

05-27-2025 Common Council Meeting

budget planning infrastructure projects ordinance enforcement

Meeting Information

- Date & Time: 2025-05-27 6:03pm
- Location: Chalmers Town Hall 205 E Walnut Street Chalmers, IN 47929
- Attendees: Clerk Treasurer Rene'e Collier, Council Member Lee Trippett, David Kurth, Marcus King, Council Member Joshua Rinehart, Council Member Fred Schrader, Jim Finnegan, Kevin Ward, Town Engineer Ken Smith, Town Marshal Jim Bolen, Council Vice President Amy LaOrange, Council President Pam Brown, Mary Northcutt, Street and Utility Superintendent Doug Reed, Pam Hiner and Bruce Hiner.

Meeting Notes

1. Town council governance, budget planning, infrastructure projects, grant funding, and departmental coordination.

- **Call to Order and Pledge**
The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM on May 27th, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
- **Agenda Check and Introduction of Guests**
Guests were invited to introduce themselves and state any concerns or topics to discuss. Mary Northcutt introduced herself and Marcus King raised the topic of acquiring or renting a wood chipper for debris management at the wastewater treatment plant.
- **Budget Preparation Process**
Discussion on involving all council members in the budget process, including breaking down departmental budgets and ensuring everyone is informed.
- **Legion Building Future Use**
Council discussed options for the Legion building, including using it as a community center and seeking grants for funding.
- **Structural Opinion on Legion Building Wall**
Need for an opinion on the structural soundness of a wall in the Legion building.

2. Town infrastructure maintenance, storm cleanup, equipment procurement, budgeting, and insurance management.

- **Storm Cleanup and Debris Removal**
Discussion on picking up sticks, large tree debris, and corn stalks after a storm, including challenges with equipment and resident expectations for cleanup.
- **Equipment Issues and Solutions**
Problems with a 5 gallon bucket causing blockages in the RAS system, attempts to remove it, and suggestions for installing a protector or grid to prevent future incidents.
- **Safety and Facility Upgrades**
Need for a working eye wash and shower at the treatment plant, which is remote and lacks town water. Discussion on installing these in the bathroom and water line issues.
- **Waste Water Treatment Plant Life Expectancy**
Question raised about whether the plant has reached its life expectancy. Discussion on mechanical parts, previous upgrades, and expected lifespan.
- **Utility Poles Replacement and Insurance**
Discussion on replacing three utility poles on the country route that were damaged in the storm with new ones, should we use three of the 5 poles that are included in the scope of the town's electric maintenance contract with Carroll White REMC council decided to pay the \$5,284.44 to replace these rather than use three of the five as the poles within the town and are more expensive to replace so all five will be used for replacement of poles within the town limits. Clerk Treasurer Collier will get ahold of insurance to see if the damaged poles being replaced can be filed as a claim against our insurance.
- **Underground Electric Installation at 207 West Main Street**
Plan to install underground electric at 207 West Main Street is scheduled for Thursday, with a cost of \$2,048.64. The property owner must come in to sign forms and pay before work is completed.
- **Equipment Rental and Procurement**
Discussion on renting or borrowing equipment for cleanup, including John Deere backhoe rental at \$800 for five days, and considering Indiana Bond Bank leasing options.
- **Budgeting and Expense Tracking**
Review of receipt books, fuel expenses, and breakdown of costs for various departments. Discussion on splitting costs and adjusting budget allocations.
- **First Aid and Safety Supplies**
Need to update first aid kits, defibrillator batteries and pads, and recommend Stop the Bleed training for staff.

- **Paving Projects and Grant Funding**
Discussion on current and future paving projects, grant matching ratios, and timing for applications.
- **Legion Building and Community Building Grant Opportunities**
Potential for grants from United Way and mental health organizations for community building, with up to \$1,000,000 per year in matching grants. Council Members to tour the building and consider options; grant opportunities to be explored.
- **Budget Session Items and Financial Reporting**
Request for monthly expenses and revenue reports from January 1, copies of all contracts, and details on liabilities and investments.
- **Department Head Involvement in Budget**
Proposal for department heads to participate in budget planning to ensure completeness.
- **Communication Improvements**
Need for better communication between departments and improved phone/email response times.
- **EMA Advisory Board Appointment**
Need to appoint a new town resident to the EMA advisory board after Randy Conwell's retirement. Board meets twice a year; next meeting date TBD.
- **Paving Project Walkthrough and Closeout**
Review of recently completed paving; only minor issues noted. Under budget by \$7,653.66.
- **Grant Matching Ratios and Funding**
Discussion on changes in grant matching ratios and how the loss of property tax money due to the passing of Senate bill 1 will affect future Grants.
- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and SRF**
Clarification on previous funding sources for water projects: CDBG (100% grant) and SRF (partial forgivable loan).
- **Sidewalk and Stormwater Grant Funding**
Discussion on eligibility for sidewalk and stormwater grants through Community Crossing (CCMG) and INDOT, with requirements that sidewalks/stormwater must be on streets being paved.
- **Paving Project Closeout Financials**
Project was \$7,653.66 under budget; extra funds to be returned to the state. Next paving round likely next year; funding and grant opportunities to be monitored.
- **Wastewater Plant Equipment Repairs**
Discussion of issues with the clarifier motor at the wastewater plant, which is over 20 years old and required custom parts and shaft replacement. New motor would cost \$100,000. Motor is currently being rebuilt and should last another 20 years.

