

## EP COUNCIL 1/9/23 85 N. MARKET ST. 7:00 PM

Mayor Conaway called the meeting to order. At this time Mayor Conaway swore in Linda May as Councilperson (For 2023 for the remainder of Flay Stewarts vacated seat) Present was Ms. May, Mr. Povenski, Dr. Rocco, Mr. Runnion, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Walker. Also present was Interim Manager/Finance Director Traci Spratt, Police Chief Jim Brown, Fire Chief Keith Drabick, Law Director David Powers, W/WW Superintendent Scott Wolfe, Clerk Misti Martin and BZ Inspector CH McCutcheon. The minutes of the 12/28/22 meeting were approved on a motion by Dr. Rocco, seconded by Mr. Runnion. The December 2022 department reports were approved on a motion by Dr. Rocco, seconded by Ms. May. At this point Mr. Simpson made a motion to go into executive session per ORC 121.22 to discuss council committee appointments, seconded by Mr. Runnion. Passed unanimously. Approx. 10 minutes later regular session resumed by motion from Dr. Rocco and seconded by Mr. Walker. There no Street, Park/Rec/Cem, Dev/Fin, Utility, or Safety Committee Reports.

**AGENDA: DON ELZER- WHY COUNCIL DOES NOT WANT INVESTMENT/DEVELOPMENT IN THE VILLAGE.** Mr. Elzer began by stating that neighboring communities are growing and developing faster than EP, he said he's been here for 15 years. 8 of those were on Council and 6 were as President of the Chamber and that the reason for the community not growing is the Village. He said there are no programs to move things forward or promote business. He said in moving here they (Elzers) have purchased vacant properties in town and put hundreds of thousands of dollars into them, some have been remodeled, some are in process and some they haven't gotten to yet. Most recently he said PNC Bank came to them and said they wanted Clip-N-Claws out of the old bank drive thru, if they got rid of them, they would double what they pay in rent. Elzer stated to keep business here they let the PNC ATM contract go. When the old M & T Sports ran into financial trouble (one of his properties) they gave them 16 months rent free to try to keep them in the building and they again lost thousands of dollars in doing so. The Cuttin Loose hair salon previously rented from them and when Covid hit he told them not to pay rent to try and help them. They currently have other tenants who don't pay rent just to keep business in town and these same people are the ones the village is driving away. He said if the Village wanted to move forward, they would work with the community not against them. He said when asked what the Village is doing to help businesses, they were told they are "applying for a grant" and that is all. Elzer said there was a grant years ago to revitalize downtown and they gave it back, there was an opportunity to take utilities to Route 14 at no cost and they turned it down, they had an opportunity to bring millions of dollars in the community through the oil/gas leasing and they turned it down. There was a 100% grant to complete the walking trail on W. Main St. and they gave it back as well as the recently passed vacant structure legislation are the problem. He the Christians opened a nursing home in the old Captain Taggart Building, Leakes put hundreds of thousands of dollars into a gas station, and they opened the hot dog shop and under the vacant structure legislation that just passed that those things would not have happened and will not happen in the future. In talking with local business people, they say they don't even know who the Mayor is. Mayor Conaway stated no one but Interim Manager Spratt do this job full time, he asked when he was supposed to go visit when he works over 50 hours a week at his job, to which Mr. Elzer asked why he was the Mayor. Mayor Conaway said because he cares about the community. Mr. Runnion stated the Mayor gives his time to be at these meetings and that its not an easy job. Elzer said he has done that job to which Mr. Runnion stated he also buildings that aren't filled and are decrepit and falling down. Mr. Povenski made a motion to allow Mr. Elzer to continue speaking on the issue, the motion was seconded by Dr. Rocco. Povenski, Rocco, Simpson voted yes to allow addition time. Dr. Rocco noted that everyone is looking at this as "us against them" and we need to work together to figure things out. Mr. Elzer said it is adversarial at this point because people who have put millions of dollars into the community are being driven out. Elzer asked why anyone would put together legislation this controversial (VSR) and refuse to talk to the people involved. Mr. Simpson said this legislation was not just pulled out overnight, the legislation itself was done two separate times as well as run through the Planning Commission each time and everyone was on board. Elzer said he was at three of those meetings and there was no positive input from anyone. Mr. Walker stated the PC voted unanimously that council should pass that legislation and that Ashtabula, Cleveland Heights, Sandusky, Youngstown and Salem all do blight mitigation and are successful. Resident David

