

**TOWN OF MONON
COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 4, 2026**

The Council of the Town of Monon met for their Regular Meeting on, March 4, 2026 at the Monon Town Hall. Members present were President Ken Hickman, Vice President Ron Benakovich and Toni Onken. Also present were Attorney Rebecca Trent, Town Marshall Roger Young and Clerk Treasurer Annette Sipkema.

Chris Franklin and Jamie Myers were absent.

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 all members had reviewed the meeting minutes from February 4, 2026. There were no questions or comments.

Toni Onken made a motion to accept the minutes, Ron Benakovich seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

BILLS/CLAIMS:... The Council reviewed the bills, claims, and payroll. No questions were raised by any Council members.

Ron Benakovich made a motion to approve bills/claims as presented. Seconded by Toni Onken. Motion carried unanimously. \$ 190,353.81

VISITORS:

SEAN GARRETT, FIRE CHIEF..... discussed the Knox Box system, an electronic key storage system that would allow emergency responders to access buildings without breaking doors or windows during emergencies. The system costs approximately \$2,500 for the truck unit plus annual subscription fees, with residential units ranging from \$250 to business units costing \$2,000-\$3,000. Each firefighter would have their own access code, and all usage is logged electronically. The chief noted they have had to break down several doors recently during emergency calls, creating additional costs and damage for residents who already face medical emergencies and ambulance bills. The Knox Box system would eliminate this problem by providing secure access.

JIM DAVIS.....Jim Davis provided several updates and comments to the Council. He reported that the Monon Food Fest is scheduled for June 6 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and may be relocated to the downtown/fire station area this year due to logistical issues, including electrical access and nearby property changes. He noted that vendor information has been distributed and that the parade is still planned to begin at the school. Davis also indicated that the location of the car show may need to change due to liability concerns at the previous site.

Davis also discussed ongoing efforts related to the former fertilizer plant property, explaining that bids are being gathered for demolition of the structure as part of a potential Brownfields grant application. He stated that there has been interest in possible housing development at the site, though the project remains in early stages. On housing initiatives, Davis conveyed to the council that recent efforts for development funding near State Road 16 have currently fallen short, lacking enough points needed for this year's funding cycle. Regardless, he remains hopeful about future prospects and acknowledged continued interest for potential apartment developments at the fertilizer plant site by several developers.

Jim Davis discussed the potential development of data centers in the area and addressed public concerns. He referenced a similar project in the City of Hobart that is projected to generate approximately \$102 million in its first year. Davis noted that development agreements can include negotiated community benefits, infrastructure investments, road use agreements, and decommissioning requirements. He also stated that data centers would operate on a separate electrical system and would not impact residential electric rates. Davis expressed support for exploring development opportunities that could provide financial resources for future infrastructure needs.

TERRY SAUNDERS, RESIDENT, raised two issues: a safety concern about exposed bricks and debris on Fourth Street where fencing was removed, creating a hazard for children, and a

request that new park board members receive an oath of office at their first meeting, as required by ordinance.

UNFINISHED/NEW BUSINESS:

COMMONWEALTH ENGR... WW PROJECT..... President Hickman stated that the wastewater project is progressing through required paperwork and bidding procedures. He explained that they are waiting to let bids out and must follow proper channels, though the timeline depends largely on state approval processes. Hickman estimated that ground breaking might occur around June or July, but emphasized there are no guarantees due to the bid approval process and state oversight requirements. He noted that Rob and Gabrielle are staying on top of project details and maintaining regular communication about progress.

REVISED STANDISH CONTRACT..... Ken Hickman presented the revised contract with Standish Consulting for water and wastewater services. Rebecca Trent explained that she had worked with Dustin to make several minor changes, most involving wording adjustments. The most significant change was removing the town's ability to terminate the contract without cause, which Dustin requested since it's only a one-year contract and he needs stability to pay employees. Member Onken questioned language about responding to customer complaints, and Attorney Trent clarified that Standish typically doesn't handle direct customer calls but wanted flexibility to assist the town when needed rather than being required to respond to every complaint. Member Onken appreciated that the contract specified monthly in-person visits at the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Toni Onken made a motion to accept the revised Standish contract. Ron Benakovich seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

BAD DEBT RESOLUTION; RESOLUTION #2026-2..... Clerk-Treasurer Sipkema presented a resolution to write off uncollectible utility bills. She explained that the accounts listed had been identified as outstanding balances that are no longer collectible. She noted that accounts six years or older are considered uncollectible. Sipkema further explained that a significant portion of the total \$12,688.77, specifically \$5,679, consisted of accounts added to the system on August 17, 2006, which contained only customer names and no addresses, making collection efforts impossible.

