

CITY OF WEST LAFAYETTE  
COMMON COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
JULY 6, 2020

The Common Council of the City of West Lafayette, Indiana, met electronically on July 6, 2020, at the hour of 6:30 p.m.

President Bunder called the meeting to order and presided.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Present: James Blanco, Peter Bunder, Nick DeBoer, Shannon Kang, Larry Leverenz, Kathy Parker, David Sanders, Gerald Thomas, and Norris Wang.

Absent: None

Also present: Mayor John Dennis, Corporation Counsel Eric Burns, Clerk Sana Booker, Director of Development Erin Easter, City Controller Peter Gray, Police Chief Troy Harris, and Building Commissioner Chad Spitznagle. Other unnamed department heads who did not speak were available on the conference line.

#### NOTES

► This meeting was conducted electronically, without the physical attendance of any person, due to the public health emergency (COVID-19 pandemic) and per IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 and State of Indiana Executive Order 20-09, Paragraph 4.

#### MINUTES

Councilor DeBoer moved for acceptance of the minutes of the June 1, 2020, Common Council Meeting. Councilor Thomas seconded the motion, and the motion passed by voice vote.

#### REPORTS OF CITY DEPARTMENTS ON FILE IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE

There were no comments.

#### REPORT OF THE APC REPRESENTATIVES

Councilor Leverenz explained that a request from Tippecanoe School Corporation (TSC) to allow a small wind turbine system at Cole Elementary School has been withdrawn due to the discovery that solar panels are now a cheaper option.

#### PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Mayoral Appointment: with Council Consent: Human Relations Commission – Rebecca Brummet  
Councilor DeBoer moved to approve the appointment of Rebecca Brummet to the Human Relations Commission. Councilor Thomas seconded the motion, and the motion passed by voice vote.

#### FINANCIAL REPORT

Controller Gray reported that our budget at half-way through the year, as far as being expensed and with encumbrances, is at 47%. We are generally in-line with the budget. He reported that we received our June tax levy. It was between 40-45% of what we were hoping to receive. The June levy is usually the higher of the two levies. However, that may or may not be the case this year as some payments were extended. Our revenue is not in dire straits at this point from a levy

standpoint. However, the levy only represents about 50% of what we receive for our General Fund. Other revenue sources are from other taxes, fees, and fines. We are still not sure where the revenues will end at the end of the year. There will be a budget review meeting tomorrow, July 7, 2020, at 4:30 p.m., held electronically.

### LEGAL REPORT

Corporation Counsel Burns confirmed for Councilor DeBoer that the Governor's extension of the public health emergency extends through the August 3, 2020, Council meeting. We will anticipate that the August meeting will be held electronically.

### SPECIAL REPORTS

#### 2019 WWTU Annual Financial Report

Jim Treat (Krohn & Associates) stated that due to the challenges of the electronic meeting format, he will provide a summary of the highlights of the 2019 Wastewater Utility Financial Report. He stated that the Utility ended 2019 in relatively good shape at year-end. Referring to the Statement of Net Position, Mr. Treat stated that we built up some cash by about three-quarters of \$1 million. We had about \$4.5 million in Cash Operating Funds and about \$8.5 million in Restricted Cash Funds. The other good news is that we did not take on any new long-term debt in 2019, so we just have to be able to continue to make payments on the debt we have outstanding. On the Income Statement, we see that revenues did not drop in 2019; they were just flat. Both the University and our other users, in terms of flows and revenues, were nearly on target with 2018. Operating expenses were down by about \$260,000, which is just what was budgeted. Net income for the year was around \$2 million, which is about the same as 2017 and 2018. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Treat also spoke about the financials for the beginning of 2020. He stated that through April, we were right on target, reflecting the same balances that we had in 2019. It was the April and May flows where we began to see a dramatic decline, significantly affected by Purdue. The May billings for April usage was at about 52% from the prior year. The following month was less dramatic at about 80%. For Wastewater fees for the first half of this year compared to last year, we are down a little over \$200,000.00. Total annual billings are a little over \$10 million. It is not shocking at this point, and hopefully we will be able to see as we get a couple months along, that the flows will come back to a certain extent, especially if Purdue is successful in their planned implementation of on-campus learning. We will continue to monitor and issue monthly financial statements as quickly as we can so we can see how this trend continues or how low it is going to get.

