

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
VALPARAISO, INDIANA
February 26, 2018**

The Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, met on Monday February 26, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in City Hall. Mayor Costas called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Present were Councilmembers Murphy, Douglas, Hoffman, Reed, Hudson, Cotton and Porter.

MINUTES

Councilmember Cotton moved to defer vote on the minutes until the next meeting. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion.

Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

VPD – Honorable Mention

Chief Balon presented Officer Jonathan Watson with two Honorable Mentions. On two different routine traffic stops, Officer Watson was able to do a search of the vehicles and both ended up with recovery of stolen guns from other burglaries.

Presentation – IVY Tech Strategic Plan

Aco Sikoski addressed the Council. He presented the Strategic Plan for IVY Tech. They are partnering with the Valparaiso Police Department. The goals of the Plan are: 1 – Student Success; 2 – Recruitment and Enrollment; 3 – Completion; 4 – Workforce; 5 – Employee; 6 – Financial; and, 7 – Community.

Councilmember Reed asked why only 49% are returning. Is it changing of career or money? Aco Sikoski replied it is both. They are working on changing this percentage.

In answer to questions from Councilmember Porter, Aco Sikoski replied they are working with the Career Center which is at capacity right now. Adjunct faculty model will be full time pay.

Councilmember Douglas thanked Aco for the presentation. He also discussed how helpful the tours of IVY Tech are. He asked what percentage of the students are fulltime and what percent are part-time. There are 20% fulltime and 80% part-time.

Councilmember Cotton discussed degrees received in four-year colleges. Aco Sikoski replied the credits from IVY Tech transfer to four-year colleges so they can get their degrees.

Joe Kusiak asked if they are working with G.I. Bill students and was told they are.

RESOLUTION NO. 3, 2018

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO,
INDIANA ENCOURAGING CERTAIN ACTIONS BE TAKEN TO PROMOTE
AWARENESS TO PREVENT ACTS OF COMMUNITY VIOLENCE**

Councilmember Hudson moved that Resolution No. 3, 2018 be read a first time and considered for passage. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Swihart read Resolution No. 3, 2018. Councilmember Hudson moved to adopt Resolution No. 3, 2018. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion.

Councilmember Murphy addressed the Council. This Resolution was drafted as a result of the recent school shooting in Florida. He was reluctant to bring this because it is a national issue. This is a complex issue. However it is an important issue in our community. It encourages the City to take eight practical steps in dealing with this issue.

Councilmember Hudson discussed how the Resolution was drafted and the power of the Council. She pointed out the limits on what the Council can do and what citizens can do to voice opinions on this matter. She read the eight Actions to be taken to Promote Awareness to Prevent Acts of Community Violence. The schools have put plans in place along with the Police Department.

With the remodeling the schools are adding more items of safety. An important saying is “If you see something, say something.”

Councilmember Cotton addressed the Council. He regrets that he did not present a Resolution in response to the email from Paul Shriner. His version would look a lot different than what was presented tonight. Tonight’s Resolution just encourages us to keep doing what we are already doing. He backed away from doing a Resolution because of past responses to issues being national issues. The Council needs to hear from their constituents. This is being pushed through too fast.

Councilmember Porter pointed out that if this Resolution is passed tonight, nothing will be different tomorrow. The Resolution needs to encourage the State to change the way guns are accessible.

Councilmember Reed stated she appreciates the efforts for this Resolution but it needs more thought about what we can do and engage citizens. Phone calls need to be made to legislators.

Councilmember Hoffman stated this Resolution was drafted in caucus and not behind closed doors. Resolutions cannot be drafted in executive sessions. She was a teacher at VHS when the young man had a machete in the school. She knows the fear involved in these situations. She knows in the past there have been resolutions brought before the Council but they were not the Council’s jurisdiction and had not been discussed with other councilmembers prior to the meeting.

City Attorney Ethan Lowe explained what the City Council is able to do and not do. There is an expansive piece of legislation that prohibits what a municipality can and cannot do with regard to gun laws. There is also language that if a municipality does regulate firearms it is void. This opens the City up to lawsuits if they try to regulate firearms.

Councilmember Cotton said we do have a constitutional right to free speech and should voice our opinions.

Councilmember Douglas said the community needs to be reassured the City is doing what it can to keep them safe. This Resolution brings awareness as to how we can work together.

Councilmember Hudson discussed passing this Resolution does not mean the conversation will end today.

Councilmember Hoffman moved to table Resolution No. 3, 2018. Councilmember Cotton seconded the motion.

Upon voice vote the motion to table Resolution No. 3, 2018 passed with a 7-0 vote.

Mayor Costas discussed that one way to have a handle on this is to have a good Police Department. Chief Balon addressed the Council and told them ways they have school safety. We have school resource officers, adopt a school programs, Hero 911 interface. School safety is number one in the community. The Police Department will soon have access to all school cameras so they can see what is going on in each of them.

