

**UTILITIES COMMITTEE MINUTES OF            DECEMBER 11, 2017**

Municipal Council of the City of Vermilion  
Municipal Complex, 685 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio 44089

**In Attendance:** S. Herron, M. Stark, F. Loucka, B. Holmes, J. Forthofer, B. Brady, B. Keller, Mayor Bulan, G. Fisher, T. Valerius, L. Miggins. Absent: F. Ostrander.

**Call to Order:** B. Brady, Chairperson, RESOLVED THAT this Utilities Committee consisting of the Committee of the Whole does now come to order.

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**TOPIC ONE:            Infiltration - Vermilion on the Lake**

B. Brady reminded the administration there is a large infiltration problem in the VOL area and wondered if they could put a camera down the lines and look for major problems. Mayor Bulan asked if she had any suggestions. B. Brady said the first thing she would like to see done is televising it at the east end to make sure there isn't a blockage, and when it rains to have a couple personnel onsite to pop the manholes to see where the problem starts. She would like to see them isolate the problem and then worry about how to fix them. She didn't feel it was an unreasonable expense.

**TOPIC TWO:            Water Bill Fee Charge**

B. Brady asked if the only way you don't get a charge for paying your water bill online is if you're set up on auto pay. Mayor Bulan said auto pay or through your bank. B. Brady said through your bank you get charged. Mayor Bulan said you do not get charged through your bank is what she has been told. You get charged if you pay through the city's website. She said they updated the website and explained this process thoroughly. She said the complaints have backed off. B. Brady asked if no charge is applied through online bill pay and Mayor Bulan confirmed. G. Fisher said if you set up the bill pay through your bank you don't get charged, but if you put in your checking account to pay your bill through the city website then you do get charged. B. Brady said the bills for the clubhouse come in so tight that they can't do this. They manually have to take their bills to the Utilities Department in order to avoid a penalty. Mayor Bulan said all the bills are mailed at the same time. B. Brady said the notice on the website is difficult to understand and Mayor Bulan said they changed the wording. B. Brady said she hopes they are making it clear to the residents about these charges. Mayor Bulan said most of the people were surprised at first but she doesn't think they will pay it again through the website to avoid the charge.

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M. Stark said her husband was livid that this charge was added to the bill, so she hopes the new wording will help explain this to the residents. Mayor Bulan said the city spent over \$20,000 in credit card fees last year. B. Brady asked if the bank charges if you process a bank checking account (ACH or EFT).

B. Keller said last year he found out that just for the convenience of using a credit card the city was paying \$20,600, and if you add this up over a 25 year period of time that's \$515,000 that would not be going into infrastructure. There are over 700 customers that do not pay by credit cards so they are sacrificing that money into the infrastructure and they are not receiving the benefit. B. Brady said she isn't talking about a credit card; a credit card makes sense because credit cards charge fees for the service, but when she directly puts in a bank account they are still getting charged a fee. B. Keller said she can sign up for the automatic payment plan. B. Brady said she doesn't do auto-pays because it gives the city control. B. Brady asked if the banks charge for EFT's and ACH transfers. B. Keller said he doesn't remember the fee structure that is available but will get back to her. B. Brady said she is getting charged \$3.25 for an ACH withdrawal and B. Keller said yes this is the credit card portion. B. Brady said no as it's not a credit card; it's directly from her checking bank account and there is no credit card involved. B. Keller asked if she went online to her online bill pay to pay it and B. Brady said no she went into the website and put in her checking account number and the money came directly out of her checking account. Mayor Bulan said if you don't go through the website you won't get charged.

M. Stark said a lot of people pay fees online through the school system and they get charged fees too. It's a convenience for not writing a check and taking it to the school. She said the city is not the only one who charges. She said the schools can't absorb all those fees and the city shouldn't either because it's public dollars that should be going back to the city.

B. Brady adjourned the meeting after no further discussion came before the committee.

*The next meeting is scheduled for January 8, 2018 at 7:00 p.m.*

*Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*