Controller Gray stated that we hope Purdue will be back in session in the fall and operating as normally as possible. One thing we are still looking at as far as the summer rates is that Purdue often hosts camps on campus, so there is still a lot of usage that happened last year that we anticipate will not happen this year. We still have some reservations on where we will end up but hope that fall and winter are back to where it has been in the past.

Mr. Treat added that we did not plan on a large revenue increase in 2020. We put together a budget this year that we will definitely not hit in terms of revenue, but since we did not plan on an increase, we do not have to absorb that as well as the unusual decrease that we will have over the course of the year.

#### Joint Board Report

Councilor DeBoer stated that the next Joint Board meeting will be July 21, 2020, at noon, and it will be held via WebEx.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Ordinance No. 07-20** An Ordinance Providing For Temporary Loans (Pension Funds) (Submitted by Controller) [No. of Readings 2 of 2]

Councilor DeBoer read Ordinance No. 07-20 by title only.

Councilor DeBoer moved for passage of Ordinance No. 07-20 on second and final reading, and that the vote be by roll call. The motion was seconded by Councilor Thomas.

Controller Gray stated that this is for our usual process for cash-flow purposes for the Pension Funds.

There was no further discussion.

Clerk Booker called the roll call vote:

<b>Councilperson</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Blanco	Aye
Bunder	Aye
DeBoer	Aye
Kang	Aye
Leverenz	Aye
Parker	Aye
Sanders	Aye
Thomas	Aye
Wang	Aye

Clerk Booker stated that the vote was 9 AYES and 0 NAYS.

President Bunder announced that Ordinance No. 07-20 passed on second and final reading.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Ordinance No. 08-20** An Ordinance To Amend Ordinance No. 04-20, To Fix The 2020 Salary Schedule For Appointed Officers, Employees, And Members Of The Police And Fire Departments Of The City Of West Lafayette, Indiana (Presented by Controller) [No. of Readings 1 of 1]

Councilor DeBoer read Ordinance No. 08-20 by title only.

Councilor DeBoer moved for passage of Ordinance No. 08-20 on first reading, and that the vote be by roll call. The motion was seconded by Councilor Thomas.

Controller Gray stated that Page 2 of the Ordinance shows change to the Building Department salaries. One is a title change from Financial and Code Assistant to Rental Housing Assistant, along with adjusting the bi-weekly minimum and maximum amounts for that position. The second change is to add an Administrative Assistant position to the Building Department. He explained that the Administrative Assistant for the Engineering Department had been split between these departments previously.

Councilor DeBoer asked for information on what the Rental Housing Assistant position entails.

Building Commission Spitznagle explained that Kathy Henderson is currently the Financial and Code Assistant. The position originally included more accounting duties which are now performed

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by the Finance Department. The duties now include invoicing, mailings, and scheduling rental housing inspections. The name change fits the actual duties.

There was no further discussion.

Clerk Booker called the roll call vote:

<b>Councilperson</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Blanco	Aye
Bunder	Aye
DeBoer	Aye
Kang	Aye
Leverenz	Aye
Parker	Aye
Sanders	Aye
Thomas	Aye
Wang	Aye

Clerk Booker stated that the vote was 9 AYES and 0 NAYS.

President Bunder announced that Ordinance No. 08-20 passed on first reading.

Ordinance No. 09-20 An Ordinance Restricting Over Growth Of Weeds, Grass, Noxious Plants, And/Or Vermin Harborage In The City Of West Lafayette, County Of Tippecanoe, Indiana (Sponsored by Mayor Dennis) [No. of Readings 1 of 2]

Councilor DeBoer read Ordinance No. 09-20 by title only.