ORDINANCE NO. 5, 2018

AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING FUNDS IN CAPITAL EQUIPMENT FUND AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF NOTICE

Councilmember Hudson moved that Ordinance No. 5, 2018 be read a second time by title and a third time in full and be considered for adoption and the opportunity be given for the offering of amendments. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Swihart read the Ordinance. Councilmember Hudson moved to adopt Ordinance No. 5, 2018. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion.

Bill Oeding explained this is an annual appropriation of funds from the Redevelopment Commission. This year the money will be spent on public safety.

Mayor Costas stated Ordinance No. 5, 2018 requires a Public Hearing and presented Proof of Publication that at tonight’s meeting the Council will consider the appropriation of \$500,000 in

the Capital Equipment Fund. Seeing no one wishing to address the Council he declared the Public Hearing closed.

Upon roll call vote the motion to adopt Ordinance No. 5, 2018 passed with a 7-0 vote.

Land Swap

Bill Oeding presented a map showing property located to the north of the Police Department. ValeView owns two sections and the City owns two sections. Currently the property goes west to east for ownership. It would be advantageous to both the property owner and the City to have the pieces of property run north to south. The developer is agreeable to this. They will be razing the building once the property swap is completed. Both pieces of property appraised equally.

Patrick Lyp explained one way to do this is to do an RFP through the Board of Works. This would have to be worded so that the current owner of the property would be the only purchaser. This method is not very transparent. Another way is the Redevelopment Commission can swap if it has permission from the Council and conducts a Public Hearing.

Councilmember Hudson asked if there will be variances needed for setbacks. Bill Oeding explained the building currently on the property will be taken down. There will not be any variances needed.

Councilmember Cotton asked about how the developer will build and if they will need a retaining wall. He also asked if the parking is an immediate need of the Police Department. The developer is Wayne Welter. Currently there are residents in the building. They are aware of the building being demolished.

Councilmember Douglas moved to allow the Redevelopment Commission to move forward with the land swap preconditioned on the building being razed. Councilmember Hudson seconded the motion.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed with a 6-1 vote. Councilmember Cotton voted no.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilmember Porter reported at the March 12th Council meeting the School Corporation will present their State of the School Address. She also talked about the recent loss at Hilltop due to flooding. At this time monetary donations are appreciated to help pay for cleanup costs.

Councilmember Hoffman advised that School Board applications will be taken beginning March 13th. Applications are available on the City's web page.

AUDIENCE

Drew Wegner – thanks for tabling Resolution No. 3, 2018. He discussed the incident at VHS with the student bringing the machete.

Kevin Cornett – Coach USA is not consistent with stops in Valparaiso. Tyler Kent advised they are working on that issue this week. If this Resolution is passed tonight it will be swept under the table from here on out. All he wants is a common-sense approach to obtaining guns.

Another citizen reported the terrible time she had with a friend coming in on the Coach USA bus.

Debbie Frey – thanks for tabling Resolution No. 3, 2018. She was at VHS as a teacher when the incident with the machete happened.

VHS student – there are no drills at the school. She knows kids that have access to weapons and brag about it. With the construction going on the school is not safe.

Paul Shriner – people have become accustomed to shooting events. The Council has common sense and need to make the State and Federal government listen to them and change the laws.

VU Student – the Resolution does not say enough. It should ask more from elected officials and not the citizens.

Susan Martin – she has not seen the press release regarding the BMV charging the wheel tax to citizens not within the City limits. Is there going to be one.

Kenard Taylor – The Councilmembers who prepared this Resolution looked at all aspects when they prepared it. It is a complicated issue.

Citizen – need to address mental health issues.

Joe Kusiak – need to post directions to new location for bus. Youth programs keep kids busy and out of trouble.

Kathy – thanks for starting the process. Even if the buildings are fortified the children still need to walk in and out of the building. Something needs to be done about assault weapons.

Jack – asked if all aspects have been looked at. Does the Police Department have the right bullets etc. Chief Balon assured him the Department has the equipment and training.

Mayor Costas asked Chief Balon to address the Council and explain what the Police Department has done to make the schools safe. Explain what training the Department has done.

Citizen – there have not been any active shooter drills in the schools. Chief Balon replied this needs to be discussed with the schools. She suggested the Council should ask the schools to institute these drills.

Joe Kusiak asked if they have anonymous tipping programs. Chief Balon advised they do.

Don – need to formulate a mechanism for citizens to interact and articulate with people who can change the gun epidemic. This is like the opioid epidemic.

Liz – if not partisan then a new Resolution should be able to be drafted quickly.

Joe Kusiak – invited the Council to come to WLUP radio for broadcast.

Greg Johnson – mental illness is not the only problem. Successful people do “position taking”. The Council needs to take a strong position.

Lois Reiner – when drafting a Resolution remember the young people.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

/s/ Sharon Swihart, Clerk-Treasurer