

REGULAR SESSION, COMMON COUNCIL, February 13, 2023

Be it Remembered that the Common Council of the City of Plymouth, Indiana, met in regular session on February 13, 2023. The meeting was held in the Council Chambers, on the second floor of the City Building, 124 N. Michigan St., Plymouth, Indiana and was called to order at 6:36 p.m.

Mayor Senter led the Pledge of Allegiance and Councilman Ecker offered prayer.

Mayor Senter presided for Council Members Greg Compton, Duane Culp, Don Ecker Jr, Jeff Houin, Randy Longanecker and Shiloh Carothers Milner. Council Member Robert Listenberger attended virtually. City Attorney Surrisi and Clerk-Treasurer Gorski were present. The public was able to see and hear the meeting through Microsoft Teams.

Council Members Culp and Compton moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the regular session of the Common Council on January 23, 2023 as presented. The motion carried.

Mayor Senter states that four weeks from tonight on March 13, 2023 that Councilman Ecker and himself will not be here. He states that he will be in training in Indianapolis while Ecker will be on vacation so Councilman Culp has volunteered to run both meetings that day.

Ecker states that depending on the situation he will try to attend virtually.

Human Resources Manager Klingerman states on January 9, 2023 for the first meeting in January that it was discussed to start a committee to evaluate their need in the Police Department. She states at that time they had lost four officers and now they are down to six. She explains that fortunately for open positions the Police Chief has filled two of them. She states that they were discussing what they were doing to help draw in attention from the public to get officers hired. She explains that a lateral transfer policy had already been adopted and went into effect last August as it was put into our employee handbook. She states that they also did discuss implementing any take-home car policies which will be implemented March 1st. She states that they were also discussing more that they could do and in a lot of work and talks with the Clerk-Treasurer they did come up with the possibility for a \$5,000.00 salary increase for all positions for the 77 fund who work within the Police Department. She states that they looked at all the numbers and the Clerk-Treasurer does believe it is a possibility. She states that is the proposal that they are asking of the Council and if it is passed then it will be implemented by April 1st and it will come out to be a \$3,750.00 increase for this year.

Compton asks if they should include this in the updated take-home car policy as well.

Klingerman responds by stating that they are implementing an updated take-home car policy and the Police Chief will be announcing that at a later date and it will be put in place March 1st.

Surrisi states that those internal department policies are just issued by the Police Chief and he has an online software that takes what used to be the codebook of policies and procedures and has that online so he can make those changes correctly.

Compton states that he does not object to that at all but since those are monetary changes that it would have to come before the Council for approval. He states that he saw in the paper that they were going to have a vote on increased wages and that he would just want to add that to it because he believes that it is necessary to at least do adjoining counties for take-home and also have the ability to drive the car. He states that is what the Sheriff's department is doing and that is what South Bend is doing as well. He states that he is unsure if that is what they are having for March 1st or not.

Bacon asks if he mentioned adjoining counties.

Compton responds by stating that take-home for adjoining counties is what Marshall County, South Bend and Elkhart have. Bacon agrees that they do. Compton states that would help them draw new employees from those other counties. He provides the example of if someone from Fulton County wants to join the Plymouth Police Department or if someone from South Bend wants to get out of South Bend and come to our beautiful community here that it would be an incentive to do that.

Bacon states that he is not going to say no to that.

Mayor Senter states that the Police Chief is in trial right now and doing this in baby steps.

Compton states that he is just making a suggestion but he would propose to adding that to tonight's increase and that it would be vital for them to do that as soon as they can.

Klingerman states that the initial discussion tonight was to just open up the take-home car policy to just Marshall County itself. Bacon adds unlimited use.

Listenberger adds that he would support what Compton was saying as well. He states that in Klingerman's memo to them she mentioned retention on that committee he was sure there was a reason he was not invited to. He states the take-home car policy would help retention, the \$5,000.00 might help retention, but he believes retention might be as important as recruitment. He states that he is definitely going to support the raise and go along with what Compton says.

Klingerman states when they meet again, they will open up the take-home car policies and open it up to surrounding counties if that is what they wish.

Compton states that they can make a proposal tonight and asks if there is any reason why they can't do that. He states that it does not say anywhere that a committee needs to meet to do that.