Councilor DeBoer moved for passage of Ordinance No. 09-20 on first reading, and that the vote be by roll call. The motion was seconded by Councilor Thomas.

In response to a question from President Bunder, Counsel Burns explained that an example of vermin harborage would be when a couch is sitting on a porch where the elements have it overwhelmed with rot, making it a perfect place for small varmints to harbor themselves. He stated that this Ordinance was put together because it was necessary as an outshoot of the effort to recodify our City Code. The Building Officials Code Administrators International (BOCA) used to be the standard for building occupancy. It fell by the wayside in the 1980s, but we still referenced it in our Code. These restrictions were left out of our current Code with the removal of the BOCA references. This is not really changing the law in the City, but it is a clean-up item. By passing it, we will be in the position we were in before the recodification and allow us to write tickets for those who do not comply with these restrictions.

Councilor DeBoer stated that one of the main reasons we recodified was because when he tried to read it, it just kept referencing a document that could not be accessed. He asked if, because this does not exist in City Code, if we need two readings tonight. He asked if we might be in any kind of legal gray area due to it not being there right now.

Counsel Burns stated that his understanding is that the compliance we have been getting has been an old-fashioned knock on the door request, and people tend to do so. We do not write a lot of tickets. Right now, we do not have the power to write those tickets, so we are actually in a black-and-white area. He is not aware of an urgent need to pass this in two readings tonight. He

prefers that anytime we impose a fine, particularly for anything as commonplace as having weeds in your yard, that we have the two readings at two different meetings

Commissioner Spitznagle added that in the recodification we did update to the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) in exchange for the BOCA, but this Ordinance cleans up some items and strengthens the IPMC. He and Counsel Burns discussed that they do not know of an urgency to pass this tonight from the Police Department's Neighborhood Resource Team (NRT).

There was no further discussion.

Clerk Booker called the roll call vote:

<b>Councilperson</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Blanco	Aye
Bunder	Aye
DeBoer	Aye
Kang	Aye
Leverenz	Aye
Parker	Aye
Sanders	Aye
Thomas	Aye
Wang	Aye

Clerk Booker stated that the vote was 9 AYES and 0 NAYS.

President Bunder announced that Ordinance No. 09-20 passed on first reading.

Resolution No. 12-20 Resolution Repealing West Lafayette City Code Chapter 24, Article IV Governing Taxicabs And Taxicab Companies (Sponsored by Mayor Dennis) [No. of Readings 1 of 1]

Councilor DeBoer read Resolution No. 12-20 by title only.

Councilor DeBoer moved for passage of Resolution No. 12-20 on first and only reading, and that the vote be by roll call. The motion was seconded by Councilor Thomas.

Counsel Burns stated that Deputy Police Chief VanVactor approached his office to explain that the taxicab chapter of the City Code is no longer serving a purpose. It became a barrier for taxicab companies when compared to Transportation Network Companies (TNC), such as Uber or Lyft, and it served no other good purpose. There are still State codes in effect plus safety regulations. There would be no adverse impact to removing this chapter.

Councilors DeBoer and Sanders requested information on why repealing a part of the City Code is a resolution rather than an ordinance and for confirmation that it is binding. Counsel Burns responded that the State statute says that any item that imposes a fine requires two readings. However, to un-do an item, there is no State requirement for how it is done. When there is no State requirement, the Council has plenary jurisdiction to determine procedure.

Police Chief Harris confirmed for Councilor Sanders that taxicabs continue to be regulated in State Code separate from TNCs. He explained that we are trying to get rid of our local ordinance

because he believes that we were overregulating our taxicab companies. Our ordinance required us to do an inspection of the vehicles, which the Police Department is not qualified to do.

There was no further discussion.

Clerk Booker called the roll call vote:

<b>Councilperson</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Blanco	Aye
Bunder	Aye
DeBoer	Aye
Kang	Aye
Leverenz	Aye
Parker	Aye
Sanders	Aye
Thomas	Aye
Wang	Aye

Clerk Booker stated that the vote was 9 AYES and 0 NAYS.

