

THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CIVIL CITY OF NEW ALBANY, INDIANA, HELD A PUBLIC HEARING IN THE THIRD FLOOR ASSEMBLY ROOM OF THE CITY/COUNTY BUILDING ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2017 AT 6:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Council Members Mr. Coffey, Mr. Caesar, Mr. Phipps, Mr. Nash, Mr. Blair, Mr. Aebersold, Mr. Barksdale, Dr. Knable and President McLaughlin.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Lorch, Police Chief Bailey, Mrs. Moeller, Mr. Wilkinson, Ms. Lewis, Mr. Hall, Mr. Duggins, Mr. Wood and Mrs. Glotzbach

Mr. McLaughlin called the public hearing to order at 6:30 p.m. and asked if anyone was there to speak on the sewer rate increase.

Roger Baylor stated that he doesn't think it is necessary to have a law to force the council to do what it was supposed to be doing all along, which is to look at the sewer needs and calculate the rates accordingly. He explained that he is dissatisfied with the way this came up quickly at the end of the year especially since it is not a hallmark of the current administration to be transparent about anything. He stated that they were told that this was about the impending loss of points for development in the City of New Albany and anyone that is paying attention would have to question at this point what this actually means. He suggested that they need to be asking what sort of developments are being discussed and what it will be used for. He stated that he isn't necessarily opposed to a rate increase but he is alarmed at the haste with which this one has come down and the absence of more comprehensive information.

Twilla Beckham 2805 Armstrong Road, spoke about the storm water issues on Armstrong Road.

David Barned, 1800 Charlestown Road, stated that he doesn't mind paying for what he uses but explained that his bill runs between 1-2 units and while he seldom uses 2 units he has to pay the fee for them. He asked that they consider the fees between the units to compensate for what people fairly use. He suggested that in order to save money they cut down on office supplies used in the billing department when they go in to make a payment.

Randy Bullet explained that he lives in district 3 and explained that when he first received the documents on this he made a call to Gary Brinkworth who is an engineer and formerly on the sewer board to ask him if there has ever been an initiative made to seek a grant to help alleviate the sewage issue. He stated that Mr. Brinkworth couldn't recall this happening but said that it was an interesting concept. He explained that the federal government appropriates \$150+ billion dollars each year towards grants to address such funding and in Indiana specifically, the Office of Community and Rural Affairs offers a letting of the grants twice a year. He stated that they would have to retain a grant writer to complete the documents but as council members they have an obligation to represent their constituents and do everything they can to alleviate costs.

Irvin R. Stumler, Floyd Knobs, stated that he wished his fixed teacher's retirement would increase 33% because it makes a rate increase like this especially hard on the poor who can barely get by as it is. He suggested that they ask the people to analyze their budgets and need annually so that they can take that into account when making a decision to increase rates.

David Gammons, 3105 Julian Drive, stated that he moved to this location in June and nothing jumped off of his desk like the sewer bill did. He explained that he came from Clarksville with a new wastewater facility and with the money he is paying now they could fund 10 new facilities. He stated that he would really like to know if there is a plan, if it will be made public, and if so will it be available before the public arbitrarily gets these charges sent to their homes.

Kirk Johnson, County Line Road, stated that he is amazed that when he looks at national averages, most people are paying \$30-\$40 a month so it doesn't make sense for it to be so high in this small area. He asked if they can justify it or explain why the utility bill is so high.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that the council usually doesn't address questions during a public hearing as it is their time to give feedback. He explained the council will not be taking action on this tonight but at their next meeting on February 16th.

Mr. Johnson stated that he would like some answers about why the rates are already so high before they make a decision

Terri Jordan, Kent Street, stated that she owns rental home and is here on behalf of the tenant. She explained that in July he received a \$243.00 bill for one month because of a leaking toilet and the bills remained extremely high because he didn't tell her about the leak. She stated that her tenant is a former green beret and has PTSD so he spends a lot of time in the VA hospital so when he was finally able to call he had been charged over \$800 for 4 months of billing. She explained that they were both told by the sewer office that there was no adjustments that could be made because the leak involved the toilet and she doesn't understand why someone from the sewer office couldn't have notified her when the bills started to go up. She stated that the water that went to the plant was clean water so she doesn't think it is right to deny residents an adjustment and it is probably happening all over the city. She added that people are forced to pay this extra money and now they are saying a rate increase is warranted every year and she doesn't understand that. She asked if there is anything they can do to help out someone in her tenant's situation.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Pat McLaughlin, President

Vicki Glotzbach, City Clerk