

WANATAH TOWN COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
6:30 pm

PRESENT: Councilman Howell, Councilman Sutton, Vice President Newburn,  
Clerk/Treasurer Ebert & Attorney Shoffner.

ABSENT: None

GUESTS: Lori Mercer, Chuck Jonas, Chuck Mack, Jeff Crandall, Ken Messer, Gennifer  
Messer, Dale Bucher, Susan Weinkaurff, Phil LaFoone, Craig Marcum  
(Bakertilly), Katilyn Duttlinger & Brian Howell.

Call To Order:

- Clerk Treasurer Ebert called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.  
The Pledge of Allegiance was held.

Roll Call:

- Councilman Howell-Here, Councilman Sutton - Here, Vice President Newburn-Here, A  
quorum is present.

Election of Officers

Councilman Sutton nominated Councilman Howell for 2026 Council President.  
Councilman Howell has accepted. No other interested parties. Motion by  
Councilman Sutton Second by Councilman Newburn to approve Councilman  
Howell as the 2026 President. Vote was taken. All Ayes. Councilman Howell is  
now the 2026 Council President.

President Howell nominated Councilman Newburn for Vice President of Council  
2026. Councilman Newburn accepts. Motion by Councilman Sutton; Second by  
President Howell to approve Councilman Newburn as the 2026 Vice President.  
Vote was taken. All Ayes. Councilman Newburn is now the 2026 Vice President  
for Town Council.

Appointments Needed

- Town Attorney - Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton to  
accept the 2026 Contract as submitted by Attorney Shoffner. Roll Call vote was taken.  
All Ayes.
- Animal Control –Motion by Vice President Newburn; second by Councilman Sutton to  
reappoint Bryan Spears for another year.
- Building Inspector – Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton  
to reappoint Blake Winland.
- NIRPC-Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton to reappoint  
Denise Ebert as the NIRPC Commissioner.
- Newspaper - Motion by Councilman Sutton; Second by Vice President Newburn to  
reappoint The Regional News.
- President Howell also mentioned that there was still a vacancy for the Planning  
Commission, Traffic Commission, BZA and Town Council positions.

Correspondence

- None

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

- Motion by Vice President Newburn Second by Councilman Sutton to approve the minutes of December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Regular Meeting. Vote was taken. All Ayes. Minutes were approved as presented.

Officer's Reports

- Plan Commission – No Report
- BZA – No Report
- Traffic Commission – No Report
- Park Board – Vice President Newburn reported that they will meet in January.
- Animal Control – No Report.
- Building Commissioner – Clerk Treasurer Ebert reported that there were 16 Contractor Registrations in the total amount of \$1,170.00.

Clerk's Office Reports

- Personnel Committee – No Report
- Facilities Coordinator – Clerk Treasurer Ebert reported that Right of Way has signed over a new lease for 2026. She also mentioned that Tillinghast, who rents a space here at the Town Hall will be soon retiring and is trying to see if the new owner would like to rent this space out, but will let me know his answer sometime in February.
- NIRPC – Clerk Treasurer Ebert reported that she attended the Leadership & Full Commissions meeting held on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025.
- Other – For the 2026 Community Crossings Grant, we were awarded \$153,236.00. We received our December Settlement from LaPorte County in the amount of \$166,645.83. We also received \$4,156.00 for CVET & FIT which now, according to House Enrolled Act 1392, we get to decide where those funds are allocated. I chose to mirror the funds from last year and allocated them accordingly.
- Clerk Treasurer Ebert let the Council know that she has provided 2026 Committee Meeting Notices along with our Council & Board Members List. She asked if there would be any changes to either of these documents, they replied with a no.
- Motion by Councilman Sutton; Second by Vice President Newburn to write off outstanding check #13851 from 7/20/23 for Conboy Detail in the amount of \$5.55.

Public Works

- Chuck Mack provided a letter to the Council from VS Engineering regarding the new Wastewater Plant and the delays they are having. IDEM is still requesting some new designs on the main lift station pumps (the GPM and TDH) since the window of 60 days were missed to correct this issue, a new application had to be sent out. He is hoping to break ground sometime in July. Chuck stated that he had some current projects that he will report in the February meeting regarding the Water Plant and the main manhole with Casey's General store.

New Business

- Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton to approve to prepay Hatfield Pest Control for a 5% discount to the Town Hall amounting to \$22.20, and for the Library \$29.40.
- Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton to approve to prepay Goetz Landscaping for a 3% discount to the Town Hall in the amount of \$25.80.
- Bakertilly-Craig Marcum presented to the Council the concerns the Towns are having due to the SEA1 Property Tax reduction for homeowners as well as the Tax Revenue loss for Municipalities. He also talked about the loss of the LIT Revenue come 2028 which all together will make it very difficult to create future Budgets. He is promoting to the town a package plan named BT Service that will provide daily service or 81 hours a year for Budget assistance, Utility Analysis, Capital Planning, Financial Planning, etc. at a

- monthly price of \$1,700 a month to be split up amongst 3 Funds. After discussion, the Council asked to have a month before a decision is made. They would like to have a discussion between themselves and approve or disapprove at the February Council Meeting.
- Rolling Communications was a no-show in regards to inquiring about a Blanket-Bond for future work in the Town of Wanatah. The Public Works Department made it very clear that they did not want this company to work in our Town due to the lack of following the Boring Permit Process and procedures. Attorney Shoffner suggested that he could amend the Bond that states there will be a \$2,500 fee if the company doesn't follow the Permit process. Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton to approve that amendment. Attorney Shoffner stated that he would submit a draft copy waiting the Council approval at the February Council meeting.
- Boring Application for 202 Koselke was discussed by the Public Works Department and they believe that this project was already done. Motion by Councilman Sutton; Second by Vice President Newburn to approve pending the Public Works Department approval..
- Motion by Councilman Sutton; Second by Vice President Newburn to approve Boring Application for 10525 US Hwy #30 pending the Public Works approval.

Further discussion was had about "No Boring" through the winter months barring it's not an emergency. The Council agreed to let the Public Works department make that decision. The Clerk Treasurer was instructed to pass on any locate to the Public Works Department and they will make that decision.

#### Unfinished Business

- None

#### Financial Report and Claims Approval

- Motion by Vice President Newburn; Second by Councilman Sutton to approve the claims as presented. Vote was taken. All Ayes.

#### Any Other Business to come before the Council

- None

#### Public Comment

- Philip LaFoone addressed the Council about a letter he received stating that his water bill was past due. Since he has never received a past due notice, he was concerned that his meter was broken and wanted to know if the Public Works Department could calibrate his meter. Mr. LaFoone addressed the Council on the recent increase to our water bills, the funding of the Wastewater Plant, and the Towns purchases, He thanked the Council for giving him this time to speak on behalf of the town and their concerns.

#### Adjournment

President Howell asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Councilman Sutton Second by Vice President Newburn. A vote was taken. All Ayes.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:36 PM

ATTEST:



*Denise Ebert*

Denise Ebert  
Clerk-Treasurer