

Town Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2024
6:00 PM

The Town Council of the Town of Kouts, Indiana met in the Kouts Town Hall, 210 South Main Street, Kouts, Indiana 46347 on the 15th day of April at 6:00 p.m. for the purpose of conducting their regular monthly meeting.

Council President Tyler Brock called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

Roll call was taken and the following members were present: Councilors Tyler Brock, Tim Gant, Harold Salyer and CJ Wittmer. Also present, Clerk-Treasurer Laurie Tribble, Police Chief Michael Miller, Fire Chief Jeremy Gettler, and Building Inspector/Park Director Orville Jefferson. Attorney Schwerd and Blake Jefferson were absent from the meeting.

Public Hearing for OCRA (Office of Community Rural Affairs) Grant- Mike Kleinpeter, of Kleinpeter and Asso. who is a Certified Grant Administrator was in attendance and explained to the audience some details about the grant process. First, there was a notice in the Times May 2nd stating the town has a water improvement project in the amount of approx. \$9,367,000. The town will be applying for a water construction grant from OCRA for \$700,000. Other funds that will be used to fund the project will be ARPA Funds in the amount of \$443,736, SRF Funds in the amount of \$8,879,790 and well settlement funds in the amount of \$43,474. We currently have had some land acquisition issues that we are working on. A proposal will be sent later this month and a formal application will be made on June 28 after the second public hearing. OCRA representatives will visit in May and if awarded, the funds will be awarded in August. After award we have 6 months to bid the project. Residents are encouraged to send in any water quality issues and how your family may have been impacted in the form of a letter or pictures and turn them in to the Town Hall. The higher the score on the grant application the better. Adam Sitka, Wessler Engineering, explained they have been working with the town reviewing the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) that looks at the entire water system. Mr. Sitka went over a hand-out that he gave the audience. The town has two working wells. There used to be two additional wells that were abandoned over time, and one water treatment plant where two chemicals are fed, polyphosphate and sodium hypochlorite (bleach) to treat the water. After the treatment plant there are two storage tanks and one distribution system. Those are the assets of the water system. The current treatment plan is not effective in removing contaminants such as manganese and iron that can have an effect on odor, taste and color of the water. The town currently addresses the issue by flushing the system using fire hydrants to decrease contaminate buildup and about 14 million gallons of water is flushed annually with two auto flushers, that is 15% of all the water used in town. We look at the system and what it will look at in 20 years. The towns well 3 will have outlived its expected life by then. The east water storage tank is 84 years old and has exceeded its useful life. It is made of riveted construction. The west storage tank is 50 years old. Looking at a 20-year growth in population the average growth is 10.2%

every 10 years, the estimated growth by 2043 is 460 people. The average day water demand today is 237,300 gpd and is expected to be 282,000 gpd in 2043. The existing wells meet capacity for today's numbers, however should there be an increase in demand the wells do not meet the requirements. The proposed project is to replace the well, construct a water treatment plant, and construct an elevated storage tank. The East Tank would be demolished and the West Tank rehabilitated. The proposed solutions: For the well it's adding a third well to replace the second well. For the treatment system will have a filtration system that will deal with the iron and manganese. The 60,000-gallon storage tank will be demolished and a new 250,000-gallon storage tank will be constructed. The proposed project schedule goes as follows: the design will be completed in July; we are hoping to bid the project this year with a completion date of 2026.

Tyler Brock opened the Public Hearing for comments or questions:

Alesha Heitz, 203 Will St. -The iron and manganese that was mentioned how is that level measured. Mr. Sitka stated by IDEM standards.

Mike Kleinpeter added that the town did score very well with OCRA. He tried to make contact with the land owner today, but he was not available, however he did make contact with someone in the home.

