

**VILLAGE OF SOUTH LEBANON  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
PUBLIC HEARING  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2013  
6:00 P.M.**

1. Mayor Lawhorn called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with Pledge
2. Linda Allen - Present                      Dean Evans - Present  
Randall Atkins – Absent                  Bill Madison – Present  
Jim Boerio - Present                      Jeff Sturtevant – Absent
3. Mayor Lawhorn stated the purpose of the public hearing is requirements for a FEMA grant.

Administrator Vidmar stated he had distributed to all council members a summary of this grant. He stated copies of the agenda and his memo are on the back table for the public. He stated that previously legislation was passed by council that enabled us to have the authority to submit this application. He stated several weeks ago they submitted a pre-application to FEMA and as a result after their review of qualifications of the pre-apps we have been fortunate enough to be short listed in a smaller group to actually submit the formal application, which is due October 11th. Gary said as part of the process we are required to conduct a public hearing so that you all have the opportunity to have feedback from the public in respect to the grant and purpose of the grant. He stated whoever wishes to speak will be given up to 5 minutes to speak by the mayor.

Mayor Lawhorn stated that we have a regular council meeting that starts at 6:30 p.m. and if the public hearing runs past the allotted time it will be continued to another time. Gary stated that typically in a public hearing the purpose is not to engage in conversation in a question and answer form but simply to voice your opinion. He said if you have questions you can contact me or any of the council members outside of this meeting for that discussion.

4. Council member Madison stated before the public speaks he would like to make a statement. Bill stated we mentioned this grant before and I have looked over the paperwork you provided and I think it has some serious shortcomings. He said first of all the grant is for a quarter million dollars is that correct and Gary stated it is \$211,000. Bill said he asked in a previous meeting about the longevity of this grant and is there a sun set on it. Gary said we are given up to two years from the date they award the grant to use that money. Bill stated if he would find a flaw in this grant he would say that is it. He said first of all he objects to one of the requirements which

is to destroy these buildings. He thinks there is a lot of history that goes with these buildings first of all. He stated second of all he does not think we can do that within a two year period to meet the conditions of the grant. He asked how in the world are we going to level these buildings in two years and be ready to open a new administration building. He said he does not see it happening. Bill said those are his two serious objections. These buildings represent this historical part of town in so many ways and hard to describe in words what these buildings mean to this community. Especially how they were built back in the 60's the community came together with limited funds and some with their own resources and built this to house administration, fire department and police so it ties together this community. Bill said you could not even erect these two building somewhere else for a quarter million dollars. He said to him it does not make any sense. Bill stated he understands it and gets what FEMA is trying to do but in this instance I think it is nonsense. He said he wanted to go on the record before the public speaks.

Mayor Lawhorn stated he wanted to add that whatever happens here with this building we as a village have no choice, we have to move out of this building. He said we don't have the room now to do the service we need to. He said every office is filled to the brim and there is not enough room to do business and we can't expand this building. So we are going to have to move. Madison stated it makes no sense to destroy it either. Mayor Lawhorn said he is not getting into whether we are going to destroy the buildings or not I am just saying that we have no choice but to move. Bill said he is a little irritated that we are here tonight even discussing it wasting the time of these folks when I don't think we can meet the requirements of this grant in the first place and that is in two years spend \$250,000 on a new facility and have this place gone, impossible. Mayor Lawhorn said he agrees that it can't be done in two years and Madison asked why we are here tonight. Mayor Lawhorn stated because it is a requirement of the grant to hold a public hearing.

5. The floor was opened to Mike Bunner and Jim Bolan from Warren County Emergency Services. Gary stated they know more about the grant than anyone and have spent an enormous amount of time helping us assemble the information for this grant. Mike stated he wanted to give some background on the process and what Warren County has to do with this process. He said this started about nine months ago where the county started looking at their wet properties. He said wet properties are basically any properties in Warren County that have three flood planes on it in the past ten years. He stated they came to South Lebanon and looked at some of the properties and reached out to some residents and none of the residents wanted to participate. We identified that South Lebanon has problems with being in the flood plain and having an opportunity to expand we reached out to you. He stated this is not something Warren County is

mandating on anyone nor is FEMA mandating it. He said this is solely your decision and we are just here to administer the grant and make sure the application is followed up on in a timely manner. Mike explained the grant and what had been done in the process this far. He said it would be \$211,000 from the Federal Government, \$35,000 from the State and \$35,000 from South Lebanon. He stated you have two years from the time the grant is awarded to demo this building but do not have to have a new building erected just turn this into green space. Jim said the reason they want it green space is it is not cost affective to put another building in here. He stated there were three options when this first came up and one is do nothing, elevate this building or apply to demo. He said the elevation of this building would require it to be 9 feet high. He said Mr. Vidmar decided to pursue the grant for demolition. He stated they were notified that South Lebanon was eligible and the application is due October 11<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Lawhorn stated the audience is saying he had his five minutes and that this is different because he is explaining the process. Brenda Greer stated from the audience that they cannot understand him because he is not speaking clearly.

