

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
VALPARAISO, INDIANA
March 10, 2025**

The Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, met on Monday, March 10, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall. Mayor Costas called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Present were Councilmembers Reed, Cotton, Domer, Pupillo, Anderson, Hunt, and Kapitan.

MINUTES

February 24, 2025 Council minutes are not complete therefore there was no vote to approve the minutes.

Mayor's Statement on Redevelopment Commission Project – Data Center

Mayor Costas – Many that are here tonight are here to get information about the data center. Those who want to speak will be given an opportunity in the Public Comment section at the end of tonight's meeting. Last Friday he issued a statement regarding this issue. This statement is posted on the City's website.

Last December the RDC entered into an option with a company that may propose a data center project in the near future. The first step is to find land. The main task for him and the Council is to ensure there is a good process that allows for public input and outline the pros and cons of the project. Currently there is no specific proposal. If the company decides to move forward, then the specifics would come forth. The project would be vetted by multiple public bodies and many public meetings. There is a saying at City Hall - A good process will yield a good result. It is imperative to conduct due diligence thoroughly. If it is a good project, it will pass scrutiny and if not, it will not be pursued.

He encouraged residents to do their homework with an open mind to consider the potential benefits and any potential downsides. The City will look at it from every angle. Should it proceed forward they will ensure that it enhances the City's future.

Council Comments

Councilmember Domer – She is VP of the RDC and she voted Yes for the Option Agreement to begin the due diligence process. She has spoken to many people and received many emails. All but one was against the data center. There are a variety of reason why they are opposed. It seems like the citizens feel it lacks transparency. She asked George Douglas what the proposed time line was for communication with the public. The way they found out about this is what is making people so angry. If the City were to have done everything correctly they would have put out Press Releases and explained why the request for offering was shortened. The residents feel there was a lack of transparency. The Environmental Board has been tasked with getting a study to make a determination if environmentally this project is sound. Regardless of any reason there would be a roomful of people here tonight opposed to the data center. She would like those that talk in the Public Comment portion to state if they are opposed to the process or opposed to a data center in this location.

Councilmember Cotton – He was on the RDC at the time the RFO was issued. A year ago there was great excitement about the fiber network in Valpo being connected to Chicago and South Bend. He has been favorable towards data centers but recently learned about the power and resources that are required. One of the most critical considerations in a data center is where it is located. It seems like a conflict to have the data center on a portion of the land and the remaining available for public use. He would like to have the help of the public and to have their opinions based on data.

Councilmember Reed – She currently is on the RDC. She is looking forward to the information as it comes out. She wants the information so she can make a decision that is best for the community. She understands the concerns and appreciates those that are here tonight. She looks forward to getting more information as it comes forward.

Councilmember Kapitan – This land was purchased with ARPA money. Does that define any use we can sell it for. Is this process using ARPA money legal?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – Yes. They had a firm in Indianapolis help them to make sure all was done correctly with this and other projects ARPA money was used for. If the RDC decides to sell the land then the money goes to the RDC. There is no prohibition on the sale or use of the land.

Councilmember Cotton - His understanding is that the City was exempt from the classic uses of those funds.

Attorney Patrick Lyp – Under \$10 Million Dollars, as long as it was used for a public purpose.

Councilmember Kapitan – This has been a reactive week with all the emails. She feels this will get better. She would like communication improved.

Mayor Costas – It is difficult to control communication as the City works with a project. Much of the early stages is confidential. They are still in the process of determining if there is enough power and water. It typically becomes public when a specific project is proposed and the Public Hearings begin. The situation with the park was dealt with in the City Newsletter and the State of the City.

Councilmember Hunt – Public participation in decisions like this is awesome. When the RFO was put out did they plan on having public participation again?

Councilmember Cotton – That is not how that works. We don't know what we will get. There was only one that came in.

Councilmember Hunt – She thinks part of the problem is that people think this is a done deal.

Mayor Costas – The land has to be rezoned. That requires hearings before the Plan Commission and this body. If that is not approved, the Option would not be granted.

