

**Minutes
Special Council Meeting
3 South Main Street
Thornville, OH
March 6, 2023**

Council Members:

Erica O'Neill
Lynne Snider
Tasia Savage
Sterling Krout

Other Village Officials:

Gina Kaetzel- Mayor
Traci Sturgill- Village Administrator
Dan Williams- Chief of Police
Kelly Beem- Fiscal Officer

Guests Present: None

Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance:

Mayor Kaetzel called the Village of Thornville Special Council Meeting to order on March 6 at 7:00 p.m. by saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Roll Call was taken with Council member Erica O'Neill, Council President Sterling Krout, Council member Lynne Snider and Council member Tasia Savage all present. Council member Kim Billman was absent due to a work event. Council member Ashley Moore was also absent.

Mayor Kaetzel stated we need a **motion** to excuse Council member Kim Billman from tonight's meeting. **Motion** made by Council President Sterling Krout and was seconded by Council member Erica O'Neill. A roll call vote was taken with all council members voting aye.

Roll Call

Erica O'Neill- aye
Tasia Savage- aye
Sterling Krout- aye
Lynne Snider- aye

Motion passed 4-0

Mayor Kaetzel stated we need a **motion** to excuse Council member Ashley Moore from tonight's meeting. **Motion** made by Council President Sterling Krout and was seconded by Council member Erica O'Neill. A roll call vote was taken with all council members voting aye.

Roll Call

Sterling Krout- aye
Erica O'Neill- aye
Tasia Savage- aye
Lynne Snider- aye

Motion passed 4-0

Motion to approve the Business Agenda for the Special Council Meeting on March 6, 2023:

Mayor Kaetzel requested a **motion** to approve the business agenda for the Special Council Meeting on March 6, 2023. A **motion** was made by Council President Sterling Krout and was seconded by Council member Erica O'Neill. A roll call vote was taken with all Council members voting aye.

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Roll Call

Erica O'Neill- aye

Lynne Snider- aye

Tasia Savage- aye

Sterling Krout- aye

Motion passed 4-0

Old Business:

- Utility Rates- Discussion held. Village Administrator Traci Sturgill advised council she had put together a spreadsheet, as requested, showing a breakdown of \$0.25 & \$0.50 per thousand gallon increases for water and also showing a \$3 & \$5 increase on the base rate for water & sewer in their folders for review. Mayor Kaetzel also added she would like to request we have a rate study completed this year. This has never been done to her knowledge. Council member Lynne Snider doesn't think it has ever been either. We are being told by engineers and grant applications that we will not qualify due to how low our utility rates currently are. They look at those and say we (the Village) aren't doing enough to help cover our costs & projects within to award the grants. Traci added we will probably all be shocked once this rate study is back showing what we should be charging for water & sewer due to our mhi (median household income) being \$89,700 for the Village. Traci added the engineers will be looking at our rates if we upgrade the sewer plant also and feels we should look at creating a 2 year increase instead of a 5 year as council has done in the past. This will give us time to complete a rate study to see where our rates need to be for the operation of the water and sewer facilities. Mayor Kaetzel explained how much everything has unfortunately increased in the economy and those increases also affect the Village. (Chemicals, gasoline, electric, propane etc.) Village Administrator Traci Sturgill stated she will have a quote on the cost to implement a rate study by the next meeting. Mayor Kaetzel advised we need a **motion** from council for the increase they feel we should implement by June 1, 2023.

Motion made by Council President Sterling Krout to increase the per 1000 gallons rate by \$0.25 and was seconded by Council member Lynne Snider. A roll call vote was taken with 3 council members voting aye and 1 council member voting no.

Roll Call

Tasia Savage- aye

Sterling Krout- aye

Lynne Snider- aye

Erica O'Neill- no

Motion passed 3-1

Mayor Kaetzel asked for a **motion** from council for the increase they feel we should now implement on the base rate.

Further discussion held: Council President Sterling Krout feels we should do the least aggressive increase until we have historical numbers from the rate study to justify where they need to be to the residents. Council member Lynne Snider feels we shouldn't raise the rates at all until we have the rate study completed.

