

VILLAGE OF OAKWOOD  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
2023-04-25

ATTENDANCE

Johnnie Warren, President  
Elaine Gaither-At-Large  
Mary Davis, Ward 4  
Candace Williams, Ward 5

Gary Gottschalk, Mayor  
Jim Climer, Law  
Tom Haba, Service  
Brian Dirocco, Fire (Acting Asst Chief)  
Mark Garratt, Police  
Dan Marinucci, Building

ABSENT

Chris Callender, Ward 1  
Eloise Hardin, Ward 2  
Paggie Matlock, Ward 3  
Carlean Perez, Recreation

Brian Thompson, Finance  
Ed Hren, Engineering

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Meeting opened at 7:22pm  
Pledge of Allegiance

Motion to approve minutes of February 28, 2023 Finance meeting made by Davis seconded by Gaither  
VOTE YES: Warren, Gaither, Davis, Williams

Motion to approve minutes of February 28, 2023 Council meeting made by Gaither seconded by Davis  
VOTE YES: Warren, Gaither, Davis, Williams

Motion to approve minutes of March 14, 2023 Council meeting made by Davis seconded by Gaither  
VOTE YES: Warren, Gaither, Davis, Williams

Motion to approve minutes of March 21, 2023 Finance meeting made by Gaither seconded by Davis  
VOTE YES: Warren, Gaither, Davis, Williams

Motion to approve minutes of March 21, 2023 Council meeting made by Davis seconded by Gaither  
VOTE YES: Warren, Gaither, Davis, Williams

*Departmental Reports*

**Fire-Dirocco:** We have been busy working with some of the businesses doing renovations. We have done inspections. University Hospitals are now using our Fire Department as a host site for monthly meetings. **Williams** asked his position. **Dirocco:** I am Captain but am currently acting Assistant Fire Chief. **Williams:** How long have you been in that office. **Dirocco:** I have been Captain for six years but acting Assistant Chief as of last March. **Williams:** Are there other assistant chiefs? **Dirocco:** There is one other in that role as well, Chris Manzo. **Williams:** Are there other captains? **Dirocco:** None other than the two of us. **Williams:** So, there are no captains right now but two assistant chiefs. **Dirocco:** Correct. **Williams:** Is there a pay increase? **Dirocco:** No. **Williams:** Who is the Fire Chief right now, **Dirocco:** Jim Schade. The acting chief is Dave Tapp. **Williams:** What was the acting fire chief before he filled that role. **Dirocco:** He is Assistant Chief. **Williams:** He is still the assistant. **Dirocco:** Yes. **Williams:** He is assistant and acting chief. **Dirocco:** Correct. **Williams:**

