can be overwhelming. How this Officer knew or decided to go the route of counting, I am unsure. But it was so fantastic. I want to make sure they are thanked for their service and understanding. The patients they had that evening, as well as during previous incidents where they were called in has been so appreciated. As a manager of the program, it is so reassuring when we have local police that we can work with and trust. You often hear horror stories about police involvement with individuals with disabilities. And that is far from the case with the Lakewood police department. Thank you again for your service and support. We all appreciate it greatly. Thank you, Sarah Locker."

Chief Rossi noted that the two Officers, Officer Matt Weigel and Officer Jason Jaske will be receiving a letter of appreciation and asked that the letter be placed in their personnel files.

With that letter, I also put together a letter of appreciation awarding both Matt Weigel and Officer Jaske for their exceptional service on behalf of the police department. A copy was forwarded to Miss Smith to be put in their personnel file. And I just wanted to make sure

**Village Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 23, 2021**  
**Page Six of Eight**

everybody was aware of what happened that evening. Additionally, I'd like to follow up on a few things that was discussed earlier. We will be getting three new officers coming on board shortly one full time officer will be coming on board April 5 with two additional part time officers to follow. Training has been very important. Right now I have training scheduled for Sgt Cole and Winters, they will be taking a 40 online course for first line supervision which is sponsored by the Illinois Training and Standards Board. This will take place between April and May. To me it's important as a once a person becomes a supervisor, you also have to give them the tools so they understand their role in the Police Department. Regarding additional training for the Officers it's going to be done as it become available. With the COVID-19 the Northeast Multi Regional Training Center who do 99% of our training, has reduced all of their training by 50%. I've instituted some grant programs. As stated earlier, the bulletproof vest grant program is in place. That's a 50/50 grant that will become available mid April. We originally purchased the vest, we submit the bill to the grant program and the Village gets reimbursed 50% back. Additionally, the Illinois Municipal League, which the Village is a member, just started a new grant locator program, which is free of charge to the Village. This allows the Village to go on there website to search for all the grants that are available; for either the Police Department, Public Works Department or the Village in its entirety. I reviewed the Department general orders, and I've submitted my recommendations and changes. Since I've been on board, vehicle maintenance has been going smoothly, repairs are being made when noted. Preventative maintenance is being performed on a timely fashion. Overall, the Department is running smoothly, and is currently staffed with a dedicated group of Officers. And again, I want to thank the Village in its entirety. And especially everybody at Village Hall, and the Officers that I was grateful to serve with. I'll be here for about another week and a half. And then my tenure is up. And again, I just want to thank everybody again for welcoming me and making me feel welcome. And I wish nothing but the best for the entire Village of Lakewood. Thank you very much.

Trustee Augustine commented on two things. He hopes these become positive rather than sounding negative. He would like to make a statement that relates to what he would considers an attack on our Village. There's a Facebook page that was started by a resident with the appearance of being a place to discuss local news and politics. That is provided the illusion of a non biased platform. The site allows residents, journalists and only disgruntled employees to join and or comment. There have been countless claims of workplace issues, financial misinformation and embellished facts. If you're an employee of the Village, do not live in the village, and you are happy with your job, then you're not allowed to be a member or comment. Our Village CAO attempted to join this page and her request was denied. What better person would there be to assist with Village related questions or correct information? Misinformation, I should say. Other

## **Village Board Meeting Minutes**

**March 23, 2021**

**Page Seven of Eight**

employees who do not live in the Village but love where they work, have been denied membership. To me this, this single sided, hostile narrative has painted a horrible vision of my Village. If you want to know what people other than a select few feel about working in our Village, you should ask them. I have. And I've talked to them. And I hear a different narrative. But nobody's talking about that narrative on that site. Because it's the same 10 people agreeing with each other constantly. A lot of my friends are on that site. And I've heard what's been said, I purposely stay off it as a trustee. I believe there's 700 people not getting all the information. I feel that site's been damaging to our Village. It shows division, hatred, threats, emails, and name calling. It's disgusting to me. And I totally reject it. I know a lot of my friends that are watching that may not agree with maybe some of the ways I voted, or the stances I've taken, would have to agree with that. Secondly, can speak for I think most of the Board rejects the continued practice of a resident sending threatening emails, and copying Village staff. This practice is unwanted by Village staff. And I hope it stops. Thank you.

