



January 14, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: MacKenzie, Dean, Dana, Corey, Vernon, Avery, Rita, Ryan Lecont, John Veenstra, Ray Rodriguez

Dean called the meeting to order.

Nominations were taken for the 2026 town council president. MacKenzie nominated Dean Smith. Dana motioned to approve. Dean Smith was named town council president for 2026. Next Dean went through the 2026 list of appointments.

Marshal: Raymundo Rodriguez

Utility Superintendent: Avery Ferguson

Maintenance Director: Corey Oberlin

Economic Development Coordinator: MacKenzie Taylor

Liability Insurance: Selective Insurance/Synergy

Medical Insurance: Indiana Public Employers (Anthem)

Engineers: Commonwealth

Annual Board of Finance: Dana Rutter

Publishing Agency: Goshen News

Park Maintenance Director: Vernon Miller

Financial Advisors: Suzy Bass & Janet Alexander

Legal Advisor: Tabled until next meeting

Financial Institution: Interra Credit Union

Dean made a motion to approve meeting minutes from December 10, 2025. Dana seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

Water: Avery asked if the council has had a chance to think about vacation pay out for days not used. Avery said he only has a little over a day and is looking for approval to get that paid out. Avery mentioned he knows Corey had some days left over too. MacKenzie said Avery has 13.1 vacation hours and Corey has 64 vacation hours. Dean stated we have a policy to use it or lose it. He acknowledged the last year or two it has been rough for everybody. Dean said his feelings on the matter is, take some half days to burn it up, work less when time allows. Dean said what was remaining in 2025 for vacation we will approve to pay it out but this is the last time we are approving this. Vacation is there for a reason. Dana said he understands if the workload is busy but there comes a time when you have to step back, it's not good to be at work all of the time.

Avery said he tries to take time off but gets called in often. Dean told Avery he knows he is still in the process of learning the job but the budget can't necessarily handle extra stuff like this.

Avery sought permission from the council to attend the spring conference in French Lick. The training would allow him to earn CEU's that are required for his license. The council had no issue with Avery attending the spring conference.

Avery has started the water side for his apprenticeship program. Avery graduated from the wastewater side in December and has his license for wastewater. Avery has started communicating with Stouder about only using them for the water side. Stouder was in agreement but he is asking for a two-year contract on the water side. Avery said the new contract without the wastewater operator coverage, should save us around \$14,000 a year. Dean asked MacKenzie if she remembered anything specific about the Stouder contract. MacKenzie said she doesn't recall, she would have to go back and revisit that. MacKenzie said she would send Dean the Stouder contract. Avery said he has enjoyed his time with Stouder and wants to continue a business relationship with them even after he passes the water exam and obtains his license.

The 10-watt locator has arrived. Avery said he will need to try to learn it when he has down time. Avery said he would like to change the shut off policy because he doesn't have anything written down. Normally, shut offs are completed on the 10th of the month. If it falls on a Tuesday, he doesn't like to do them then because then people can't come in and pay on Wednesday. Avery said, same thing for having shut offs on a Friday, then they have to go all weekend without water. Dana said, it is what it is, he doesn't really have an opinion on it. He said he doesn't intend to sound cruel but it is what it is. Avery said the shut offs really bind up his day. Overall, Avery would like a more consistent shut off policy.

Avery received a letter from IDEM in regard to the phase II well head protection plan. Avery told the council last spring he had received notification about this and accidentally let it slip through the cracks. Avery's getting help from someone that's affiliated with IDEM or Alliance (couldn't remember where this representative is from). Avery is working on getting an extension from IDEM.

Avery stated he received an email today from the State level. Senate Bill 6 states the public utility must provide information to landowners if a town/city is doing a main extension through condemned property. Avery said it's something to think about if we really end up doing the extension past Forest River, this could come into play.

Avery said it was brought to him about hiring Holly part-time for holidays and weekends. Avery said he would like to start working on the process to get her hired. Avery said he still needs to meet with Tina and Holly to see what they are thinking. Dean stated he will abstain from any involvement. Dana said we approve it and to start working on that.

Ryan Lecount was in attendance for an extremely high-water bill. Before discussing his situation, he asked about the shut off policy? MacKenzie told Ryan It's sixty days of non-payment. The Clerk Treasurer's office prints out a disconnect notice that they are to received by the 1st of the month. From there, the customer needs to make contact with us about creating a payment arrangement or if there is no contact Avery will shut them off on the 10th. Ryan said he heard about a relief fund that a municipality does to help those who are experiencing hardship. He wondered if we had any fund like that set up. MacKenzie said the town currently does not. Ryan said he knows families are struggling in our area and if there's a way to help them, he and his family would like to do that if we ever create a fund for this purpose. He understood that a lot of people wouldn't want to disclose that information. Ryan began informing the council about his high-water bill. His January bill was \$539.90 and questioned what is going on. He inspected the meter and thought maybe there was a running toilet. A month prior to receiving this bill, he put a new flapper in the toilet and he determined that wasn't the problem. Then he checked the front spicket of his house and it was frozen. Then he went to the back of the house and that spicket was running. Ryan assumes the spicket must have been running for a month and a half straight. Ryan performed some math on his utility usage and meter reading and got it back to normal. Ryan said when he lived in Goshen, he appealed a high-water bill and had to prove the leak was fixed by a plumber and they'd offset that cost on the sewer side. Ryan said, he was hoping since it happened outside of the home an adjustment could be made on the sewer portion. MacKenzie explained for the adjustment process if the council approves it, we take the average of your past three months sewer bill, charge the customer the average amount, and adjust off the rest of the portion. Dana said we have done this for others in the past; it wouldn't be fair not to do the same for Ryan. Dana asked Avery if he was okay with this? Avery said yes, since the leak was on the outside. Dana and Dean approved an adjustment on the sewer portion of -\$226.37, the average sewage will amount to \$84.09.

Wastewater: Crosby will begin mobilizing in February for the UV Plant.

Avery said he's unsure what to do about this situation. Mr. Geiger seems to be very picky about the fields he leases (which are basically all the ones we land apply to) We may need to look into other options which would be more costly, construct dry beds, bag it, and treat it, then pay someone to haul it out. Or we need to look for another place to permit and land apply. Dean

asked if we have a contract with Dean Rink? Avery said we have a verbal agreement and good working relationship.

Avery told the council he would like to sit down with them sometime and go over ordinances every other year to see if there need to be any updates/alterations.

Community Development: MacKenzie would like to get an early spring newsletter around and requested all information be submitted to her or Addie by February 9th.

MacKenzie informed the council she, Vernon, and Corey will be going to Elkhart on January 20th for a trail meeting with experts from the Netherlands and Community Foundations.

Maintenance: Corey began by recalling when Dean came up to the maintenance building on New Years Eve, the dump truck wasn't working again. Apparently, the starter was the issue. Corey made the trip to Ft. Wayne to get a new one. Dean asked Corey how long it took him to get that changed. Corey replied it took him longer to get it out than put back in.

Corey told the council someone hit the guardrail on the overpass. He asked if anyone had any suggestions on where to get a replacement or if it would be best to just contact Elkhart County? Dean thought it would be best to ask Elkhart County where they get their material.

Last week on Larimer Street Corey smelled gas while picking up brush. He called Avery. They tried to assess the area. There were times they could smell the gas and then it would disappear. They called the fire department. The fire department could smell it but not detect it. NIPSCO was called out to fix it. NIPSCO showed up, detected it, then said they would call a supervisor. No work had been done by the time of the meeting.

Marshal: An application was submitted for a part-time officer. Ray, Robert, and John Veenstra met with him before the town council meeting. Ray said he thinks Michael Wass would bring a lot to the department and be a good asset. He has 30 years of experience, was a K-9 officer, a detective, and meets tier one qualifications. Ray told the council his two requests were to be paid \$25.00 a hour and a take home squad car. Ray said he isn't retired yet, he will retire towards the end of next month and wouldn't be able to start until March. Dean said let's table this and we can think about this and discuss it more in depth at the next meeting. Ray told the council he won't be at the next meeting because he has Chiefs training, but Robert will be here.