Councilmember Hunt – Does that put the City in a bad spot?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – In the Option Agreement they laid out all the requirements going forward. The Option Agreement was signed but there were many off ramps. It gave situations for both parties to be able to leave the conversation.

Councilmember Domer – There is no opt out clause in the Agreement. If the company exercises the option to purchase the land, they will purchase it but cannot do anything with it because it requires a zoning change? Specifically having an opt out clause for the City is not specifically in the Option Agreement.

Attorney Patrick Lyp - The folks that signed the Agreement are spending a lot of money doing their due diligence. After that they do not want the City saying they do not want to sell anyway. It is called a clean option. But if they do not get all the permissions and approvals, they more than likely are not going to buy the property.

Councilmember Hunt - How can we make sure that under the NDA the Environmental Board gets all the information they need to issue a substantive advisory opinion?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – There are no tangible documents that tell us what this will look like. When that comes in those documents will be public record. He cannot imagine a scenario where the Environmental Board will not have access to everything.

Councilmember Domer – Is it possible to ask Agincourt to have a Town Hall so the public can ask questions?

Mayor Costas – There is no perspective we shouldn't exclude. He has suggested a special Council meeting and have them do a presentation and maybe even bring in an expert.

Councilmember Cotton – He believes the RDC has the power to move forward on this without City Council approval. If they did not need a rezone or an incentive, this would not come before the Council?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – Correct. But we know the property is zoned Open Space and they cannot do anything with the property without rezoning.

Councilmember Cotton – Agincourt is a front company. When will it be learned who the person is that we will deal with?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – They are not a front company. They are a developer. They look for property. Presumably they have talked to an end user. Presumably they would not spend the time and money if there is not an end user. The Council needs to know when there is an improvement on that property, who is it the City will be dealing with. At this point they have not disclosed who that is but it is a fair question.

Councilmember Cotton – Does our Environmental Board have any budget to engage in this level of consulting?

Councilmember Kapitan – There is a fund set up for donations. The current balance is zero.

ORDINANCE NO. 4, 2025

ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING FUNDS IN THE CCIF CIGARETTE TAX FUND AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF NOTICE

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 4, 2025 be read a second time by title and a third time in full and be considered for adoption with the opportunity for the offering of amendments. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 4, 2025.

Councilmember Kapitan addressed the Council. This Ordinance is for \$150,000. Of that amount, \$50,000 is for Professional Legal Services and \$100,000 is allocated to general consultative purposes. This is similar to the Ordinance adopted last year for the same purposes.

Public Hearing

Mayor Costas announced Ordinance No. 4, 2025 requires a Public Hearing and presented Proof of Publication that at tonight's meeting the Council will listen to public questions, comments or concerns regarding Ordinance No. 4, 2025. Seeing no one wishing to address the Council, Mayor Costas declared the Public Hearing closed.

Councilmember Pupillo – Can this money be used to send to the Environmental Council?

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – That can be done. Since it is a Gift Fund it does not need Council approval.

Councilmember Cotton – The purpose of Professional Services is different than simply funding a Council established commission. That is not the only place to look for funds.

Upon Roll Call Vote Ordinance 4, 2025 was adopted with a 7-0 vote.

ORDINANCE NO. 5, 2025

AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING FUNDS IN THE GENERAL BOARD OF WORKS, MVH RESTRICTED, LOCAL ROAD & STREET, WHEEL SURTAX, AND WHEEL TAX FUNDS AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF NOTICE

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 5, 2025 be read a second time by title and a third time in full and be considered for adoption with the opportunity for the offering of amendments. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 5, 2025.

Max Rehlander addressed the Council. This Ordinance is for Paving 2025. These funds were part of the budget process for this year.

