



**MINUTES REGULAR MEETING
REYNOLDSBURG CITY COUNCIL
February 24, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Shanette Strickland called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

INVOCATION - Pastor Renee Russell of City Church of Reynoldsburg

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Cotner, Baker, Johnson, Strickland, Towns, Salvati, Pyakurel, Hill
ABSENT:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as submitted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2025

The regular meeting minutes of February 10, 2025 were approved as submitted.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Kurt Keljo

1306 North Jackson Avenue

I would be most grateful if you would respond to the following questions:

1. Why does the city believe that the Huber Park project was a legitimate and cost-effective way to address the erosion problems in the park?
2. Given that the city spent \$500,000 on a creek restoration project, is it a matter of concern that it did more harm than good to the creek? Why or why not?
3. The creek channel moved significantly in 2021 and will continue to move. The main creek flow bypasses part of the restoration project now and will bypass more of it as time goes on. How does the project design

address this problem?

4. Who is responsible if the project fails?
5. Why does the city believe that using creek restoration would be a legitimate and cost-effective way to fix stream bank erosion north of Main Street?
6. What steps will the city take to make sure that any future projects undertaken to address erosion on Blacklick Creek are legitimate and cost-effective?

I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you tonight, but I have a problem. I am good at being well-informed, honest and sometimes even interesting and funny. However, I am best at being persuasive. I am the opposite of slick. I couldn't sell air conditioners in Arizona during a heat wave. I am a retired watershed resource specialist who wrote the Ohio EPA-approved watershed plan for Blacklick Creek north of Tussing Road and have spent the last 25 years working to protect Blacklick Creek, first as a volunteer and then as a professional.

I was stunned to learn last week that the city is planning to implement more projects on Blacklick Creek north of Main Street like the one implemented in Huber Park. I know that the project in Huber Park wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars and failed to accomplish its stated purpose - restoring Blacklick Creek. I have no idea why the city would want to implement another such a project. I actually do have an idea, but you need to know more than you do now for it to make sense.

The city wasted at least \$300,000 on the Huber Park project - probably \$400,000 or even more. As I understand it, the city wanted to fix erosion along the creek in the park. I walked the creek with an engineer who is an expert in creek erosion, and he identified approximately 400' of stream bank that needed to be stabilized, saying the rest was fine.

I believe that stabilizing the eroding bank would cost \$120 per linear foot, which means that just fixing the erosion would have cost approximately \$50,000. Even if I am off by 100%, fixing the erosion would have cost \$100,000. The city spent \$500,000 on the Huber Park project - \$180,000 of its own money. EMH&T alone was paid \$150,000.

The project cost so much, because the city implemented a creek restoration project and not just a project to fix the erosion. It did so even though it was clear that the creek did not need restoring. The foremost expert on creek habitat in Ohio told me that the creek was fine before the project. He later told me that the project made no improvements to the creek. Given that the large trees along the creek that were removed used to provide critical shade to the creek in addition to instream habitat, the \$500,000 restoration project did more harm than good.

I think that the city implemented a restoration project, because it could get grant funds to help pay for a restoration project, but would not have been able to get a grant to pay

for fixing erosion. I think what happened is a bit like this.

I have a sore tendon in my arm. Imagine if I went to the doctor, and the doctor said that he could treat my arm effectively with therapy, but insurance wouldn't pay for it. However, he could do surgery. There wasn't any reason to do surgery, but insurance would pay for it.

The city decided to do surgery on the creek even though surgery was unnecessary, because insurance - a grant - would help pay for it. Unfortunately for all involved, the co-pay on the surgery was more expensive than the therapy would have even, and surgery did more harm than good.

Restoring a creek always costs more than just fixing erosion. When you restore a creek, you need to fix the erosion and do much more. Engineering companies make more money on restoration projects than they do on projects to fix erosion, often much more. I'm not saying the EMH&T prefers to do creek restoration projects over bank stabilization projects because it makes more money on restoration projects, but it does make more money on restoration projects. It made a lot more money on the Huber Park project than it would have made on doing bank stabilization.

I am raising these issues to stop state conservation funds from being misused, prevent city funds from being wasted and protect the well-being of Blacklick Creek. I have nothing to gain personally from this except peace of mind. I realize that my professional reputation is at stake to a degree, but I am retired, and in Reynoldsburg, I don't think I have anything to lose or gain for that matter.

I would really appreciate it if you would provide me with some answers to the questions I have handed out. I have been trying to get answers to some of them for two years now. I look forward to your responses. Thank you for your time and attention.