Brandi Kneifel, 716 Sharyn – Ms. Kneifel asked why we don't qualify for certain grants? She knows our communities income is higher but it is her understanding that LaCrosse is not paying back their loans. 1. Why does Kouts have to pay back so much funding? She feels we already pay too much for the water we have and that our bills will be going up and that this will impact the residents that can't afford their bill. 2. Is there a secondary plan if we are not awarded the funding. Mike Kleinpeter wrote the grant for LaCrosse. Our problem is the project is large and we can't just go out and get loans or grant money. We have applied to the State Revolving Loan Fund, that is what LaCrosse did. All the applications are due April 1st for that funding. They then rank and score each application. In July or August they release that ranking. In that ranking they will go through and award any additional grant or loan money. There is a chance we may get additional funding over the \$700,000. As of now we don't have any grant money. One option is to go after the OCRA Grant and team it with the SRF funds. Second option, is to take a SRF loan for the whole project. Adam, added that we could break the project into smaller pieces. However, when you add up the smaller projects, this would make the cost of the project a lot higher, however that is the backup plan if necessary. If we do one piece, we still have a lot of fees. The engineering, the bidding, the rate consultant fees, the loan etc. If you break up the project it significantly impacts the cost of the project. There are some additional "secret" grant dollars available through SRF, they have not announced those grant awards as of yet. Ms. Kneifel asked if there was any funding available for those who can't pay their bills? Laurie Tribble answered, we don't have an account set up for that purpose. That funding would have to come from the citizens. If you can't pay your water bill the Trustee's Office will help pay utilities also.

Jill Stricker, 702 Alice- Questioned the term secret money? That was just a term used there isn't really secret money. There is special money available for lead service lines, emerging contaminants and disadvantage communities many different types of funding. The Town has taken all the steps to obtain funding to limit the impact on the town citizens. She then asked if

this project is going to take care of all the piping in Kouts? Adam answered the project would provide for a new well, plant and water tower. By doing so this will improve the water that is in the system. The build-up of iron and manganese will flush out and will no longer accumulate in the system. As flushing continues, the iron and manganese will continue to be flushed out. The piping itself will not be replaced. She then asked why we need a new water tower, what's wrong with the one we have now? The 60,000-gallon tank is too old to be refurbished and is past its normal lifetime. She also asked if fluoride would then be added to the water? No fluoride will be added. Ms. Kneifel asked what is currently added to the water. Adam answered chlorine and phosphate. The chlorine used will be less and filters will improve the color and taste of the water. An ORICAL will be fed into the lines for the first year. It is a cleaning agent and will eliminate the need to treat the water and then waste 14 million gallons a year flushing the lines. Ms. Heitz asked who is paying for the flushed water? Councilor Brock added it is a loss of revenue from flushing that water. The costs are spread over the entire community. Kevin Salyer noted that not having to pump that water the equipment will last longer. Ms. Stricker asked if the water pressure will still be enough to shower etc. The answer was yes it will be the same as it is currently. Ms. Heitz asked if we know or don't know if the people pay for the offset of the flushing? Mike Kleinpeter stated, a financial advisor is required to set rates. They work with Laurie to find out all the expenses for the water department to operate. What do the pumps cost to run, utility bills, labor, chemicals. They gather all the cost for the last three years and they build a case of what the costs will be and divide the needed number to operate the plant by the number of customers and that is the cost to the consumer. That's why smaller communities have a larger spike in their rates because they have less customers to pass the costs around to. Ms. Heitz stated she has called Ed Soliday's office to file a complaint about the water quality because this is a common complaint on Facebook. They opened a file and will contact IDEM also. Adam stated that's great to get the word out and get the community involved. Mike Kleinpeter reported we need an easement to move forward with the project. Ms. Stricker asked if LaCrosse had an increase in rates. Yes, there was a rate increase. Once we do this project, we can go back to SRF next year and ask for additional funding to do other projects. Kevin Salyer added that LaCrosse is half the size of Kouts, so you can't really compare the two. Adam Sitka added that they also have a lot of lead service lines that will need to be replaced. Mike Kleinpeter, after looking up the numbers, stated that LaCrosse received \$700,000 from OCRA in 2020 and received a \$3.3 million dollar loan.

Jake Southwell, 404 Gordon Terrace- How long has Kouts been flushing? Councilor Salyer answered, there are two auto flushers that flush all the time and hydrants are flushed twice a year. The town was flushing in 1987 when he owned a business on 49 and 8. Do we know how much sediment is in the system? Adam stated it depends on where and the age of the system?

Judy Goodman, 207 W College- Asked how does the treatment plant work? What is the filter? We feed chlorine into the system, which causes solvents to fall out. Those solvents are pushed through the filters which contain gravel, sand and anthracite that gets pushed through and removes those things from the water. After a certain amount of operating time the system gets reversed and the water is pushed down through the filter and pushes all the stuff out of the water and that gets disposed of in a backwash holding pond at the back of the site. That dirty water sits in that pond and gets cleaned out every so often. Ms. Kneifel asked if as our bills go

up, is our water quality going to get worse? Yes, but not for extended periods of time, more like intermittently over the first year.