VARIOUS FUNDS & APPROPRIATION AMOUNTS

General Board of Works – Paving (1101 012 364) \$1,367,015.00

MVH Restricted – Paving (2203 015 364) \$ 277,000.00

LR&S – Other Svcs & Charges Paving (2202 015 311) \$ 321,666.00

Municipal Excise Surtax – Other Svcs & Charges (2249 015 311) \$ 500,000.00

Municipal Wheel Tax – Other Svcs & Charges (2250 015 311) \$ 20,000.00

Total \$2,485,681.00

They were advised last week they have been awarded the Community Crossing Matching grant of \$1.5 Million Dollars. The total available for paving in 2025 is \$9,379,681.00.

Councilmember Hunt – This amount is beyond what they had budgeted for paving.

Max Rehlander – It is beyond what was anticipated based on the Local Road and Street, and the Wheel Tax Account. This is roughly \$800,000.

Councilmember Hunt – Can those funds be used for anything else?

Max Rehlander – No.

Councilmember Hunt – Any of the funds that money is being pulled from for paving, can it be used for anything else?

Max Rehlander – No.

Councilmember Hunt – Her concern is the impact of SB1 on the City of Valparaiso. It is important that people know these funds cannot be used elsewhere. The City stands to have a \$3 Million Dollar loss over the next three years.

Mayor Costas – It is not certain that is going to happen.

Councilmember Hunt – It may not happen but she likes to plan for worst case scenarios. If it happens it might not impact this specific appropriation but are those conversations happening.

Mayor Costas – At this point they are waiting to see what happens which they should know in the next 30 days. At that point they will address it head on.

Councilmember Hunt – We don't have any concept right now. She and CT Taylor have spoken about the impact on the City if this passes. If this were to pass the biggest impact to the City would be our employees. They would not be getting their annual raises.

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – The biggest part of the budget is employees and benefits. They would meet with the Department Heads and see what they had not spent and where funds would be available for employees.

Councilmember Hunt – Out of the General BOW fund Holly has said she like to save that money to pay employees. Now she is saying they can't do that.

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – The cash carry over of General Fund as a whole. This \$1.365 Million Dollars that we are asking to appropriate. In the City Code it says it has to be used for paving.

Councilmember Hunt – Max, for the additional \$800,000 did he say what that was going to be used for?

Max Rehlander – This is the total rehabilitation funds available and then the different work types of how the funds will be spent.

Councilmember Hunt – She and Councilmember Kapitan met with Max a few months ago about the Westside Coalition wanting a sidewalk to connect them to downtown. She lived in Shamrock so she knows how restrictive it can feel to be in a development with no sidewalk to town. Can these funds be used for that?

Max Rehlander – Yes they can.

Councilmember Hunt – Can we include that in your Ordinance?

Mayor Costas – We are working on that plan. The most cost effective is to go all the way down Hayes Leonard to meet up with the pathway.

Councilmember Hunt – She wants to make sure the funds get used for that.

Councilmember Domer – She thinks it is more significant to have a pathway on Coolwood rather than Hayes Leonard Rd. Right now that neighborhood is isolated from walking to the grocery store and retail that is directly south of them.

Councilmember Hunt – They both agree there needs to be a connection from those neighborhoods. The Engineering Department can decide if it should be Coolwood or Hayes Leonard. She wants the assurance that this extra money we are appropriating is spent on that.

Councilmember Domer – The 2025 budget has \$800,000 for sidewalks. The Board of Works just approved Package #1 for sidewalks. There is also an additional amount of funding coming from the RDC.

Max Rehlander – As part of Package #2 they are evaluating Hayes Leonard versus Coolwood. On Hayes Leonard there are right of way issues and utility pole issues.

Councilmember Kapitan – She knows there is a group working on assessing the pathways to see where they are missing and where they should be advocating. She asked if the Council could have a presentation on this. How can we get language in the Ordinance if this is for sidewalks that do not exist yet.

Max Rehlander – There is a 2017 Pathways Master Plan. Now they are looking at an Active Transportation Plan. That is not only pathways but missing sidewalks. This is in the preliminary stages.

Councilmember Cotton – It is apparent there is a lot of need in that regard. The complete streets in the heart of the City are the longest deferred. This is a competing priority.

Max Rehlander – If citizens want sidewalks at missing spots, please use the Valpo Voice a Concern on the website.