President Bunder announced that Resolution No. 12-20 passed on first and only reading.

Resolution No. 13-20 (Amended) A Resolution Amending The West Lafayette Community Development Block Grant 2019 One-Year Annual Action Plan (CARES Act) (Submitted by Department of Development) [No. of Readings 1 of 1]

Councilor DeBoer read Resolution No. 13-20 (Amended) by title only.

Councilor DeBoer moved for passage of Resolution No. 13-20 on first and only reading, and that the vote be by roll call. The motion was seconded by Councilor Thomas.

Director Easter stated that this Resolution is related to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding. This funding is specific to the coronavirus through the federal government. We can use it a little differently than we have in the past. Our option this time was to be able to support our public service agencies. These agencies support those who are finding themselves in troubled times based on the economic fallout and the virus itself. We have gone through a process with our Mayor’s Advisory Committee, and this is their recommendation for the funding. She noted that there is still \$107,472 unallocated, and we are still receiving applications from more agencies for that.

There was no further discussion.

Clerk Booker called the roll call vote:

<b>Councilperson</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Blanco	Aye
Bunder	Aye
DeBoer	Aye
Kang	Aye
Leverenz	Aye
Parker	Aye

<b>Councilperson</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Sanders	Aye
Thomas	Aye
Wang	Aye

Clerk Booker stated that the vote was 9 AYES and 0 NAYS.

President Bunder announced that Resolution No. 13-20 (Amended) passed on first and only reading.

**REPORT BY THE MAYOR**

**COVID-19 Discussion**

Mayor John Dennis stated that he has been asked many times the last few days about when we will mandate the wearing of masks in public. He stated that we are all acutely aware of what has been going on lately. There are some people who are abiding by requirements and wearing masks appropriately, while others are not. We have had several discussions about that with our public health officer, with further discussions to come. Mayor Dennis advocates for mandatory masks, although he knows that does not go well with everybody. He believes that Dr. Jeremy Adler, being responsible for the County, wants to have a unanimous decision by all of the elected leadership, including himself, Lafayette Mayor Tony Roswarski, and the Commissioners. He is fairly positive that some type of decision will be made this week. He explained that he does not believe anyone is opposed to masks, but it comes down to enforcement and certain details. In West Lafayette we see a lot of compliance with masks, but also see a lot of people not complying with social distancing. He stated that people still need to take care of themselves. Until we are in a position to mandate that everybody does it, everybody should be doing it. His presumption is that if there are people who are disregarding masks after all of the information that is out there, and all of the weeks and months that we have been dealing with the virus numbers increasing, then we must do the best we can as local government. That is why it is not only important that we have the power of mandating, but also have the power to have some sort of enforcement device or punitive measure. He knows that Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett has used this opportunity to not only encourage by ordinance, but also to hand out information. Mayor Dennis feels this is a good direction to start, but if it does not have any teeth then it will probably not be abided by.

Councilor DeBoer stated that while it may be difficult to enforce on an individual level, he does know that there are problems with convenience stores and employees of certain establishments not abiding by it. He feels that is something we could target. Councilor DeBoer asked what happens if this is not done at the County level, and if that would mean that we have the authority to enact a policy for West Lafayette alone.

Mayor Dennis stated that he believes we do have that authority. However, there are challenges with people traveling between West Lafayette, Lafayette, and the County. He and Counsel Burns stated that we could craft a local ordinance. Mayor Dennis stated that he thinks that people understand that if we are going to get to where the virus causes the minimal amount of damage to our citizens and our economy, then we need to take the steps to do all that we can to prevent this from spreading. As we are about to welcome 45,000 people back to Purdue, it is important that we have things in place for a holistic approach that does not just apply on campus; it would apply off-campus in the entire area.

Councilor DeBoer stated that he feels time is of the essence with this matter, so if the Council needs to come together to get this done, he encourages that to happen.