Email Comment

Tanya Dexter
7255 Sorrelwood Court

Good evening. I would like for the regulations regarding chicken ownership in residential areas to be changed, allowing ownership of chickens to be permitted. As the supply chain for eggs at this time is struggling to meet the demands, chicken ownership is now more than ever an issue that should be addressed in a swift manner. Families should be allowed to provide and raise their own food! With spring quickly approaching, now would be the best time to prepare for a new flock. I wait with great anticipation to see the change in the regulations which will allow chicken ownership in residential

areas to be permitted. Thank you.

Mayor Begeny

Mayor Begeny stated that on February 18th, there was a flooding town hall meeting at the Reynoldsburg Library. This was the final of three meetings discussing the FEMA grant that the City received around two years ago. This meeting provided the most likely solutions available. One of these options includes storm sewer improvement and one option that will most likely not be considered is turning Civic Park into, basically, a retention pond. They also discussed the installation of flood walls along Blacklick Creek and potential property purchases that are most at risk of flooding and returning the land to vacant flood plain. Staff will eventually come back to Council to request funding for whichever option is decided to be the most effective.

President Strickland stated that she was able to attend this meeting, and it had a great turnout. There was a lot of information presented and they appreciated FEMA being there.

President Strickland

President Strickland wanted to address Ms. Tanya Dexter's comments about residential chicken ownership. She stated that Council appreciates her concern on the matter and her endurance in continuing to show up to Council to express her opinions. President Strickland stated that she did take the time to do her own research on this issue, and they believe that at this time it is best to leave the regulations regarding chickens as is. She understands that chickens may provide sustainability and local food production, but they have to consider noise, odor, proper upkeep, and the effect it may have on neighborhoods. Currently, another major concern with this issue is public health, especially with the ongoing risk of the Avian Flu. They have to be conscious of policies and how they may affect the community and put residents at risk. They do not plan to continue the discussion on backyard chickens at this time. They are willing to address this issue in the future if there is a strong community interest with a clear plan for responsible ownership and implementation. They stated that residents should continue to stay engaged and they value their input.

MOTIONS

A Motion to Affirm a Resolution by the City Council of Reynoldsburg, Ohio Declaring Support for the Preservation of the Federal Tax Exemption Regarding Municipal Bonds

Mayor Begeny stated that municipalities all throughout Ohio have been made

aware of a potential change in how the federal government will administer certain tax policies. This policy would eliminate the ability of municipalities and school districts from being exempt from paying taxes on interest and municipal bonds. This would add substantial costs to any projects in the future. They are being told at this time that it probably won't be in the next budget, but there is no definitive answer at this point, so the Ohio Municipal League has prepared options for cities to discuss this.

Councilmember Baker asked if this would affect our bond rating. Mayor Begeny stated that he does not believe this would affect bond ratings. Auditor Cicak stated that municipal bond businesses are about \$4.2 trillion of the US economy. He stated that as of this morning there is no threat to outstanding bonds, so there should be no retroactive risk. He explained that the country needs to reduce spending and increase revenue. Right now we are paying more on interest rates on earned interest than we are for the military and Medicaid. He clarified that he is opposed to having the tax exemption status of municipal bonds removed, but there is no legislation at this time that is pending. Mayor Begeny stated that this legislation is to continue to pay for the tax cuts from the federal government that do not benefit anyone in the City of Reynoldsburg. He does not believe our City or School District should have to fund this level of income tax break that is given to billionaires. Auditor Cicak stated that there is no legislation, yet that is available to read on this issue. He stated that the City Attorney stated it would be better to wait on this issue, but the Mayor wants to be proactive. Attorney Shook stated that he wrote this Resolution and submitted it to Council, and he does not believe there is time to wait on this issue because legislation is being drafted at this moment. Auditor Cicak stated that maybe he misunderstood previous discussions. Councilmember Baker stated that the School District is already facing budget cuts and trying to pass a levy, and issues like this will hinder us even more. President Strickland thanked Councilmember Baker for his questions.

Councilmember Salvati made a motion to approve this motion. Second by Councilmember Pyakurel. Motion carried.

A Motion to Approve a Resolution Recognizing the Kingdom of Bhutan as Responsible for the Oppression and Forced Eviction of More Than 100,000 Bhutanese Citizens

Councilmember Pyakurel read the motion.

Councilmember Pyakurel invited Sudarshan Pyakurel to speak on this issue.

Mr. Sudarshan Pyakurel thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak. He stated that tonight they gather not just to witness the passage of this motion, but to recognize the resilience, contributions, and ongoing strength in their community.

He expressed his gratitude to Councilmember Pyakurel for sponsoring this motion, which does more than acknowledge their presence here. It affirms their past, present, and future in the City of Reynoldsburg. 35 years ago, thousands of families were forced to flee the only home they had ever known, with entire communities uprooted and generations of hard work erased, and their only crime was being different, using a different language and practicing a different faith. Family separation, trauma, and mental health problems are continuing to affect their people, yet they have found a way to rebuild. He stated that they have contributed financially and culturally to the City. They are small business owners, teachers, healthcare workers, social service workers, front-line workers, and neighbors who have made this City a great place to live. Even as they celebrate, they cannot ignore the issues of the past or the challenges of the present. Across the country, immigrants are being labeled as illegal and threatened with deportation. These words are not political rhetoric; they affect real families and bring up a traumatizing past. This motion shows that Reynoldsburg values and protects all who call it home, and it is a commitment to not allowing history to repeat itself.

Councilmember Pyakurel thanked him for speaking. He stated that Sudarshan is the Executive Director of the Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio (BCCO) which provides support and different services to its community members. He thanked him for his service with this organization.

Councilmember Salvati made a motion to approve this motion. Second by Councilmember Towns. Motion carried.

REPORTS

Clerk of Court Report for January 2025

The Clerk of Court submitted moneys from the courts held in January 2025 in the amount of \$25,801.

Liquor Permit - Reynoldsburg Nepali Bazaar

Deputy Chief Binder stated that this liquor permit was submitted by Reynoldsburg Nepali Bazaar, LLC, doing business as Taylor Road Asian Market at 8305 Taylor Road. It is for a C1/C2 class, which is for beer, wine, and mixed beverages in sealed containers for carry out only. He explained that there have not been any alcohol-related calls at this location during the past two years and the Ohio Department of Liquor Control advised that they are not aware of anything that would prevent this permit from being transferred. However, this property is across



from an elementary school and the driveway to the business empties into a school zone. The business also has a daycare on an adjoining property. They are requesting a hearing for this permit application.

Development, Parks & Recreation Committee

This is the Development, Parks & Recreation Committee meeting for February 24, 2025.

Members in attendance are: Councilmember Cotner, Councilmember Towns, Councilmember Hill, Chair Salvati, and President Strickland.

A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Accept the Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program Reimbursable Grant, Administered by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, in the Amount of \$115,200.00

Director Bauman stated that they had been awarded this grant that they applied to back in October. It is a reimbursable 80/20 grant, so we are responsible for 20% of the funding. They have not chosen a transit provider yet, so it will be brought back to Council at some point. This Resolution is to go ahead and accept the grant.

Councilmember Salvati made a motion to forward this Resolution to Council for approval. Second by Councilmember Hill. Motion carried.

Public Safety, Law & Courts Committee

This is the Public Safety, Law & Courts Committee meeting for February 24, 2025.

Members in attendance are: Councilmember Cotner, Councilmember Towns, Councilmember Hill, Chair Johnson, and President Strickland.

An Ordinance Appropriating Funds from the Receipt of a Zurich American Insurance Company Payment, and Declaring an Emergency

Deputy Chief Binder stated that they are requesting an Ordinance to appropriate funds the City received to settle an insurance claim for two cruisers that were totaled. The City was not at fault for the crash. He explained that the funds will be used for expenses related to the fleet vehicles. They are requesting emergency language on this item so the funds can be made available for current needs.

Councilmember Johnson made a motion to forward this Ordinance to Council for a first reading. Second by Councilmember Towns. Motion carried.

An Ordinance to Amend Reynoldsburg Codified Ordinance Section 333.03 Maximum Speed Limits; Assured Clear Distance Ahead

Deputy Chief Binder explained that this Ordinance would allow for an increase in penalty for speeds of 15 mph over the posted limit. This was recommended by the traffic unit officers as the current law does not allow for enhanced penalties unless the driver is going over 50 mph. He stated that this is appropriate in areas where the speed limit is 35 and over but does not account for neighborhoods and school zones where the speed limit may be 25 mph and below. This would increase the fine to a \$200 waiver rather than the standard \$120 waiver.

Councilmember Cotner asked if this is comparable to other communities nearby. Attorney Shook stated that is not entirely comparable. This proposed increase is above what the Ohio Revised Code sets for speed limits, but each City, under home rule authority, is allowed to make offenses more serious if they see they are needed. Councilmember Cotner stated that he is not opposed to this Ordinance but was just curious where this idea may have come from. He also asked if they expect to see challenges to implementing this because it is unique to Reynoldsburg. Attorney Shook stated that they did not anticipate that it would be a challenge as home rule allows for City governments to increase the penalties that the ORC has set. They are still planning to handle these tickets in Mayors' Court as the fee is waivable, allowing them to pay the ticket and not come to court or choose to come to court and challenge the ticket if they choose to do so. Councilmember Cotner thanked them for this information.

President Strickland asked if they have any data on tickets that this specific increase may affect in the future. DC Binder stated that he does not have that information tonight but he can send that information to Council.

Councilmember Johnson made a motion to forward this Ordinance to Council for a first reading. Second by Councilmember Hill. Motion carried.

