

COUNCIL MEETING (REGULAR)

NOVEMBER 5, 2025

The Council of the Town of Monon met for a regular meeting on **Wednesday, November 5, 2025**, at the Monon Town Hall. Members present were President Ken Hickman, Vice President Ron Benakovich, Toni Onken, Chris Franklin and Jamie Myers. Also present were Attorney Rebecca Trent, Town Marshall Roger Young and Clerk Treasurer Annette Sipkema.

President Hickman started our regular meeting at 6:30 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment-of silence.

READING OF MINUTES.... Council President Ken Hickman asked if everyone had reviewed the meeting minutes dated October 1st (Budget Adoption, Public Hearing on Additional Appropriation & Regular) and the Executive Meeting dated Oct 20th.

Jamie Myers made a motion to accept the minutes, and Chris Franklin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

PAYROLL, BILLS & CLAIMS:.... President Hickman asked if there were any questions on the bills, claims, and payroll. Hearing none, he requested a motion to approve all three items together.

Ron Benakovich made a motion to approve the bills, claims, and payroll, seconded by Jamie Myers. Motion carried unanimously. **\$206,249.09**

Month End Reconciliation Review / Sign Off.... President Ken Hickman reviewed and signed off on September and October bank reconciliations.

VISITORS:

Debbie Reindt, Monon Township Resident, attended the meeting and addressed comments made by President Hickman during the October meeting. She expressed concerns about a potential data center project and asked how the town would gather public support and inform residents about the project. President Hickman confirmed that he had shared all available information at the previous meeting and assured attendees that he would oppose any project detrimental to the town's water resources or significantly elevating electric rates. He disclosed that the council had not yet engaged in discussions with any company. Council Member Ron Benakovich explained that the council is actively gathering information by consulting with officials from other towns that have both approved and rejected similar propositions. He emphasized that the council's strategy is to remain open to the project, gathering all necessary information before reaching any decisions. Council Member Jamie Myers recounted a conversation with a resident living near a comparable facility. The resident reported no disturbances regarding noise or water supply issues but highlighted potential benefits such as increased property values and job opportunities. Debbie Reindt also addressed issues concerning the Hispanic community's involvement in Monon, urging inclusivity in decision processes. President Hickman assured that efforts had been made to engage the entire community and informed that the decision ultimately lies with the three county commissioners. President Hickman further highlighted the potential educational advantages the project could bring, citing the proximity of Purdue University. This presents opportunities for local high school students to access education in computer and data-related fields.

Sean Garrett, Fire Chief.....reported on a recent fundraising drive that generated \$23,000. He requested the town to contribute an additional \$11,583.90 to purchase new radio equipment, as the current units are now obsolete. The total expenditure for ten replacement units is projected at \$46,167.80. Clerk Siphema confirmed that funding is available both from the fire department's existing budget (\$4,181.73) and from EDIT allocations. Following deliberation,

Ron Benakovich made a motion to approve the town's proposed portion of the radio portion in the amount of \$11,583.90 (\$4,181.73; Fire Dept Equipment & \$7,402.17; Edit Machinery & Equipment Budget Lines). Seconded by Ken Hickman. Motion carried unanimously.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN ORDINANCE.....President Hickman presented Ordinance 2025-4 for the adoption of an emergency response plan for the town's Water & Wastewater Treatment Operations. The ordinance states that the town desires to adopt an emergency response plan, which is attached as Exhibit A. All prior conflicting ordinances would be repealed upon the effective date, and the ordinance would take effect upon signing. After brief discussion,

Toni Onken made a motion to adopt the ordinance, and Ron Benakovich seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

COMMONWEALTH ENGINEERING.... Gabrielle Taber reported that USDA has received all the paperwork for the wastewater project, but authorization to go to bid cannot be granted until the federal government reopens. She explained that the town cannot proceed with bidding the project without USDA authorization, or it risks losing funding. Once USDA reopens, they will review the paperwork and hopefully provide authorization quickly. President Hickman asked if virtual meetings regarding the project would resume once the government reopens, Gabrielle confirmed they would.

2026 SALARY DISCUSSION.....Council President Hickman initiated a discussion about 2026 salary proposals for town employees and officials. The council received a salary proposal from Member Benakovich for consideration. Council Member Toni Onken expressed concern that some positions, particularly the Street Commissioner, did not receive an increase in the proposal. She suggested a 4% across-the-board increase for all positions. Ron Benakovich explained his reasoning, stating he was looking ahead to filling the vacant full-time Supervisor position, as the current arrangement has Commissioner Young spread too thin. This led to an extended discussion about the need for a full-time position and supervision of town employees. Council Member Jamie Myers noted the importance of having clear expectations for town workers and measuring their performance against those expectations. The discussion continued about whether the town could financially support another full-time position. Clerk Siphema stated that she does not see any benefit to hiring a supervisor who is not certified and would only support the hiring of a new superintendent if that person were properly certified which would allow the town to terminate the \$54,000 operator contract with Standish Consulting. President Hickman suggested tabling the discussion of a new position until the council could compile a list of tasks that are not currently being completed but should be.

Clerk Siphema read Member Benakovich's salary proposal, which included:

- 3% increase for Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Town Marshal
- 3.5% for Deputy Marshal
- \$4,500 (annual salary) for Council President
- \$4,000 (annual salary) for Council Members
- No increase for Town Superintendent
- 3% cost of living adjustment for town labor employees
- Increase Annual Park Board Member stipend from \$500 to \$600

After further discussion,

Jamie Myers made a motion to accept Member Benakovich's proposal. Ron Benakovich seconded the motion. Motion passed; four in favor & one against.