Howin responds by stating he is not opposed to it either and that it makes a lot of sense. He states that they authorized a take-home policy to be evaluated and adjusted at the discretion of the

Police Chief. He states that he is uncertain if it is necessary for them to vote on it as they have already given him authority to adjust the parameters of the take-home policy as needed.

Compton states there is no reason that they can't either.

Bacon states that if they want to do that, he would be okay with it. He states that his concern is, which he stated to the committee is that you can't put the genie back in the bottle. He states at the end of the year when the Clerk-Treasurer states that their fuel budget is more than what they have.

Compton states that's why the other departments are doing the adjoining counties.

Clerk-Treasurer Gorski states that is not built into the budget this year to do that.

Houin asks Bacon if he is having these discussions with the officers on the force to find out what appeals to them. He asks if they are asking to be able to drive the cars more or asking for something else.

Bacon responds by stating right now all their cars are out except for two spares. He states that he already has a certified officer coming on so he will take one of those and hopefully when they get the three new cars that are budgeted that they will still need more cars for when they are fully staffed.

Mayor Senter adds that is why they are not trading in.

Bacon agrees and states they will still need more vehicles added to the fleet to reach the 25 to have one for every officer.

Listenberger asks on the number of vehicles that are needed.

Bacon responds by stating that with the three that are coming in this year that it would put them at 23 so they will just need two more. He states if they wanted to approve those tonight that he would be happy to do that. He explains that one of the newer officers that just took home a take-home car that he described that like a \$10,000 raise and that officer lives right outside of Plymouth. He adds that currently the policy is to and from work and they are hoping to expand that March 1st. He states policies like this is very important to them and obviously other departments offer it and Plymouth never did. He states that he saw a need for that and for some it is very important while for others it is not at all.

Listenberger asks if there is anything else that this Council should be doing or should not be doing that would be helpful in any way. He states that he does not want them to unknowingly hamstring any efforts for retention. He once again asks if there is anything that they should be talking about at this point.

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Bacon responds by stating that obviously the \$5,000 raise is big to retain the officers that they have now and there are things that were discussing during the Committee meeting as far as specialty pay for specialty positions within the department. He states that doing the last budget session he put in for a \$1,200 clothing allowance and he got a \$1,000 increase in that as well. He states that there are just things like that other departments offer. He lists the example little things like beards, which they changed the policy on that mid-year, that are simple to fix while there are bigger things like this.

Mayor Senter states that it took him a long time to do that.

Ecker states that this committee went through a lot of stuff where they had several meetings with a lot of back and forth. He states that the \$5,000.00 they are adding is on an annual basis that they are adding April 1st so that it becomes prorated, so it is going to be \$3,750.00 for the rest of the year. He states that secondly what is going on is that they could jump in and approve everything that is being asked for and then they would get into a sustainability issue and if they would be able to sustain that. He states that they do not know if they can so they are implementing along the way what is important. He compares it to the Pareto Analysis where they are looking at what is the most critical. He lists the take-home car as critical, the compensation as critical and if they can do something else down the road. He states it is the same way as how they did the Fire Department. He states that it was not done all at once as they did it all in segments because they wanted to make sure they could sustain it. He adds that while everyone is in agreement that these are good points that they are not taking anything off the table but this is what they can implement now and what they can do right. He states that he encourages them to take that into consideration and that this is a good proposal and a good step forward. He states that the Police Chief is advocating on behalf of his department and they, as a Council, are committed to providing safety for the citizens of this city and this is the right way to go.

Compton asks how many officers there are now that live outside of the county.

Bacon responds by stating that right now there is one who lives outside of the county but he is a specialty. He adds that he is their K-9 Officer.

Compton states this is something that he has gave a great deal of thought to by the way. He explains that he met with the Sheriff and he talked with some people up in South Bend as well. He states they all thought it was a critical part of them attracting qualified individuals to fill those positions. He provides the example that they get two or three people who want to live outside the county, which may be a stretch to begin with, that it is not going to make a great impact on the

budget. He states that if they do believe it is going to make a great impact then they he believes they are fooling themselves and they can spin around the block and wait until March 1st to implement the new procedure for take-home but he believes this added feature will give them far more benefit to attracting new police officers then the ones they currently have.