A Resolution Authorizing the City Auditor to Remove Equipment from the City's Fixed Asset List for the Reynoldsburg Police Department

Deputy Chief Binder stated that this Resolution is for the removal of two vehicles from the fixed asset list. He explained that both vehicles are over 15 years old and have high mileage. The removal of these vehicles was recommended by the city mechanic and they will be traded in for replacements.

Councilmember Johnson made a motion to forward this Resolution to Council for approval. Second by Councilmember Towns. Motion carried.

There is no Public Service & Transportation Committee meeting.



There is no Finance & Administration Committee meeting.

RESOLUTIONS - CONSENT AGENDA

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Baker
SECONDER:	Salvati
AYES:	Cotner, Baker, Johnson, Strickland, Towns, Salvati, Pyakurel, Hill

A Resolution Authorizing the Mayor to Accept the Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program Reimbursable Grant, Administered by the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, in the Amount of \$115,200.00

A Resolution Authorizing the City Auditor to Remove Equipment from the City's Fixed Asset List for the Reynoldsburg Police Department

CONSENT AGENDA FOR EMERGENCY ADOPTION

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Salvati
SECONDER:	Johnson
AYES:	Cotner, Baker, Johnson, Strickland, Towns, Salvati, Pyakurel, Hill

Councilmember Cotner asked about the Grant Program and how the recipients are chosen. Mayor Begeny stated that it will be a little bit different this year since it is our own funding as opposed to federal funding, but the same principle applies. Once approved, they will begin notifying businesses in the community that have qualified in the past or potentially qualify. They will provide them with an application that requires documents showing that they are in good standing with the State and the City as far as any kind of tax issues. They also have to provide any information about what they are applying for reimbursement for. Once all of this information is in, they will verify all of it through the Auditor's office and the Mayor, City Attorney, and Auditor, plus some of the Auditor's staff if they are available, will go through the applicants and do a site visit to ensure that the locations are accurate. They would then either approve or deny the requests based on the full review. Applications will go out in a week once this is approved, then allow around 2 weeks to get applications back, then begin the review process and site visits. Councilmember Cotner asked if this is for new businesses or all businesses, and if a business has been given grant funding in the past, are they still



eligible to apply again? Mayor Begeny stated that it is for all businesses and businesses can be given funding again even if they have received it in the past, unless Council would like to change that. Councilmember Cotner stated that it seemed very black and white when there was federal funding, but now that Reynoldsburg is providing the funding, it doesn't seem as clear as to who will receive this funding. Mayor Begeny stated that every person would have to review their piece of this application; development would review their part, the Auditor would review tax information, the Attorney's office would ensure that everything is legally binding, and then, once everything has been reviewed, they would go ahead and move forward with the process. He stated that it is just as black and white, if a business does not meet the requirements, then it will not receive funding. Councilmember Cotner asked if they would send Council a copy of this application so they could review it. He stated that this grant does seem as though it has been successful in the past, and they just want to ensure that the money is being allocated properly. Mayor Begeny stated that they will provide regular updates throughout this process.

An Ordinance Appropriating Unencumbered Balances as of December 31, 2024, in Various Police Special Revenue Funds, Provided Revenue Funds Received during 2025 be Accepted, and Declaring an Emergency

An Ordinance Authorizing the Mayor to Implement the 2025 Grant Program for Female, Minority, and Veteran-Owned Businesses in the City of Reynoldsburg, Appropriate Funds Therefor, and Declaring an Emergency

CONSENT AGENDA FOR FIRST READING

An Ordinance Appropriating Funds from the Receipt of a Zurich American Insurance Company Payment, and Declaring an Emergency

An Ordinance to Amend Reynoldsburg Codified Ordinance Section 333.03 Maximum Speed Limits; Assured Clear Distance Ahead

CONSENT AGENDA FOR SECOND READING



An Ordinance Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into a Contract with EMH&T for Implementation of 2025 Sanitary Sewer Program

OTHER COUNCIL MATTERS

Councilmember Johnson invited everyone to Reynoldsburg City Hall for Harriet Tubman Day. The event will be March 8th at 12. There will be events and a movie showing.

Councilmember Pyakurel stated that he thinks the City should do something or provide education about scams. He stated that he personally knows two people who have lost \$52,000 and \$67,000 to a scammer. They are targeting older people, so he believes that the City should do something to bring awareness to this issue. He is not exactly sure how they would do this but would like for it to be addressed in some way.

Councilmember Baker gave a shout-out to the Reynoldsburg Boys Basketball team for their win over Pick Central. He thanked the RPD for the work they do in the City as well.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

March 6, 2025 Planning & Zoning Board
March 10, 2025 Council
March 20, 2025 Planning & Zoning Board
March 24, 2025 Council

ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business, Council President Strickland adjourned the meeting.

Shanette Strickland, Council President

Mollie Prasher, Clerk of Council