Trustee Alexander commented that when we talk about grants, you think about local government funding mechanisms available to the Village of Lakewood. There is a budget process that takes place which determines what a levy will be, which is a fixed amount, let's say it is \$100. And then we run our business based on that \$100 every year. If things come up that need to be addressed that deplete that \$100. The business has to forego something that was budgeted for an emergency or something along those lines. I've heard countless times that we've gone above and beyond, we've worked extra hours, and we've done extra credit to get grants. I really appreciate the efforts of Chief Rossi and CAO Smith Jeannine, I really appreciate your efforts and going above and beyond to get dollars for our Village that aren't necessarily easy to get. There's a lot of effort, there's a lot of politicking, there's a lot of networking required to be able to go after those dollars and secure those funds. And a lot of that's based on relationships as well, without leaders who have that connectivity to other people in the state of our organizations, we would be devoid of those particular funds. So I want to commend both CAO Smith and Chief Rossi. And I just want to make sure that everyone understands that the grant process is something that I don't think that we put enough light on to ensure that our residents know how much money we're actually getting through extra efforts of our personnel, but at the end of the day, thank you. Thank you.

Thanks for your comment, then I'll add a little humor to the grant process because it is laborious and it does take a lot of time. And I've been into the grant process where you're in it for just days, and I would ask our CAO, what are the odds of us getting this grant? And she'll tell me 100% better than if we don't finish it. So thank you for your comments.

**Village Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 23, 2021**  
**Page Eight of Eight**

Trustee Berman wanted to take a few minutes to take a few minutes to talk about this issue of missing money. I'm not talking about the \$90,000 that Shelby young claimed was missing during our last board meeting. And I'm not talking about the \$123,000 that Trisha Babischkin is claiming is missing. And I'm not talking about the \$220,000 that Brian Younge wrote to the Attorney General. We all know that these claims are a bunch of hogwash. We just completed an audit, which we passed with flying colors. I don't know about you, but I'm going to trust paid CPAs, people who do this kind of thing for a living, over a guy that went to hotel college and a political candidate whose background in finance consists of an unsuccessful attempt to run a business booking cruises for people. What I am talking about is approximately \$12,000 that was collected for the purpose of former Village President Erin Smith's TIF district. In which, if my understanding is correct, was refunded directly to taxpayers back in 2017, when the TIF district was dissolved, it's my understanding that this was done by Janice Hansen, Jean Heckman and Sue Villie. It was done during the time period when Janice Hansen was serving as the Interim Village Manager, and Jean Heckman was serving as Treasurer. And that this refund was paid out without consent of the Board of Trustees. It's also my understanding that the refund checks were signed by Mrs. Hansen and Mrs. Heckman, and that Mrs. Villie was involved in drafting correspondence related to these refunds. The thing that concerns me about this is that if true, it was illegal. 65 ILCS 511-74.4-8 lays out in great detail the rules for creation and dissolution of TIF districts. It explicitly lays out direction for the distribution of surplus funds. And nowhere in this distribution schedule does it mention taxpayers themselves. This makes sense. Because funding for the TIF comes from the taxing bodies, not from the residents directly. If these things are true, this would be really, really bad. And it raises a lot of questions. Number one, who authorized Mrs. Hansen, Mrs. Heckman and Mrs. Villie to refund TIF district surplus funds directly to Village residents in contravention of Illinois law. Number two, how much money was refunded to the residents and which residents received refunds? Number three, did Mrs. Hansen or Mrs. Heckman residents of Lakewood give refunds to themselves? Number four, when was the Board made aware of this, and did they ever give their consent? I believe that the only way to understand what happened is to initiate a formal investigation. And I'm calling on you, Phil, to add the creation of an investigative body to look into these allegations to the agenda for our next meeting.

Trustee Alexander, seconded by Trustee Berman, moved to adjourn the Village Board Meeting. Voting Aye: Trustees Alexander, Augustine, Berman, Eddy, Odom, and Ulrich. Voting Nay: None. Motion declared carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Karen Crowe

Deputy Village Clerk

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_