

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
VALPARAISO, INDIANA  
September 22, 2025**

Minutes are not verbatim. To Hear Full Comments, Please refer to the – Watch City Meetings Section of the City of Valparaiso’s Website (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)

The Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, met on Monday, September 22, 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**

**MOTION:** Councilmember Kapitan moved to adopt September 8, 2025 minutes. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

**RESOLUTION NO. 11, 2025**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE VALPARAISO COMMON COUNCIL TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT  
SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER COVERAGE AND SCHOOL SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS**

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Resolution No. 11, 2025 be read and considered for adoption. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Resolution No. 11, 2025.

Councilmember Pupillo – He is reintroducing this Resolution. Minor changes have been made. They have added Immanuel Lutheran and St. Paul schools. A Whereas was added by Councilmember Hunt adding firearm safety. This Resolution is a statement of intent on what they plan to do as a City working with the schools, law enforcement officials and all interested parties to get us protected.

Councilmember Cotton – You say this is our plan. He is not privy to what the plan is. He knows there is an MOU but he is not aware of a plan to have resource officers in every school.

Councilmember Pupillo - This Resolution is not a Plan. It is a statement of intent of what we would like to do based on what law enforcement is saying.

Councilmember Cotton – When you say “we” you mean the people we have empowered to have that discussion. So the City Council would interject itself into this process.

Councilmember Pupillo – We do pay 50% of the SRO salary so yes, we do have a say.

Councilmember Cotton- He is not comfortable with jumping the process. How do we interject ourselves into this process.

Councilmember Anderson - We are simply making a statement that says we want action on this. It is not the Council’s role to come up with what that action is. We do not have the budget that pays for it. The Mayor presents the budget for the City. The schools have their budget. We are saying we want Administration, VPD and the schools to work together. He would be more than happy to vote yes to have the Council pay for part of this.

Councilmember Hunt – There is no doubt school safety is important to every single councilmember and elected official. There has been some misinformation from Councilmembers regarding why this was tabled. For her

the tabling of this was to provide the opportunity for all parties to clarify what recommendations have been made. What we have found out is VPD has confirmed that an SRO in every school would be ideal but at this time there is no funding or a timeline planned for this. She is comfortable in making this proclamation that the Council supports this because the local law enforcement has confirmed that it is their recommendation. They also confirmed that a fifth SRO has been requested. The intention to table was to ensure that every party had the opportunity to clarify where they stood and that the Council was making an informed decision and if possible they would bring action. She was hoping tonight they would have an updated MOU.

Councilmember Pupillo – The recommendation was made earlier this year that there be a fifth SRO. They did not get that. The MOU in effect reflects four SROs and \$75,000 cost share versus \$70,000.00. With the public documentation it is not clear that the recommendation was made. But they have flushed it out.

Councilmember Hunt – The recommendation of VPD to VCS was to have a fifth SRO and has been made for the past two years. The City and schools have the flexibility in their budgets to cover the fifth SRO. Ultimately this is a decision for the School Board. This has not been presented to the School Board. Her hope is that the School Board President adds this to their next agenda.

Mayor Costas – Councilmember Hunt is correct when she says everybody wants school safety. The question is what is the best way to provide school safety. Is it having an SRO in every school? We have about 15 schools. That is adding 11 full-time officers. That is a significant investment in school safety. Is that the best use? The National recommendation is one SRO for every 1,000 students. VCS has a little over 6,000 students. The request of this Resolution is more than the National SRO organization suggests. They are trying to keep safety in neighborhoods and commercial areas safe. They are always balancing resources. He cautioned the Council that it is unclear if each school is to have its own officer or an assigned officer.

Councilmember Domer – Ensure means to definitively provide for. She has an issue with using that term. It sounds like the Mayor does not agree with ensuring that a school officer is assigned to every school. She just wants to make sure she understands that.

Mayor Costas – To do that right now would require about \$1.5 Million Dollars. If we had \$1.5 Million Dollars, is this the best use of that money for school safety? He doesn't have the answer. He thinks going from four to five is an easy decision. It is in the budget and they have a process for that happening. Having one in every school is a major step.

Councilmember Domer – So say we adopt this Resolution and then a year from now we get to ten and we are not at 15. What would we be saying about the Resolution if we do not get to 15?

Councilmember Pupillo – The timeline is not established to say when we need more officers. It is very clear that having an SRO in school is substantially safer. An SRO will also provide upgrades, proper 3-M film, secure entryways and making sure we are spending our money wisely.