6. Mayor Lawhorn opened the floor to the public and stated that if there is a group he would ask that one speak.
7. David Lapp – McKinley St. – stated he wanted to touch on some of the history behind the building. He shared a couple of newspaper articles he said when he read them they impressed him because he is from PA. He said from December 27, 1960 the article headline is “Citizens Efforts Spurs South Lebanon Building”. He read about the volunteer labor by council and citizens as well as material donations for new village hall. He said it states if the future of a community can be measured by the extent to which it’s residents are willing to work for civil self improvement then South Lebanon need have little to worry about. He stated that on July 4, 1961 the building was dedicated and the article states this program was cited as “typical American effort” and “praises for the American spirit of residents here who built their own municipal building without appealing to the great white father. David said that this building was not only built in 1960 but it is historic for what it says about South Lebanon. It tells the story of South Lebanon and of the folks that built this building. He said he doesn’t care what anyone says about South Lebanon, this building shows the kind of community that South Lebanon is. David said this building symbolizes a community striving for a better life, finding it, making their way and leaving their children better off. He said it would be a shame for this building to be torn down and an unfortunate irony that Federal Aid would be used to tear down a building built entirely by citizen effort.

John Greer – architect – married to Brenda Terry Greer who grew up in South Lebanon – stated he wants to speak to the financial aspect and is familiar with the flood plain and the expansion of buildings in the flood plain. He said of course this building is too small and of course you can't stay like this but he says it can expand and would be a lot more economically feasible to do that. He handed out a sheet of options he worked out and reviewed it with council. He stated that you can expand in the flood plain. He said he knows he is not supposed to ask questions but asked Mike why could this building not be expanded and Mike stated he does not sit on council and he would need to direct that question to them. Council member Allen said she lives in the flood plain and you can't add living space to the outside structure. John said that can be appealed as a hardship so yes it would have to be appealed but we are looking at saving money and saving the historic character.

Brenda Terry Greer – stated she was born and raised here and if you are running out of space why would you not want to use the old elementary school and Gary said it is also in the flood plain and the costliness to to be able to occupy that building in its current condition would not be cost affective. Madison said as soon as we open it to the public we open all kinds of requirements.

Don Combs – 783 Mary Lane Ext. – stated he has no problem with a grant from FEMA but I do have a big concern about using it for a new municipal building or police department anywhere other than the building across the street. He said you cannot tell him that we cannot sit down with figures and not show him where it is not cost affective to move into the building over here. He said he has been there before and and you are going to build a building up here for \$150 per square foot, not going to happen. He said that is not a good decision and he does not care who makes it. He stated in his opinion and stated that what he knows for a fact you cannot build a building for \$150 a square foot and you can remodel that building across the street for three quarters of a million dollars. Don said you have plenty of high ceilings, we went through this before, you can run forced air all through it. An elevator for less than \$60,000 and utilize the second floor and have handicap accessible. He said would not be smart in his opinion to go anywhere other than across the street. He said if you can get a grant, fine, get grants to buy properties around here and if you have people in the flood area that needs to move make it feasible for them to move someplace else without a total harassment. He said that is not nice, that is operating something like IRS. Don said for council just to remember for every decision you make there is a consequence.

Madison said in principal he agrees and we would save more money by reusing this building as a court and one of the stipulations when we

become a city is our courts. He said then recreate or build a new administration building wherever it might be but still we would be more cost effective reusing this building for another resource rather than tearing it down and taking what is left to try to add to another facility somewhere.

Maryann Harrison asked for a date for the continuance of the public hearing and Linda Allen said she wants to make a statement first.

Allen stated we approved applying for the pre-approval grant and this deadline is October the 11<sup>th</sup> and that does not mean that we are going to use it, it just means we just have to apply or we cannot get it at all. She stated it doesn't mean we are going to tear the building down tonight or move forward. She said we don't know if we will get it or use it. Mayor Lawhorn said this hearing is just the requirements for the application that is all. She said we have to come back to council to use this.

8. Mayor Lawhorn stated we have to close the public hearing and stated we are going to apply for the grant that is not going to change because that is what this hearing is about. He said we will have another hearing and may be better if wait to see if we get the grant and whether there is a decision made to even tear this building down.
9. A motion was made to adjourn the public hearing at 6:32 p.m. by Allen, seconded by Madison, all yeas.

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Sharon Louallen, Fiscal Officer

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Lionel Lawhorn, Mayor