Biggins said you need to take into account the population and fees of those communities. Mr. Simpson said their fees are higher to which Mr. Biggins said he did not believe that. Mr. Elzer said we should be copying the communities that are doing well not the ones that are struggling. Elzer asked what happens when the people who have invested in the community decide leave and go somewhere business friendly, Mr. Runnion answered that we would have to adapt and keep moving forward. Elzer asked what the Village is doing to bring business into town, promote the village or even made a statement about something positive here. Mr. Walker said that is the job of the Chamber, Council is the legislative body of the village. Ms. May agreed saying some of the communities mentioned have active staffed Chambers of Commerce, our Chamber is volunteer people who are trying to run a business, run a household and help with the Chamber. Elzer said we had a chance to take utilities to Route 14 completely free and the village turned it down. Interim Manager/Finance Director Traci Spratt said that is not true, it was only a partial grant and Mayor Conaway added it was going to cost the village well over a million dollars. Elzer argued that was not the case and Spratt said that it absolutely was. Mr. Runnion stated in the letter Elzer sent he stated the PC thought the VSR was a bad idea; they have documentation that that information is incorrect to which Mr. Elzer stated he was wrong about that. Mayor Conaway stated former Manager McTrusty and Interim Manager Spratt as well BZ Inspector McCutcheon have all met with Elzer about the VSR. Elzer stated he is talking about the overall picture not just the VSR and that not once in his meeting with Spratt did, they talk about how businesses are doing or why businesses are closing. Elzer said the VSR is just the villages latest attempt to get rid of business to which Mayor Conaway said it is an attempt to get rid of blight and get rid of people who buy buildings and do nothing with them. Mr. Walker the government isn't holding back growth and prosperity, it is the blight; no smart businessman wants to come into a town filled with blight. Mr. Simpson asked if Elzer had any ideas to improve things, Elzer said for the Village to sit down with the people who have the businesses/properties to develop of plan for the future. Elzer said they just closed down a business and he can't think of one council person who had ever been there, council should be involved in what is going on. He said the only organization with the ability to attract new business is the Village and they are driving them away. Mr. Simpson suggested Mr. Elzer come up with a committee that is will to work with a couple village officials so they can sit down and discuss these issues. Elzer said it would be great but it would be hard to do at this point and then asked if the VSR could be put on hold until those meetings are held. Multiple council members said no as it was already passed. Mr. Simpson said they would come up with a list of people for the meeting within next week and asked Mr. Elzer to do the same. Business owner Maggie Gugliermo asked to speak, Dr. Rocco made a motion to allow it seconded by Mr. Povenski, Ms. May, Mr. Povenski, Dr. Rocco and Mr. Runnion voted yes to allow the statement. Ms. Gugliermo stated that since the Mayor called her out about her flag shop she wanted to ask if everyone new how the M & W Building was purchased. It was purchased at a Sheriffs sale and they were not allowed to enter the building prior to purchase so they didn't know what condition it was in. Elzer not that until BZ Inspector McCutcheon was hired they were under the impression that that property was restricted to residential but he said it would be "grandfathered".