Councilmember Hunt – So is there language that should be added?

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – This is just an appropriation. It is a permission to spend ordinance.

Councilmember Hunt – She remembers last year having a significant discussion on how the funds should be spent and she didn't include how she felt the funds should be spent. She is trying to avoid that from happening again. She is not saying which project but pathways or sidewalks with these extra funds.

Attorney Patrick Lyp – The discussion has given the City Engineer a direction as to what needs to be done. The question is whether or not they can be used for paving and for sidewalks. The answer is Yes. Where you would like the work done is not something that would be put in the appropriation ordinance tonight. Once Max has made a determination of what can be done, he should report back to the Council.

Councilmember Reed - She saw the new sidewalks on Evans. It is being used and looks great. Thank You.

Councilmember Kapitan – At the last meeting Max said he needs to wait until the bids come back to share the list with the public. She asked for the timeline of that.

Max Rehlander – They usually look at the middle of May to have the interactive map posted on the City's website.

Councilmember Kapitan – She asked that the list be presented at a Council meeting. She asked that there be a presentation on the preliminary sidewalk plan also.

Councilmember Hunt – Patrick just suggested there could be a motion subject to approval by Council on how those additional funds are used. Councilmember Kapitan seconded the motion. Councilmember Cotton started a Motion.

Max Rehlander – We still have to have a Public Hearing.

Councilmember Hunt – When we get there make sure the Motion is subject to the Council's subsequent approval of the additional funds.

Attorney Patrick Lyp – The question is if they are looking for the Council's approval on the use generally, or are they talking about very specific. You want the funds utilized for paving and sidewalks and for the City Engineer to give strong consideration to the desire to have a sidewalk on Coolwood or Hayes Leonard. It is more your request as opposed to saying "thou shalt".

Public Hearing

Mayor Costas announced Ordinance No. 5, 2025 requires a Public Hearing and presented Proof of Publication that at tonight's meeting the Council will listen to public questions, comments or concerns regarding Ordinance No. 5, 2025.

Walt Breitingner – 608 Academy. He is in favor of increased and improved sidewalks and bicycle paths. Curbs need attention.

Bryant Mitol – 508 Valparaiso St. He would like the City to reconsider alley paving. They should be impervious. Asphalt is petroleum. This goes into the water ways.

Megan O'Brien – 1303 Parkway Court. They have no sidewalks in the Forest Park neighborhood. The kids have to walk in the street to get to the bus. They also have no curbs.

Councilmember Hunt – Is there an HOA in Forest Park?

Megan O'Brien – No.

Seeing no one else wishing to address the Council, Mayor Costas declared the Public Hearing closed.

Councilmember Hunt – She would like to make amendments but will be okay with the motion being subject to Council review.

Attorney Patrick Lyp – Subject to the funds being utilized for paving, sidewalks, and specifically the recommendation as to the Coolwood Hayes Leonard connection.

Councilmember Cotton – He added finish sidewalks and curbs etc.

Motion: Councilmember Cotton moved to adopt Ordinance No. 5, 2025 subject to Council review and recommendation. Councilmember Kapitan seconded the motion.

Attorney Patrick Lyp - Clarified the Ordinance will stay the way it is. As part of the Motion there is an understanding the funds will be used as directed by the City Council. The Mayor and City Engineer are acceptable with those guardrails.

Upon Roll Call Vote Ordinance 5, 2025 was adopted with a 7-0 vote.

ORDINANCE NO. 6, 2025

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS PRACTICES AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR PROJECTS RECEIVING ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FROM THE CITY OF VALPARAISO

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 6, 2025 be read a second time by title and a third time in full and be considered for adoption with the opportunity for the offering of amendments. Councilmember Reed seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 6, 2025.