Councilmember Reed – There could be a resource officer assigned to multiple buildings. This would make a presence in the building. Central Elementary for example. What they have done to secure that building is incredible. They do not need an SRO in there all day every day.

Councilmember Kapitan – Did VPD make the recommendation of one SRO per school?

Councilmember Pupillo – In his conversations with VPD the recommendation for five was based on being realistic. When asked about one for every school they said that it would be ideal.

Councilmember Kapitan – Her suggestion is to take out “one per school” and change it to “as recommended”.

Mayor Costas – When you are dealing with a high school you are dealing with a lot of issues that require police responses which don't occur in the grade schools. That is why the concentration is in the high school and then making sure the junior highs are covered. This is a partnership.

Councilmember Anderson - Some of the things the Mayor has prescribed he could go along with if they came out of conversations. Can someone show him where the school board has commented on any of this. The Council is being held accountable while the school board is sitting back and saying nothing.

Councilmember Hunt – She thinks part of that is that this has never been presented to the School board.

Councilmember Pupillo – There are some school districts in the State that have one SRO per school. One is Noblesville. The reason is because they have already had an incident. Hobart has an SRO in every school.

Councilmember Cotton- He has heard some data tonight. There is a lot that needs to be discussed. He does not think this Resolution is appropriate now. If the Resolution moved forward with the amendment, he would support it with a great deal of trepidation.

Councilmember Hunt – Her support of this Resolution is based on the recommendation of law enforcement.

Mayor Costas – If money were no object would having two officers at every school make it safe? That would be another \$1.5 Million Dollars . Do we have the resources to do that? He thinks they need to dig deeper into conversations and see what is an attainable goal.

Councilmember Hunt – She thinks those conversations have happened. A fifth SRO has been recommended for two years and has not been implemented. She does not think the Council has a clear reason why. She sees this Resolution as a statement of the best possible scenario. We have an answer now and that is a fifth SRO. She asked for an amended MOU with the City and the School confirming they had received the recommendation from VPD and that they have room in their budgets for the fifth SRO. She does not see any reason why that is not happening.

Councilmember Cotton –He has talked to Dr. McCall about a school safety tax. It seems to him there should be a permanent infrastructure to support this. It should not be that one year it is affordable and the next year there is no money for it.

**UPON ROLL CALL VOTE** the motion to adopt Resolution No. 11, 2025 passed with a 6-1 vote.  
Councilmember Cotton voted No.

### **ORDINANCE NO. 17, 2025 VALPARAISO COMMUNITY SCHOOL 2026 BUDGET**

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 17, 2025, be read a first time and considered on first reading. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 17, 2025.

Jim Holifield, CFO of VCS addressed the Council. He presented the 2026 Valparaiso Community School's Budget. A copy is online. Tonight is a Public Hearing for this Ordinance. October 13, 2025 is the final reading.

### **Public Hearing**

Mayor Costas announced this Ordinance requires a Public Hearing and presented Proof of Publication that at tonight' meeting the Council will hear comments and questions regarding the VCS 2026 Budget.

**TO HEAR CITIZENS' FULL COMMENTS, PLEASE REFER TO THE WATCH CITY MEETINGS SECTION OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO'S WEBSITE ([WWW.CL.VALPARAISO.IN.US](http://WWW.CL.VALPARAISO.IN.US))**

This discussion starts at 38:00 on the video.

Derek Taylor – 3260 Climbing Tree Court. He asked if Dr. McCall and Mr. Holifield were staying for the Public Comment portion of the meeting. They advised they were not staying.

Brian Williams – Gibraltar Court – In November of 2030 an operations referendum will go before the taxpayers again. The taxpayers should ask the schools to tax enough to keep up with spending or reach out to legislators to get more funding for public schools. Taxpayers need to let Senator Charbonneau, Representative Soliday and Governor Braun know not to defund public education with voucher programs.

**Questions/Comments from Councilmembers**

Councilmember Pupillo – He wants to confirm the VCS 2026 budget has a fifth SRO in it and should the recommendation come from law enforcement, that it will be able to be acted on.

Dr. McCall – There is room in the budget.

Councilmember Pupillo – So if the recommendation comes from VDP to add one or two more SROs, can we do that?

Dr. McCall -We would work through our process to arrive at the best possible outcome.

Councilmember Pupillo- So we can commit to that?

Dr. McCall – We are going to work through the process with VPD to ensure the best possible outcome for our students and staff.

