

**PORTER TOWN COUNCIL  
MARCH 9, 2004  
PORTER TOWN HALL**

**President Jennifer Granat called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. In addition to President Granat, also present were: Paul Childress, Sandy Boothe, Bill Sexton, Clerk-treasurer Carol Pomeroy, Building Commissioner Dave Babcock, Police Chief John Lane and Tom Troy from the Street Department.**

**Councilperson Sandy Snyder was absent due to a family obligation. Attorney Dave Hollenbeck was attending a previously scheduled meeting and will arrive later.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Granat asked for and received a motion from Childress to approve the minutes as written from the February 24, 2004 meeting. Sexton seconded. Motion carried 4-0.**

**A motion by Sexton was made to approve the minutes of the special meeting on February 27, 2004. Childress seconded. The motion carried 4-0.**

**CONSIDERATION OF CLAIMS:**

**Claims in the amount of \$11,008.54 were presented to the council from February 16-29, 2004. Childress made a motion to approve. Boothe seconded and the motion passed 4-0.**

**Payroll claims were presented totaling \$48,595.70. Childress again made the motion to accept with Boothe seconding. Motion carried 4-0.**

**PETITIONS & COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR:**

**Dan Colbert, 1555 Essex presented a petition of eight neighbors of the Kids Cove Park at Porter Cove. They are totally against the lights at the park and the shelter. The other two neighbors were out of town. He also presented a letter sent to Jim Miller. They agree that there is a problem with vandalism but they are dead set against it and feel that it will create more problems. The current ordinance says that the Porter Parks are open from dawn to dusk. The homeowners do not want lights shining in their windows. He pointed out the town's financial crisis and that there are other ways to spend money. Neighbors take care of the park and clean it up.**

**Park Board President Bud Tilden said he was aware of the situation. What was discussed was putting a light in the shelter and two other lights all on a timer switch and plug ins.**

**Jim Katsafaros, 1580 Essex in Porter Cove said they do not have a problem with hook-up to shelter. There would immediately be an obstacle going through a ditch to get power to the park. He and other neighbors brought these particular lots because there would be no activity behind them.**

**Granat said she would refer comments and petition to Park Liaison Sandy Snyder. All were invited to attend the Park Board meeting April 6, 2004, 7:00 at Porter Hawthorne Community Building.**

**Connie Goysich 527 S First St. manager of the Porter Community Bldg. announced the annual Easter Egg hunt will be held at Hawthorne Park on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 a.m.**

**Jennifer Klug, 302 Lincoln St. spoke on the tabled Cost Recovery program suggested by Chief John Lane. She considers it to be an absurd idea to ask taxpayers from surrounding area to fund the police department. She was asked by Granat to hold her thoughts until the Cost Recover matter appeared later in the agenda.**

Bob Cantrell also said it was a bad idea and was asked to comment later under Cost Recovery on Agenda.

There being no further audience participation, Granat closed that portion of the meeting.

### REPORTS FROM TOWN OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENTS

**Clerk-Treasurer** Pomeroy reported the town has repaid the \$300,000. to the Redevelopment Commission. Porter's total balance is \$841,500.

She and the deputy clerk had just spent the day at a seminar in Valparaiso during the day that proved to very informative.

**ATTORNEY** Not yet arrived

**POLICE** Chief Lane asked for and received permission by consensus for Detectives Spanier & Veal to travel to Arizona/ Los Angeles to spend 8-10 days following up new leads on the ongoing homicide. There are sixteen individuals who may have information. The cost will be approximately \$1500.00. At this point there is nothing more to do in this area on the investigation.

**FIRE** Chief Craig had only one thing other than the written report (see attached). He reported on recent Fireman's Appreciation dinner attended by members and their wives. Several awards were presented. Deputy Chief, Glenn Zaideman became a life time members after 20 years of service. Each month there is a firefight of the month and at the end of the year, one member is singled out as Firefighter of the Year. Glenn Zaideman also received this award.

Assist Chief J.J. Craig	10 years
Capt. Daniel Branham	5 years
Lt Steve Davis	5 years
Lt Jason Bogue	5 years
Lt Ryan	5 years

Granat thanked the Fire Department for extending an invitation to the Council to the dinner. Sexton congratulated the Chief on the excellent reports he generates each month. He gave credit to Zaideman and J. Craig.

**PUBLIC WORKS** In Superintendent Scott Guy's absence, Tommy Troy announced that brush pick up will continue the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March due to the recent high winds. If any resident is missed, they should call the Street Department and leave a message.

