

LOWELL TOWN COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
MAY 8, 2023

A Work Session of the Lowell Town Council was called to order on Monday, May 8, 2023, at 5:35 P.M., by President Todd Angerman. Members present were Todd Angerman, Michael Gruszka, John Alessia, John Yelkich, and Shane Tucker arrived at 6:08. Also present were Clerk-Treasurer Judith Walters, Town Manager Craig Hendrix, Town Attorney David Westland, GIS Director Greg White, and Police Chief Jim Woestman and Fire Chief Chris Gamblin. Also present were one citizens. The purpose of the work session was general town business.

Water Proceeds Investment Discussion - Peoples Bank - Jim Dunne of Peoples Bank was present to discuss the final revision of the investment policy statement. Mr. Dunne stated he felt even without being able to invest in equities, they will still be able to get the highest yield on floating rate bond funds to get more for our return. Discussion followed. A sentence will be added to the statement that an annual review of the interest earned will be reviewed annually on whether to pull out funds or roll over. Mr. Dunne stated it will be a couple month process to get all the investments set up and will be requesting a quarterly meeting in August for review.

Discussion of Fire Department Staffing - Chief Gamblin stated with the resignation of full-time firefighter Matt VanDrunen, they are recommending at this time to fill that position with two part-time staffers. He stated he has reviewed the budget with Clerk-Treasurer Judy Walters and the amount budgeted of \$108,000, would allow to hire two part-time employees during the day shifts Monday thru Friday. The rate of pay would be \$20.00-\$22.00 an hour and he has a pull of eight employees that could fill those shifts. They would become employees of the town. In review of the salary ordinance, nothing would have to be changed because they are below the maximum amount listed in the ordinance. Chief Gamblin stated he would like to see the one employee that is paid from the volunteer side become a part-time town employee also in the future. The part-time employees would continue to do fire inspections.

136 W Washington Street (Patricia's Dance) Update - Mr. Hendrix had reached out to the owners of the property that the appraisal had come in at \$190,000.00, and they were looking at around \$300,000.00. Mr. Hendrix offered to them to pick another appraiser of their choice. Mr. Hendrix stated the property is zoned Town Center and has no parking and noted the parking lot at the park is not a municipal parking lot. Discussion followed on what it may become if the town doesn't purchase it, and how much the Council was willing to go to get the property. Councilman Alessia stated we shouldn't pay more that it is worth and Councilman Tucker agreed there should be a limit on what we would pay. President Angerman stated he looked at what a benefit it would be to own the property next to the park, and stated the money budgeted in the construction price to re do the old distribution plant could be used to purchase this property. Mr. Hendrix said the owner was going to have a commercial realtor review the appraisal. Attorney Westland suggested giving her a list of appraisers to choose from and then see where we are and what we will have to negotiate.

Appointment of Budget/Finance Committee - A committee was set of President Angerman, Councilman Yelkich, Clerk-Treasurer Judy Walters, and Town Manager Craig Hendrix to review 2024 budgets with future spending of capital projects for sewer and street projects and bring recommendations to the Council.

Donation of Park Property Opportunity - Mr. Hendrix reviewed a piece of property on Cline Avenue of 40 acres that the owners would like to donate 1.5 acres to become a park and name after their family. Discussion followed. Mr. Hendrix would like to see additional acreage bought and it be turned into soccer fields that could be shared with the school corporation. Further discussions will be set with the property owner.

Discussion of Unsafe Buildings - Tim Henke, Building Administrator, had provided pictures of some properties in town that are in bad shape and in violation of the unsafe building ordinance, which include bad roofs, caved in garage, unkept property, abandoned houses, and junk vehicles. Mr. Henke spoke of complaints from citizens and concerns of unsafe properties. Mr. Hendrix stated we have language in our unsafe building/property maintenance ordinance to enforce and wanted Council to be aware that increased enforcement will begin and will include increased legal expenses to pursue. Discussion followed. Mr. Henke spoke of a property being opened as a boutique that needs to meet commercial standards and has not inquired about building permits or applied for a variance to run. Council agreed for staff to do what needs to be done to enforce the ordinance and make sure properties are in compliance.

No further discussion, the work session adjourned at 7:04 P.M.



Todd Angerman, President

Attest:



Judith Walters
Clerk-Treasurer