Councilmember Hunt – The recommendation has been made and VCS has chosen not to implement it despite having room in their budget. We are still unclear why that is.

Dr. McCall – We received a proposal from the SROs regarding a fifth SRO. The Chief and he met and discussed it and came to the conclusion that we weren't quite there yet and they would continue to monitor the data.

Councilmember Hunt – Is it VCS's position that there is not enough data to warrant a fifth SRO?

Dr. McCall – We look at things like halls, interactions with students, programing and utility of the SROs in order to maximize that investment of our limited resources.

Councilmember Hunt – Both of you agree that a fifth SRO is not needed despite that being the recommendation in January.

Dr. McCall. – We arrived at that conclusion together.

Councilmember Hunt – She thinks there is still some misunderstanding. She asked Assistant Chief Lamont to provide some clarity from VPD. Is the fifth SRO still being requested or recommended?

Assistant Chief Lamont – Yes.

Councilmember Cotton – He doesn't see that it is necessitated if one party is recommending it. Dr. McCall says the consensus decision was that there is not the need. However, there was a recommendation to do it and the basis for that recommendation would be supported by the data that you shared, one per 1,000 students.

Assistant Chief Lamont – He would categorize that as a minimum.

Councilmember Kapitan – It is in the City's budget to cover their portion in 2026. It sounds like the schools have it in their budget.

Dr. McCall – July 1, 2026 is generally the start date. That is what they were figuring on being able to navigate.

Councilmember Hunt – It sounds like something would need to change because the recommendation has been made. The funds have been available.

Mayor Costas – The fifth SRO is in our 2026 budget. The funds are available January 1, 2026.

Assistant Chief LaMont – It is eight months before they are fully equipped and ready for SRO.

Councilmember Cotton - Some places they teach classes.

Councilmember Pupillo – Valpo has an excellent SRO program. It is just getting the commitment that we have the money in our budget.

Councilmember Hunt – She thinks it would be helpful to bring this in front of the School Board. She is having a hard time understanding that they have an MOU, a recommendation has been made for a fifth SRO for two years, and it has never been brought in front of the School Board. What else would warrant the implementation of a fifth SRO?

Dr. McCall – The maximization of its utility with programming interactions and engagement with students. We want to make sure it is going to be a well-reasoned and executed investment of our taxpayer dollars. School safety is paramount to what we do. He appreciates they are engaged in conversation and the Council's work on the Resolution. They believe in partnerships. They can continue that conversation and chart a path forward together.

Councilmember Hunt – Last year they talked about school safety grants. There was a State school safety grant and a Federal DOJ Violence Prevention Grant. Are they expecting those this year?

Mr. Holifield – They have gotten confirmation on the School safety Grant. There is no indication they are going to extend that or open up the application. Last year that was \$370,000. It was a pretty significant Federal grant. The School Safety Grant is going up this year. These are matching grants.

Dr. McCall – The SRO is funded out of the School Safety Grant. That is part of the matching dollars and then the balance of the \$300,000 commitment is from the Operating Referendum.

Councilmember Hunt – What was the \$370,000 for the School Violence Prevention Grant spent on?

Mr. Holifield – A large part of that was spent on a secure entryway at the Vale.

Councilmember Domer – Are there restrictions of what those funds can be spent on?

Mr. Holifield – The School Safety Grant funds can be spent on an SRO.

Councilmember Cotton – Brian Williams expressed the State is not doing enough to fund our schools. Many of the lines in the budget seem to be bundled. Maybe the schools can do more with less. Or get louder about getting some help. Can they make a greater amount of line items in the various categories that seemed to bunch some of the expenditures without differentiating where a lump of money might be going?

Mr. Holifield – They have over 12,000 accounts. Many of them are not used. When he runs his budget it is 335 pages of lines; each one being an individual account. The form One takes many of those individual accounts and puts them together into one lined item for the budget approval process.

Councilmember Domer – The Education Fund is not part of the property tax. It is sales tax and income tax. Was there an increase in the education fund from 2025 to 2026?

Mr. Holifield – Yes. Our ADM is down a little bit. We still saw an increase of about \$1 Million Dollars.

Councilmember Domer – Is it still about a 40 student decrease?

Dr. McCall. – He thinks they are at about 50 student decrease.

Councilmember Domer – She asked for an explanation of the legislative changes and how that affected the dollars in the adopted budget of the referendum.