**BUILDING** Babcock offered thirteen new contractors with the total reaching 169 since January 1, 2004. Sexton made a motion to approve the contractors, Childress seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

### OLD BUSINESS

**ORDINANCE TO AMMEND PARKING REGULATION** - Chief Lane has suggested changes to the current ordinance on the wording and the meaning of parking vehicles at Porter residences. Attorney Hollenbeck has prepared the amended ordinance. By consensus of the council, the matter was referred back to the Police Commission for their recommendation.

**ORDINANCE FOR MANUAL ALARM SYSTEMS** - referred back to the Police Commission for recommendations.

**COST RECOVERY** - Chief Lane briefly explained the issues covering his recommendation for the program. He feels that Cost Recovery will offer Porter a way to create revenue for the Police Department. Approximately \$101.00 will be charged for Porter Police investigating, documenting, and reporting on accidents concerning non-Porter residents. At a suggestion by council, Lane is urging this program be designed to limit charges on drivers at fault out of the 46304 area. He pointed out the County is charging a \$25.00 arrest fee. With taxes going up, this is a way to get cost back to the town. In comparison this will be only a small fee to the driver at fault.

Karen Pisowicz, 85 Ed McDashowicz questioned the take home policy for Porter Police cars and if there is an accident couldn't one of the police with take home cars be called in to cover the patrol. Lane explained that would be another cost issue. She asked what the place in Ohio would charge to take care of this program. Lane was not aware of the exact charge but it would come from the at fault driver, not the department. Do surrounding areas receive pay for assistance to Porter? Lane said no they don't. She felt that the Police were hired to serve the public and that Porter has just come off of bad publicity and now the town has it back again. She referred to the article that appeared in the paper in Hawaii, cartoons, and editorials. Granat disagreed, saying that the total explanation of the program has not been understood. Pisowicz asked how many tickets are given at US 20 and Waverly road where drivers run the signal continually. She wanted to know if tickets were ever given. Lane had no numbers available at that time. Pisowicz suggested that if more tickets were written, more revenue would come back to the town. Lane said all ticket money (\$3.00) must be used only for training. She complimented Lane on the Police Department.

Jennifer Klug again stated she felt it was a bad idea and in the end up with the taxpayers from Chesterton and Burns Harbor paying more in premiums. When there is a homicide here, other areas help out. She pointed out that other departments are being funded by their citizen's taxes and their respective departments are not reimbursed. But, when drivers come into Porter and are at fault in an accident, those drivers are charged an additional fee from Porter. Premiums will always go up if there are additional charges. Sexton disagreed and said that after talking to three different insurance people and this fee is already included in your policy. The only way anyone's rate would be raised is by the accident itself and not this additional fee. She asked if this is setting a precedent, such as home invasion and mugging and if that could eventually be charges for this services. Sexton said we would be seeing more of this type of charges such as a fee for children serving at the Juvenile Center. Sexton said that this is something that will be a thing of the future and we will see more and more of these charges. She suggested that to really save money the council should look at the take home policy.

Bob Cantrell stated he is happy with the Police Department and is glad Chief Lane is trying to find ways to get money but this is not a good neighbor policy. The town should find other ways to fund the department.

Granat asked for a break down on the 83% Lane had quoted as non-resident accidents. Asking for more research, she wanted to know % of out of town, out of county, out of state, etc. Lane said he would work up those statistics for the council. Lane also said that he would have a representative from the Cost Recovery program at the Police Commission meeting on Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>. By consensus, the matter will return to the Police Commission for their recommendation. Sexton asked for statements by insurance companies on their rates.

Childress applauded Chief Lane for bringing up the idea. The council had requested that all departments find a way to cut costs. He said each department head should not be afraid to offer such ideas. He suggested the matter should be turned back to the Police Commission. By consensus it was returned to Police Commission.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2004-05 PPD VIDEO TAPE FEE** - By consensus, the council again sent the matter back to the Police Commission for their recommendation.

**HEALTH INSURANCE CO-PAY**- Granat announced that the council is continuing to look for ways to cut costs

and save money for the town. Right now the employees are charged \$1.00 for their coverage and 20% for their dependents. She relayed a message that Councilperson Snyder was not comfortable with the current setup. She did some investigation into the issue. She does not want to punish the employees if there was another way. Snyder asked that Granat and Sexton meet with an insurance person. Granat was unable to attend so Childress took her place. What they found was that there were several proposals that came in at lower cost to the town. Prices varied from \$9,000 to \$13,000. Prior to doing anything, a complete rundown of the employees needs should be compiled.

Granat said current coverage is not due to be renewed until October of 2004 but she would like to start work immediately on the process to be ready for that date. She would like a spreadsheet for the PPOs showing the figures comparing apples to apples.

