



**Village of Milan**  
**Special Council Meeting**  
**March 29, 2023**

The March 29, 2023 Special Council Meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance by Mayor Pam Crosby.

Roll call: McIlrath – yes, Bickley – yes, Rospert – yes, Taylor – yes, Shafer – yes, McManus – yes.

Also, present: Mayor Pam Crosby, Fiscal Officer Cathy Ramey and Administrator Brian Rospert.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mayor Crosby read a letter noting that it was not the original Investigation report, however, anyone wanting a copy of the original report would need to contact the Auditor of the State of Ohio Special Investigation Unit.

Mayor Crosby then read the following:

Good evening and thank you for attending tonight’s Special Council Meeting. Tonight, we will be going over an investigation alleging Village of Milan employees conducting weekend chores were claiming more time and being paid in excess of the time they were actually working.

On March 1, 2023, the State Auditor’s Office requested a meeting with our Solicitor, Fiscal Officer, Administrator, and me. During the meeting, we learned that a Village resident made at least 23 complaints of fraud by Village employees to the State Auditor’s Fraud Hotline. These allegations were made against four Village employees and the allegations revolve around reporting on their time sheets. The complaint alleged the employees who do weekend chores were claiming more time on their time sheets than they actually worked and were therefore being paid in excess of what they were actually working. After that meeting, the field Auditors said they will take their notes from this meeting back to their supervisors to see if the Special Investigation Unit or the SIU, will perform an investigation. After the meeting, our Solicitor and Administrator contacted Erie County Sheriff Paul Sigsworth, and asked to have his office investigate these complaints. Sheriff Sigsworth contacted the SIU to request they do an investigation.

On March 3, 2023 we received a phone call from Mike Vinson, Chief Investigator with the SIU asking if he and Tiffany Ridenbaugh, Chief Forensic Officer, could come to Milan on March 6, 2023 to interview the employees and watch the process of weekend chores at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Our Solicitor, Administrator and I met with them at the office first and then we all went to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and met with the employees.

The following is a summary of the investigation performed by the SIU. The complete investigative report is a public record and can be obtained by contacting the Ohio Auditor's office.

The Ohio Auditor's Special Investigation Unit (SIU) received complaints from Tina Frederick, alleging Village of Milan Employees conducting weekend chores were claiming time and being paid in excess of what they were working. Frederick provided information she believed substantiated her claim including photographs of vehicles traveling to and from the Village of Milan Wastewater Treatment Plant and timesheets of employees she accused.

On March 6, 2023, an investigator from the SIU conducted interviews with Tina Frederick, Milan Village Mayor Pam Crosby, Milan Village Administrator Brian Rospert, Village of Milan Employees who were called out in the complaints.

The report of the SIU indicates that Frederick provided them with a notebook containing eight (8) tabs. After discussing the information contained in the notebook, the investigators determined that tabs five (5) through eight (8) related to Mary Bruno and a previous Finding for Recovery and would not be a focus of this preliminary inquiry.

The investigators then reported that Frederick had pictures of vehicles she claimed were the vehicles coming and going from the treatment plant and the time of the coming and going did not match up with the times on the employee's time slips. The camera was a motion activated camera which the investigators found from their interview with Frederick to be unreliable and created images which limited the ability to identify details. Frederick did not personally witness any of the vehicles going by. Frederick told investigators she did not know the details or time it took to complete the weekend chores.

The investigators then went to the water/wastewater treatment plant. At the investigator's request, Wastewater Superintendent Brad Simon demonstrated to the SIU what exactly the weekend chores entail so they could get an idea of the time it took to do the chores and what would happen if they were not done. After the demonstration, each employee agreed to be interviewed by the investigators, even though the allegations, if found true, would be a high-level criminal offense.

According to the SIU investigative report, the investigators then looked at the all the documents contained in the 23 complaints from Frederick, considered the interviews and the demonstration by Superintendent Simon.

After this investigation, the investigators found “(Quote”):

**Based on our observations of the tasks to complete the chores and then comparing the timesheets from March 1, 2021, to current, it is apparent the employees completing the weekend chores are claiming times which would be consistent to properly complete their required duties. The allegation that the employees who complete the weekend chores are stealing time is unfounded. unquote**

In closing, I want to thank our Solicitor, Administrator, and staff for assisting with this investigation. Although it is difficult for the employees and their families to have to go through these allegations, it is refreshing to learn that our employees were not fraudulently documenting unworked time on their time sheets. We value our employees and their commitment to our Village. Not only for weekend chores, but they are there for our residents in their time of need. It doesn't matter if it is an electric issue, water or wastewater issue, snow removal, brush pick up, yard waste pick up or just simply keeping our charming community clean, they are there!

Even though the SIU substantiated the complaints were unfounded, all members of council received an email from Frederick after she received the SIU report. The email stated basically that the SIU investigation was wrong and she is continuing to investigate the employees doing weekend chores.

In order to keep the Village from expending funds to respond to these types of situations and to allow our employees to do their jobs without the constant harassment, I ask that the Council consider going back to the way we paid for employees for weekend chores before COVID, as two hours of pay minimum at overtime rate, for each time they performed chores on the weekends and holidays. This will be a minimum of two hours in the morning and then again in the afternoon each day.

Discussion then took place over the situation at hand regarding chores. Village Residents then had a chance to speak and voice their thoughts and frustrations. Council was asked if this constitutes a hostile work environment and the amount of taxpayer's money it has cost the Village. Residents would like to see public record requests put online, this not only would show the number of request but also the response time from the Village. Another would like to know what an employee can do when they are being followed, video or harassed out in the public. Administrator Rospert noted that employees were informed to contact the Police Department and make a report so that it is on file.

Council and Administrator Rospert spoke highly of all the employees with the Village of Milan noting that they all crossover in positions helping each other out in other departments and how family oriented they are along with the strong support they have for each other and their families. Also noting that the Village of Milan has the best workforce in place and would hate to see an employee leave due to this harassment.

Councilperson McManus spoke highly also about Administrator and Fire Chief Brian Rospert. Mentioning the searches he does for Grants that saves the Village thousands and thousands of dollars for many different projects around the Village. Brian is a true and strong leader who keeps his employees together. Applause was heard not only by Council but the audience as well.

Council request that the letter read above by Mayor Crosby be put on the Village Facebook page as well as the Village Website due to the fact it was an investigation has caused quite a stir throughout the Village. There has been a lot of people who want to know the outcome.

The Village State Audit was to be completed by October 31<sup>st</sup>, but with all the complaints that have been sent in to the auditors, the audit is still ongoing.

Fiscal Officer Ramey is still waiting on word on the additional cost the Village will incur from October 31<sup>st</sup> on due to these complaints which has prolonged the original completion date of October 31<sup>st</sup>.

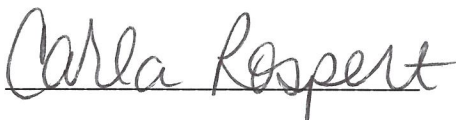
Council President Rospert wants the policy written for change in chores and presented for the next Council meeting.

### **Adjournment**

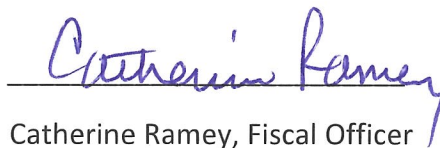
Councilperson Shafer left the meeting due to another commitment.

Motion by Bickley, seconded by McIlrath, to adjourn tonight's meeting.

Roll call: Bickley – yes, McIlrath – yes, Rospert – yes, Taylor – yes, McManus – yes.



Carla Rospert, Council President



Catherine Ramey, Fiscal Officer