

Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of the  
Village of Jerome Board

**CALL TO ORDER:** The President and the Board of Trustees held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 18, 2024, at the Jerome Civic Center, 2901 Leonard Street, Jerome, Illinois. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by President Lopez, followed by Roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:** The following were present:

Mike Lopez, Village President  
Kathy DeHart, Trustee of Public Property & Co Trustee Public Health  
Leigh Irons, Trustee of Public Safety  
Ralph Irons, Trustee of Water Department  
Dale Lael, Trustee of Building & Zoning  
Phil Raftis, Trustee of Public Works

Also Present:

Lisa Cave, Village Clerk  
Steve Roth, Executive Assistant  
Jason Brokaw, Attorney, Giffin, Winning, Cohen & Bodewes, P.C.,

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**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:** President Lopez asked whether the Board had reviewed the January 4, 2024, Minutes and if they found need for any changes, corrections, or amendments. President Lopez asked the January 4, 2024, minutes would stand approved as presented.

Motion to approve the January 4, 2024, Meeting Minutes as presented by:  
Trustee Leigh Irons and 2nd by Trustee DeHart  
Upon roll call vote, all voted AYE;

**MOTION PASSES.**

**APPROVAL TO PAY BILLS:** President Lopez asked whether the board had reviewed Warrant List 24-18 dated January 18, 2024, totaling \$32,423.88. Mr. Roth stated the breakdown of the amount that \$7,865.79 will be paid from the General Revenue Fund, \$550.31 will be paid from the 1% Fund, and \$24,007.58 will be paid from the Water Account. President Lopez asked for a motion to approve Warrant List 24-18 as presented.

Motion to Approve the Warrant List 24-18 totaling \$32,423.88 as presented by  
Trustee Leigh Irons and 2nd by Trustee Ralph Irons  
Upon roll call vote, all voted AYE;

**MOTION PASSES.**

Cameron Jones with Benton and Associates presented to the Board the option of repairing Iles with curb and gutters starting at Chatham Road just past the bridge. Unfortunately the amount of funds that the Village has received we are only able to do about 700 ft of West Iles with a complete reconstruction of curbs and gutters. Trustee Lael asked how far will it go? Cameron stated it goes to 1800 W Iles. Trustee Ralph Irons asked with the added traffic the new sports complex will the City help the Village out? President Lopez stated that he has approached the City and they will not entertain providing any funds to the Village and we are depending on state and federal funding. President Lopez stated that if the Village adopts a Business Development District or TIF area that may help provide more revenue for the future of the Village. Trustee Raftis stated that his opinion is to mill the rest of Iles to improve the roadway till we have the funding to do the full reconstruction.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

President Lopez opened the Visitors Acknowledgement portion of the meeting at 6:49 pm.

Clerk Cave reported receiving one email. Clerk Cave read the following into the minutes. On Thursday January 18, 2024 at 6:05 pm the Village received an email from Heather Piepenburg. The email stated the following: *Summary of events beginning February 2023, from Heather Piepenburg and Shawn Stillman, who live at 1310 W. Iles in Jerome. We also have a 9 year old daughter, Zuzu, who lives here. 2023 Sunday night, January 26/Monday morning, January 27 Approx 1 am, woke up by aggressive barking and growling directly outside my upstairs bedroom window. Looked out to see 2 pit bulls lunging at my dogs through the fence. Ran downstairs, went out back door into my fenced area and yelled at dogs to go home. Called non-emergency number (I have a screenshot of this) at 1:02 am, was told by county that no one was available from the county police or animal control to come get the dogs out of my yard. I posted on Jerome IL neighbors fb page that there were 2 aggressive dogs trying to climb my fence and for the owner to come get them. We repeatedly yelled at them and tried to chase them away for the next 10-15 minutes, as they kept coming back and trying to climb in again. They broke a trellis and a birdbath trying to climb my fence (we discovered this the next morning). I have photos of the birdbath and trellis, and I have screenshots of the replies by the dog owner on my fb post, denying any possibility that the dogs could be aggressive or dangerous, and being generally rude and ignorant. The post itself has been removed, for unknown reasons. This was terrifying and my neighbors gave me the audio recording from that night captured from their cameras. November, sometime in the range of, or on, 11/9 Sitting in my home late afternoon with my family. Heard a dog outside in my yard again, barking and growling at my dogs. Went out front door, not in fenced area this time. Yelled at dog to go home. 2 women walk up. I state that this is the 2nd time your pit bulls have been in my yard, behaving aggressively toward my dogs. The woman says, "I am just the groomer." I ask another woman, just arriving, if she is the dog owner (I know her name is Nikki Jones from my February post and her remarks on that). She says yes. I proceed to tell her this is the 2nd time her pit bulls have been in my yard and I'd appreciate it if she kept them out of my yard. She interrupts me to say, "I don't need to hear from you about my f#\$%@ dogs" and some other mumbled swearing. I reply, that's fine, and that if she cannot be civil and speak to us without the hostility and vulgarity, I will call the police the next time they are in my yard. There are 3 women in my yard at this point, trying to collect the dog, and none of them are able to successfully call it to them or physically grab it. Shawn Stillman finally walks up to the dog and is able to hold on to it and tells them to get it. The dog wasn't wearing a collar so he was just gripping it lightly from the scruff of its neck. 2024 Tuesday night, January 2 Approximately 9 pm. Dogs barking and growling loudly outside my house again, leaping at my fence. We immediately call 911 and go downstairs to yell at the dogs to go home, from inside fenced area in back. County officer*