John Schoon, 401 Woodland asked if any mains would be replaced? No mains will be replaced during this project. He also asked if there was any income coming from the contamination lawsuit? We don't know what the amount is for the well replacement at this time. We currently do have \$43,474 in well contamination settlement funds that will be used for this project. Next public hearing will probably be June 10 at 6pm. Tyler Brock thanked everyone for attending the meeting. The public hearing is now closed.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the March 11th, 2024 regular meeting minutes were submitted to the council for approval. Councilor Salyer motioned to approve the minutes as submitted and Councilor Wittmer seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Claims: The Accounts Payable Docket from March 12, to April 15, 2024 was presented to the Council for approval. Councilor Salyer motioned to approve the Accounts Payable Docket as submitted and Councilor Wittmer seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Departmental/Contractual Reports:

***Clerk-Treasurer-Laurie Tribble** reported the vactor is still being repaired with Jack Doheny in Whiteland, Indiana. We would like to pick it up as soon as it's ready since we need it back in service. I'm asking for approval to issue payment to pick up the vactor not to exceed \$20,000. Councilor Salyer motioned to approve payment not to exceed \$20,000 and Councilor Gant seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. Next, the insurance company did not renew the Clerk's \$30,000 bond at the beginning of the year. Instead, they canceled it without warning which they are not allowed to do. They have reissued it and back dated it to January 1, 2024 and it will be filed with Porter County.

***Attorney-No report.**

***Park-** The Parks Department asked for permission for the 2024 Christmas Parade this year and for Chief Miller to sign the road closure permit. Councilor Salyer motioned to approve the parade and signature and Councilor Gant seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. Director Jefferson thanked Wessler Engineering for volunteering at Drazer Park, moving mulch and raking. He further stated he would like to replace the basketball court at the park. They are currently looking into it. This would be a great asset for the whole community.

***Police Department-** Chief Miller reported the department statistics are up for the first quarter as compared to 2023:

| | <u>2023</u> | 2024 |
|-----------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| Citations | 10 | 116 |
| Warnings | 7 | 214 |
| Arrests | 4 | 7 (3-DUI, 3-Suspended and 1 Battery) |

Councilor Brock stated their work is appreciated and that he has heard positive feedback from the community.

***Plan Commission-** No report.

***Building Inspector-** No report.

***Storm Water Board-** Kevin Salyer reported they are working on getting quotes to get Church St paved after the completion of the project. He has also been emailing back and forth with the contact. Matthew Deitchley, from INDOT that CJ Wittmer had talked to at a NIRPC meeting. He is hoping to meet with him sometime next week.

***Economic Development Commission-** Tammy Dubbels reported the EDC is currently working on the Town Hall remodel. The basketball court has been torn out at Drazer Park.

***Fire Department-** Fire Chief Gettler reported they received a grant from Porter County Community Foundation for personal protection equipment in the amount of \$1800. They are also going to be doing joint training with Hebron Fire on Wednesday's.

New Business

Park Board Appt- Tyler Brock appointed Samantha Tribble to the Park Board.

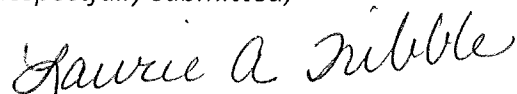
Drop-Off Recycling Site Lease Agreement- Councilor Salyer motioned to approve the drop off recycling site lease at the town garage covering the next two years, with a lease payment of \$2. Councilor Wittmer seconded the motion. Motion carried. 4-0.

Any Other Matters That Come Before the Council

Adjournment:

Councilor Wittmer motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m., and Councilor Salyer seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie A. Tribble
Clerk-Treasurer


(Council Member signatures on next page)

absent

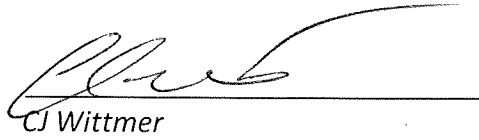
Tyler Brock, President



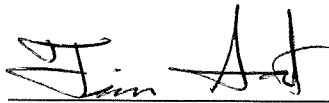
Blake Jefferson, Vice-President



Harold Salyer



CJ Wittmer



Tim Gant