OPERATOR CONTRACT..... The Council discussed updates to the water/wastewater operator contract and directed Attorney Rebecca Trent to draft a more detailed version based on council and staff input. Clerk-Treasurer Annette Sipkema recommended adding provisions for improved communication, monthly operational reviews, regulatory record-keeping, attendance at relevant meetings, preparation of required documents, timely IDEM violation responses, and employee training. Clerk Sipkema will forward her list to Attorney Trent and Attorney Trent will work on the revised contract for council review.

2026 HEALTH INSURANCE.....The council discussed health insurance options for town employees. Annette Sipkema reported that the rates for the current plan, PPO 7 Rx T3, will increase 9.7% for medical and 3.2% for dental, with vision and life insurance rates remaining the same. She presented alternative plans with different deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums, as well as information about the AIM Medical Trust, which could potentially offer better rates and coverage. The council decided to maintain the current tier of coverage but authorized Sipkema to explore rates with the AIM Medical Trust for potential future implementation.

DEPARTMENTS:

TOWN MARSHALL ROGER YOUNG..... 1) Tyler Cosgray from the Monticello Police Department has been filling in for Mr. Hickman at the school while he is recovering from surgery. 2) Deputy Miller has been asked if he wants to pick up extra hours, and a response is awaited. 3) The department has some state-mandated training to complete before the end of the year.

STREET COMMISSIONER ROGER YOUNG... 1) reported that in the past scrap was disposed in the trash or given away. Now, the town saves brass water meters for scrap; on slower days staff remove the internal components to take to the scrap yard. A recent load brought in \$919.50 in scrap revenue, ensuring materials are reused and taxpayer dollars are protected. 2) The snow plows are ready for winter with new cutting blades installed. 3) The new truck is at Clark's getting a harness and snow plow mount installed. 4) The old dump truck has been sold, and bids for the Chevy will be accepted until November 15th. 5) Some issues with the Bobcat required repairs due to possible previous misuse. 6) The park has been winterized, and picnic tables have been stored in the log cabin for the winter. 7) During winterizing, a step leading up to the second story of the little league concession stand gave way. 8) A new park caretaker will be needed for next year, as the current caretaker will not be returning.

CLERK-TREASURER ANNETTE SIPKEMA..... 1) reported that property cleanup letters were sent certified mail on October 22nd, giving property owners 30 days to pay costs incurred by the town before liens are placed on the properties. Both property owners have received the letters. 2) Vanguard was invoiced \$698 for a hydrant repair kit and labor as directed by the council last month. 3) The Indiana Unclaimed report has been filed, with 8 checks voided and returned to the meter deposit fund, and a check for \$372.19 sent to Indiana Unclaimed. 4) Revisions to the employee handbook were made to comply with Senate Bill 409, which requires employers to provide leave rights for employees' children's educational activities, effective July 1, 2025. A ghost employment policy was also added to the handbook, and employees have resigned to acknowledge the changes. 5) The Community Crossing Matching Grant application has been submitted for a total construction cost of \$998,890, with the grant request being \$799,112 and the town's portion \$199,778. The grant would cover work on Race Street, Third Street, and Lincoln Street, including sidewalks and curbs. Results should be known by December.

ATTORNEY REBECCA TRENT..... Attorney Rebecca Trent discussed issues with the Park Board membership. After research, she discovered that some current members do not live within town limits, which is required by state statute. The current board includes Charrisse Hook (who is resigning), Diane Tribbitt, Ryan McGrail (who lives outside town limits), Yessica Gomez, Julie Hart (the library appointee who lives outside town limits), and Esther Hardy. The council discussed the need to replace these members with residents who live within town limits. Linda Melton, Monon Resident, was asked if she would serve on the park board, which she answered yes.

Jamie Myers made a motion to appoint Linda Melton to fill one of the vacancies. Ron Benakovich seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The library will need to appoint a new representative who lives within town limits. The remaining vacant position is to be appointed by the town council. Clerk Sipkema confirmed that there is a posting on the town’s Facebook page for interested candidates to contact the town hall. Trent also noted that state law now allows council members to serve on the Park Board, which was previously prohibited by town ordinance.

Council Members..... Member Chris Franklin raised concerns about the collapsed building at 116 East 4th Street, noting that it poses a significant safety hazard. The building was damaged in a fire and the owner has not taken action to clean it up. It was recommended that Attorney Trent handle the notification to the owner. Benakovich requested that the area be blocked off immediately for safety reasons, and the council agreed to take care of this the following day.

Member Myers reiterated his position that the town needs to hire a full-time superintendent to oversee town operations and employees.

Vice-President Ron Benakovich mentioned safety concerns about the steps at the Little League building, which are approximately 40 years old and in need of replacement. The council agreed to look into this issue.

ALL OTHER MATTERS


The council briefly discussed fire run compensation but decided to table the matter until the next meeting to allow time to gather more information and consult with township officials.

There being no other business to discuss,


Ron Benakovich made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Chris Franklin seconded. Meeting adjourned @ 8:05 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 3, 2025 at 6:30 p.m..

COUNCIL PRESIDENT: 

COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT: 

COUNCIL MEMBER: 

COUNCIL MEMBER: 

COUNCIL MEMBER: _____

ATTEST: Annette Spikema

These minutes are a summary of actions taken at the Monon Town Council meeting. The full video archive of the meeting is available for viewing at <https://www.youtube.com/@townofmonon> for as long as this media is supported.

Official signed minutes may be requested at the Clerk's Office or viewed at <https://townofmonon.com/2025-minutes>