

**BELLEFONTAINE CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2025
7:30 pm**

CALL TO ORDER: Zeb Wagner
PLEDGE & INVOCATION:
ROLL CALL: Fitzpatrick *First Chair*
James
Reser
Springs
Aler
Baker
Davis *Minister* All Present

SUSPENSION READING OF MINUTES: Moved by Springs, seconded by Aler V All Ayes
CORRECTIONS/ADDITIONS: none

ADMINISTRATION REPORTS:

Mayor - Not present
S/SD- Update on natural gas and electric aggregation programs. We have a new natural gas aggregation that will start on November 2025 meter reading. This rate is 63.49 cents per CCF fixed rate. Encourage citizens to shop for rates. Resident opt out letters went out yesterday. The contact number for our broker is posted on the city’s website. For the electric aggregate, we are currently at 7.18 cents per kilowatt hour through December of this year. The renewal rate is 9.08 cents per kilowatt hour. This is a 29-month term at this rate. Citizens can use the Apples to Apples through the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio website to shop for rates.

Speaks to the Detrick Annexation that is up for adoption. Lots of concerns in the city. Hopefully this will bring clarity and balance to the situation. Approval this evening would simply bring the property into the corporate boundaries of the city. This does not approve a housing development and does not approve tax abatements. This only means that the property owners would gain access to city services such as water and sewer and the income derived from the property would be subbed to city income tax. The property owners have expressed interest in developing housing but annexation is just the first managed step to getting there. Any proposed development would go through multiple stages of review by Council and public input. There will be opportunities to discuss in detail before anything moves forward. The concerns most raised fall into 4 categories:

Infrastructure-our city services already serve Southview Park and BellTech so extensions are very feasible. The cost of those extensions will be borne by the developer not tax payors. Our plants have ample capacity. Every new home not only pays its share of monthly user fees but contributes to a long term system of support.

Traffic and Safety-Any development would require a professional traffic impact study which would produce a list of recommended improvements including widening, turn lanes and signals. The city would evaluate those improvements and determine which are immediately necessary. If not necessary right away, these would be negotiated with the developer to make sure those improvements happen.

Connectivity-would strengthen our community and not fragment it. Sidewalks, trail lengths and safe pedestrian connections to Southview Park and beyond are essential. These will be required as part of any development plan and we should see this as an opportunity to improve walkability for both new and existing residents.

Tax Abatements-Annexation does not automatically trigger abatements. Any abatements will require Council approval. We have heard about City Schools request to stop extending abatements to new properties and I support a fresh review of those policies. It has been the stance of the city to regularly evaluate the abatement program to achieving the desired effect with input from the schools. Just nine months ago we amended the residential abatements of new single family developments within the existing city limits that would no longer be eligible for 12-year abatements but only 5-year abatements. With growth over the last several years we will continue to follow through in our plan reviews of the CR abatement program with additional input from the schools. In a meeting with Superintendent Brad Hall on Friday

afternoon we had a conversation about this and he was very clear to me that the schools do have room for more students and that they are supportive of new developments just not tax abatements. Concerns have been raised, and they do deserve attention. Annexation is not the final word on these issues it's simply the first step that makes further dialogue and planning possible. There are challenges but it also brings opportunity. New families mean new energy, more income taxes, city services, more dollars spent in the community to improve sales tax collections for the county, more property taxes for stronger schools and more support for local businesses. Bellefontaine's employers need workers and workers need housing. Without new housing we risk pulling back the momentum that has revitalized our downtown and strengthened our economy. I also want to acknowledge the residents close to this property. Your concerns are valid and I don't dismiss them. My belief is that through collaboration we can address the ways that make our community stronger. Council voting yes on this annexation tonight is not just about one property it's about affirming the progress Bellefontaine has made positioning us for continued success and making sure our community keeps thriving into the future and I would urge Council to support the annexation this evening.

Law - No report

Auditor- No report

Police Chief - One of our candidates successfully made it through the process and was sworn in last evening. He starts the police academy next week. It will be approximately a year before his training is complete. Dispatch candidate and other officer candidate are nearing the end of their process. The car from previous reports is still in Public Safety and hopefully we will have it this week. The drone that was approved will be about 6 months out.