Sexton suggested two be appointed to make research on the variety of programs available and return to the council with those proposals. Sexton said he would contact Snyder to start work on it and Childress would be the alternate. Sexton said the earliest it could be put on the agenda would be late April. Childress urged it be addressed before the first of May.

Granat brought up that when the council was going through the claims, Snyder noticed on some long distance calls costing \$1.00 and when they investigated, the cost could be lowered to \$.09. All departments were urged to carefully monitor their long distance service and call the phone department to check on the lowest cost they can have.

Granat asked Hollenbeck about the pay phone at the Community Building costing \$85.00 per month. He said he didn't believe it was legally binding that we provide a phone there. Connie Goyrich stated that for safety reasons the phone should stay. Granat acknowledged that, but added most people have cell phones or if it is after dark, there is a security guard on duty.

From the floor, Linda Hodges suggested the council contact the phone company as she had been told on another matter, there is a monthly charge based on the amount of usage. Perhaps when the \$85.00 fee was established, the phone had not been used as much. She also suggested that you could make the phone calls out only and not call in. The council said they would look into the alternatives referring the matter to Park liaison Snyder.

## NEW BUSINESS

**UTILITY RATE STUDY** –Childress produced a spreadsheet showing the utilities figures for the last three years.

In operating fund	2000	504,810		
			2002	162,339
			2003	279,000

He stated his findings showed that the previous council actually used the Sewer Fund as a slush fund. When there was a problem or new equipment was needed, they just took it out of the sewer fund. The previous rate study was done in 1996 and there should be one done at least every three years.

The other problem is in the Construction Fund, which now has \$555,000. Daily 513,000 gals are used from Chesterton Sewage Treatment Plant. Later this year the town will have to purchase 400,000- 425,000 gals. The problem is that we are going to have to pay for the purchase out of the \$555,000. All money is collected from Tap on fees – He feels the tap on fee should relate to how much is needed from Chesterton. He said that tap on fees throughout town vary greatly citing that fees for business should not be the same for residential where there would be less usage. He would like permission to have Cender and Co. do a new rate study of our sewer utility. He motioned and Sexton seconded. Sexton felt that tap on fees must be consistent throughout the town. Motion carried 4-0.

**REVISED FRANCHISE AGREEMENT - COMCAST CABLE - Greg Gomolka, district manager from Comcast approached the Council stating the cable company has had a franchise with Porter since 1980 with the existing cable company at that time. Amended in 1995, to say that there must be an office in the Chesterton-Porter Area. Per Section 15K, he would like permission from the town to close the Cable office on Calumet in Chesterton stating that there is not enough business to keep it open. Controversy and questions came from council members and citizens. He said they are available 24/7s for service. He will notify customers by mail that the office is closing. He contacted many of the area business and banks to have them receive payments. As of the moment, no decision has been made.**

**Citizens input –**

**Linda Hodges 470 E Oak Hill Road spoke against the closing. First, there are people who put their payments in the drop box. Secondly, if payments are made at banks or grocery stores, at first there will be no charge. Like NIPSCO, eventually there will be a charge. There is also definitely a problem with the 24/7 service. If someone calls the number, you are told if there is an outage and then told to stand by. You are talking to someone in Illinois and they don't know who you are or what your problem is. She also asked why patients in a nursing home who are all on the same hook up but each pay their own bills, will lose service but the next person in the same building does not.**

**The district manager said the lack of business includes dropped payments. The 24 /7 is available and according to surveys is very productive. Childress challenged the remark and told of his experiences with the company. Sexton asked what the impact would be on service if the Chesterton office were allowed to close. The representative said there would be absolutely no impact. There are 57 offices in Northwest Indiana including Portage, Michigan City and Valparaiso.**

**Granat asked the pleasure of the council. Sexton noted that Comcast has no intent of adding service to the Chesterton office. Childress said we have no option except to demand decent service. The representative said he would return to the Council with information about the concerns of the service calls. Sexton asked that the matter be tabled until more numbers were available. Childress seconded. Motion carried 4-0.**

**Sexton announced the State Board of Accounts will have their report by the end of the month. They have finished their audit.**

**COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL – Childress addressed the recent comments from Chesterton on the Drug problem in the community. He will personally work with anyone who wants to deal SERIOUSLY with the issue. He has no ideas but is willing to listen and work hand in hand with surrounding areas to help in the fight.**

**There being no further business, Sexton made a motion to adjourn and Childress seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:57.**

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**Jennifer Granat, President**

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**William Sexton, Vice President**

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**Sandy Boothe**

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**Paul Childress**

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**Sandi Snyder**

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carol Pomeroy, Clerk Treasurer**