

VILLAGE OF SISTER BAY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2024
(APPROVED VERSION)

Agenda Item No. 1. Call Meeting to Order

The October 21, 2024 meeting of the Village of Sister Bay Board of Trustees was called to order by President Nate Bell at 6:00 P.M.

Agenda Item No. 2. Roll Call

Present: Trustees Nate Bell, Denise Bhirdo, Kurt Harff, Louise Howson, Patrice Champeau, Alison Werner, and Lilly Orozco.

Staff: Administrator Julie Schmelzer, Finance Director/Treasurer Volodymyr Gannik, and Clerk Heidi Teich

Others: Adam Ruechel, Brian Ruechel, Laurel Harff, Jeff & Margaret Connar, Bill Wegehaupt, Faye Blue, Ken Church, Nancy Akerly, "iphone", Skip Heidler and David Matasek

Agenda Item No. 3. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Bhirdo, seconded by Orozco that the Agenda for the October 21, 2024 meeting of the Village of Sister Bay Board of Trustees be approved as presented. Motion carried – All ayes.

Agenda Item No. 4. Comments, Correspondence and Concerns from the Public

Correspondence was received this morning from Mike Laszkiewicz and forwarded to the board prior to the meeting. In his email, Laszkiewicz asked the board to consider the needs of the village over wants, focus on projects that have clear benefits to taxpayers and be conservative in their financial planning to show that they are listening to the public.

Bell asked if anyone wished to make a public statement.

Bill Wegehaupt - 10579 Fieldcrest Rd – spoke to the increase in his property taxes in 2023 and asked if there would be an increase in 2024. Bell replied that the Village's portion of the tax would not be increasing. Wegehaupt asked if there is a way to put some checks and balances on the technical district and their continual increases.

Margaret Connar – 2492 Cherrywood Ln – introduced herself as the President of SAIL, Senior Advocates for Independent Living (SAIL). Connar asked the board to reconsider providing financial support for their organization in 2025 so they can assist those living in poverty in Sister Bay by waiving SAIL membership fees.

Nancy Akerly – 10810 N Spring Rd – congratulated the village on a successful Fall Fest weekend. However, with no "No Parking Signs" on N Spring Road, cars park on both sides of the street, which is narrow to begin with. It is difficult to negotiate both the cars and pedestrians who are walking on that road. She asked the board to consider making it "One Way" or post "No Parking" on one side for next year's event. Bell requested that this item go to the Parks, Property & Streets Committee for discussion.

Agenda Item No. 5. Public Hearing: 2025 Budget

The proposed budget for 2025 was posted to the village website prior to this meeting and included as part of the meeting packet for this evening's discussion. Bell opened the Public Hearing at 6:06 PM and asked if anyone would like to offer comments.

Laurie Harff – 10513 Cherrywood Ct – expressed her displeasure with the costs associated with construction of a new public works building and administrative building but stated that she understands the need for them. However, she noted that the \$500,000 budgeted for the ice rink in 2025 is an expense that taxpayers should not have to pay. She asked where the money for annual maintenance costs for the ice rink will come from, which includes paying staff.

Nancy Akerly – 10810 N Spring Rd – commented on the lack of funding in the budget for the village hall. She questioned the need for a new administration building when there is a large meeting hall in the village hall, or the old medical clinic on State Highway 42. She agreed that a new administration building is needed, but there are other options that don't require new construction.

Trustee Bhirdo responded to Akerly's concerns about a new administration building, and stated that without new construction, there will not be the space or security that staff needs to work. The village hall is not completely ADA accessible and has no parking so large meetings are not practical there. Akerly countered that there is street parking and parking at the park (beach). She stated that the village has a responsibility to bring their municipal buildings up to code and use them without duplicating the expense of building something the village already has.

Trustee Werner added the need for election security and the efforts of staff to continually be moving equipment and materials to set up the meeting room. She also felt that the old medical clinic would not be sufficient in size to host large meetings.

Trustee Howson noted that the Parks Committee will be looking at the administration building again to modify the design and potentially remove the atrium at its November 4th meeting.

Trustee Champeau confirmed that the 2026 budget will have \$200,000 for the village hall and asked that they consider the future of the village and not just provide a temporary fix with regards to the administration building. She voiced the need for a safe and secure elections facility and noted that constructions costs will only continue to rise if they delay the project. She added that she would personally like to see the size of the proposed administration building reduced.