Park: Vernon said the park is good/closed up and the mule is doing good. Vernon thinks it would be a good idea to get a situation cleared up by the pickleball court. The water is washing out the

area and coming up on the pickleball courts. Vernon spoke with Jake Oberlin about this and he said someone needs a transit with a slope and see where we are at after doing that. Vernon said he is really eager to get to get that driveway to come in and someone really needs to get started off of SR-13. We can think about it and talk more in depth about this at the next meeting. If we want this in by August we really need to get started. Vernon said other than that everything is fine.

Clerk Treasurer: MacKenzie gave Dean and Dana their Nepotism Certification. Both signed the document.

MacKenzie had a retroactive Salary Ordinance for it to be effective for the first payroll in January. The change was reflected in Tina's pay. Dana made a motion to approve the retroactive amended salary ordinance. Dean abstained. MacKenzie seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the retroactive amended salary ordinance was unanimously approved.

MacKenzie gave the council an amended retroactive Ordinance 2026-02. This establishes new rental rates for the park facilities that was voted on and approved back in 2025. Dean made a motion to accept the retroactive ordinance 2026-02. Dana seconded the motion. Upon voice vote Ordinance 2026-02 was unanimously approved.

Ordinance 2026-03 is an ordinance repeal for ordinance 2020-06. This ordinance outlines an amendment in our current handbook policy about permitting full time employees, other than public safety officers to carry a concealed firearm in the workplace. MacKenzie explained, since we are about ready to adopt a new handbook, she wants to make sure everything jives correctly. Dana and Dean were not in favor of this and worried it may be a violation of second amendment rights. They asked MacKenzie to speak with an attorney about this. Dana said, we are allowed to at Jayco but the firearm needs to stay in the vehicle in a lock box or glove box. MacKenzie said that's what the new handbook says too, it follows state guidelines.

MacKenzie said she won't be here for the meeting Wednesday, but Addie will be.

Old Business: Avery was asked about the laundry mat and how things seem to be moving forward? Avery wants to make sure the laundry mat aligns with our ordinances. Vernon said his son in law is waiting on NIPSCO to bore under the road. Avery said he has gotten several locates but they just keep wasting his time by having to go out there and mark it again and not doing the work.

Dean asked Ray how his department has been doing with speeders? Dean said he hasn't heard much in regard to this. Ray told the council he keeps doing traffic checks whenever he and Robert can. It was asked if anyone has heard anything else as far as complaints? Dana said he can confirm speeding is happening because he is out there with traffic in the early mornings. The traffic getting to work is really rocking and rolling. Dana said just today as he was coming home from work someone was tailgating him pretty bad. People are just idiot drivers and are always in a hurry. Ray said there have been a lot of accidents today. It was encouraged to have Ray and Robert keep writing tickets so a part-time officer can be hired.

New Business: Rita told everyone Farmer's Day will be August 21 and 22 this year. Dana asked when garage sales will be? Avery informed the council Amber Gingerich released a post on Facebook saying she is looking for someone to takeover that responsibility because the old person they had isn't doing it anymore and she no longer wants to either. Rita suggested not doing it as early as they did last year. Dana reminded everyone it normally coincides with town clean up. Is there a date set for that? MacKenzie said no she hasn't scheduled yet and asked for suggestions. Dean and Dana thought the best time for town wide clean up would be in May and hopefully garage sales can coincide with that.

Dean asked MacKenzie what the handout was in regard to Boyce Systems? MacKenzie said it's a upgrade of our software system. MacKenzie said she doesn't even want to pitch it to the council because it's not feasible. Dean said great.

Dean made a motion to pay bills. Dana seconded the motion. Upon voice vote it was unanimously approved to pay bills.

Dean made a motion to adjourn. Dana seconded the motion to adjourn. Upon voice vote it was unanimously approved to adjourn.

X 

Dean Smith
Town Council President

X 

MacKenzie Taylor
Clerk Treasurer