Mayor Costas – Ordinance No. 6, 2025 is the expansion of the Responsible Bidders Ordinance to private sector projects that receive public incentives. He expressed his concern at the last meeting that while the Ordinance promotes the use of local workers and contractors, it may have a chilling effect upon investment in our community which could reduce the number of jobs and investment in our community. He also expressed his concern of the effect on smaller companies in the construction industry. Being untested these concerns remain to be seen. No one benefits if this Ordinance discourages investment in our City or hamstring small emerging contractors. His team has been working with Dave Fagen of Local 150 Operating Engineers and other Union organizations to offer a revised Ordinance that comes closest to promoting local workers while inviting investment and jobs to our City. Currently there are three versions of Ordinance 6, 2025. The version approved on first reading at the last Council meeting. A version circulated by Councilmember Hunt yesterday and a version Attorney Lyp circulated late today. It will take some time to work out the details. Given the current situation and positive steps forward, the Operating Engineers, the Building Trades and the Construction

Advancement Organization have all indicated a desire to finish the work we have started. These organizations represent 14 of the 15 Labor Organizations in Northwest Indiana. He still has his concerns but can support a version of Ordinance 6, 2025 that has some safeguards. He would ask the Council to consider tabling Ordinance 6, 2025 to the next Council meeting to allow the Council time to complete the compromise Ordinance for consideration at our next meeting.

Councilmember Cotton – Ordinance No. 6, 2025 began as Ordinance No. 30, 2024. Actually it was begun in 2018 but was aborted because of concern regarding what its adverse impact might be. They are not able to bid fairly because of the standard of workers. The largest benefit of Economic Development is the worker because they get wages and spend those wages locally. More jobs are created here by the multiplier affect than in Honduras. The City Council has been patient and welcomed input since October. He brought this back due to the glaring reality that if you do not do something different you are going to get the same consequence on a repeating basis. We saw that with the Linc. They were given a large incentive. There were a large number of safety issues. They were using workers that did not know what city they were in. He thinks this Ordinance is reasonable. It is logical for what taxpayers deserve. He believes the Council was given a very fine Ordinance. It is flexible. It gives the Council the ability to make sure they are getting the highest level of consideration for their tax dollars. It is time to move forward. He is not sure it is the Mayor's domain to give them what they are going to pass. They have worked on it and done a good job. They have met all the objections that were presented. People have had an equal amount of time to engage with the Council. But don't engage outside of us and then come to this body as if their role is not prominent and most important in this whole discussion. This Ordinance takes into account every concern that was raised. He supports voting on this tonight.

Councilmember Hunt – She clarified there are three versions of this Ordinance circulating at this point. She has not fully reviewed the third version that was sent out this afternoon. Her initial amendments were sent out on Monday. She sent two additional amendments last night. Are there groups asking for this to be tabled?

Mayor Costas – The Local 150, the Construction Advancement Association, and the Building Trades. They have asked for this to be tabled so there can be a complete ordinance with as much input as possible.

Councilmember Hunt – Was the Council involved in those conversations at all?

Mayor Costas – No.

Councilmember Hunt – It is interesting to her that conversations are going on without Council input when this is before the Council.

Mayor Costas – It also involves Administration. They are trying to create a coalition with Unions. They are trying to be helpful because there are different versions.

Councilmember Cotton – The notion of what is on the table is the Ordinance they have been working on since October. That is what passed to second reading. The other things are attempts to weaken what is a fair Ordinance. There seems to be something missing with respect to crafting something that creates a circumstance that repeats itself until we get the next Linc circumstance.

Councilmember Hunt – If there are representatives from the trades saying they would like more time to look at it, shouldn't that be honored?

Councilmember Cotton – It shouldn't undermine what has been considered for the last six months. This is an attempt to undermine what they have done that is a very good and effective job. He is insulted by this circumstance.

Public Comment

Andrew Schnowsky – 408 Meadowbrook. In State of City address Mayor reported on upgrading parks and paving program. He went onto discuss the data center.

Mayor Costas – This Public Hearing is regarding Ordinance 6, 2025. Other comments will be in the Public Comment section.

Mac McElhaney – 609 Yellowstone. No one from Council reached out to him.

Councilmember Hunt – She did reach out to him but his voice mailbox was full.