Councilor Leverenz stated that comments he is getting is curiosity what input the City has had with Purdue regarding student behavior and cooperative efforts between the entities. There is a real concern about 45,000 students coming back. Mayor Dennis responded that Purdue has been generous about including the elected officials. They are acutely aware of the challenges in dealing with that particular age group. Purdue has a pledge that they are expecting their students to take seriously, which includes behavior in the community. This means that if there are students misbehaving, we can report it to the Dean of Students to handle discipline. Mayor Dennis noted that Councilor Sanders is a skilled biologist, and they have had conversations at great length about what a serious matter this virus is and how it will not go away until we get a vaccine. In the interim, we need to abide by the rules that we know will help keep us safe. The two biggest ones are to wear a mask and keep your distance.

Councilor Wang asked if there are any municipalities or government units that have mandated wearing masks in public. Mayor Dennis responded yes, including Indianapolis as the biggest example in Indiana.

Councilor Wang asked if the police would be involved in enforcement. Mayor Dennis stated that he has asked the Police Department to address issues that he has been made aware of by providing information and requesting that people do the right thing. He knows that there are those who will not want to comply, but due to the severity of the virus and the fact it is communicated so easily, this is a situation where we have to appeal to people's general good nature. It is like anything else, such as making sure people do not drive too fast in a residential neighborhood. People tend to be more compliant when there is a person in authority nearby. When there is not, it goes back to the Boy Scout rule of, "Do unto others as they would do unto you." Councilor Wang noted that if we pass an ordinance and find someone in violation, it will be a fine, and we cannot put people in jail. Mayor Dennis responded that this is a public health issue. The last thing we want to do is get back to closing businesses, shutting down the economy, putting people out of work, and possibly losing their businesses and homes. We want to keep things moving in the right direction, even if it is only slowly progressing that way. However, we have a big problem in the middle of that with making sure that people are socially aware enough and have the necessary compassion to recognize that, "It is not just about me, it is about the people I care about and the community I care about." Councilor Wang stated that he understands, but it will be tough.

Councilor Kang stated that she feels we have passed a point of trusting our citizens to act accordingly and it is time for us to take action. She asked if Purdue would be likely to follow the rule if we mandate masks, because they have a pledge but are not requiring masks, though they are expecting students to wear them. She feels the University should consider not just individuals, but the entire entity of the campus.

Mayor Dennis stated that he thought Purdue was mandating masks, but we will encourage that. He spoke about the seriousness of the virus. He stated that we need to look after ourselves, but that includes looking after others. If you protect yourself, then you have done the right thing for everyone else. He feels we should be cautious about the number of people that gather.

Councilor Parker stated that it seems like everyone is waiting for somebody else to do something. We are waiting for the Governor, or the County, or Dr. Adler. She feels that if we were to mandate masks, it may prompt businesses to say, "No mask, no entry" just as they now say, "No shirt, no shoes, no service." It may at least get people to think about it before they go out in public. Councilor DeBoer voiced his agreement, noting that if we mandate pants in public, then there is no reason we cannot do this.



Councilor Kang noted that face masks are part of a culture. That is how it works in other countries, where masks are accepted by society, and has probably led to their massive decreases in virus numbers.

Councilor Sanders stated that Purdue does have a requirement to wear a face mask for those in a public or common space of any Purdue building, or in a classroom, laboratory, or office with others, or even outdoors when not able to maintain a safe distance. The problem is not the rule, it is about enforcement. There is a non-specific statement about how it could result in disciplinary action if this is not followed. However, there is not a real mechanism for enforcing the rules off-campus, even though he expects they will convey the message that it should apply. We would be assisting Purdue in its goals if we had our own regulations.