Mr. Holifield – The taxpayers approved in May of 2022 an operating referendum rate of 0.1495. They cannot go above that. The AV went up so the cap went down for one year. Now it is up to the 0.1495.

Councilmember Domer – We typically do not see this \$1 Million Dollars in the Rainy Day fund as part of the budget. It makes it sound like that money is going to be spent. She asked for an explanation.

Mr. Holifield – A budget is permission to spend. Each year they have had to do a temporary loan from a rainy-day fund into the pension debt fund because there is not enough cash built up in that fund to cover the payments. The payments are due six months before they get the money. This authorizes them to loan themselves money and then they pay it back in December.

Councilmember Domer – Employees are paid out of the Operation Fund. Is there a projected increase raise in 2026?

Dr. McCall – We are looking at between 2.5% and 3% for our employees across the board.

Councilmember Domer – As far as the health insurance and benefits. Is there an increase there?

Dr. McCall – It is calculated in. Final numbers for renewal should be forthcoming.

Councilmember Domer – What is the projected percentage increase of AV growth from 2025 to 2026.

Dr. McCall – It is 4.9%.

Councilmember Reed – Have they noted any trends in the ADM count throughout the years and how it is trending. Is it streaming upward or are we losing students yearly?

Dr. McCall – They do a report every October after the official ADM day. They had growth and two successive years of graduating the largest senior class and bringing in the lowest ever kindergarten class. Within that range, they are seeing students come in at the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade bumps from parochial or homeschooled students.

Councilmember Reed – Is there a change in the number of students choosing not to come to Valparaiso schools?

Dr. McCall – The report the State puts out has shown an increase. What that doesn't show is how many students are miscoded or the number of students who have never attended Valpo schools. They track their withdrawal data and follow up with surveys.

Councilmember Reed - Are many students doing early graduation?

Dr. McCall – Yes.

Councilmember Cotton – You confirmed that we do not have a capacity problem.

Dr. McCall - That is correct.

Councilmember Cotton – He noticed Immanuel is almost doubling the capacity of their school.

Councilmember Hunt – There was a change this year in the teacher Appreciation Grant. It limits the number of teachers that may receive it. In our meeting earlier you mentioned teacher salaries are not negotiated until after the budget is approved.

Dr. McCall – No. Teacher negotiations are concurrent with the budget process.

Councilmember Hunt – Can you talk about how SB 1 will affect the schools.

Mr. Holifield – The AV is going to drop over the next five years. Our debts are what they are. If the AV goes down, they still need the same levy so the rate will go up to create the same result in that same levy that they need. Where they could feel some pain is with the Operating Referendum.

Dr. McCall – They can have confidence in this budget because they are using certified AV numbers.

Councilmember Anderson – The last time there was a referendum there were two different things. One of them dropped off or became lower.

Dr. McCall – In 2015 they asked for two separate facilities referendum which is paying the mortgage on all the facilities they built and improved between 2015 and 2020. And there is the Operating Referendum which pays for people and programs that provide above and beyond educational experience and wraparound services for students. In 2022 they are still paying the mortgage. They still have the facilities referendum ongoing. In 2022 they asked the citizens to support the continuation of the Operating Referendum. That was at a lower rate.

Councilmember Pupillo – When does the Capital Referendum roll off again?

Dr. McCall – In 2035. But they are including it in the refinance.

Mr. Holifield – They are reducing the payments. It is still going to be 2035.

Councilmember Pupillo – Do you see having to ask for another referendum in 2035 when that one rolls off?

Dr. McCall – The demographic study was based on assumptions that are no longer valid. The higher the price point and the higher the mortgage skews your student population. The younger families or childless young couples aren't in a position to afford those homes at that price point and mortgage rate.

Mayor Costas – One of the themes is that growth helps in the budgeting. As the assessed value grows there are more taxpayers to help pay these expenses. Communities that have flat assessed values or declining assessed values can suffer over the years.

**UPON VOICE VOTE** the motion to carry Ordinance No. 17, 2025 to the October 13<sup>th</sup> meeting passed with a 7-0 vote.

### **City of Valparaiso 2026 Budget Presentation**

Bill Oeding and Holly Taylor presented the 2026 City of Valparaiso Budget. A copy of the presentation is online at [www.ci.valparaiso.in.us](http://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us) Watch City Meetings. October 13, 2025 is the first reading and Public Hearing. This discussion starts at 1:38 on the video.