Have there been discussions about pay increases? **Dirocco:** When things get finalized, there may be a pay increase. **Williams:** I asked for information I haven't received. There are two fire chiefs. **Dirocco:** Only one chief. **Williams:** There is technically two acting fire chiefs, **Dirocco:** Yes. **Williams:** There are technically two captains but no acting captains. **Dirocco:** Yes. **Williams:** This structure has been for 13 months. **Dirocco:** Correct. **Williams:** Thank you. **Davis** asked why there are two assistants. **Dirocco:** We have always had one but when Dave Tapp took the role as acting chief, his thought was, it was adequate when we had 30 personnel. We now have 70 personnel in the Fire Dept. We grew a lot when we took on Walton Hills and Glenwillow. He realized since these are part-time positions, we needed continuity to make sure a chief officer is on shift every day. **Davis:** So you work alternate days. **Mayor:** Remember they have full time positions elsewhere. We have to have the coverage. Fifteen years ago, most of our Fire Dept were EMT certified. Now they are all paramedics which means they can perform drug therapy. By picking up Walton Hills from Bedford and Glenwillow from Solon, it is amazing they came to Oakwood. Now, UH wants to use Oakwood as their hub for training. We have to give kudos to our Fire Dept. for the high level of performance they have here. **Williams:** I understand to make sure there is an acting person in the roll, I noticed the acting fire chief signed off as the fire chief. Is that because Jim Schade is not acting daily in that role? **Dirocco:** I don't know why. **Williams:** Can anyone describe why we have different acting people in these roles? Does the department require one fire chief, one assistant? **Dirocco:** There are structures in our codified ordinances; one chief, one assistant, two captains, eight lieutenants, and firefighter-paramedics up to 70 personnel. **Warren:** There has been no request for an executive session to discuss Fire Department. **Williams:** That isn't true. However. Many... **Warren:** Council...**Williams:** Let me make sure I am clear. We are supposed to have one chief, one assistant and two captains but we have two captains, three acting or assistant chiefs and two acting fire chiefs. **Dirocco:** We have one sworn in Chief, one Assistant Chief, and two sworn in Captains and one Lieutenant. We have been acting as assistant chief Dave Tapp. **Williams:** Not sworn. Thank you. I am requesting an executive session because it seems to me if we have this many chiefs acting, it affects the budget in some way, if it doesn't, I am wondering why we have people acting in roles they are not being compensated and where our Fire Chief is if this has been going on for 13 months. I request an executive session. **Warren:** We can move forward to discuss that. **Williams:** I would like the information I requested on March 31<sup>st</sup> and you reached out to me on April 10<sup>th</sup> stating it will be about two weeks. That would have been April 24<sup>th</sup>. **Thompson:** We are compiling it. You reached out for older information we had to gather in our prior financial system, which takes time. I am looking to replace two positions in the finance department. Logistically I am doing all those roles right now. It will remain status quo as to relates to compilation of salaries and other information. **Williams:** Why will it remain status quo when I requested it be separated out. **Thompson:** The poll of the majority of Council, the format it is in, and the way it is submitted. **Williams:** When you discussed it, when I was not present? **Thompson:** It is how it is presented in the Finance Committee meeting and the format. You may not have been attendance at some of the meetings. **Williams:** Since I requested it be separated out. **Thompson:** We haven't had a meeting. The information I provide does separate the salaries and operating expenses. **Williams:** Side by side, **Thompson:** You can see them by line item with operating expenses. **Williams:** So you are not going to separate them out, side by side in the actual report, I want to make sure you go over that when we do finance. **Thompson:** We can discuss that, **Williams:** I requested year end salaries for 2018, 2019 and 2020, 2021 and 2022. How do you record information that is taking you so long to give me year end information. **Thompson:** We bought a new financial system and the 2018-2020 information is in the older system. We are in the process and hope to get it completed soon. **Williams:** So, those years are in a prior system. You don't have access to those years. **Thompson:** We do but we have to put in a support ticket to get the information. **Williams:** You haven't done that. **Thompson:** We have. **Williams:** You have access to 2021 and 2022. **Thompson:** Yes. **Williams:** Can you give me those. **Thompson:** We can get that to you, but it will take longer, **Williams:** I want all of it but if you can get me those as soon as you can for those roles. **Thompson:** Ok.

**Building-Marinucci:** Solar panels are \$60-\$70,000. The engineers are out of Washington DC and Connecticut. The installers are not local either. That is going well. We are getting rental properties registration money in. LLCs are still dominant in Oakwood. We are processing those and holding them to strict standards. We have face-to-face contact with

building official meetings. **Davis** asked the building permit cost for solar panels. **Marinucci**: The total cost is \$60,000 but they complete the form, if it is \$20,000 cost, that will not show the cost of the installation, Some need special drawings. It is a select group that does those.

**Service-Haba**: We started cleaning the flower beds, the bridges, and sidewalks. We pick up branches after storms. Cambridge residents called us, we took care of their issue. We took care of picking up branches in the Meadows but found out it is the HOA which is responsible so we will no longer do that. **Warren** asked if he has a contact person in the Meadows HOA. **Haba**: I can get that. **Warren**: Also, they address the common area issues.