Mayor Senter asks for clarification that because you can go outside of Marshall County that it would be a better attraction then inside the county only.

Compton responds by stating that if someone from South Bend might be attracted to come to a smaller community and if they can drive their car home and use it. He states that is the same way if they are from Rochester, Knox, or Kosciusko County. He adds that it is not like they are going to get flooded with all kinds of people who want to live outside county limits. He states someone working for the City may end up moving here anyway but he does not think the impact is going to be that great. He states even the idea of it will benefit them greatly in hiring. He asks the Police Chief if he agrees with him.

Bacon responds by stating that he is in full support of him.

Mayor Senter states what he believes the Police Chief is worried about is how in county looks first. He suggests putting a three-month limit on it or something like that.

Bacon states his thing is that last year they went over in fuel. He lists one of the reasons is that fuel went up after the budget was set. He states that when he comes back for an additional appropriation for fuel this year then you would know why.

Compton adds that all of this is different then what their budget was because they were not talking about this nor did the committee meet prior to setting our budget.

Surtisi states that example is one of the features that Klingerman can touch on with these proposed salary changes.

Culp states that he has done a lot of studies on take-home cars going out of the county and he doesn't see a problem with it but he wants them to understand what Bacon is up against. He states they just started doing take-home cars and now they have to do it in baby steps. He explains that Bacon just does not want to take advantage of it. He can vouch that this is a great idea and the increase in money won't be that great unless someone is abusing it. He states that in his opinion, Bacon would be tracking that to begin with and if that is then the Police Chief addresses that. He states that with that said he agrees with Compton wholeheartedly but in due time when the Clerk-Treasurer is comfortable with the monies there and Bacon is comfortable with the baby steps he

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thinks they need to take. He adds that sometimes people will take advantage of it and he thinks that is why Bacon is saying no.

Compton adds that he has not heard Bacon say no at all.

Bacon states what he is saying with the budget is that he is on his third Clerk-Treasurer and they all scare him. He states that he is not looking to ask for an additional appropriation but if that is the route they want to go, then he is in full support. He states that the more they can do to attract people and to retain people, he is all for it.

Listenberger states he believes this is crucial and that he wouldn't take a job where he is getting that benefit currently to then not have it.

Compton states that he believes it is a carrot with a minimum amount of exposure for financial expenditures.

Bacon adds that doing it that way, one of the offers of employment tonight does reside out of county and that would benefit him and he is a very qualified applicant.

Marquardt asks if they are talking on Compton's proposal that every county that these officers can leave Plymouth, Indiana go to the mall in South Bend. He asks if Compton is thinking an officer can be hired out of county, drive to Plymouth, and have unlimited use in Plymouth. He adds that would change fuel a lot. He states with the possibility of abuse, if Bacon states that you can use this car for anything in surrounding counties, how are you not abusing it by going to the mall.

Compton asks what the difference would be then by letting someone in Marshall County use it anywhere they want to go and if they would be able to drive up to the mall.

Marquardt responds by stating not if they are only in Marshall County right now. He states that is why he is trying to clarify it.

Gorski explains that added use is also going to change our fuel bid and the warehouse budget.

Marquardt states if this is just someone in Saint Joseph County working in Plymouth driving to and from work then it is not such a big deal.

Mayor Senter states his take on this. He states that in his 15 years here, he has not hopefully micromanaged the department heads. He states respectfully to Compton that he does not want the Council to micromanage what Bacon is doing as well and if he can find out three months how this is going from March 1st to July 1st, then that is what he would prefer.

Compton states that his take is that he never intended on micromanaging anyone and he was making a suggestion that he believed the Police Chief would be in support of as well.