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Council member Erica O'Neill reminded council we need to show the rate increases now in order to apply and receive grant or low interest loans for anything. This will affect our sewer plant grant applications if we don't increase them now. Traci advised she suggested the 2 year ordinance now and then by year 3 we would have our rate study to refer too for increases then and create a new ordinance in 2024 effective June 1, 2025. Council member Lynne Snider asked Fiscal Officer Kelly Beem if she has ever dealt with a rate study. Kelly advised no. The Village of Somerset gives one flat 3% increase yearly but they have an entirely different rate structure and much higher rates than Thornville. Council President Sterling Krout asked if the increased funds could be used for other things? Traci advised no. Kelly breaks down every water and sewer payment and the funds can only legally be used for water and sewer. Kelly added we spend very close to what we bring in yearly. Traci did say the reason that the budget is close in the past couple years is due to the budgeting for the new equipment and trucks. She has also been making sure a back up pump is on hand for emergency situations. One pump alone is \$50,000. Mayor Kaetzel wants to be sure we remain able to save up funds as we have in the past to be able to purchase vehicles and equipment we may need. Traci is very concerned with what our rate study will show and what we decide to do with it. Kelly added she felt the village would have a few years to get to the point of where the rates should be (gradual increases) once the rate study is back. Traci added this is another reason she has been very worried about losing Northern Perry Water revenue. We really do need that income to operate. Council President Sterling Krout added there is a lot of uncertainty in the economic future. Mayor Kaetzel added that it is impossible for us to know what the future may be. Council member Tasia Savage added she is concerned about having the levy on this year also. Village Administrator Traci Sturgill asked Council member Lynne Snider how the rate increases were decided on prior to her being administrator and this current council. Lynne felt the former administrator just projected them herself, brought them to council and said that is the way we are going to go. Mayor Kaetzel reminded council of the rate comparison to all surrounding areas and our rates are extremely low.

Fiscal Officer Kelly Beem suggested just increasing our base rate \$5 and not the usage for now (2023). We will bring in more of an increase on the base rate then next year (2024) increase the usage by \$0.50 per 1000 gallons and no increase to the base rate.

Council member Tasia Savage likes Fiscal Officer Kelly Beem's suggestion and made a **motion** to increase the base rate from \$12 to \$17 for in town customers and from \$35 to \$45 base rate increase for out of town customers, effective June 1, 2023 and effective June 1, 2024 a usage rate increase of \$0.50 per thousand gallons making the rate \$3.50 per thousand gallons effective for in town customers and \$7.00 per thousand gallons for out of town customers effective June 1, 2024. **Motion** seconded by Council member Erica O'Neill. A roll call vote was taken with 2 council members voting aye, 1 council member abstain and 1 council member voting no.

Roll Call

Tasia Savage- aye
Sterling Krout- abstain
Lynne Snider- no
Erica O'Neill- aye

Motion passed 2-1

Mayor Kaetzel agrees with this **motion**. Village Administrator Traci Sturgill will prepare the ordinance and have it ready for the March 27th council meeting.

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- Parks & Recreation Levy- Mayor Kaetzel advised council she would like to go over details on what we can & can't discuss at the next Special Meeting at the school. We have to be very, very careful about what we talk about and answer. This meeting is only for the parks & recreation levy on the agenda so we can't answer any questions on anything but this subject matter that is stated on the agenda legally. Mayor Kaetzel feels by putting on the levy, we are allowing the Villagers of Thornville to decide if they feel they want the pool or not. We are leaving it up to them. On the survey responses sent out last year, 90-95% of the Villagers stated they wanted the pool replaced which is why we moved forward getting the quotes put together to either repair or replace. But now that it is above what this Village can pay for, we are taking it to the Villagers to decide if they still want that. Traci let council know there is an informational spreadsheet in their folders with a breakdown of several home values and what it would cost that homeowner in levy taxes per year. From what Traci is finding in the auditor's website the highest home would pay \$358 additional per year. This is on a home that sold for \$540,000. We can figure up anyone's tax amount from the auditor's website. Traci wrote down some information we will need to advise the public on. We will be applying for grants and loans. They may ask if membership rates and admissions will increase. Traci advised the levy will bring in \$80,141 per year on a 3-mill continuous levy. \$13,000 of this will need to be appropriated for the care of the parks as we have now. We combined the current park levy of .50 mill into one. Council member Sterling Krout asked if there was a way the levy could cover the cost of admissions like Murfield. Traci advised Murfield is most likely charging an HOA to cover the cost of those admissions to every resident who lives there and we would not be able to do that with these levy funds. Since the special meeting is a council meeting, all council members are permitted to speak freely. Traci advised she will have informational sheets there for the public. Council member Lynne Snider also reminded everyone of the 5-minute talking time limit. Lynne also advised we shouldn't be going down the row of public attendees at council meetings. They should be required to call in and be on the agenda to speak. Mayor Kaetzel has also been to meetings where you sign a separate sheet upon sign in if you wish to speak at the meeting. Traci explained we should also be having discussions after a motion is made, prior to the roll call. We will start this new procedure.

Public Comments: None

Adjournment: Mayor Kaetzel asked for a **motion** to adjourn the meeting. **Motion** made by Council President Sterling Krout and was seconded by Council member Lynne Snider. A roll call vote was taken with all council members voting aye.

Roll Call:

Erica O'Neill- aye
Lynne Snider- aye
Sterling Krout- aye
Tasia Savage- aye

Motion passed 4-0

Adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



Mayor Gina Kaetzel



Traci Sturgill, Council Clerk