#### MRAP Discussion

Mayor Dennis stated that the other topic of conversation he wants to address is the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle that the Police Department owns. He knows that a lot of people have found that object to be offensive. They want us to decommission it, get rid of it, or sell it for scrap. They are looking at it as an aggressive military vehicle, which is not the truth. He explained that it is a piece of equipment used for transportation. It is a defensive vehicle by nature. We are living in some incredibly difficult times. There have been some horrible things happen over the past few months that have turned a bright light on what happens in larger cities when things break bad and law enforcement has to come in to maintain some semblance of order. There are a lot of extremely horrible and bad examples of what happens when police officers do not abide the rules and lose their concern for mankind. We need to focus on things of that nature. Because of that situation, we are looking at inanimate objects and making them the focus of our anxiety and negative feelings. We are not realizing that it is not the object itself; it is who is using it. In the case of the City of West Lafayette, it is the officers of the West Lafayette Police Department that, in an extremely necessary event, would utilize that vehicle for transportation purposes only. We need to focus on our police officers and what they do, how well they are trained, the conditions that training is under, the level of education they have, the diversity of the Department, and the fact that they live here instead of a suburb 50 miles away. They are a part of this community, and a part of the makeup of this community. He noted that he has been around law enforcement for a long time, and he feels they are one of the best trained and most professional agencies he has ever had the honor to serve around. They do a very good job, and they care passionately about this community. They are in our schools and neighborhoods, they attend meetings, and their kids go to our schools. He stated that it is a professional organization. We now need to support our police officers. They are under a lot of pressure right now because of the misbehavior of some evil people in uniform in other states. We need to be aware of who we have here and be proud of who have here. He stated that Chief Harris' leadership philosophy trickles down to every officer on that agency. He knows that there are some who feel that the MRAP is excessive, but the vehicle does nothing but sit. It is the officers who utilize it, get the training, and serve the citizens honorably every day that need our attention and support right now.

Councilor DeBoer stated he thinks there is an importance of symbols though. We can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can feel that our Police Department is very professional and lives in our community but disagree about the effect of a large armored vehicle that sits to do nothing. He asked what it is there to defend against, and it begs the question if it is there to defend against the people. He thinks we should get rid of it, and he plans to do what he can as a City Councilor to ensure we do not have armored vehicles from the military in this City.

Councilor Blanco asked when this piece of equipment is necessary or if has been needed at any point in the seven years that we have had it. Chief Harris responded that the vehicle is only to be used when there is imminent threat to life, such as an active shooter situation. There have been

only a few incidents where they were preparing to transport officers into harm's way, including the active shooter situation at Purdue. However, the situations were resolved before we needed to put it into duty. The use of it is something that must be authorized by himself or the Deputy Chief, and only for active shooter or to safely transport our officers to help our community.

Councilor Wang stated that he sees the MRAP as being a tool that is utilized by the Police with their best judgment. It is only going to be used to transport officers to rescue hostages. He noted that nobody called for it to be used when there was a disturbance at the Courthouse a couple of weeks ago. He trusts the judgement of our Police Chief and Deputy Chief on when to use it. We need to think about it as just a tool.

Councilor Sanders stated he is curious about the expected lifespan of the vehicle and what it costs to maintain. Chief Harris responded that he does not know the lifespan. For maintaining it, we have an annual insurance cost, and since we have had it, we have only had to replace a few batteries. It is not utilized often enough for wear and tear to be an issue.

Chief Harris added that he understands that this is a difficult and emotional time in America, and we all feel like we want to do something. He has been vocal in talking about change in police work. He spoke about how we plan to improve here at our Police Department. We have several initiatives that our community and our agency would not only agree on but are also beneficial to both. We need to talk about how we recruit minorities and how we bring the best and brightest candidates to work for our community. This is so we do not repeat history and so we do not have these issues. We need to talk about better training. We need to think outside the box. We need to talk about how to bring social service providers alongside our officers to provide some other resources. Now is the time to focus on unity to show not just our community, but also America that we are different here. He stated that if you really want to invoke change, and if social justice and reform is really on your heart, that we should not focus on a vehicle. There are other things and other initiatives that should take precedent over this. He stated that he is happy to sit down and have a conversation with anybody about this. His door is always open, and he is very approachable. He stated that he does not want to have this discussion on social media or through the media. He asked that we sit down to discuss this and move forward.

Councilor DeBoer stated that he wants to reiterate that symbols are important. We are having a national debate about statues and flags right now on top of the overarching discussion about the way that police interact with communities. He thinks that we can do both and tackle both the symbols of things we do not need in our community as well as acknowledge the great work that the police do on a day-to-day basis. He is not sure how the two are necessarily linked. He stated that he will take Chief Harris up on his offer to have a conversation about the vehicle.

### COMMUNICATIONS

► Councilor Thomas stated that he and Councilor Parker, at the request of President Bunder, have taken a lead in dealing with the issue of social injustice and things that have been happening in our community, State, and country for the last several weeks. They have met with Chief Harris, Counsel Burns, Clerk Booker, and Mayor Dennis. They continue to have discussions about how we move forward as a community. This includes the Police Department's procedures and policies. We look at those and make suggestions on improvements. We should hear more from Chief Harris in the coming weeks about what he has been and is doing. We make sure that their Department is accountable to our citizens and to themselves. He and Councilor Parker have prepared a statement, which he read aloud:

Statement on Police Violence

During these months of the pandemic, the United States has witnessed the largest sustained uprising against police brutality and killing of black people that has been seen in 50 years.

We want to be clear: these latest killings...Elijah McClain, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Draesjon Reed, and David McAtee...are only the most recent in a long, long list of police killing black individuals, spanning decades. Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Emmett Till, George Stinney. It seems that every day, we can add more names to the list. The prevalence of cell phones has finally made it impossible for white people to ignore. Fact is, Black people are 3X more likely to be killed by police than white people in the USA. To correct problems, we have to first admit there is one.

There are several national movements afoot that are also taking hold in West Lafayette. We have each, on this council, received many calls and emails these last few weeks, demanding changes to our police department, with particular emphasis on withholding the public safety tax that was approved in October 2019, and instead diverting that money towards mental health funding.

We all agree that nationwide, police misconduct must be addressed and mental health resources in Tippecanoe County are grossly lacking. The challenge in repairing this mental health deficiency will take intentional efforts from the whole county in both the construction of facilities and staffing by qualified personnel.

At the same time, we express our deep gratitude to the West Lafayette Police Department, which sets the highest bar for police standards. Hiring practices are rigorous and thorough, involving a written test, physical test, polygraph, comprehensive background check, home visit, police interview and Merit Commission interview. Our officers have a duty to intercede if they witness improper police conduct. They will be held accountable. Complaints against officers are handled, letters of reprimand are placed in the permanent file, the Merit Commission is notified, and if appropriate, officers are terminated.

While our police department is currently one that we are very proud of, we acknowledge that there was a time in our history when officers may not have had the level of bias awareness that they do now. From a recent letter written by alumni of West Lafayette High School, we have read numerous accounts of situations involving racial profiling and microaggressions that we find concerning. We would like the public to know that although the police department addresses all complaints against its officers, we understand that it might feel unsafe to lodge a complaint about the police, TO the police.

Fortunately, the city has an independent Human Rights Commission that will hear complaints, in addition to nine members of the City Council who were elected to listen to the public and solve problems. We cannot address injustices if we are not aware of their existence, and so it is our fervent hope that we work together as a community in continuing to improve our police department and our city. Neither racial profiling nor microaggressions are okay in any sector of our society, and cooperation and communication are essential if we are to root them out.

We wish to thank the many citizens who have contacted us with their concerns and suggestions to make this city that they call home even better. We appreciate their research

about funding and their reminder that access to proper mental health care is a crisis in our county, as well as in the state. This conversation is a work in progress, and we hope for a large attendance of mask-wearing citizens at the community-wide townhall to be held at the amphitheater on July 25, 2020, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., sponsored by the NAACP, to address these urgent matters.

Councilor Thomas stated that there will be more conversations in the future. We need to make sure that we keep talking about this issue because it is not going away. This issue has taken root and we need to address our City, our police force, and our citizens. We need to look at how we can come back. He thinks that Chief Harris is on his way to bringing information to the community that will be beneficial for them to understand procedures and how our police force operates.