Mac McElhaney - He does not bid on jobs of this size. He is here on principal. It is unfair to expect a business of his size to have an apprenticeship program. The cost outweighs the benefit. The process should be fair for everyone. He asked the Council to reconsider and look at small businesses.

Councilmember Hunt – Did you begin saying these are not jobs you would bid on but you are here for contractors who would?

Mac McElhaney – I said I am here on principal. Contractors his size should be able to bid.

Councilmember Hunt – Are you bidding on these types of projects?

Mac McElhaney – No.

Councilmember Cotton – Are you bidding on any BOW projects where the RBO has been in place?

Mac McElhaney - Not currently. What if he decides in a few years to do so. Then he has to start an apprenticeship program.

Harvey Jackson – 431 Chadwick Circle. He believes there were people left out of the conversation. This Ordinance is about safety. It is not about union versus non-union. Please table it.

Nick Merkel – Central Midwest Region Council of Carpenters. He supports the Ordinance. It will have a lasting positive impact on Valpo's workforce. This Ordinance is about establishing fair, responsible and transparent standards for construction projects. This Ordinance will not hinder economic growth or limit opportunities for small contractors. This Ordinance levels the playing field. He urged the Council to approve the Ordinance. It is a proactive step towards maintaining a strong local economy, supporting skilled trades people and upholding the high standards that make Valpo a great place to live and work.

Jason Creasbaum – Local 150. The Local is in support of tabling to get everything worked out so it works for everyone.

Councilmember Cotton – Do you think that should happen to the exclusion of the City Council?

Jason Creasbaum – The City Council should get together and get this worked out.

Councilmember Cotton – It has been open for comment for six months.

Joe Sweeney – IIFCC/Local 150/NWI Building Trades. They support tabling the Ordinance for further discussion between the Council and Administration. They think the \$600,000 threshold is too high. They see other areas of the language that could be improved. They are in support of an RBO. Registered apprenticeships

are one of the tried and true ways to get people into the construction trades and give them the skills they need to get them into a career and not just go from job to job. The Associated Builders and Contractors of Indiana have an open apprenticeship program.

Kenard Taylor – 306 Napoleon. He commends the unions for their apprenticeship programs. He spent 40 years training people. Apprenticeship programs are not the only way to get skilled workers. What makes the State approved program better than any other? Downtown restaurants are given a liquor license for \$25,000. If they were not able to get this they would have to buy one and it would cost approximately \$250,000. This is an incentive. If they are doing a reconstruction job do they fall under this Ordinance. It should be tabled to make sure all situations are covered.

Melissa Reed – 2008 Blackhawk Road. Instead of thinking about growth we should be thinking about maintaining. Smaller companies can work together to create a larger group. If it is tabled a clear timeline should be set and no last minute changes.

Keith Smith – Local 1005 Carpenters. Safety is important. He is a second year apprentice. It will help him be better in the future. Cash jobs are tax fraud. He asked the Council to vote on this tonight.

Seeing no one else wishing to address the Council, Mayor Costas declared the Public Hearing closed.

Attorney Patrick Lyp- There is a motion and second to move Ordinance No. 6, 2025 for final reading. Procedurally that can be withdrawn. That is the most efficient way. Otherwise you can move forward on the pending motion and then look for a motion to table.

Councilmember Hunt -If it is not withdrawn, there is nothing to table.

Attorney Patrick Lyp – If a majority of the Council would prefer to table it, they can make their opinions known now. If there is no desire to withdraw it, take a vote and vote No with the sole purpose of tabling it.

Councilmember Cotton - If it goes forward and fails what is the fate of its standing? Can it come back as an Ordinance presented again?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – Technically it would have to be reintroduced because there was a vote against it. That is why he suggested if there is a majority of the Council that wants to table it that it be withdrawn.

Councilmember Cotton – It is his Ordinance and he does not want to be excluded from conversations.

There was discussion among Councilmembers on what has been offered as changes and if the Ordinance should be tabled. Councilmember Hunt asked to be included in any discussions since she has suggested amendments.