**Finance-Thompson**: To recap from a prior meeting, when we make amendments to the budget whether partial or full, we always add attachments when we submit them to Council. **Williams**: You know that isn't correct. **Thompson**: This is true. **Williams**: It was in the minutes, will you let us see this once it is complete, so it was passed without an attachment. **Thompson**: It was present especially for the audit. **Williams**: It was not. The conversation was that legislation was passed without the attachment at that time. That was factual, it was not there. **Thompson**: It was submitted to the body of Council. **Williams**: It may have been submitted to Council but after the fact. Our conversation was... **Thompson**: We gave it to the Council for their review. **Williams**: It was not attached at the time it passed. **Warren**: The legislation as passed that I signed off on had the attachment. **Williams**: When you sign off on it in the meeting, after the fact. **Warren**: After the meeting. **Williams**: When the vote was taken it wasn't attached. I don't know if you went and got it and you had it then but when the vote was taken it wasn't attached, that is a fact. **Warren**: I had the legislation in front of me with all the documents attached when I signed it. **Williams**: That is not a fact. **Warren**: Everyone was reading off it. **Williams**: The minutes state it wasn't present. **Warren**: The legislation presented to me to sign off on the budget, the attachment was attached. **Williams**: To be clear, the conversation was when the legislation was passed, and the vote was taken the minutes showed there was no attachment at the time. After the meeting, it appeared that is one thing. **Warren**: It was attached. **Williams**: The conversation was, and the fact is, when the vote was taken there was no attachment at all. Those are two different things. **Warren**: Again, as I said, we reviewed the legislation, it was amended and when I signed it, the budget was attached. **Williams**: That is different than the conversation from before. **Warren**: It is in the conversation I had. All legislation with the documents attached. We revise legislation especially with budgets, but the attachments sometimes change as requested by the Council. **Williams**: That is different than no attachment at all. We are saying there was no attachment. It shows in the minutes there was no attachment. **Warren**: So, there is no distortion of assumption of the record, the legislation I signed had the attachment with it. **Thompson**: We are diligently looking to fill key positions in finance so just bear with us. **Warren**: We understand you don't have the accounts receivable/accounts payable person, so we have to be patient because we are working understaffed. **Williams** asked what positions he is looking to fill. **Thompson**: Two. **Williams**: What are those two, **Thompson**: Finance Administrator and Accounts Payable/Payroll Assistant. **Williams**: How many interviews have been conducted so far, **Thompson**: We did about six so far. **Williams**: We cancelled our Finance meeting for today. We are supposed to have income coming in toward the end of the year. To not have a finance meeting and miss that, what month have you closed out. **Thompson**: We are closed out up to February. We would have closed out March but without the staffing we haven't been able to do that yet. **Williams**: February has been closed out and we had a meeting at the end of March on the 21<sup>st</sup>. March isn't closed out. **Thompson**: We are looking to close in March. **Williams**: When will you close March. **Thompson**: I can't say at this time because of the missing staff. One person will come back to partially assist. **Warren**: We usually have the finance meeting at the last meeting of the month, when it is closed, we can review March and April. **Williams**: When March is closed out, I would like to have them and not wait till the end of May, **Thompson**: We provide that in normal operations a week before the meeting. **Williams**: Let me be clear about what I am asking. We have to close out March and then close out April. We typically discuss April the second meeting in May. March would have been done this meeting. **Thompson** Yes. **Williams**: Are you saying we won't have April's report until the end of May. **Thompson**: We will look forward to having March and April at the end of May. **Warren**: The April report typically would be discussed at the end of May. **Williams**: I don't need to be. I would like to have those reports when they are closed out and not wait until

the week before the fourth week in May. **Thompson:** So, you want March reports as soon as they are done. **Warren:** When you do have them, if it is prior to the first meeting in May, we will discuss them then and April reports will be discussed at the second meeting in May. April would have been done not before the second meeting in May. Present it to Council and we will set up a meeting and we will set up another one for the April financials. **Thompson:** Ok.

**Law- Climer:** No report

**Mayoral-Mayor:** It has been a busy couple weeks with the grand opening/ribbon cutting ceremony for the Vet Center in Broadway on Friday. The Deputy Chief Officer of the Veteran Counseling Centers of the U.S. from Washington DC, the acting Midwest District Director, Chief of Staff for Ohio Veteran Services, Rolling Thunder who gave a roll call for POW's and MIA's which was very moving, the Bedford VFW color guard, Bedford High School Acapella Choir, elected officials and residents were in attendance for a very moving ceremony. Twenty-two veterans commit suicide every day in the U.S, this is a much-needed service with confidential counseling services provided by the Vet Center here in Oakwood. However, I feel strongly there should be some spiritual enrichment. They are open to having a revivalist and gospel music combined with developing a relationship with Jesus. This will make a much stronger operation. I was pleased to see the Federal government was willing to see this happen. No offering will be taken, Additionally, I had a meeting with the Executive of Cuyahoga County, Chris Ronayne, along with the Economic Development Director, Paul Herdeg, Ohio District 18 Senator, Jerry Cirino, who all came here. We are looking for more grants from the County, State and Federal governments. I will have a report on that in six weeks. We are cautiously optimistic. Today I met with Cat Ohio which Council passed a 49% CRA along with 40% TIF. They are putting in a \$1/2 million expansion creating 25 new jobs. They are interested in purchasing the lot where the I Schuman plant exists if they will not reopen. They would also like to expand the lot with five more acres. I also visited Solfe, IBA Molecular. We will offer them 90% CRA non-school board TIF. That legislation will be before you at the next Council meeting. They make injectables for PET scans. Their operations are in Virginia and California, but they have \$4.5 million expansion here in Oakwood. It will create more jobs. We are a hub for high-tech and medical diagnostic research. Lastly, I'd like to ask those who pray to pray for our Police Chief.

#### *Open Floor Comments*

**Joseph Commander, Bedford School Incoming Athletic Director:** I am coming from South Euclid/Lyndhurst Schools Assistant Athletic Director was my position. I reached out to Ms. Williams and Ms. Davis. Ms. Davis is a former educator. I wanted to introduce myself. Oakwood is one of the main communities of the Bedford Schools. **Warren:** It is a challenge to give all communities within the district equal attention, thank you for being here.

**Tony Ramos of NOPEC:** I appreciate having a couple moments of your time. Last summer we returned all customers back to the utility and put the aggregation program on pause. We are in the process of getting our recertification to restart the program at the end of March with the first month being June on electric. Residents should have received the opt out letter. Beginning this past Monday, natural gas opt-out letters were sent out. Our electric pricing is extremely competitive. Price to compare will go from 5.8 cents/kwh to 12.2 cents/kwh. We are recommending, do not stay on the standard service offer come June, your bill will go up. Residents can visit Energy Source Ohio to compare apples to apples. NOPEC is a member driven organization for a council of governments. Oakwood is a member community, and you have a say on what happens in NOPEC. Mayor Georgene Welo of South Euclid. She is the Vice Chair of our Board of Directors. If you have questions from residents, please send them to Customer Care which is answered 365 days, 7 days a week. Call volumes are high right now. **Mayor:** We welcome you back. **Ramos:** I will be happy to answer questions. The standard rate is 6.75 cents kwh. We offer 12- and 24-month fixed rates. It doesn't cost the customer anything to move from one product to another within NOPEC for gas and electric. **Warren:** You are cheaper than standard utility companies? **Ramos:** Yes, beginning in June, NOPEC never claims to be the cheapest price in the market. We promise to be in the bottom third of the offerings. You can always offer someone lower than our pricing but check the terms and conditions of the contract. **Williams:** Why do they automatically enroll, why not the other way. **Ramos:** Between 1999

and 2000 the State Legislature instituted aggregation programs. The whole point of aggregation is so your customers can experience lower costs and competitive rates, saving the state money. The states that have opt-out rates have higher participation rates demonstrating more savings over time. The opt-in states have very little customers. This is the state rule, not NOPEC. **Davis:** You mentioned you can stay at the rate for 12 to 24 months? **Ramos:** Everybody starts at the standard offering. We also offer other products and renewal products as well as a variable rate which is typically 6% less. **Davis:** If we don't do anything, we are automatically enrolled for both gas and electric. **Ramos:** Correct. **Haba:** The rates may change in January, but you will publish the upcoming price and you can enroll in that price at that time. **Ramos:** Correct. **Warren:** Can you commit to 12-24 months now? **Ramos:** Correct. Currently the 12-month rate I believe is 6.879 cents and the 24 month is 6.895. If you do that you are significantly below the regular utility offering at 12.2. **Davis:** Will the information be sent out? **Ramos:** You can go online and check the rates at any time. You can also call our customer care and request the fixed price. We have added safeguards and oversight from our regulator to ensure what happened last year doesn't happen again. We have already been aggressive with pricing and have brought in consultant assistance. Think about gas stations, that is just a different segment of the overall energy pricing. Many things come into play regarding your energy costs, weather, regulatory issues, and other things. I have a 10-year-old daughter, I tell her, turn off the light. I gave Council a packet of what we do for your community. Residents who want to shop competitively rather than use the aggregation program, there is a list of questions for residents and answers. These resources are all on our website. We are transparent. We are at [www.NOPEC.org](http://www.NOPEC.org) go under the community tab and go to your member community tool kit. All this information is available there. If you have a community event, we are happy to come out. Thank you, Mayor and Council.

#### *Open Floor Comments*

**Karen Howse, Oakwood Village:** I wasn't going to say anything today but when I make a statement at a Council meeting, I am careful not to accuse or assert anything. Your minutes support the discussion. The inquiry supports the statement. At the Council meeting of December 2022, the appropriations were presented to Council on second read, and I asked the Clerk of Council for the attachment. She stated she didn't have it yet but that you were still working on it. I asked you about it in your office. You stated, Brian, you were working on it. As a result, Council had a special council meeting. Do you recall? At that time appropriations presented to the Council did not have the attachment. You said you would have it at the next council meeting. When you said it never happened, that you had always supplied it, it is not true. I have no reason to come before the council or residents to make an assumption. The whole purpose in me saying it is, I asked council not to pass anything without the attachment. If the ordinance reads an attachment, the council should make an asserted effort in the decision-making process with it. To imply you always include it, asserts I made this up. I did not. You stated you hadn't finished it yet. I don't appreciate that. I was bringing this to Climer, because he asked, can you provide documentation. You can go to the website and at some point, give it to me. How council can pass a budget without seeing it. I just wanted to say this for the record. I did not say anything that was false. I don't appreciate that. Even back on December 30, 2021, the same action occurred. The council stated if we pass this legislation, will you then provide us the documentation and you said yes. I asked for the documentation then. Why is it every other appropriation has attachment, but this doesn't. I am sure you intended to have it, but I am just saying the council should never pass appropriations without it. Its not that you are doing something dishonest but how do you pass a budget without it. **Warren:** May I ask? **Howse:** Yes. **Warren:** There are numerous adjustments to the attachments during the Finance Committee meetings and hearings. The last one was the documented budget and before we passed the budget, we stated we were taking an additional \$66,000 out of recreation which was an increase from the previous year. The budget was approved, as a matter of record, then Brian had to present the budget in the revised document with the amendments. We then passed it. **Howse:** I am referring to 2021 and 2022 council meetings in which I asked where the attachment is. You stated I wasn't going to pass it because you needed the attachment and the only reason you passed it is because you would have a special meeting. **Warren:** Correct. **Howse:** Are you referring to 2023? **Warren:** I understand. **Howse:** Again, I only came to provide the documentation to support what I said. I do not appreciate the statement you made. You told me to come to you and have a conversation with you. Then tell the council you always

present that. Sometimes things happen that maybe you didn't provide that. I feel like it is in the minutes we had a conversation, you had good intentions, but I have no reason to question what you say. I will not bring something to the council without documentation. That is a serious charge to say you didn't do something then there is no backup for it. I asked for the attachment, and you said you were working on it. **Thompson:** I asked you to come in out of courtesy. We discussed it but I see how this plays out. I have always added numerous hours of information and submitted those exhibits before the meetings, there was a lot of changes in staffing in the Council Clerks office. Whether she had the attachment or not, I did submit it. I never called you out to be a liar. I have been here almost 17 years in the village, passing budgets, staying in the black, providing the council with the information they need. There hasn't been anything different this whole time. I never called you a liar, I always respected you, Ms. House. I will continue to do that and to move forward providing information to council and the residents. It is always there. I will continue to add the exhibits as a formality. These exhibits that have been passed forwarded to the council body have been approved by the state Auditor. I also submit to the County, **Howse:** I... **Thompson:** There are other organizations here in compliance with the whole process, so I am not doing anything hideous, it is the same process I have been doing. I see how this plays out, no disrespect. **Howse:** I... **Warren:** We understand Mrs. House's position. Mrs. Howse you have the floor. **Howse:** Again, I don't know where you see this going, I don't know what that means but I will say this, I asked the council in the future please don't pass without documentation, No you did not ask or invite me to come to your office. After the council meeting, I asked if I could talk to you. You said yes, I will say this, I will never come to council again without making an assertion without documentation. I just didn't appreciate a comment you made that you have always presented attachments. **Thompson:** It is true. **Warren:** Wait a minute. "Gavel". We already know. You said you gave it to the Clerk. We have no verification of that because the clerk is no longer here. **Howse:** We are all sitting here. **Warren:** You are not recognizing (gavel). **Howse:** You didn't just gavel me. You don't say something about. **Warren:** I just did say something to him, and I asked him not to respond and to let.. **Howse:** You didn't just... **Warren:** Mrs. Howse you have the floor. **Howse:** I just... **Warren:** I understand what you said. **Howse:** I just want to be sure I said on record I did not imply that you were doing something to intentionally deceive council. I did not say that. I said where the attachment is, that is what you shared with me, you said you were going to get that to them then Johnnie said he would have a special council meeting. I don't know where that came from, Again, I am not implicating anything I don't have to do that, the minutes speak for themselves. Whether you have been here 17 years or not, that has nothing to do with what I am saying here, as far as the auditors and never had a problem with your audit. I didn't say that. I never said that one time about the auditors. That seems to be something you felt you needed to say. You certainly made the statement that I said that it is in the minutes what I asked for and it is in the minutes what Johnnie said, we are not going to pass the legislation until you do. **Warren:** Thank you very much,

**Sharyn Macklin** 7473 Oakhill: I am a school board member now. This is very interesting. My husband invented a grill which will put Oakwood on the invention map; 42 American companies are looking at it. Some want to come and see it. **Mayor** asked if she will be at the Oakwood Village concerts. **Warren:** Let me say this if you don't mind. Not until your husband grills us some ribs and chicken will be make that evaluation. **Macklin:** This grill can cook 36 slabs of ribs and 28 whole chickens. You know that is no problem for me. **Gaither** asked her about the grill. **Macklin:** It is a smoker and a grill. I have a video and a commercial will be on tv in 3-4 weeks.

*Floor Closed*

#### *Legislation*

2023-14            An emergency ordinance appointing Dionna Hammett Assistant Clerk of Village Council and setting duties of such position

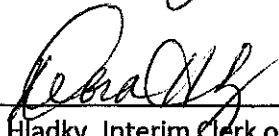
First reading


Motion to adjourn made by Gaither seconded by Davis

YES VOTE: Warren, Gaither, Davis, Williams

Adjourned at 8:18pm

Approved June 13, 2023

  
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Debra L Hladky, Interim Clerk of Council

  
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Johnnie Warren, Council President