Bill Oeding – They are doing a presentation tonight to talk about the budget. They are doing this especially because of the concern this past year over SB1 and the effect it has on the City. They are always working on the current budget and future budgets. They used the State's form 4B that gives the last six months and twelve months into the future. When talking about SB1 they are talking about the General Fund and other funds supported by property tax dollars. The growth quotient is determined by the State and given to us. The City has a balanced budget and a cash carryover at the end of the year. Every employee will receive a minimum of \$2,000 raise. Health Insurance for 2026 dropped by 3%. Employee insurance premiums have not raised or increased in 13 years and will be the same for next year. Employee wages and benefits make up 71% of the City operating budget. The City pays 100% of employee PERF; both employee and employer portion. Police and Fire have different pensions. Property tax cap in the General Fund for 2025 is \$600,600 and will grow to \$1.4 Million Dollars in 2026. This is an estimated loss of \$800,00. They will carry over an estimated \$8.7 Million Dollars at the end of 2025 and a conservative estimate at the end of 2026 at \$5.4 Million Dollars. The Departments are very conservative in their spending.

Holly Taylor – A reason Bill says the estimated December cash balances for 2025 should be higher is that the necessary expenditures that are left for the latter half of 2025; DLGF is assuming we are spending every single penny of money that is left over in appropriations. We do not do that. They ask the Departments to underspend their budgets.

Councilmember Domer – She clarified how the State determines the levy amount.

Holly Taylor – The State gives her the figure and she splits it between General Fund, MVH and Park with the percentage splits.

Councilmember Domer – In 2026 we don't see a financial impact based on the legislative changes. This is because we have a good cash balance and our AV growth.

Bill Oeding – That is due to residential growth and business growth as well.

Mayor Costas – There has been a significant reassessment of commercial and multifamily properties.

Councilmember Domer – Citizens will see an increase in their assessed valuation, but a decrease slightly in the tax rate.

Mayor Costas – Assessed valuation is tied to the fair market value. It could go up based upon whether or not there is an improvement to their property. That is a parcel by parcel analysis. The hope of SB 1 is that the tax bills will decrease somewhat.

Councilmember Domer – The new credits are going to impact the taxpayer because that is like a dollar for dollar reduction as opposed to the Homestead deduction.

Bill Oeding – He thinks they have pretty good certainty for 2026. The State is telling us with the tax cap increase of \$800,000 or so that because of net assessed valuation, we are going to come out with a balance of \$5.3 Million at the end of the year.

Holly Taylor – In 2025 we adopted a tax rate of 1.3635. DLGF came in and the actual rate was 1.155. She anticipates that again this year.

Councilmember Anderson – He thanked Bill, Holly and Mayor Costas for letting the Council be a part of the process. It was very informative for him.

Councilmember Hunt – She thanked them also. The budget meetings have been helpful. They helped her shift the focus from the property tax impact of SB 1. This put it in perspective of a shift from property tax to local income tax. The City is anticipating implementing an income tax in fall of 2027?

Bill Oeding – Correct or 2028.

Councilmember Hunt – That number will be dependent on what the County does with their numbers?

Bill Oeding – It will affect Valparaiso residents and the overall income tax they will be paying because they will be paying county and city income tax.

Councilmember Hunt – Do we know what the County will be doing this year?

Bill Oeding - We have not received anything from the County. They have to adopt it by October 31<sup>st</sup> for next year.

Holly Taylor – We have received a Notice to Inform that they are looking into it. It is not definitive yet.

Councilmember Hunt – Are the Departments putting together capital improvement plans?

Bill Oeding – All Departments that have capital equipment have a capital equipment plan that has been in place for many years. A number of years ago we started forecasting ten years into the future on capital expenditures.

Councilmember Hunt – Who monitors the departments under spending?

Bill Oeding - The big departments are told to under spend by 10% at a minimum. As we go through the year we talk about it. This gives a cushion in case of an emergency. Years ago we would have to borrow money from downstate. We do not have to do that now.

Holly Taylor – She and her AP Clerk watch the accounts closely towards the end of the year.

Councilmember Cotton – The City's borrowing limit changes relative to the assessed valuation. What is our bond capacity right now?

Bill Oeding – We would have to go to Baker Tilly and ask them to calculate that for us.

Councilmember Reed – Are we seeing an increase in the Wheel Tax year after year?

Holly Taylor – That is running smoothly and they work closely with the BMV.

Bill Oeding – State statute requires a city to have a Wheel tax if they are going to apply for a Community Crossing Grant.