Houin states that coming into this conversation tonight of one of the things he wanted to be clear on and not so much that he is concerned, but that it is easy to assume for the public to see what they are doing tonight considered a pay raise and have a concern that they formed this committee to look into possible solutions and they are just throwing money at it. He states from what he has heard tonight, especially from Councilman Ecker, is that the committee has considered many different things and is having ongoing discussions about how they can incentivize officers to first of all stay in the department and to attract new ones. He believes this is going to be an ongoing process and this committee is going to have to keep at it and keep working on ways to make it an attractive department to work for. He likes Compton's idea and obviously the Police Chief is in favor of it but his personal feeling is that they formed this committee, they are working hard and they are doing a lot. He states there is a lot more on the table that is being considered and rather than make a snap judgement tonight about what the policy should be that he would prefer to at least give it until their next council meeting. He believes they should give Bacon the time to consider what Compton is suggesting and come back and let them know what his recommendation is or what the committee's recommendation is if they are able to meet and discuss it. He states that he would prefer to let them take a little time and answer those questions on what does surrounding counties mean. He asks if every officer has the authority to or the ability to drive their car to the mall on the weekends, drive to the grocery store, or take their family to events. He states that maybe that is what it is but it doesn't sound like they can answer that question right now. He states especially they can't know what the possible ramifications might be. He explains that he is all in favor of the idea but he would like to give the Police Chief and the committee a little time to examine it and come back with a recommendation before making a final decision on that.

Compton responds by stating that there is nothing that he stated that he disagrees with at all. He however does want to make one more comment and he wants to direct this to the Clerk-Treasurer and the Police Chief. He asks what does it cost them losing employees and having to hire new and train them. He explains it is far more than they would ever spend on any gasoline they would spend driving to an adjoining county.

Ecker responds by stating that is a fair point but once again that is part of the equation that goes into what they can do and what they can't do. He agrees with Compton's point and he also appreciates Houin's comments as each person is ultimately right that they need to continue to dig into this. He states that this is going to be an evolving process not only with the police department but with other departments as well. He states to sit here and make that decision tonight is premature.

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He states that he believes they have done the right things over the years with the decisions they made and by making adjustments where they needed to make adjustments but all of that has been done through time, study, conversations and analysis so to sit here and do it quickly, that is does not sit right with him. He states that he would reject that and vote against it. He states that he is in support of the increase as it is something they have to do now and it is something they have had great conversation on by validating the need to support it with the Clerk-Treasurer. He states that it was a lot of great input from a lot of great people and he would like to table the subject Compton brought up tonight.

Compton agrees and states that he believes everyone on the Council has put time and study into this as well. He states that he does not want to dismiss any other ideas and that he is fine with that.

Klingerman states that Gorski and her worked on this proposal and this would not require any additional appropriations by the end of the year. She states with that said she does not know about other things they are talking about but the salary increase proposed tonight was already built into the budget and they would not have to move any money.

Houin states that he also appreciates the detail that they have provided with the spreadsheet and the calculations to explain it all to them. He adds that he is not sure who produced that but he assumes Gorski was involved in that.

Gorski adds that they worked together.

Mayor Senter states that he had sat out aside from the meeting where Councilman Culp couldn't make it and he likes the way it is going and he appreciates everyone's leadership and input. Surrisi clarifies that the intent for tonight was just to share the work of the committee and get this discussion going and seeing there is momentum for approving this that they will get a draft of the revised salary ordinance prepared and presented at the next meeting. He states that there was some discussion since the Mayor and Councilman Ecker would be gone in the first meeting in March if they would be open to the idea of suspending the rules at their next meeting and try to get this all adopted then so it is in place so they are ready to go with payroll the first of April.

Ecker states that is should be noted as a reminder that if they do choose the suspend the rules that they need to have a unanimous vote in order to do that.

Surrisi agrees and states that they need to at least have two-thirds of the membership here and then a unanimous vote for those in attendance.

Houin asks if they can look forward to that at the next meeting. Surrisi agrees.

Clerk-Treasurer Gorski states that in their packets she included a list of Outstanding Unpaid warrants to be written off from 2020. According to IC 5.11-10.5, by March 1st of each year, the Clerk-Treasurer shall prepare a list of checks outstanding and unpaid for 2 or more years as of December 31st which shall be declared cancelled; one copy of the list is filed with the City Council, the other is kept in the Clerk-Treasurer's office. The funds from the cancelled checks are receipted back into the operating balance of the fund from which it was drawn. This requires no action by the Council. She states that this year the checks total \$574.05 to be written off from 2020. There were nine checks to city employees that she stopped payment on and reissued. She adds that those checks are not added in this \$574.05.

Fire Chief Holm states that about a month or a month and a half ago they were made aware from Crossroads Ambulance, who is the dealer for their new ambulance, that they were getting a 5500 Dodge RAM Chassis as part of the ambulance. He states that they found out that RAM was slowing their production down and will not be making as many. He states that the main thing with that is that they can still get that chassis with the fleet division but it was just going to push our time limit a lot further out. He states that the other option they had was to go more retail of taking the chassis and having to add a bunch of stuff to it. He explains that was going to increase the cost by about \$10,000 to do that. He states that the other option that they have they really dug into was for them to go ahead and find the chassis ourselves and have it specked out with approval from Crossroads to how it needs to be specked out. He explains that they were able to do that through Auto Park here in Plymouth and they came up with a price tag for that chassis in the amount of \$65,174.00. He states that they sent all that stuff over to Crossroads and they agreed with all the extras that would have to be put on it in order to do the build. He states that they also said it would not increase and that they would still stick with the price that they signed for minus the contribution of the chassis. He reminds the board that the price that they did sign for was a bit of an inflated price because it was so far out that they wanted to basically end up without a lot of surprises. He states that there is the chance they may end up saving money on that in the long term anyway when it is all said and done. He states that with that being said, he understands that they were not wanting to put any money towards the ambulance until next year when it was completed. He states that if they go this route then they will have to go ahead and purchase the chassis outright ahead of time and then send it over to have the rest of the ambulance built on top of it.

Mayor Senter asks where that would be at.

Holm responds by stating that PL Customs is the company that builds it.

Compton adds that they should have money for it because they allocated money out of the ARPA funds towards the new ambulance.

Houin states that because it is allocated the money is already sitting there waiting. He states that they can spend it now or spend it later but it is going to be spent on the ambulance.

Holm states that in the end it is going to be the same but they are just going to have to front some of the money now instead of next year.

Compton asks what the total price difference is from what they were doing before total to what they are doing now.

Holm responds by stating that the price they signed for was \$368,394 so they are going to end up being at about \$305,000 or so after the purchase of the chassis. He clarifies that the remaining balance at least.

Houin asks if he heard him correctly that by doing it this way their bottom line at the end shouldn't change.

Holm responds by stating that is correct. He states that the amount they signed for was still good when they initially signed for that. He clarifies when they signed for it, it was a \$12,000 inflated price just to compensate for a couple years out not knowing how different components could fluctuate pricing.

Culp asks what the turnaround is in getting that chassis.

Holm responds by stating they haven't told us that yet and that is why he was hoping his Assistant Fire Chief Jernstrom was here because he had all that information. He states they were going to be able to get it to them a lot quicker than if PL Customs went with it.

Culp asks if they need a motion to do this given that he already has this taken care of so they should be good to go.

Mayor Senter responds by stating it is in the budget.

Surrisi says that it wouldn't hurt since he will actually be spending money now.

Council Members Houin and Compton moved and seconded to approve the Chassis purchase as explained by Fire Chief Holm. The motion carried.

Surrisi states that for Stellar Communities they are preparing for their quarterly meeting with OCRA on the 27th just to give them the status of all their projects. He states that River Park Square Phase Two construction is still slated to be completed this Spring when the weather breaks and the last remaining work can be completed. He states that the Rees Theatre has an onsite visit from OCRA on the 15th or 16th as they are in the final closeout phases of the grant so that should be

wrapping up shortly. He states that the Greenways Trail Phase Three project is still in the preliminary engineering phase as there was environmental and archeological work going on. He states that as the design phase develops, Mike Reese with the Troyer Group will be working with Mike Hite at the Park Board on the choices of the trail location. He states that for the preliminary route of the trial was affected by some of the houses along the river they found archeological items which are classified as who knows what items from household use over the years. He states that in order to not have to do more evaluation of that they are going to slightly alter the path of the trail in a couple of places next to some of the overlook nodes. He adds that Riverside Commons is looking great.

Council Members Houin and Culp moved and seconded to accept the following

communications:

- Minutes of the Board of Public Works and Safety meeting of January 23, 2023
- February 13, 2023 Check Register
- January 24, 2023 Technical Review Committee Minutes
- MEMO 02.08.23 Request for Police Salary Increase

The motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the Council, Council Members Longanecker and Milner moved and seconded to adjourn, Mayor Senter declared the meeting adjourned at 7:17

p.m.


Lynn M. Gorski
Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED



Mark Senter, Mayor