

President Christopher McCann called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

### **Roll Call:**

#### **Council Members Present:**

President McCann Trustees: Gale, Cavendish, Harper, Cook and Conley

**Absent Members:** Trustee Ager joined via Zoom

**Staff Present:** DPW Superintendent- Chris Holton, Clerk-Scott and Village Manager/Zoning Administrator- Jim Dyer

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

Trustee Conley **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cavendish to approve the December 7, 2023 Regular meeting minutes. **Motion Carried.**

### **Approval of Agenda (amendments/additions):**

Trustee Conley **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cavendish to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion Carried.**

### **Correspondence:**

None

### **Public Comment:**

**Alan Dalzel-** expressed his view that the village should not enter into a contract with Housing North. He suggested that the village and township, along with the residents, already understand their housing needs. He believed that the key to achieving affordable housing is through local efforts and subsidies rather than spending money on external organizations like Housing North.

**Campbell McLeod-** inquired about the status of the Fairway View development and the allocation of Residential Equivalent Units (REUs). He expressed curiosity about whether the allocation of REUs had been revisited, which might affect housing developments and workforce housing. He also mentioned the possibility of offering a break on sewer rates for certain developments like the Fairway View project.

**Barbara McCann-** commended the Planning Commission for their outstanding work presented in the Dropbox. She acknowledged the extensive efforts of the committee over the past few years and expressed appreciation for their ongoing work. McCann additionally stated, as the vice chair of the Community Foundation, she encouraged council members and community members who haven't already done so to visit the Foundation's website. She mentioned that the Foundation had conducted a Housing Survey, the results of which are available on the website. Barbara emphasized the need for housing and noted that Housing North has the resources to help Northport move in the right direction to address this issue.

### **Staff Reports:**

The Council received written reports from the Clerk and DPW Superintendent.

#### **A. Village Manager/Zoning Administrator -**

##### **Village Manager/Zoning Administrator:**

Village Manager Jim Dyer's report covered various key points. He stressed the need for detailed analysis in future meetings and mentioned plans for new agenda software. iPads were set up for council members, and sewer improvement grant applications worth \$454,387 were submitted for the NLTUA's capital improvement program. A Medicare Health Reimbursement Arrangement (MHRA) was proposed to reduce insurance costs for Medicare-eligible employees. Adoption of the MHRA was recommended. A public hearing for the Seventh Street property was advised to facilitate a thorough review of materials and public comments. Funding for electric vehicle charging stations and purchasing policy revisions were discussed, and no land use permits were submitted during the reporting period.

## 1. **Committee Reports:**

### A. Employee Relations:

Minutes from the December 20, 2023 Employee Relations meeting were provided.

### B. Finance Committee:

Minutes from the December 13, 2023 Finance Committee meeting were provided.

### C. Infrastructure Committee:

Infrastructure Chair Cavendish mentioned that her December infrastructure report will be uploaded to the Dropbox soon. Most of the discussed items were already on the agenda or covered in DPW. The main focus of the committee is on reviewing and prioritizing various infrastructure projects for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and efforts are being made to ensure consistency in criteria used for project prioritization across committees.

### D. Waterfront:

Waterfront Chair Cook, mentioned that he didn't have enough time to prepare a written report of their December meeting. However, he highlighted a presentation by Phil Hallstedt regarding a kayak launching system and recommended that he present it to the full council in February.

### E. Parks and Trails:

Minutes from the December 18, 2023 Parks and Trails meeting were provided.

## 2. **Ex-Officio Board Reports:**

### A. Planning Commission:

Ex-officio member Jane Gale provided minutes from the December 20, 2023 meeting.

Planning Commission Chair Arbury presented a comprehensive report on the Village's 7th Street property. She acknowledged the dedication of Planning Commission members and residents during the two-year project. The timeline, starting in 2022, was outlined with modifications to the initial charge based on resident feedback. The process included attorney involvement and public outreach through surveys and publications. Arbury discussed the criteria used to evaluate proposed uses and highlighted three unresolved concerns, including the request for additional environmental studies. She recommended a public hearing for further discussion and decision-making by the Village Council.

Village Manager Jim Dyer clarified the role of the Planning Commission as a recommending body to the Village Council, underscoring that they cannot enact ordinances or limit the Village Council's choices, particularly concerning the sale of village property, and recommended that the Council hold a Public Hearing.

### B. NLTUA:

Ex-officio member Chris McCann gave a brief report on the NLTUA's December meeting, highlighting discussions about a new auditing firm, the draft budget for the upcoming fiscal year, and rules and regulations for NLTUA, enabling them to set sewer rates for townships. Trustee Conley raised concerns about potential rate increases and the need for provisions to assist struggling residents, with President McCann mentioning no direct concerns but agreeing to address the issue. Village Manager Jim Dyer mentioned one inquiry about public assistance. Trustee Conley proposed creating a fund to aid residents facing rate-related challenges, which Trustee Cavendish supported. The question arose regarding whether the village could establish such a fund if NLTUA couldn't, and Dyer explained the flexibility of either entity to do so, with grant funds from sewer capital improvements also considered.

### 3. Discussion/Potential Action Items:

#### A. Consider a Housing North Partnership Contract:

Village Manager Jim Dyer confirmed the village's commitment to contribute \$1,000 annually for three years starting in May 2022 but mentioned the need to verify if these payments had been made. The discussion then shifted towards the necessity for clarity regarding the services provided in exchange for the funding. There was a suggestion to invite Housing North for a presentation, similar to the county's approach in hiring someone for a similar role. Dyer expressed agreement that a presentation would provide insights into the fund's utilization. Ultimately, it was decided to table the discussion and for the village manager to contact Housing North for clarification on how the funding is used and to discuss the potential for a presentation.

#### B. Consider Establishing a Medicare Health Reimbursement Arrangement:

Trustee Harper **Moved Supported by** Trustee Cavendish to authorize the Village Manager to establish a Medicare Health Reimbursement Arrangement.

**Discussion:** Trustee Conley inquired about the specifics of the Medicare Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA), particularly regarding what expenses it covers. Conley mentioned Medicare Parts A, B, C, and D, as well as Medigap, seeking clarification on which of these the HRA reimburses for. Village Manager Jim Dyer explained that the HRA can cover premiums, such as those for Medicare Advantage plans, Medigap plans, Part B, and Part D prescription plans, but it does not pay for Medigap itself. Trustee Conley then asked about the tax implications for both the village and the beneficiary. Dyer clarified that the village doesn't pay taxes and therefore wouldn't be taxed for providing this benefit. However, if the village were to provide a taxable benefit, the beneficiary would have to pay taxes on it, reducing its value. The discussion continued with Dyer explaining the costs associated with the HRA and its benefits compared to the village's existing insurance. Trustee Harper inquired if there were other employees over 65 who could apply for this benefit, to which Dyer responded that there was one other employee close to that age, but the benefit would need to be applied universally to anyone eligible for it.

**Roll Call Vote: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent: (1) Motion Carried.**

#### C. Consider a Public Hearing Concerning the Seventh Street Property:

Trustee Conley **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Gale to ask the Village Manager to set up a Public Hearing Concerning the Seventh Street Property. **Discussion:** Village Manager Jim Dyer suggested scheduling it on a regular Village Council meeting date rather than a special meeting. He mentioned that special meetings might be viewed as attempts to avoid public participation, so having it on a regular meeting date would make it clear that the public is welcome. He also used the opportunity to bring up the idea of changing the meeting date from the first Thursday of the month, which could provide more time for financial matters to be prepared for the meetings. **Motion Carried.**

#### D. Consider Funding of Public EV Chargers by Local Fundraising:

Village Manager Jim Dyer recommended that the Village Council consider authorizing the creation of an advertising sign for a fundraising campaign aimed at raising up to \$3,000 to cover the electricity costs for the EV chargers. The goal is to acknowledge contributors on a well-designed sign. Dyer suggested specifying an amount, like not exceeding \$700 or \$1,000, to allow flexibility in creating the sign.

Trustee Gale **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Cook to authorize up to \$1,000 for the advertising sign for the EV charger fundraising campaign. Roll Call Vote: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent: (1) **Motion Carried.**

#### E. Consider Revisions to the Village Purchasing and Sales Policy:

Village Manager Jim Dyer provided an intermediate revision to the Village's Purchasing and Sales Policy.

Trustee Conley **Moved, Supported by** Trustee Harper to approve the revisions to the Purchasing and Sales Policy. **Discussion:** Trustee Gale suggested adding a header for "competitive bidding" in all caps and underlined, followed by an outline of the competitive bidding process to improve formatting. Village Manager Jim Dyer noted that this was an intermediate revision and mentioned that additional policies, such as a contract approval policy, would need to be reviewed and addressed in the future. Dyer also

talked about establishing a process for approving pre-payment of bills that aren't part of routine payments, which would be included in a future policy iteration.

Roll Call Vote: Yeas (6) Nays (0) Absent: (1) **Motion Carried.**

### **Payment of Bills:**

None.

### **Public Comments:**

Kristi Fischer- commended the Planning Commission's work and expressed her support for a public hearing on the Seventh Street property, emphasizing the need for affordable housing. She mentioned the results of the Leelanau Township Community Foundation's survey on affordable housing and suggested that the community is more ready for a housing project. She also advocated for Yarrow Brown's work with Housing North, highlighting the cost savings and the value, and supported a presentation.

Fred Steffens- expressed his frustration with the prolonged process surrounding the Seventh Street property, which he has been watching for three years. He noted that the situation has turned into a fiasco and mentioned that he previously raised concerns about the proper procedures for selling the property. Fred Steffens emphasized that the property consists of buildable lots, and he believed that the village had followed proper procedures in reaching that conclusion. He expressed sadness at the situation's progression, citing the missed opportunities for enhancing the town with additional building sites. Fred Steffens concluded by stating his desire for the village to move forward with the matter.

Greg Nobles- expressed gratitude to the Planning Commission for their work and looked forward to the upcoming public hearing. He emphasized the importance of framing the issue not just as pro or anti-development but also as an environmental concern. Nobles advised against dismissing those against development as a minority voice and stressed the need to consider the environmental impact in discussions. While supportive of affordable housing, he cautioned against hasty decisions regarding publicly owned property, given potential long-term consequences.

Mary Betzoldt- expressed her gratitude for Nicole's presence at the meeting and brought up an interesting point about the outdated environmental studies. She sought clarification, suggesting that if Proposal 1, which preserves the land as it is naturally, is chosen, there should be no additional cost for new environmental studies. However, for Proposal 2, which involves selling part of the property while leaving part natural, or Proposal 3, which involves selling the entire property, new studies would be required, incurring additional costs. Mary inquired about the cost of the previous environmental studies.

### **Council Comments:**

None

### **Adjournment:**

Trustee Cook Moved, Supported by Trustee Gale to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 pm.  
Motion Carried.

Several Citizens attended via zoom.

**Joni I. Scott, Village of Northport  
Clerk**