Toni Onken made a motion to accept the resolution to write off bad debts. Ron Benakovich seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS

Roger Young, Town Marshal... 1) Reported increased enforcement of abandoned vehicle violations, particularly targeting vehicles without license plates sitting in yards. 2) Initiated property cleanup efforts now that weather has improved. 3) Expressed concern about the damaged building on Fourth Street, noting they haven't received a response from Ken Smith regarding structural engineering services. 4) Plans to contact the state fire marshal's office for assistance with the building issue.

Roger Young, Street Commissioner... 1) Reported completion of all six minor violations from their recent inspection, excluding the ice in the water tower base near the fire station, which needs pumping and preventive maintenance before next winter. 2) Submitted all required reports to IDEM, including lead and copper testing and chloroform analysis. 3) Noted that tower lights have been repaired and implemented a valve maintenance program for street water valves that have not been systematically maintained. 4) Installed a new pump for the west clarifier, as the east clarifier is currently down with bearing problems. 5) Responded to a sewer backup issue at the old Lyon's building church; investigation found a blockage in the town's line near the old Raver's property. Coordinated with Anderson Plumbing, who cleared the blockage, and advised the church to send the bill to the town. 6) Obtained quotes for repairs to the sewage plant lab where siding has fallen off and guttering is damaged. Noted missing shingles on the shop roof and is collecting estimates for both metal roofing and shingle replacement.

Annette Sipkema - Clerk/Treasurer..... 1) Sipkema reported upcoming training, including a webinar and the ILMCT conference in Plainfield next week. 2) The 2026 insurance package came in at \$42,752, down significantly from last year's \$56,049 premium. 3) The insurance asset list has been revised. 4) The annual financial report has been completed, advertised, and copies

are available. 5) Fire and EMS contracts for 2026 have been signed and returned. 6) She reported receiving notification from INDOT that the town is eligible for Community Crossings grant funding on a first-come, first-served basis, requiring quick turnaround on bid processes.

Attorney Rebecca Trent... confirmed that the legal advertisement for the Community Crossings bid will run on March 12th and 19th. Bids will be opened under advisement on March 26th. At least one council member will need to be at the bid opening on March 26th. A pre bid meeting will be held March 19th at the town hall. 2) Trent reported ongoing communication with insurance claims representatives regarding the damaged building issue. She's working with both the property owner's situation and exploring whether the town can file its own claim since the building affects the municipal alleyway and creates safety concerns. Trent explained that Ken Smith doesn't have current licensing for the required structural analysis but is seeking someone else to perform the evaluation. She acknowledged the challenge that even with a condemnation order, the town lacks sufficient budget for demolition and removal.

Council Members... Council discussed parking concerns in the downtown area, including a vehicle and trailer that have remained parked behind a property for an extended period. It was noted that the trailer had previously been moved but is currently locked in place.

Members discussed an area on the west side of the street that has been roped off to prevent parking. The property was identified as belonging to Mr. Newbold; however, David Cox has asserted that a past agreement related to apartment parking may give his property rights to use the space. The Town has no documentation confirming this claim. Mr. Cox has been advised that any property dispute would need to be resolved privately and that the Town will not tow vehicles from the area.

Council also confirmed that the parking area near KIRPC's building is owned by the Town of Monon. A suggestion was made to install **Public Parking** signage to clarify availability.

ALL OTHER MATTERS

No additional matters were discussed.

Ron Benakovich made a motion to adjourn at 7:24 p.m., seconded by Toni Onken.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on April 1, 2026 @ 6:30 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT: Ken Johnson

COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT: Ronald Bell

COUNCIL MEMBER: Toni Onken

COUNCIL MEMBER: [Signature]

COUNCIL MEMBER: [Signature]

ATTEST: Barbette 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 after 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>