

Salem Common Council Meeting

Written by

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The Salem Common Council met in regular session on Monday evening, February 9, with all members present except for Pete Brown; Brown is recovering from extensive back surgery. The Council approved the minutes of previous meetings and all claims unanimously.

After reviewing the financial statement prepared by Salem Clerk/Treasurer Pat Persinger, Council members noted that the February 10 property tax draw should help the tough economic situation that city government is facing. Mayor David Bower reminded the Council members that his administration continues to look for ways to save money without cutting services.

One example of cost cutting that Bower pointed to was his recommendation for Salem to withdraw from the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURG). According to Bower and Persinger, any time the city wishes to take on a major infrastructure project, complying with IURG guidelines adds considerable cost to the project. That cost must be absorbed by the taxpayers. Bower cited the proposed project to raise the level of Lake John Hay as a prime example of how Salem can save the taxpayers money by withdrawing from IURG. Bower said if the city goes ahead with the project without going through the IURG it will mean a savings of over \$200,000 on just this one project alone. City Attorney, Drew Wright gave examples of nearly 300 Indiana cities and towns that have withdrawn from IURG over the last three decades for the same reasons cited by Bower.

In other business, Persinger requested Council approval to obtain a credit card for the city. Persinger said that making travel reservations and ordering needed supplies online are all but impossible without a credit card. She also indicated that considerable savings can be realized in some cases if payment is made when an order is placed rather than having it billed. Salem Police Chief, Scott Ratts, chimed in to support Persinger's request, noting that the price his department pays for certain electronic equipment ordered online is as much as 25% more than what the Washington County Sheriff's Department pays for the same items by using a credit card. After lengthy discussion and an agreement on usage limitations, the Council approved Persinger's request.

Two city department heads came before the Council requesting a revision in the city's personnel policy regarding employee sick leave. The Council agreed to take the department heads' request under advisement.

With no further business to conduct, the Council adjourned until its next regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, March 10.