MOTION: Councilmember Cotton moved to withdraw his motion. The second was withdrawn.

MOTION: Councilmember Anderson moved to table Ordinance No. 6, 2025 to the March 24, 2025 Council meeting with the suggestions that Councilmembers Hunt and Cotton have brought forth. Councilmember Cotton seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

Update from Advisory Human Relations Council

Alison Quackenbush addressed the Council. There are things to celebrate. In February 2023 Mayor Murphy made March Disability Awareness month. The banners that hang outside demonstrate various improvements. The Valpo Soccer team has agreed to play in the Unified Track and Field this year. The Creative Art Center was opened this week. This all shows ways the HRC brings to light the similarity and diversity in our

community. It all requires civility. At their last meeting they discussed civility and the City and Council. It was discussed that not one person can be the civility police. Creating an ordinance relating to civility may not impact behavior. Possibly putting placards in front of each Councilmember and at the podium would have an impact. The bottom of the Agenda should be revised. Possibly have a banner that hangs on the front of the dais that says “civility, respect and community are the order of the day. She has discussed this with each Councilmember. They all had commonality in their perspectives. The HRC got a Pride Resolution passed.

Councilmember Hunt - She appreciates the update. She thinks they are set up for programming. Last year they did Disability Awareness Month and Pride Month. Her concern is that the Council had requested multiple times to work with the AHRC on promoting Black History Month. That did not happen. If the AHRC is going a different direction it needs to be said out loud so the Council can go in a different direction. She read a portion of the AHRC website where it states they would be doing programming. On March 22nd they will be able to participate and stream a documentary in the Council Chambers.

Alison Quackenbush- She was not involved when the Disability Awareness Month was done. It is her understanding that there were outside contractors that handled a lot of that. The group did pass a Pride Resolution. The Pride Resolution came about because two organizations came to the AHRC and said they would like some recognition, support and acknowledgement of their existence. They are reinstituting the Cultural Grants where groups can apply for funding for their cultural programs. Right now diversity is not looked at like as a positive thing.

Councilmember Cotton – It seems the current HRC has reverted to less than what the ambition was originally. There might need to be further discussion.

Alison Quackenbush – Besides civility they discussed diversity at their last meeting. They decided they should invite groups in and let them ask or tell what they need.

Councilmember Hunt – The request for Black History Month was not to have a big celebration. She was asking about streaming a documentary. She suggested what the group envisions is not what is expected. She was told eventually that the Mayor and Alison had decided non-profits and charitable organizations were better suited to develop cultural programming. She can express her frustration over what she thought the AHRC was meant to do. She knows this is a Mayoral appointment Board. If this is the change and direction then it should be noted and maybe the Council will consider some other options.

Councilmember Domer – Have you considered partnering with other organizations like the Northwest Indiana African American Association?

Alison Quackenbush – If that is the direction the community wants to go the AHRC will certainly go that way. But it was February 1st when she was contacted and she cannot turn something around that fast.

Councilmember Kapitan – It comes the same time every year so she would have thought something was being planned. Maybe we need to consider a different direction where we see the City going and that is fine. They just need that confirmation.

Mayor Costas – We wanted a council that was independent and could advise him on issues related to human relations as he directed the core duties of the City. The question is, is it a core function of the City to engage in a lot of cultural programming and to fund that programming. He is focused on doing the core duties of the City and doing it in an understanding way but leaving the cultural beliefs to the citizens. The Council can go in what direction it wants but he is not in favor of something different. He believes the Ordinance is written as it is functioning presently.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORTS

Councilmember Hunt – School Board Applications are being accepted starting tomorrow morning. They will be accepted through April 14th. The application is on the City website.

Councilmember Reed – Ballers (pickleball) players attended the last meeting. There was a soft open for the Bender Tee House at Creekside. Voting is going on for the best park. Ice skating rink is closed for the season. Another Compost Agreement has been signed with the County. Berglund Construction has been retained to help the parks with their renovation projects. Members of the Fish and Wildlife Service came and cleaned up 40 acres. This volunteer work saved the Park a lot of time and money. Five Neighborhood grants have been applied for. The golf irrigation project will go out for bid with a hope of end of winter start of project.