Fire Chief – Engine 22 was out for services and is back in service. Engine 21 is slated to go for repairs for a steering gear box fluid leak. The drivers seat is also being reupholstered. The Medic 21 is in VanWert getting some repairs and should be back on Friday. Station Alert technicians should be in tomorrow. We have three conditional offers out, waiting for physicals and background checks. Concerning the annexation, the ladder truck does fit under Lake Ave. but not under the viaduct on Troy Rd. Both engines do fit under both. Concerning the new engine, we are not sure of the height as of yet.

Engineer- Not present

Utilities- No report

Parks & Rec- Not present

Economic Dev- We had a really wonderful trip to Japan with President Wagner, Mayor Crissman, Commissioner Fitzpatrick, Jeff Sprague from NX Automotive and Dr. Blondin from Clark State. We met with our company headquarters of AGC, Belltech, Dido, ISS America, Honda, Honda Logistics, NX Automotive and Nipon Express. Great meetings with all those companies. Concerns were tariff related, work force and finding ways to attract people to employ within the local industry. They are very much in touch with what is happening at the local level. Also had a short visit to Suzuka. Thanks Council for the gift that was put together for the Mayor of Suzuka. We were able to do several prospect visits this time with three companies that are considering locating in central Ohio. These were joint visits with One Columbus. Thanks Council for their support. Next year's conference will be in Indianapolis.

Concerning the annexation, wanted to share with you all kinds of those messages that we continue to receive from industry. Unfortunately Ohio is projected to decline significantly and if you've looked at any of the data and statistics Ohio by 2050 is expected to lose another 675,000 people that's a 5% decline in Ohio's population. In the most recent state budget there are a couple of new provisions, one of them being guaranteed admissions for high school graduates. If you're in the top 5% of your class you are guaranteed admission to any public university in Ohio. If you are in the top 10% you are guaranteed to be on a campus of a public university. If you are in the top 5% of your class you receive the Governor's Merit Scholarship which is \$5000 per year for up to four years to attend an Ohio public university. That has really shifted the tides over the past years since this was done. Moving the numbers from about 60% of those top 5% staying in Ohio and pushing it up to 80%. The idea is staying here, going to school here and finding employment here. Jobs Ohio is putting together an incentive program to attract out of state people to move here and provide up to \$15,000 to companies to attract new STEM talent into the state.

We are now seeing the benefits of the work that Council, developers and city planners have put in place over the last 7 years. This does provide challenges, growth is not easy, but it is something that our community is up to. Without growth the picture looks very different for our city, county and Ohio. This annexation is a very important next step for our economic development and to provide opportunity for

housing to take place in our area. The first step is bringing the property in and is important to show that we do want to see growth in our community.

Downtown Dir- Not present

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

Finance – Explained ordinance on the agenda.

Rules - Explained ordinance on the agenda. Speaks to the Detrick Annexation to clarify the misinformation spread online, there is no tax abatement associated with the legislation being proposed this evening, it is being brought in as R1 which is single family homes, no development approval or planning approval, this annexation just brings the property into the city, no development details or who the developers are, it is false that we are at or even close to capacity with waste water, sewer. In addition, no developer would pay for traffic studies without first annexing the property.

Safety - No report

Utilities - Utility Committee met this afternoon to discuss charges on recycling in the city with no action taken. Explained ordinances on the agenda.

Streets - Street Committee met on September 17th with all members present, Mayor Crissman, Service Safety Director Dodds, 2 residents from the church at 221 Terrance and Gary McKenzie, 223 Terrance. Discussion included municipal parking in Lot 6 at the corner of S. Detroit and W. Columbus. Asked to remove the status on the east side of the lot but maintain the 3 hour parking rule. Secondly, Terrence St. on-street parking to move no parking signs on the west side of the street and to paint the curbing yellow on the south side of the street. Thirdly, the stops signs at Colton and Park, confirmation by SSD Dodds to see if a traffic counter is available from the street department.

Sidewalks, Curbs & Parks -The committee met on Sept 12th at 3:00 pm to discuss designating ARPA funds to areas west of Main Street. The committee plans along with the Engineer and SSD Dodds lead to start with projects for Streets that currently do not have sidewalks to increase pedestrian traffic in those areas. Additionally a parent attended whose child is walking to school and had some concerns about sidewalks and crossings on the north side of town to get their child safely from their home to the Intermediate School. This posed a larger discussion about overall walkways. Again, with the SSD's lead we will continue to have conversations with the city schools about how to come up with a plan to insure that all children can walk to school in the safest way possible.

Audit – No report

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS: Jordan Morgan, 525 E. Chillicothe Ave., here to speak against the proposed Detrick annexation.

Matt Dolf, 764 Cty Rd 32 S, (non-constituent) Bellefontaine, here to ask questions about water and sewer capacity if the annexation occurred. Concerns about existing pipes and how it would work with new developments. Would that increase taxes. *Mr. Dodds addresses concerns stating that each developer would pay to put new pipes in the ground to serve any new development. They will connect to existing pipes which already carry the same volume of water whether those houses are there or not. We annually do maintenance and replacement projects for water.*

Each new dwelling would pay a tap fee which the city increased several months ago due to the development that we are seeing so that those funds are healthy to address any problems that may come up.

Mr. Dolf suggests using empty lots within the city instead.

President Wagner clarifies that those properties are all owned by individual property owners and would have to be discussed with each individual property owner to sell those properties or perhaps they would rebuild on their own lot and this is the individual property owners right.

Jordan Reames 1481, TR 216, (non-constituent) Bellefontaine, thanks council and Mr. Dodds for the clarification on the annexation but here with concerns of the annexation. Asks the city to carefully consider that we have good prospect analysis of the project.

Russ Miller, 1471 Cty Rd 11, (non-constituent) here to speak against the proposed Detrick annexation.

Holly Buroker, 1605 TR 216, (non-constituent) here to speak against the proposed Detrick annexation.

Bart Barok, Sox Real Estate, 1100 Innovation Way, Marysville, here in support of the Detrick annexation. No need for the tax abatement from the city if this should be approved. From a traffic standpoint, without the annexation the city cannot fix these problems. The annexation will give the city the opportunity to fix issues. Connectivity will have trails to connect to and through the park and the Simon Kenton Trail.

John Morgan, 525 E. Chillicothe, Bellefontaine, here to speak against the Detrick annexation.
 David Hill, 1012 Dorothy Lane, Bellefontaine, here to speak about speed and accidents concerning the annexation.
 Rachel Moreland, 877 Cty Rd 11, (non-constituent) here to ask for clarification of the annexation and to speak against the Detrick annexation.
 Jordan Morgan, 525 E. Chillicothe, here again to speak against the annexation.
 Bart Barok, Sox Real Estate, will put into writing that the development will not use tax abatements.

1. ORDINANCES FOR 1ST READING

25-67 A. AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS AND AMENDING THE PERMANENT APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE FOR PURPOSES OF AUDITOR, CITY HALL, TAX, WATER AND WASTEWATER DEPARTMENTS AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. **FINANCE**

3RR- Moved by Springs, seconded by Reser V All Ayes
 Passage-
 Adoption-

2. ORDINANCES FOR 2ND READING

3. ORDINANCES FOR 3RD READING

25-62 A. AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING APPLICATION FOR ANNEXATION OF CERTAIN TERRITORY/ REAL ESTATE TO THE CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO, CONTAINING 143.138 ACRES, OWNED BY ANDREW G. DETRICK AND BARBARA DETRICK, LOCATED IN HARRISON TOWNSHIP ADJACENT TO THE CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO, ESTABLISHING ZONING CLASSIFICATION THEREFORE, AMENDING THE ZONING MAP AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. **RULES**

Adoption- Moved by James, seconded by Davis V All Ayes

25-63 B. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISION OF CHAPTER 923 WATER OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. **UTILITIES**

Adoption- Moved by Davis, seconded by Fitzpatrick V All Ayes

25-64 C. AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CERTAIN PROVISION OF CHAPTER 925 SEWERS OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. **UTILITIES**

Adoption- Moved by Davis, seconded by Aler V All Ayes

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CLERK: Received a new liquor license for Dolgen Midwest LLC, Dollar General Store #3046 on 884 E Sandusky Street. If no objections, this will be mailed.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM COUNCIL: Mrs. Fitzpatrick adds that this will be the last weekend of the Farmers Market.

ADJOURNMENT – 8:35 moved by Fitzpatrick, seconded by James