**CLERK: NO REPORT**

**MAYOR:** In reference to 2023 Council Committees the only changes would be to Dev/Finance with Ms. May being Chair, Mr. Runnion and Mr. Simpson and Legislation with Mr. Runnion being Chair, Mr. Simpson and Mr. Walker. Dr. Rocco made the motion to make the changes seconded by Mr. Walker, all in favor. Mr. Runnion then nominated Mr. Simpson as Mayor Pro Tem, seconded by Mr. Walker, all in favor. In reference to boards/commissions appointments; ZBA – Brenda Ginder & Jerry Coblentz, CRA- Paula Jurjavcic, Stephanie Elick and Becky Foster. A motion for both boards appointments was made by Ms. May, seconded by Mr. Walker, passed unanimously. PC-John Turner, the motion to appoint was made by Dr. Rocco, seconded by Mr. Walker and passed unanimously.

**MANAGER:** Interim Manager Spratt stated the PD is on year three of a four-year grant for a police officer. The third years is a 50/50 split (\$35,000/\$35,000). They are also applying for a \$15,000 training grant for two new officers. Fire Chief Drabick stated on Sun Jan 29 the FD has the Community Center at the park reserved to begin registration for the new My ID program they are offering to the community. Mayor Conaway thanked the EP Police Officer Association for their

work with No Shave November as they raised \$3855 to purchased Christmas gifts for 18 kids the holiday season.

**LAW DIRECTOR:** Atty. Powers stated the contractor registration is on the agenda for a first reading tonight. He noted on the last page he listed the initial registration fee as \$150; he added a paragraph about subsequent registration and he needed to know what fee council wished for those. A Dev/Fin Committee meeting was called for 6:30 pm prior to the next meeting on January 23 to discuss the fees.

**THERE WERE NO VISITORS COMMENTS ON CURRENT LEGISLATION**

**VISITORS:** Kent & Darlene Chapman, Jerry Coblentz, Mike Dugan, John Davis, Don & Dianne Elzer, Carolyn Hecking, Stephanie Elick, Nicole Johannes, Dave Biggins, Amanda Smith, Mike & Missy Smith, Ron & Peggy Caratelli, Chuck Doll, Karen Conaway, Conner Conaway, Karen King, Tom Figley, Tifani Coffi, Tami & Bob Harris, Patrick Oneill, Maggie Gugliemo, Sherry Dyke, Officer Jake Koehler, Officer Anthony Monteleone.

**LEGISLATION:** Mr. Runnion introduced Ord. 24-2022 for a third reading and made a motion that it be read by title only, seconded by Mr. Walker. **An ordinance vacating McClure Avenue from the Eastern Line of Ellis Street, east to its terminus.** Mr. Runnion called for a vote on Ord. 24-2022. Ms. May-y, Mr. Povenski-y, Dr. Rocco-y, Mr. Runnion-y, Mr. Simpson-y, Mr. Walker-y. Mr. Runnion introduced Ord. 25-2022 for a third reading and made a motion that it be read by title only, seconded by Ms. May. **An ordinance amending section 452.14 (limited parking areas) of the Codified Ordinances of East Palestine, Ohio.** Mr. Runnion called for a vote on Ord. 25-2022. Mr. Povenski-y. Dr. Rocco-y, Mr. Runnion-y, Mr. Simpson-y, Mr. Walker-y, Ms. May-y. Mr. Runnion introduced Ord. 26-2022 for a third reading and made a motion that it be read by title only, seconded by Dr. Rocco. **An ordinance authorizing the position of Finance Clerk and creating a job description.** Mr. Runnion called for a vote on Ord. 26-2022. Dr. Rocco-y, Mr. Runnion-y, Mr. Simpson-y, Mr. Walker-y, Ms. May-y, Mr. Povenski-y. Mr. Runnion introduced Ord. 1-2023 for a first reading and made a motion that it be read by title only, seconded by Mr. Walker. **An ordinance amending, creating, and adopting Chapter 1442 Contractor Registration of the Codified Ordinances of East Palestine, Oh.**

**ADJOURN:** With no further business Mr. Simpson made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded Dr. Rocco. All in favor, meeting adjourned.

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**MISTI J. MARTIN CLERK**

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**MAYOR TRENT CONAWAY**