

# **THE VILLAGE OF ST. BERNARD**

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

The St. Bernard Village Committee of the Whole was held on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in Council Chambers.

Roll call showed all members were present: Mr. Moreton, Mr. Stuchell, Mr. Edwards, Ms. Hausfeld, Mr. Schildmeyer, Mr. Culbertson, and Mr. Estep.

A moment of silence was held in honor of Annabelle Waldon and Rose Sicking.

A motion by Mr. Schildmeyer, seconded by Mr. Estep, to approve the written minutes of the June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, council meeting. Motion passes 7-0.

### **REPORTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS**

Mayor, Mr. Stuchell- Thank you, Mr. President. My sympathies as well to the families of Annebelle Waldon and Rose Sicking. I would also like to send my sympathies to the family of Rob Johnson who also passed away after a well-fought battle with cancer. Rob was the voice of the Titans and the announcer for both football and basketball. I would also like to thank everyone who made our Independence Day Celebration an awesome event. To our community and those who love coming to St. Bernard, thank you for showing up. Thank you to our recreation department for organizing the concert and fireworks. Thank you to the service department for setting up and tearing down and to the police and fire departments for keeping us safe during the event. I cannot say enough about how fabulous The Remains concert was and the Rozzi Family for putting on such a great display. I personally think ours is one of the best. Our community event staff have decided that next year's Independence Day Celebration will be on Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026, starting at 5:00pm. Staying off of the 4<sup>th</sup> will allow us to have better attendance and will allow people to go to other great venues around town. Thank you to Councilmember, Connor Moreton, for allowing me to participate in his most recent Community Connect. There was a large portion of the evening discussing the Greenlee Ave. project. We had a situation where a very short-sighted decision was made, and we had a lot of community input received. So, it was decided that the grass verge would become concrete, and the trees would be removed. After being made aware of the trees being removed by the contractor, I was able to stop this, and we are now committed to maintaining the grass verge and a tree line where we can. The concern was the excavation of the new curb; the trees would be damaged or destroyed. We will now be dealing with that on a case-by-case basis so we will not have to remove them all once construction starts. We are also committing to adding trees to Greenlee Ave. We are working on identifying size appropriate plants for the area. I do appreciate the residents who have voiced their opinion. A quick update on the projects we have going on in the village now. Langley Ave.

is currently working on installing the roof drain collection line, downspout pipes under the sidewalk, next we will be pouring curbs, sidewalk and driveway aprons and getting the storm sewer installation. There was a bit of a lag period due to testing being done on the water lines so we could not go any further. Greenlee will be starting on water main installation and restoration for the next three weeks before we can start on our part of the improvements, which will be milling, paving, new curbs and new driveway aprons. They do have to dig an 18–24-inch trench and 12 inches deep towards the verge to pour the new curbs so there could be some damage to the trees, but we will be dealing with that on a case-by-case basis. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Auditor, Ms. Brickweg- Thank you Mr. President. I have been trying to catch up from being on vacation so I would like to ask for the council's patience. We will probably have an appropriation ordinance because the Police Chief's equipment maintenance is running very low. He has had some problems with some of the cruisers. I did just pay about 100 invoices. Once they are in the mail, I need to review how that will impact the budget. I will let you know as soon as I do. Hopefully tomorrow or Monday we will know what we are going to need to appropriate. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Law Director, Ms. Van Valkenberg- Thank you Mr. President. I do apologize for not being here at the last council meeting. I was with my mother-in-law in hospice. I want to thank you all for your well wishes and condolences for Annabelle. She was an active member of the community and the secretary of the school board at St. Bernard for approximately 20 years. She was also the secretary for the civil service commission as well for a stint. There is a celebration of life for her tomorrow at 12:30pm at Arlington Cemetery. I do not have anything prepared tonight, there was some cross communication between myself and the Safety Service Director. Last month we talked about the easement signed, or supposed to have been signed, in the early 1980s, between the Eagles Club and the village. I could not find it downtown, so I assume it was never filed. The signatures that were identified on the document, two of them have passed away. So, we will have to recreate the document to get signatures. My plan is to have a resolution authorizing the signatures for the document that should have been signed in 1981, so we can go ahead and get that signed and filed. You should have the resolution ahead of the next council meeting. Also, a recently enacted law has changed the ORC 149.43B1. It now allows municipalities to charge for public records requests that involve video. Chief Simos approached me about this months ago before they signed the law into place. It allows us to charge for actual cost for the video request up to \$75 an hour to be charged for a maximum total of \$750 per request/per video. What I would like to do is get a Laws, Contracts and Claims meeting scheduled so we can look at this. If we can get this meeting done, I can get everything prepared for next month. The Chief is very anxious about this because the people spend a lot of time working with these types of requests. They must be reviewed or redacted due to personal information the request is not entitled to, so I would like to get the Laws, Contracts and Claims meeting schedule to go over that. I do need to

go into executive session at the end of the meeting to discuss ongoing litigation. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Motion made by Mr. Schildmeyer, seconded by Mr. Estep, to place the easement resolution on the table for the next council meeting. Motion passes 7-0.

Motion made by Mr. Schildmeyer, seconded by Ms. Hausfeld, to go into executive session to discuss ongoing litigation at the end of the meeting. Motion passes 7-0.

Treasurer, Ms. Darrenkamp- Thank you Mr. President. As of the end of June, our revenue is \$7,898,054.41. Our expenses are \$8,194,072.69. That concludes my report.

Safety and Service Director, Mr. Williams- Thank you Mr. President. A couple things to pass along. First, with the discussion of the parking lot, I did get notice this afternoon from Fifth Third Bank that they have completed all the quotes and work for the lot on their end. The contractor will be Apco, with the lower quote, and they will begin shortly after the German Luau in early August. We did request that they provide us three days' notice before they begin so we can move cars and let people know they can't park or use the lot. The village recently concluded a risk management report from the Ohio Plan. Ohio Plan is one of the benefits of being with that insurer. They provide a full-time risk management person to come and review the buildings and operations. It was a rather extensive review, and we did receive the report on that this week. I am going to be working with the different department heads to rectify some of the situations that need attention. Most of them are minor, but some of the playgrounds need some work. We are in the process of reconstituting our planning commission that has been dormant for a period of time. We do have a request for a potential lot split on Kieley. The mayor has made appointments with three individuals at this point. The other two, based on our charter, the mayor and myself, are hoping to have that planning commission up and running by August. I am currently working on a plan for training of the planning commission so we can get that up and running. I would say probably September to look for a recommendation for that planning commission relating to a lot split on Kieley involving an industrial building and their warehouse, that is all one parcel right now. The business owner would like to have those two properties split. Finally, I wanted to point out, some people may have seen this, but there are times during some really heavy rains, we are getting some backups on Spring Grove Ave. near B&G Foods. It was brought to my attention by our police department a couple weeks ago. We finally found someone at MSD that can help us with that and hopefully we can get that resolved. It is part of the combined sewer overflow on a line that was worked on in 2007 and it appears their system for that line is not working correctly and water is coming out of some inlets and manholes. This could potentially create some traffic hazards, so hopefully our partners at MSD can have this resolved in the next couple weeks. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Tax Administrator, Ms. Helmes- Absent. Teaching a class on taxes for other tax administrators.

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

Finance, Mr. Moreton- Thank you Mr. President. The next finance committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in the lower level of city hall. We will likely be discussing the LISC home repair program that we previously discussed and other topics as they arise. The finance committee met yesterday to discuss that same LISC home repair program and the impact of a piece of legislation that is in the house, house bill 335, which means to eliminate one of the two ways that we collect property tax revenue which pays for our villages vital and appreciated services. During that committee meeting we did not have much to discuss regarding out collaboration with LISC since we are waiting to hear back about who will manage the payout process. Fortunately, I did hear back from our contact this afternoon with good news and that this project is fully feasible in collaboration with Warsaw Financial and LISC. We are in the process of scheduling a meeting sometime next week to discuss the details. Again, this program will remove an affordability barrier and address deferred maintenance on people's homes through a brand new 0% interest rate micro loan for low-income households. This is a huge step towards better support for the village code enforcement and our beautification efforts. The finance committee also discussed house bill 335, which aims to eliminate inside milage. A mil represents \$1 of tax liability for every \$1,000 in assessed on your property. For example, 1 mil would cost \$100 in property taxes to an assessed home of \$100,000. Inside milage is collected from levies not on the voter's ballot. Outside levies and outside milage are collected form levies that are on the ballot for voters. The village, like most municipalities, currently collects through inside milage around \$552,000 annually from taxes. The rest of our property tax revenues come from that 7 mil levy which is considered an outside levy. These levies provide crucial funds to support our police, fire and service departments. House bill 335 eliminates these levies including around \$85,000 that is allocated for our police and fire pensions, thus removing our ability to support and fund these important services. Because of this reason, the finance committee unanimously agreed that a resolution showing council's opposition to the bill is necessary. This is an opportunity to show our residents that we are tuned into the decisions on all levels of government and are equipped to advocate on their behalf as good representatives. In summary, we ask as the finance committee, a resolution to be prepared detailing out our opposition. I again want to encourage people to help save lives and participate in the Ben Strong blood drive, which is right outside the municipal building Friday, July 25<sup>th</sup> from noon to 6:00pm. You can find more information about the importance of blood and platelet donation at [www.donatblood.uc.idu](http://www.donatblood.uc.idu). Lastly, thank you to those who attended this month's Community Connect. We discussed a variety of topics including Greenlee Street Project and to make our parks compliant with some county regulations. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Service, Mr. Stuchell- Thank you Mr. President. Last Thursday, the service committee met to discuss the revised draft of the hall rental contract. In his meeting the committee focused on revising rental policies to ensure better management, accountability and cost recovery for the village. Key points included the introduction of an online portal for reservations and payments, which will also be used for recreational programming. The deposit of \$200 and an hourly rate of \$125.00 with a minimum of two hours and a maximum of six were proposed to help cover utilities, supplies and staff oversight during events. The Fire Marshall also conducted an updated capacity assessments confirming that the main hall can hold up to 100 people, the teen center 90 people and Centennial Hall 90 people. The committee debated whether liability insurance should be required for renters only when alcohol is served or whether renters could instead assume full responsibility via a signed agreement. The estimated cost of one day liability coverage range between \$50 and \$150.00, depending on the provider. Committee members also emphasize the importance of ensuring the village is protected. Whether through renter insurance or clarified language in the rental agreement. Discussion also addressed equity and accessibility concerns, especially for a long time since our residents proposed flat rate of \$300.00 for weekends and a lower weekday rate was also suggested to simplify pricing and reduce barriers. Members also discussed the potential need for a lower cost funeral rate for those wishing to host a celebration of life. Topics included ensuring clear definitions of what funeral family is to avoid misuse and whether delinquent taxes should impact rental eligibility. This has been proposed in the past before but lack of past council support, stronger enforcement against flooding or misuse such as including potential bands, need for consistent staffing model to cover cleaning and modern responsibilities, especially on weekends. The overall goal is to reinstate hall rentals by beginning of next year as a benefit for the residents, while also protecting public assets and ensuring financial and operational sustainability. Thank you, concludes my report.

Public Improvements, Mr. Edwards- Thank you Mr. President. There was no need for a public improvement committee meeting, but I would like to report on the great time I had working with the recreation department at the food booth at our celebration of Independence Day. I had the easiest job there, handing out buns and talking to people. Many of our residents and visitors to our community we're not only impressed with the quality of food, but we're surprised it was free. I know no other community can pull this off. I even had the opportunity to invite some of our visitors to move to Saint Bernard. It was a great time. I would also like to say I totally support the food being free. It's a very positive way to make Saint Bernard stand apart from other communities our size. Using opportunities like this and projects like the shopping center, I am hopeful not just to make our village a destination to visit, but a destination to live and to raise a family. I would also like to thank all the others who worked a lot harder than me. They're the ones that made this happen. Four or five worked over a hot grill, another four or five handed out food and so on. It was a real team effort by our recreation department. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President, this concludes my report.

Safety, Ms. Hausfeld- No report.

Laws, Contracts and Claims, Mr. Schildmeyer- We did not have a laws, contracts and claims meeting this past month. There was no topic to discuss. I will be getting with Valerie, and we can coordinate the time for the next upcoming meeting to discuss the information Valerie discussed at the beginning of the meeting. Thank you, that concludes my report.

Marketing, Mr. Culbertson- Thank you Mr. President. This is a reminder of some upcoming events in the village. Tomorrow night, Friday, July 11th, there will be an adult night at the Aquatic Center. This event is from 7:00 PM to 11:00 PM. Bring your own food and beverages. On Saturday, July 12th, there will be live pro wrestling in the pavilion. The event is brought to us by Northern Wrestling Federation. Doors open at 6:00 PM in the first matches at 7:00 PM. Admission is free, so please come down and check out Saint Bernard's own Denver Drake Johnson. The next Saint Bernard Ludlow Grove Historical Society meeting is on Monday, July 21st at 7:00 PM. There will be a presentation on amusement parks in Greater Cincinnati. This event will be at the upper level of the Municipal building. Finally, the German Luau is about 3 weeks away and on August 1st it's from 5:00 to midnight and Saturday, August 2nd it's from noon to midnight. My heart goes out to the families of Robert Johnson, Annabelle Walton and my neighbor Rose Sicking. Rose is a matriarch of a wonderful family. That concludes my report.

Business and Industry, Mr. Estep- No report.

President of Council, Mr. Asbach- At this time, is there anyone in the audience wishing to address council this evening? Please state your name and address for the record.

Jeffrey Smith, 4607 Heger- Before I get to what I came here for, I just have a question for all of you. Does everybody in here brush their teeth in the morning? Yeah, you guys look at yourself in the mirror when you do that. Are you able to look at yourself in the mirror? You do, cool. This will be quick. What I put together here is years in the making, not just my own experience, but a decade of public records, financial votes FOIA denials, and silence from this very room. I have a binder for every single one of you here, a personal binder. Sealed letters are already being delivered, which I have right here for some of you. The rest of you, if you don't get them, they'll be delivered in the weeks coming. And this time, you're not the ones holding the clock. I won't be handing the binders out tonight. I believe in fairness; I'm giving each of you a chance to review what's coming. You've got your letters right here, which I will pass out to you before I leave. I will return one final time on July 24th and at that point I will not come to any more meetings. I will not reach out to you guys anymore. That's it. At that point, the full record will be presented, the public will hear everything, and the door will close for good faith resolution. What you do between now and then is up to you, but as of tonight, the silence is over. Not only do I have binders here, if you don't believe it and you want to test me, I brought specific binders and I

can read from those binders. If anybody wants to do that tonight. I've got a Peggy Brickweg's binder with me. I've got John Estep's binder with me. I've got Ray Culbertson binder with me. I have Jonathan Stuchell's binder with me. I have the law director's binder with me. If any of you want to challenge that, that I just named, I have your binder. Please do so now and we can reach from your binders. No. OK. With that being said, each individual binder ties to what I call the Saint Bernard Suck, which puts all of you in connection. So, with that being said, here are your letters. These letters involve not just city council but the police, fire, maintenance, and school board, all of that. So, I will see you guys on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Jeffrey Smith continues to pass out a letter in an envelope to each Council Member and Administration personnel.

Council enters executive session to discuss ongoing litigation.

Council returns from executive session after discussing ongoing litigation.

Next council meeting will be held July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 7:00pm in Council Chambers.

Motion made by Mr. Culbertson, seconded by Mr. Estep, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passes 7-0.

Meeting is adjourned.