Akerly asked if the village had looked at other municipal buildings, such as the Town of Sevastopol's town hall, for ideas on size. She also requested that the board hold a public meeting to discuss the design and layout of the administration building so the public can understand its purpose. Trustee Bhirdo responded that staff were interviewed so the committee could understand the needs of this community. She added that the administration building drawing only looks large, but it is nearly the same size as all the various spaces currently being utilized, just combined into one complex.

Trustee Orozco agreed that the village needs to plan for future, and they have been taking time to do so correctly. She voiced her support to build a new facility, and noted that the size and cost have not been finalized.

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2 Bhirido, in response to Harff's earlier comments, stated that there are many village facilities, such as
3 the library, beach, and ice rink, that she personally does not use, but believes that a new ice rink – like
4 other village amenities – are a benefit to the village and improve the quality of life for everyone who
5 cares to enjoy them. The need for the taxpayers to fund those costs is no different than those who
6 pay property taxes to the school districts when they may not have children in school.

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8 Discussion on the ice rink continued and covered such topics as:

- 9
- Prioritizing the construction of the rink now, when other public facilities are also planned
 - Manpower needed to provide ice rink maintenance
 - Grant funding for the ice rink construction, or requests for funding to other Northern Door communities
 - The incentive for young families to stay in the village, which the ice rink could provide
- 14

15 Skip Heidler – 2630 Woodland Dr – thanked the board for their service and taking on the responsibility
16 of acting for the village. He asked that the board continue to keep in mind the balance between
17 revenues and meeting village needs as it appears there may be inconsistencies in the budget. He
18 provided the example of the construction of a new marina building in the millions when the associated
19 annual revenues are only a couple hundred thousand dollars. There is also very little money available
20 for road projects that, over the next ten years, will cost upwards of four million dollars. He inquired as
21 to the village's plan to address this.

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23 Schmelzer responded that the current road plan is outdated, and roads have been neglected for a long
24 time. However, they are working on the worst roads first and scheduling maintenance for others in
25 the future as they are able. PRAT funds will be used, in part, for this maintenance.

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27 *At 6:42 P.M. the public hearing was closed.*

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29 **Agenda Item No. 6. Discussion and Action**

30 **a) Res. 2024-018; Adopting the 2025 Budget**

31 Adam Ruechel, of Robert W. Baird & Associates, was invited to speak. He explained his involvement
32 in the preparation of the 2025 budget to understand the priorities of the board and work with the
33 numbers so that there was no need to increase taxes. The budget proposed this evening meets the
34 objective of the board. He noted that there is a projected increase of 1% in overall revenues (due to
35 net new construction). Both the equalized value and assessed value have increased, which allows
36 the board to absorb any increases in expenses (projected at a 3% increase factoring in the additional
37 revenues) without raising taxes.

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39 Bell clarified that there is no increase to the mill rate, so the amount of money owed to the village
40 will not change.

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42 Howson asked Ruechel what the village's benchmark for spending is. Ruechel explained that the
43 village is allowed to borrow up to 5% of its equalized value by statute. The village has also improved
44 bond ratings over the past several years to get better rates.

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46 The members briefly discussed the procedures for amending the Capital Improvement Plan if
47 necessary to address a sum of \$200,000 to install water and sewer to the former Logerquist property.

1 Bell noted that a decision regarding any amendments to the CIP could be made later. Ruechel
2 explained that the decision before them tonight is to adopt a budget with \$3 million for an
3 administration building. If the cost turns out to be more than that, the board will decide at that time
4 how to proceed, such as using reserve funds or delaying another project.

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6 Trustee Champeau asked what was taken out or added to the budget to get the proposed budget
7 before them this evening. Bhirdo replied that most cuts came from the Parks budget, including
8 \$50,000 in wayfinding signage, money for a new DPW vehicle, \$345,000 for the Woodland Trail and
9 various other small items to get \$500,000 for the ice rink. While they were not able to find \$10,000
10 for SAIL at this time, the support amount to the Historical Society was increased to \$15,000 for 2025.

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12 Bell noted his position was not to get in the habit of taking funds from the unassigned fund balance,
13 which is already being done for the administration building design. The use of those funds could be
14 carefully considered.

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16 *A motion was made by Bhirdo, seconded by Howson to approve Resolution 2024-018 which adopts*
17 *the 2025 Budget for the Village of Sister Bay as presented. Motion carried – all ayes.*

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19 **Agenda Item No. 7 Adjourn**

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21 *A motion was made by Howson, seconded by Orozco to adjourn the October 21, 2024 meeting of the*
22 *Village Board of Trustees at 7:15 P.M. Motion carried – all ayes.*

23
24 Respectfully submitted,

25 

26 Heidi Teich
27 Village Clerk
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