► Councilor Kang stated that when we say the Pledge of Allegiance in this electronic format it does not sound as nicely as it should, so in the future we should have one person unmuted to lead us through it. President Bunder agreed and asked that Councilor Kang lead the Pledge in August.

► President Bunder stated that the weekend of June 27, 2020, was very busy for the City Council members with the number of emails and phone communications they had from citizens. Many of the letters were form letters from a template, though some were personalized. He stated that everybody who is involved in the conversation around George Floyd's murder and the reform of policing should hear at least one of these letters. He noted that he is not endorsing everything in the letter. He read a letter aloud from Minnie Yang:

As an Asian American member of the West Lafayette community, as well as an alum of the West Lafayette Community School Corporation who has lived here since 2002, I am writing to compel you to consider the changes that must be made to the West Lafayette Police Department and to strongly urge the City Council to defund the WLPD when it votes on the upcoming 2021 city budget.

During the last few weeks around the country, we've all seen what police departments are capable of when a large percentage of our municipal governments' resources and funds are dedicated to them. Many politicians across the nation have called for increasing police funding and for improving the system. However, the Minneapolis Police Department, which was a model for many of the reforms these politicians want, still demonstrated an inability to protect its citizens.

The police system continuously enables officers to use excessive violence and kill members of the community. The WLPD is not separate from this. All police departments are diseased with systemic racism that allows officers to wield power that does more harm than good – it has been shown that aggressive policing can lead to social disruption and, in turn, more crime. In addition, policing that punishes poverty, which includes large traffic tickets and debts, can produce circumstances where crime is more probable. Rather than spend more on training programs for the police, it's clear that we must take steps to demilitarize and disempower these departments, for we would be better off allocating those resources elsewhere in our community: to education, youth centers, affordable housing, and treatment for both mental health and drug abuse.

We claim to be a multicultural and progressive community in West Lafayette, but we are lying to ourselves if we pretend our militarized police institutions protect Black and non-white people. We can, however, live up to this ideal if we invest in efforts that truly support our community. This country was founded upon Black oppression and we must continue to

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take action to dismantle a system centered around white supremacy. The local income tax recently instituted on January 1st of this year sends more than \$8 million to Lafayette, West Lafayette, and Tippecanoe County public safety – the bulk of which heads to police departments. It is imperative that from this moment forward, the City Council:

- 1) refrains from spending the revenue generated from this new income tax on the WLPD;
- 2) commits to never again increasing the WLPD budget;
- 3) defunds the police and instead invests in measures that would support Black and Brown communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Minnie Yang  
District 5, WLHS '16

Councilor Bunder stated that he reads that not because he agrees with it or thinks it is a blueprint for action for the City of West Lafayette. He read it so that people understand that on a particular weekend in June, every one of the Council members received 30 or 40 of those messages via phone or email. It is important for the people who spent the time writing those to know that we did hear them, and for everyone in City government to know that a substantial lobbying effort, whether you agree with it or not, was undertaken on behalf of this issue.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

One email received to the Clerk email prior to the meeting which is appended to these minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business at this time, Councilor Kang moved for adjournment, and President Bunder adjourned the meeting the time being 8:00 p.m.

**From:** [Sam Craig](#)  
**To:** [clerk](#)  
**Subject:** "Financial Report" Comment for July 6 Meeting  
**Date:** Monday, July 6, 2020 8:24:00 AM

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## External

As you have either already seen or are likely to see, allocating police funding elsewhere would be greatly beneficial to the community as a whole, but especially the Black and Brown communities that have dealt with centuries of systemic oppression. One logical step to take this route is demilitarizing the police.

I have been especially encouraged by Councillor Bundler's recent comments that he does not see the MRAP tank as especially useful for the West Lafayette Police Department. I urge the councillors as a whole to think about the following: the MRAP tank is designed for the recent US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. What about the city of West Lafayette poses such a threat as would require a vehicle designed for wartime?

I hope that this is only an avenue toward other budget decisions that could help the community.

-Sam