Councilmember Cotton – There is no follow up with Intervention and Reconciliation. There has not been a Fire Territory meeting since the merit board appointments.

Councilmember Kapitan – They are accepting Downtown Liquor License applications. Submissions are due by March 17th for consideration at the March 24th Council meeting. The Environmental Advisory Board voted to have a study done on the impact of a data center. The Ethics Commission appointed their fifth member. They approved an ethics complaint form. The Plan Commission discussed alternate plan for the Brooks. There was a zoning discussion for Project Neighbors. They have four lots they are asking to be zoned from Campus to Residential Transition. Monday is the Traffic and Safety meeting.

Councilmember Domer - The BOW awarded New Tech for the Sidewalk Program Package #1. The list of sidewalks will be published in early May. The Goodrich Road improvement project was awarded to Egolf Coates. The RDC meets this coming Thursday.

Councilmember Pupillo – The VPD has planned their Jr. Police Academy. Applications are due by May 27th. Citizen Academy applications are still open. The VFD is having its first Buddy Bash on September 20th. This will benefit Project Fire Buddies.

Councilmember Anderson - The VCU approved an engineering contract for stormwater infrastructure along Institute Street. On Sturdy Road by the via duct they are installing a lift station. The sewer pipe for the lift station will start construction in April, 2025 and will be complete in early 2026. The two wells at the Country Club are almost complete and anticipate being online April 1, 2025. Tomorrow they will open bids for the Beauty Creek/Candlewood bank stabilization project.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

TO HEAR CITIZENS' FULL COMMENTS, PLEASE REFER TO THE WATCH CITY MEETINGS SECTION OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO'S WEBSITE (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)

THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE MADE PUBLIC COMMENT ABOUT THEIR CONCERNS/QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DATA CENTER.

Matt Steckly – 210 Carter Court
Greg Kuehl – Kuehl Farms
Dr. Hector Marchand Jr. - 376 Bright Court
Bret Kutansky – 411 Meadowbrook
Bryant Mitol – 508 Valparaiso Street
Melissa DeSutter – 1305 Parkview Avenue
Kelley Weisenbacher – 455 Sheffield
Patricia Gray – 205 Wayne Street

Randall Fiola – Valparaiso Resident
Melissa Reed – 2008 Blackhawk
Jerry Scott – 2416 Alison Circle – Villas at Vale Park
Joe Lyman – Timberbridge
Jessica Hodge – 2601 Eisenhower
Bill Kucek – 436 Eastwood Court
Ken Rogers -Harvest Road
Joanne Manno - 4101 Crown Drive
Brandon Long – 577 Glenwood
Mike Randolph – 2606 Estero Parkway
Nan Kucek - 436 Eastwood Court
Elizabeth Disken – 4300 Clausen Court
Lucia Labrador – 3918 Campbell Street
Mike Blink – 226 E 650 N
Kathy Watts - Eisenhower
Jeanine Hornback - 751 Eastport Centre Drive – Little U Academy
Lucille Weidenbacher – 455 Sheffield
Tom Murray – 3202 Kestrel Street
Thomas Feranec – 443 Meadowbrook
Harry McMurtrey – 2501 Blue Mound
Kenard Taylor – 306 Napoleon
Severin Fisher – 528 N 300 E
Jana Dukleski – 4709 Wayside
Brett Miller – 409 Weston Street
Gary Brown – 203 Harrison
Melinda Burkner – 1602 Pine Creek
James Ferguson – 303 Indiana
Jose Mendoza – 453 Locust
Andrew Tancos - 460 N 325 E

Councilmember Hunt – She feels it is important to say the Council is not bound by an NDA. What the Council knows will be shared and discussed.

Mayor Costas – This is not a done deal. This is the beginning of a lengthy process. The project is just an idea. There will be many opportunities to be heard.

The Next Council Meeting will be March 24, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

/s/ Holly Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer