

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
SPECIAL JOINT COUNCIL MEETING WITH FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2021**

At 7:00 p.m., Mayor Jerry T. Fiala called the **SPECIAL JOINT COUNCIL MEETING WITH FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES** to order. Roll call was taken.

PRESENT: Mr. Jack Amrhein, Mr. Michael DeLeone, Mr. Garret Ferrara, Mr. John Kuhar, Ms. Gwen Rosenberg, Ms. Heidi Shaffer, Mr. Roger Sidoti, Mr. Robin Turner, Ms. Tracy Wallach.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Jerry T. Fiala, Mayor and President of Council; Ms. Ann Hanna, Franklin Township Trustee; Mr. Keith Benjamin, Franklin Township Trustee; Mr. Scott Swan, Franklin Township Trustee; Mr. Dave Ruller, City Manager; Ms. Hope Jones, Law Director; Mr. Jim Bowling, City Engineer; Ms. Rhonda Hall, Finance Director; Ms. Melanie Baker, Public Service Director; Police Chief Nick Shearer; Fire Chief John Tosko; Mr. Gary Bishop, IT Manager, Ms. Joan Seidel, Health Commissioner; Ms. Angela Manley, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. Tom Wilke, Economic Development Director and Ms. Amy Wilkens Clerk of Council.

Mayor Fiala welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting.

MOTION TO APPOINT LEO LUX AS AN AT LARGE TRUSTEE OF THE STANDING ROCK CEMETERY made by Mr. Benjamin, seconded by Mr. DeLeone and carried by a voice vote of 12-0.

Mayor Fiala said next there needed to be a discussion on Joint Resolution 2021-042 regarding the millage increase.

Mr. Benjamin said they have asked for an increase in the millage due to the excellent work that is done at the cemetery and the pay which is \$4 below the national average for cemetery workers. He referenced a statement that was given to Council members prior to the meeting (**Attachment #1**) which outlines the reason for the modest increase. There has not been a raise since 2013. Mr. Benjamin also added the cemetery is looking into if CARES Act funding could be used. The Board is very proud of the work done by its workers, much of the work being done on Saturdays. The increase in the millage will help with repair of the roads, waterlines, and tree maintenance.

Mr. DeLeone said he voted for this increase because it is needed.

Ms. Shaffer Bish clarified the process of bringing this forward, and if the tax payers NOT vote on this. This was confirmed by Mr. DeLeone and Mr. Benjamin.

Ms. Shaffer Bish asked for a \$100,000 house what it would cost. Ms. Rhonda Hall clarified the process of the City contributing almost \$200,000 to the cemetery and Franklin Township would do the same. She confirmed this would not affect the tax payers, but would come from the City's and Franklin Township's budget. This request is asking for almost an additional \$80,000. If the assessment values of properties increase, so does the amount that is contributed to the cemetery.

Ms. Rhonda Hall continued by adding the last increase was done in 2017 and went into effect in 2018. Mr. Ferrara asked if the increase was done for the cemetery and Ms. Hall confirmed this.

Mr. Kuhar reviewed the hourly wage increases, which he said look reasonable. He asked if there is some way to meet the wage increases without increasing the millage drastically.

Mr. Benjamin said the last time the millage was raised, they asked for a .1 increase and today they are asking for a .2 increase. Mr. Benjamin said they would even be agreeable to increase by .1 if a .2 increase cannot be done. Mr. Benjamin said that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the amount of burials has remained constant, the difference being there have been a lot more cremations which brings in less money.

Mr. Kuhar asked if a compromise could be done by increasing the price in cremations.

Mr. Benjamin said the rates of cremations have not been raised since 2013, so perhaps a combination of both a raise in rates and a millage increase could work. A discussion continued about outpricing and location preference for burials.

Mr. Sidoti asked what a .1 millage increase would look like. Ms. Hall clarified the increase in the cost to the City would be anywhere from \$40- 45,000. Ms. Hall said if the assessed property values increase, it would go up even more.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the money is collected from property taxes and put into the City's General Fund. Ms. Hall said it could go into other funds as well, wherever they have it stipulated to go. He asked if those dollars are earmarked. She said it is already included in the budget in the Governmental Section.

Mr. Ferrara asked about pricing at the cemetery and where people choose to be buried. He asked if they should try a millage increase and price increase to see if that would help. Mr. DeLeone said they have talked about raising their pricing but they are very cognizant of what other cemeteries in the area are charging.

Mr. Ferrara asked about seasonal employee pay and if we can hire locally. Mr. Benjamin said all things being equal, they try to hire local.

Mr. Turner asked Ms. Rhonda Hall about the implications from the housing boom and property taxes. He also wanted to know from the cemetery board any implications to the function of the cemetery.

Mr. Benjamin said their services will remain as high as they have been because of its dedicated staff.

Mr. Turner asked how "backing down" the funding would affect operations.

Mr. DeLeone added the roads are in terrible shape and the items needing funding were outlined in the attachment to the agenda. He said they may be able to keep up with the tree removal, but the roads and other items may take a hit.

Mr. Turner asked Ms. Hall if the next property tax evaluation increases, would that benefit the cemetery. She said it would, when taxes increase, an additional contribution would increase from the City.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if the millage being discussed pays the wage increases. She asked why there are two separate motions to consider. Mr. DeLeone said the employees are not employed by the City. Mayor Fiala added this is brought to this meeting every year for City Council and the Franklin Township Trustees to decide.

MOTION TO APPROVE A .100 MILLAGE INCREASE MADE BY Mr. Kuhar, SECONDED by Mr. Benjamin and CARRIED by a voice vote of 12-0.

MOTION TO AUTHORIZE DRAFT Nos. 2021-042, 2021-043 and 2021-044 made by Mr. DeLeone, seconded by Mr. Kuhar, and CARRIED by a voice vote of 12-0.

AMENDED JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 2021-042: A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP AND THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO, PURSUANT TO OHIO REVISED CODE SECTION 759.34 DETERMINING THAT THE RATE OF TAXES TO BE LEVIED UPON ALL THE TAXABLE PROPERTY OF SAID MUNICIPALITY AND SAID TOWNSHIP FOR CEMETERY PURPOSES FOR THE TAX YEAR OF 2021 SHALL BE AND HEREBY IS FIXED IN AN AMOUNT EQUAL TO .60 MILLS FOR THE CITY OF KENT AND .60 MILLS FOR FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Sidoti. On Roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Swan. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 12-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT No. 2021-042 made by Mr. Kuhar and seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On Roll call, voting "Yes": Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone, Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Swan. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 12-0.

JOINT RESOLUTION No. 2021-042 PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

JOINT RESOLUTION No. 2021-043: A JOINT RESOLUTION APPOINTING LEO LUX, AN AT-LARGE TRUSTEE, TO THE STANDING ROCK CEMETERY BOARD OF TRUSTEES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE OHIO REVISED CODE SECTION 759.36, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2022 AND ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala's request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Kuhar and seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On Roll call, voting “Yes”: Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Swan, Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 12-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT No. 2021-043 made by Mr. DeLeone and seconded by Mr. Kuhar. On Roll call, voting “Yes”: Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Swan, Mr. Amrhein. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 12-0.

JOINT RESOLUTION No. 2021-043 PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

JOINT RESOLUTION No. 2021-044: A JOINT RESOLUTION GRANTING SALARY AND HOURLY PAY RAISES TO THE PERSONNEL OF THE STANDING ROCK CEMETERY, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. was read by title only by Clerk Wilkens per Mayor Fiala’s request.

MOTION TO SUSPEND THE THREE READINGS made by Mr. Kuhar and seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On Roll call, voting “Yes”: Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Swan, Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 12-0.

MOTION TO ADOPT DRAFT No. 2021-044 made by Mr. Kuhar and seconded by Mr. DeLeone. On Roll call, voting “Yes”: Mr. Ferrara, Mr. Kuhar, Ms. Rosenberg, Ms. Shaffer, Mr. Sidoti, Mr. Turner, Ms. Wallach, Ms. Hanna, Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Swan, Mr. Amrhein, Mr. DeLeone. The Motion CARRIED by a roll call vote of 12-0.

Ms. Shaffer Bish said the salary issue is important and this is a question of fairness.

JOINT RESOLUTION No. 2021-044 PASSED as stated by Clerk Wilkens.

Mr. Ferrara said the cemetery is an asset to the City and the Township and is something to be proud of and worth putting resources toward.

The Special Joint meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Amy Wilkens
Clerk of Council

Jerry T. Fiala
Mayor and President of Council