- **Insurance Policy Updates**
Review of new insurance endorsements, including cyber security and equipment coverage.
- **Website and Email Hosting Transition**
Transition from HostGator to Indiana Office of Technology for email and website hosting, with concerns about losing email addresses and domain hosting.

3. Town Council Meeting: Financial Approvals, IT and Payroll Issues, Compliance, and Fund Allocations

- **Abandoned Vehicle and Ordinance Tags Reporting**
Discussion about duplicate entries for abandoned vehicle tags ordered from Staples on 4/29, clarification of reporting errors, and correction process.
- **Approval of Bank One Claims**
Motion and approval to pass Bank One claims dated 2025-05-27 for \$81,030.34. Motion to approve was given by Council Vice President LaOrange, Council Member Schrader seconded the motion and the claims passed by a vote of 5 Ayes to 0 Nays.
- **Police Department Report Systems**
Clarification between two different police report systems: case report system and Aries (crash) system. Town Marshal Bolen is currently working on getting them both up and running.
- **Employee Timesheet and Payroll Software Issues**
Discussion on issues with time clock accuracy, transition to manual entry using existing timecards, and the need for consistent time recording in hundredths of an hour. It was reported that the time clock was off by an hour this morning when employees were clocking in. Council Member Trippett asked why we do not just purchase a new time clock so the reporting and computation of time will go much smoother which was met with much discussion and resistance from the rest of the council.
- **ADA and Title VI Compliance**
Discussion on the need for a Title VI plan for federal funding and ADA compliance, with Rebecca tasked to prepare a comprehensive plan.
- **Approval of Common Council Minutes**
Motion to accept and approve the Common Council minutes for the May 13, 2025 Common Council Meeting was given by Council Vice President LaOrange and seconded by Council Member Schrader. Meeting Minutes were approved by a vote of 5 Ayes to 0 Nays.
- **CD Investments and Meter Deposits**
Clerk Treasurer Collier updated the council on the renewal of two large CD's one is a Wastewater Utility CD and the other is an Electric Utility CD. The CD's were renewed for 6 months at 4% interest. Discussion on small

meter deposit CDs and their purpose was had and Clerk Treasurer Collier will be looking in to the reasoning behind the two smaller CD's to see if she if she thinks the town should renew these CD's and if they are tied to some type of Resolution or Ordinance.

- **Police Software Subscription Funding**

Discussion on \$975 police software, with \$475 per year for ongoing subscription. One free year received; future funding source needed. Town Marshal Bolen says he has talked to other units and they do not pay the yearly subscription and that he has chosen to do the same for his department.

- **IT Services and Payment**

Discussion on IT service invoice from Kevin Ward for moving two security cameras, running new ethernet line for the front door camera, troubleshooting the front door camera, troubleshooting the police computer and defragmenting the hard drive, the trip to Lafayette in the Police Truck to get a new computer, monitor and printer, set up of the computer, the transfer of files, email installation, CAD program and Aeries 6 Crash Report Software in the amount of \$405.00 Clerk Treasurer Collier reporting that she was told by Kevin Ward and Council President that the bill was to come out of the general fund office supplies that was only budgeted \$3,000 for the year and it in fact could not come from that fund and should come from the police department equipment fund which has around \$11,000.00 remaining for the year. The Council and Police Department argued with the Clerk Treasurer that the money should not come from Police Funds which resulted in Council President Brown making a motion to pay the invoice out of Windmill Funds with the second coming from Council Vice President LaOrange. Motion carried by a vote 4 Ayes to 1 Nay, with the vote of Nay coming from Council Member Trippet.

- **Ordinance Ticket Revenue Allocation**

Discussion on where ordinance ticket revenue should be allocated, with the need for a dedicated fund or line item for purchasing more tickets.

4. Town governance, ordinance enforcement, budgeting, and public services management

- **Allocation and Use of Funds from Ordinance Violations and Tickets**

Discussion on how funds from ordinance violations and tickets are allocated, including the creation of a dedicated account and the need for a resolution to clarify where the payment of these fees will be allocated. Town Attorney Trent will be asked to establish a resolution for fund allocation, including ordinance violations.

- **Case Report Fees**

Consideration of charging for case and crash reports, referencing county charges of \$12 to \$15 per page, and the need for a town ordinance to

match or set fees. Town Attorney Trent will be asked to draft an Ordinance to set case report fees.

- **Reimbursement from ARIES and Crash Reports**

Inquiry into whether the town receives its share from ARIES or crash report sales, noting minimal payments (e.g., \$3, \$20 over six months or a year) and a lack of clarity on expected reimbursements.

- **Hiring of Ordinance/Code Enforcement Officer**

Proposal to hire Kevin Ward as an ordinance/code enforcement officer from May to October, at \$21 per hour, 10 hours per week, totaling \$5,040 per year. Duties include enforcing ordinances related to animals, yards, cars, etc.

Town Attorney Trent will be asked to draw up a resolution creating the job.

- **Code Enforcement Officer Authority and Overlap with Police Powers**

Clarification that the code enforcement officer will have police powers, including the ability to act in situations involving wanted individuals, provided this is stated in the resolution.

- **Truck Lighting Issues**

Report of ongoing problems with the lights on a town truck, including running board lights failing and the need to purchase new lights for safety

- **Building Inspector Role and Training**

Discussion on the need for a building inspector, the requirement for online training, and the challenge of finding someone to complete the course and testify in court.

- **Fire Burn Ordinance Enforcement and Fire Department Responsibilities**

Confusion over enforcement of burn ordinances, with police able to write tickets but not extinguish fires, and the fire department hesitant to act without police presence. The new fire protection agreement (effective January 2026) will require the fire department to extinguish ordinance-violating fires upon request.

- **Reporting Nuisance Fires**

Clarification on how to report nuisance fires, recommending use of the counties non-emergency number for documentation, and the process for police and fire department response.

- **Storm Damage and Insurance**

Report of storm damage to town property, including a scoreboard, a swing, and a tree at the park, with discussion on insurance coverage.

- **Farmer Appreciation Day and Flower Garden Adoption**

Update on Farmer Appreciation Day and the availability of a flower garden spot for adoption at the park.

- **Splash Pad Maintenance**

Council Vice President LaOrange brought up that she believes the splash pad needs repainted and asked if the park board had plans to repaint it, with a suggestion to hire professionals and address it during budget meetings.

- **Town Scope and Overflow Planning**

Report that a complete scope of the town was conducted with the tractor, with readiness for overflow if needed.

- **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM by a vote of 5 Ayes to 0 Nays with motion made by Council Vice President LaOrange, seconded by Council Member Schrader.

NEXT ARRANGEMENTS

☐ Tour the Legion building to assess future use and items to keep, sell, or discard.

☐ Share structural opinion on Legion building wall via email.

☐ Compile and distribute monthly expenses and revenue reports from January

1.

☐ Schedule a session to review all contracts and financial documents.

☐ Revise the town's phone menu for improved communication.

☐ Appoint a new EMA advisory board member.

☐ Monitor for new paving grant windows and prepare necessary documentation.

☐ Schedule meetings with department heads for budget planning.

☐ Return \$7,653.66 in unused paving project funds.

☐ Complete repairs on the wastewater plant clarifier motor.

☐ Property owner to sign contract and pay \$2,048.64 for underground electric installation at 207 West Main Street before Thursday, 2025-05-29.

☐ Check and update first aid kits, defibrillator batteries and pads, and arrange Stop the Bleed training.

☐ Continue attempts to contact John or Alexa regarding insurance and utility pole reimbursement.

☐ Explore equipment procurement options, including Indiana Bond Bank leasing and budgeting for next year.

☐ Investigate installation of eye wash and shower at the treatment plant.

☐ Review and refine budget tracking and allocation methods for shared expenses.

☐ Transition email and website hosting from HostGator to Indiana Office of Technology by July 2025.

☐ Rebecca to prepare a comprehensive ADA and Title VI compliance plan for the next meeting.

☐ Further investigation into the purpose and management of small meter deposit CDs.

☐ Future IT and security camera expenses to be included in the budget.

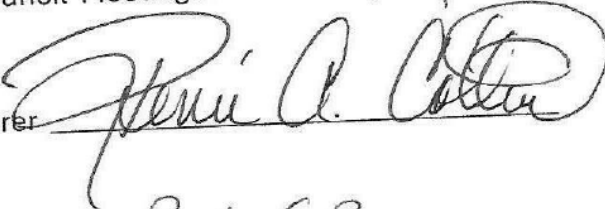
☐ Establish a dedicated fund or line item for ordinance ticket revenue and expenditures.

☐ Rebecca to draft a resolution for fund allocation from ordinance violations.

☐ Rebecca to draft an ordinance for case report fees, matching county rates.

- ☐ Check on missing ARIES/crash report reimbursements.
- ☐ Rebecca to draft and finalize the resolution/ordinance for the code enforcement officer, including police powers.
- ☐ Review and update ordinances to specify code enforcement officer responsibilities.
- ☐ Promote flower garden adoption in the newsletter and on Facebook.
- ☐ Discuss professional repainting of the splash pad and include this in next years budget.
- ☐ Purchase new side lights for the town truck from a different supplier.

Common Council Meeting Minutes for May 27th, 2025

Clerk Treasurer 

Council President Pamela S Brown Yay or Nay Abstain

Council Vice President Ang Labreze ☒ Yay or Nay Abstain

Council Member Lee Thomas ☒ Yay or Nay Abstain

Council Member _____ Yay or Nay Abstain

Council Member _____ Yay or Nay Abstain

Signed this 10th day of June, 2025