### **Human Relations Council Appointment**

Councilmember Kapitan – With the reorganization of the Human Relations Council there is an addition of a City Councilmember that is a nonvoting member. They held a joint meeting with City Councilmembers and those of the AHRC that wished to stay on. At that meeting she asked which Councilmembers would be interested in serving as this nonvoting member.

**MOTION:** Councilmember Kapitan moved to appoint Emilie Hunt as the non-voting Councilmember of the Human Relations Council. Councilmember Cotton seconded the Motion. Upon a roll call vote the Motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

### **COUNCIL LIAISON REPORTS**

Councilmember Anderson – Work continues at the WWTP on the infrastructure upgrades. Roof replacement bids were accepted. Franciscan Health Medical Campus is building in Eastport Center. They are requesting approval for water and sanitary construction plans. Bids were opened for the Marsh Street lift station project.

Councilmember Pupillo – VFD Local 1124 had their first annual Buddy Bash which was a concert downtown. He gave a shout out to VPD. They have been busy keeping up with the protests downtown.

Councilmember Domer– Annual payment from Center Township Trustee was increased from \$85,000 to \$150,000. Also, the Trustee is giving the Park Department an additional \$100,000 for the ACE program. With these payments, Center Township residents will get the reduced fee that City residents get. Also, two of the Center Township appointments to the Board will be eligible to become officers of the Board. A bid was opened for the golf course pump house. Goodrich Road extension opened. It has a final Change Order so the total project cost was \$564,000. The US 30 and Silhavy Road reconstruction project plan was approved. This will be a roundabout across the street from Walmart. The second meeting of the east side Master Plan Stakeholder Group will be tomorrow.

Councilmember Kapitan – She expressed her gratitude for the Budget committee and all the work Holly and Bill did. The Environmental Board will meet on Monday, October 6<sup>th</sup> in City Hall. Plan Commission meets the first Tuesday in October.

Councilmember Cotton – The Investigation and Reconciliation Commission met on September 11<sup>th</sup>. They worked to restate the purpose of the Commission. They talked about defining their role and limitations. They need to let people know they exist. They worked on refining the application. They looked at collaborations with agencies in the State organization.

Councilmember Reed – The Park Board opened the Pricing Bids for the Regal Beloit Building. The next Park Board meeting is September 30<sup>th</sup>. The RDC meets on October 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:00.

Councilmember Hunt – The next School Board meeting is September 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00. It will be held at the VHS auditorium. She encouraged citizens to email the schoolboard members and let them know how important school safety is to them. She hopes the School Board will add this to their agenda and at the meeting make a clear statement as to their position on a fifth SRO and other recommendations made by VPD.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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## **SECTION OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO'S WEBSITE (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)**

Derek Taylor – 3260 Climbing Tree Court. An educator at VHS is not terminated after an adequate and formal investigation into her comments regarding the death of Charlie Kirk. This behavior is not acceptable. City Council appoints the school board so both need to be publicly accountable. What is the agenda of the school board? Use funding for SROs instead of DEI groups. Of the students in VCS system, 40% do not live in the City limits and cannot vote for school issues. The educator mentioned above has had issues with students in the classroom.

Brandon Long – 577 Glenwood Drive. He asked if the meeting happened regarding protestors. Mayor Costas replied it did and there is a plan. Brandon continued saying we continue to see political division that is becoming more and more violent. He met with a group of protestors. He wanted to show them his perspectives and ask questions. It was clear he was unwelcome. Deb McLeod has slandered him and said twice she wishes he were dead. He has encountered VPD during his protests and they are kind. Nothing good will come from two sides separated and shouting at each other. Must have honest dialogue based on reason and evidence.

Jim Bilder – 3070 Indian Sumer Circle. He talked about SROs. The Obama administration had its plan to reduce gun violence and called for a greater number of SROs to be in our school system. SROs are members of the law enforcement community who teach, counsel, and protect the school community. When integrated into a school system the benefits go beyond reduced violence. The officers build relationships. Support for additional SROs is very much warranted.

James Ferguson – 303 Indiana. He read a letter from someone who has students in the school system but could not make the meeting tonight. The letter dealt with the recent teacher comments on social media regarding Charlie Kirk's death.

Russ Shrader – 604 Shamrock. He discussed the need for SROs in our schools. SROs will stop or divert any threat. He would be in favor of a school safety tax.

The Next Council Meeting will be October 13, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

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/s/ Holly Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer