Town of Somerville

Meeting minutes for Jan. 18, 2022

Date of this meeting February 15, 2022

1. Meeting called to order at 5:31 p.m. with David, Austin, and Ruth in attendance along with the following people: Steve Bottoms, Mark Kammerer of 5240 S. Washington, Tony Scott of 5021 S. Jefferson St., Kay Hartley of 5024 S. Lincoln, Miranda Caskey of 5006 S. Jefferson, Ms. Cristina Caskey of 5006 S. Jefferson, Clifford Harris of 5048 S. Washington, Azel Willis of 5094 S. Washington, Jessie Willis of 5094 S. Washington, Josh Young of 10123 S. Adams.
2. David read the minutes. Minutes approved. Ruth read the financials and explained the difference between the ledger balance and the appropriation balance/budget. Ruth explained where our funds come from.
3. David and Austin read their “oaths of office”. Ruth read her oath of office at the Princeton Courthouse today. David contacted Matt Schesselle about a possible problem with the asphalt on Washington Street between North and Michigan Streets. Matt will come look at it and determine the problem. We have a request from Pansy O’Neal to put pipe in Lincoln Street from her property past her son’s property Alvin O’Neals. There’s a problem with pipe drainage at Hamilton and Illinois at crossing #539580L close to Mark’s property. David spoke with the railroad’s emergency number on Jan. 13. The woman he spoke to said she would have her boss call him. He has not heard from anyone yet. David has already put 300 pounds of coal mix in the hole. David opened the floor to the visitors. Ms. Caskey started by talking about problems she has had with the Town Board. Ms. Caskey discussed her personal life with her husband and the subsequent divorce. She talked about the help she received from her family to help with back payment on the house and the divorce. She has been divorced for 3 years. In the divorce decree her ex-husband was supposed to pay her $80 per week to pay for the house. The house is technically Ms. Caskey’s and it is not for sale. She asked for his 8214 for her daughter’s college. It took her one year to get the title for the Jeep for her to sale. In 2019 she spent most of her time in court. They have had many discussions regarding items at the property. David was on her property one week after she tested positive for COVID. David and she discussed the vehicles on her property that were in noncompliance with Town ordinances. She was the one who called 911 the night of the fire at Austin’s house. She stated what she thought David had said regarding the discussions about the Fire Departments statement about vehicles being in the way of their equipment. Ms. Caskey related her confusion regarding David’s “conflict of interest”. Ms. Caskey asked questions about why the snow plow did not operate last year. Ms. Caskey asked Austin if he had said he felt his children were unsafe on her property. Ms. Caskey related that this weekend she will have a dumpster and she will be taking care of the trash that makes her in violation of the Town’s ordinances. She will be posting “NO TRESPASSING” signs, erecting a fence, painting her trees purple, and installing cameras. She has requested copies of the Town’s minutes, financials, and ordinances for the past 3 years. She was given the ordinance 2019-1. David related how long the discussion on her property has been ongoing. David related how he felt the Town has been more than lenient in dealing with her for the past 3 years. He related how household trash left in the yard draws unwanted scavenger animals. He reiterated that the Town litter ordinance is not fair when everyone does not abide by it. Azel asked about a leash law. David answered the Town of Somerville does not have a leash law but the State of Indiana does. Azel said Austin lets his dog run loose. Azel wanted to discuss the scrap problem. He said Steve Sevier will be putting up a privacy fence. He said that the fence will be put up as he can afford it. David stated that he has been dealing with Azel for 3 years about getting a fence. Azel said right now he can only afford two sides with a gate. Azel brought into question that a person bringing scrap to him can be fined as well. Azel said the proceeds from the scrap business JUNKIT goes to Cliff Harris and Josh Willis. Azel wants a copy of ordinances, minutes, and financials by the next meeting. David explained that all minutes and financials are read at every meeting. Azel showed pictures on David’s mother’s property and asked why she gets away with things and he doesn’t. Azel said he is in full understanding of the ordinance and will be in compliance as soon as he can because he doesn’t have the funds since he is only on social security. David asked Azel if people were bringing scrap to him why the money goes to Cliff and Josh. Azel responded, “It’s none of your business.” Azel claims he was “grandfathered in” and the ordinances do not apply to him. A lot has gone into the Town’s improvement. Hours have been spent trying to improve the Town. Mark stated that if Azel lived across from him he would complain to the Town about the condition of Azel’s property. Tony asked a question regarding ordinances. Do the ordinances pertain to just Somerville, Gibson County, etc.? Tony expressed a concern regarding trees with overhanging branches over the street. David replied that he has taken the equipment the Town has and cut what he could reach. He stated that the Town will be contracting with a business to take care of overhanging tree limbs. Tony also asked about the problem with the drainage at the railroad crossing. How much responsibility lies with the railroad for damage to our drainage system? David explained what he has seen inside the pipe that is involved. A question was raised about what the Town does with their monies. Ruth explained that the ARPA monies are very restricted on what it can be spent on. She also explained that the CCMG grant was used to do the paving project in Town and how we were able to meet the matching portion of that grant. Steve applauded the Town’s work in acquiring the CCMG grant. Josh Young has offered assistance to anyone who needs help cleaning up their property. David has been in touch with Jim McDonald. He has worked with Debbie Bennett-Stearsman for us to be able to use ARPA funds to purchase the old post office. Ordinance 2022-1 gives the Town permission to use ARPA funds for purchase of property. David read ordinance 2022-1. Ruth read resolution 2022-1. Ruth explained why we are choosing to buy the property rather than try to bring the current Town hall up to ADA standards. Questions were raised about the amount of space in the new building. The purchase price is $25,000. Cliff questioned how many board members are required for a meeting to be legal. David has put the dump truck on a trial run. He discovered it needs 3 new tires. Ms. Caskey asked about why we don’t have Town festivals anymore. David said it had been hosted by the Fire Department. David said that if Azel can keep everything out of view from all 4 sides the Town will take it into consideration. Austin agreed that it needs to take place within a year. David explained to Azel that several of their neighbors have complained to him personally but don’t want to come to a board meeting and make a formal complaint. David told Azel that he needs to know more about the truck coming to his property since it exceeds the weight limit. Azel reported that Johnny Osmer has a large trash truck that he drives the full length of Washington Street (south to north) that exceeds the weight limit. The Town is obligated to investigate the matter fully. David told Ms. Caskey about when the Town of Boonville got into trouble because the Town sent people to help fix a dilapidated house. David explained that paid government officials have a conflict of interest when it comes to helping residents to clean up their property when they are in violation of ordinances. David told Ms. Caskey that we are aware of her intentions to clean up her property and will work with her. David is still waiting to hear from Peabody about getting the property/lake back. We have to make sure our liability insurance covers the use of it. The Town will have to post “NO SWIMMING” and investigate if we want to allow fishing. The Town has plans to make a greenspace around the lake. The old schoolhouse is still a property of concern for the safety of the residents. David is hoping to get the ADA requirements met before the next meeting. Next meeting will be February 15th at 5:30 p.m.
4. Meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Approved,



Ruth Strickland David Willis