shows up, calls animal control. Dogs are still running loose when he gets here. We explain that this is the 3rd time one or both of these dogs have been in our yard and they are extremely aggressive and we are very concerned they are going to attack or kill someone's pet, or a person. He goes to Jones' home and tells her to go get her dogs and that he doesn't want to come to Jerome for this again. Then he comes back to our house and says he put her on notice and to call if there are any more issues, but that animal control is not coming. We learn later that he has cancelled animal control or they would have shown up that night (this was information we read in the actual police report). We tell him the dogs will definitely be out again and how frustrating it is to have to deal with this, that we have a middle schooler playing outside frequently with friends, that dozens of kids walk up and down lles to and from school, there are dog walkers, people jogging, etc. etc. We have video from that night and the screenshot of the 911 call. Later that evening, Jones sends me a hateful, obscenity-laced message via fb messenger, which I also have, and makes a post on the neighborhood fb page, which I also have screenshots of, claiming her dogs have only been out twice and "karma will get us for calling the police on her dogs" basically. False. Sunday, January 7 Approximately 9-9:30 pm. We are in our home with the television and space heater on. Over that noise we hear what we think is screaming. We pause the tv and listen again. Definitely screaming. I step outside and hear what I can only describe as the sound of a woman being murdered. I yell for Shawn to call 911, start moving toward the screaming, and see my neighbor Jenny in a yard across the street and down one house, already on her phone. I am dialing 911 at that point also. I can hear that my neighbor and I are reporting the same disturbing screaming. I see another neighbor, Bart, in the street, and I yell at him to find out who he is because I originally thought he could be some person running from attacking the woman screaming. As we approach the house we can see the shadow of a man fighting the dogs in the light against Danielle's garage (Danielle is the attack victim). We get to the back deck to find her with blood running all over her hands and legs. Our neighbor Monty is there also, having just gotten the dogs to finally let go of Danielle and her dog and take off. We have photos of some of the visible injuries but have since learned that she has other physical damage caused by the attack that we could not see at the moment. The same two pit bulls saw Danielle's dog outside, ran up on him and attacked him, and attacked her as she tried to get her dog inside away from the pit bulls. Her dog has multiple injuries also and had to get staples in his wounds the night of the attack. While about 8 of us neighbors stood outside Danielle's house the night of the attack to make sure the police and animal control got all the information they needed, especially since the cops have been called on these dogs twice before the 7th (and now this is 4 incidents of being off their property, just that we know of), Jones drove by, stopped her car, and asked us if we'd seen any dogs. I said, "Are you Nikki?" She says yes. I tell her yes we've seen some dogs, your neighbor is a bloody mess because of your dogs being out AGAIN!! She got out and yelled at us all, again denying that her dogs have been out as many times as I have experienced, then eventually left. Some of this is on video although it is jumbled and unclear because of everyone talking and yelling at once. Animal control allowed Jones to keep the dogs in her home after the attack, for a ten day hold. It expired yesterday (Wednesday, January 17th, 2024). Danielle has still not returned home and is dealing with multiple doctor appointments and vet appointments for herself and her dog, missing work, and has valid concerns about her safety and her dog's safety at her home, along with concerns about being harrassed by Jones, since she has already went onto her property to put an item into her mailbox (see next paragraph). My neighbors (Joe and Penny) have shared multiple clips with me, from their cameras, showing the dogs running loose in front of their home and in their driveway over the last year. Danielle is not staying in her home since the attack because the dogs are still in Jerome and clearly none of us trust the owner to keep them home; she does not want to be attacked again. Jones has sent Danielle facebook messages and placed a letter in her mailbox trying to make contact but has not apologized or taken responsibility for hers

*or her dogs' role in the attack. Jones complains about the "mob of neighbors" in the hand delivered note, and how we have a "personal vendetta" toward her. I have sent most, if not all, of the screenshots and videos mentioned here in this email to board member Kathy DeHart, in the first day or two after the attack.*

*This morning (Thursday, January 18) while my 9 year old daughter was waiting for the school bus in the truck with her father, Shawn Stillman (we do not allow her to walk to or from the corner, or play in the yard since the attack on 1/7), Jones drove by and flipped them off. Real classy. **I spoke with Leigh Irons, Kathy DeHart and the Jerome Chief of Police in the days immediately after the attack. I was told that a letter would be sent to Jones and she would have to comply with Jerome ordinances for a 6 ft fence, dangerous animal signage, chain leashes, muzzles, etc. What I and my neighbors would like to know is has the letter been sent, was it send certified mail, and if not when will it be in her hands? What is the time frame she has to comply with the ordinance requirements? How many violations are allowed after the letter is delivered, before the dogs are removed permanently from the village?** I personally feel that this is not being taken seriously enough. Please let us know the actions being taken and the time frames involved. None of us feel safe at the present time, and unfortunately this started almost a year ago now, but since no one we called listened, now a woman and her dog are injured and traumatized. There could very well be a fatality if/when another attack occurs. I saw a woman walking by my house pushing a stroller tonight. How is Jerome going to respond when a woman and a baby in a stroller are attacked by dogs we all know are dangerous?? Please provide us the information requested. Thank you.*

Shawn Stillman, resident on Iles, thanked the Village as he has seen more police presence the last two weeks.

This portion of the meeting closed at 7:20 pm.

#### **REPORTS:**

Trustee DeHart stated some issues have been corrected especially with police presence.

Trustee Raftis stated Christmas tree pickup is set for January 23, 2024.

Trustee DeHart stated that two toilets will be replaced and Dave reported that the condenser drain line was frozen which shut down the furnace in the office during the cold spell. Dave has reserved a scissor lift for maintenance issues and installing additional outlets. Lights are working sporadically in the front of the Civic Center.

Trustee Lael questioned Attorney Brokaw on Homewood, he stated that there will be a post on the building that Sangamon County will require them to clean it up. Not sure when the date will be. 3030 ½ Chatham Road, Jason Brokaw stated that there was an issue getting the documents to us from FEMA. Trustee Lael stated what about Glenn, Jason stated he has nothing on that one at this time. Trustee Lael asked what about 1511 Jerome. Jason has not heard anything further on that property. Codes that we passed, can we go after people? Since adopting the 2018 IBC we will have avenues to enforce the building codes. Trustee Lael stated there is a semi truck located at the Shop n Save property. President Lopez called Neiman Foods regarding no lights on the outside of the building.

Trustee Leigh Irons reported that the two officers are in their 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the Academy. Trustee Leigh Irons stated that Jimmy was on vacation this week. Bingo starts the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in January from 2 pm – 4 pm at the Civic Center.

Trustee Ralph Irons stated Dave received the hydrants into Public Works. He is hopeful to have all the ones installed by end of February 2024. Trustee Ralph Irons stated that Brandon will be taking the Water Operator test and once he passes that the Village will have two Water Operators.

Clerk Cave had nothing to report.

President Lopez has not had a response from Nieman Foods. Next meeting we will discuss Iles Avenue. Abby Powell reached out last week on feedback from the board meeting she presented. President Lopez asked the Trustees to review the line items. February and March will be budget meetings.

**OLD BUSINESS:** President Lopez tabled discussion and approval of Time Management App.

President Lopez opened up discussion of the Appointment of a Public Health and Safety Trustee. President Lopez would like to nominate Katrina Christofilakos as the Public Health and Safety Trustee. Katrina has been a long standing resident of the Village and would like to see the Village of Jerome cleaned up.

Motion to Approve the nomination of Katrina Chirstofilakos as the Public Health and Safety Trustee by Trustee Leigh Irons and 2nd by Trustee Ralph Irons  
Upon roll call vote, all voted AYE; except Trustee Raftis voted present  
**MOTION PASSES.**

President Lopez opened discussion and approval of Ordinance 24-03 Regarding Civic Center Rental Procedures and Rates. Trustee DeHart asked to table till the next meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION:** President Lopez opened up discussion and approval of Ordinance 24-06 Approving a Contract for the Purchase of Real Estate commonly known as 3030 ½ Chatham Road from Federal National Mortgage Association. Attorney Brokaw suggested to table it until we receive the contract.

President Lopez opened up discussion and approval of the Rental of a Scissor Lift for one week to Aid Public Works in Maintenance Issues.

Motion to Approve the Rental of a Scissor Lift for one week to Aid Public Works in Maintenance Issues not to exceed \$750.00 by Trustee DeHart and 2nd by Trustee Raftis  
Upon roll call vote, all voted AYE;  
**MOTION PASSES.**

**ADJOURNMENT:** With no further business, President Lopez asked for a motion to close the meeting at 7:48 pm. Motion was made by Trustee Raftis and 2nd by Trustee Ralph Irons.

**PREPARED BY:** Lisa Cave, Clerk

**DATE APPROVED:** February 1, 2024

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Village Clerk

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Date