

MINUTES
MUNCIE COMMON COUNCIL
300 NORTH HIGH STREET
MUNCIE, INDIANA 47305



MARCH 3, 2025

REGULAR MEETING: 7:00 P.M., 1st Floor City Hall Auditorium.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by President Mason.

INVOCATION: Given by Councilperson Green.

CITIZEN RECOGNITION: Councilperson Gullion has always been a believer that a strong public education system should be the foundation of a healthy city. We need a well-educated citizenry in order to move forward and grow as a city. With that, she is a huge admirer of public education teachers and wanted to choose a teacher for the citizen's award this month—especially as we watch public education being hit so hard in our state. While we have so many hard-working, long-term Muncie Community Schools educators (even a couple of our own Council), she narrowed it down to her District #4 and chose someone who happens to be celebrating 10 years at Muncie Central High School. Her son also had him while he was there so she personally knows his effects on the students. (As well as many of those here from Ms. Snider's government class have too.) This month, she is presenting Drew Shermeta, a social studies and economics teacher at Muncie Central, with the Council's Citizen of the Month award. As mentioned, Drew started teaching at Central in 2015, where he's taught Economics, AP Macroeconomics, AP Microeconomics, AP US History, World History, and Ethnic Studies. Before that, he was a technology education specialist for the Muncie Public Library, volunteered with the Whitely Community Council, a teacher and academic community director for Motivate Our Minds, and taught social studies at high schools in Georgia and North Carolina. And, he's a Ball State Cardinal since he earned his Master's here, although he did his undergrad at Wake Forest University. Mr. Shermeta is also a Mentor Teacher for MCS, a Curriculum Frameworks Reviewer for the Indiana Department of Education, served on the MCS Innovation Plan National Review Panel, and is a Muncie Youth Leadership Academy Sponsor at Central. One of the Foundational Principles of the Innovation Plan that Drew found particularly important was Culturally Responsive Practices, which embrace "the values and backgrounds within our diverse MCS community." He believes we need to meet our students where they are and work to connect the content being taught to their interests and passions. During his years here in Muncie, Drew has been actively and passionately involved in our community and has been recognized for that work. He attended the Muncie-Delaware County Chamber of Commerce Academy for Community Leadership, was awarded the Muncie Rotary Very Important Volunteer Award (2012), the Fisher Institute Friend of Wellness & Gerontology Award (2013), and was chosen as one of M Magazine's Next Generation Leaders (2013). Mr. Shermeta was also honored as the MCHS Teacher of the Year in 2017, and was a finalist in both 2017 and 2020 for the Ball Brothers Foundation Excellence in Teaching award. Drew not only works with his students to teach them the course work they need to graduate, but models' commitment to others in our community and how to be civically and civilly involved. She mentioned her son had Mr. Shermeta a few years ago, as did many of his friends, and has heard only good things about him. He is the kind of teacher who is respected because he's respectful to the kids. He's not a pushover, but as one kid put it, "takes a beat" to think about his responses. We're lucky to have teachers like Drew in our city schools. And because she's also here tonight with her students, and she and Mr. Shermeta have worked closely together over the years, Gullion asked his colleague Julie Snider if she wanted to share anything about him tonight. She did: "Drew is one of a kind. He is a great teacher, but more importantly, he is an amazing person. I know he would do anything for me anytime. He cares so much for everyone around him and this really resonates with his students. They don't just learn economics from him, they learn how to be compassionate and kind human beings. He is an invaluable member of our staff and I am so proud

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| ROLL CALL: | PRESENT | ABSENT |
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APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Garrett to Adopt the Minutes from the February 3, 2025 Regular Meeting. An all-in-favor vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. MINUTES APPROVED.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

ORDINANCES PREVIOUSLY INTRODUCED:

ORD. 30-24 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA ANNEXING CERTAIN TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA, PLACING THE SAME WITHIN THE CORPORATE BOUNDARIES THEREOF, AND MAKING THE SAME A PART OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA. (Annexation Area No. 2 – Portions of Heron Pointe Neighborhood)
A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Powell to Adopt.

Max Adams is Attorney with Barnes & Thornburg LLP that is assisting the Administration with these annexations. The Heron Pointe annexation is up for adoption tonight and has been discussed on several occasions at several previous meetings. He is willing to answer any questions. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

ORD. 3-25 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF MUNCIE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING ORDINANCE FROM THE R-4 RESIDENCE ZONE TO THE BC COMMUNITY BUSINESS ZONE ON PREMISES LOCATED AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF THE INTERSECTION OF W. MEMORIAL DR. AND S. SAMPSON AVE., MUNCIE, INDIANA.

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Garrett to Adopt.

Brian Allardt, real estate salesperson, here representing the seller and buyer, is happy to answer any questions. This is a commercial property located in a residential zone on 12th Street across from a convenience store. The buyer wants to convert it into residential on the top and potentially commercial on the bottom. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

ORD. 6-25 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 77 (PARKING REGULATIONS) OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE CODE OF ORDINANCES (BURRIS LABORATORY SCHOOL PARKING).

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Garrett to Adopt. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

NEW ORDINANCES:

ORD. 7-25 AN ORDINANCE FOR TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS (POLICE/FIRE)

A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Green to Introduce.

President Mason stated this ordinance seeks to transfer \$526,0072.77 from the Opioid Distribution Fund. Questions called. An all-in-favor showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. INTRODUCED.

ORD. 8-25 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF MUNCIE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING ORDINANCE FROM THE R-4 RESIDENCE ZONE TO THE BV VARIETY BUSINESS ZONE ON PREMISES LOCATED AT 2810 W. ETHEL AVE., MUNCIE, IN 47304.

A motion was made by Garrett and seconded by Selvey to Introduce.

Michael Foley, Dennis Wenger Abrell at 324 W. Jackson, here on behalf of the petitioner, explained how this is a petition to rezone a property just off the Tillotson corridor north of Payless supermarket. They received a favorable vote and it has been commercial since 1966 when it was built. They are just trying to get that classification to match the use and he is willing to answer any questions.

Councilperson Gullion confirmed it is currently zoned all Business. Foley replied yes, it is small offices with 9 units in the L-shaped building. She just confirms, again, there is no Residential. Foley replied no.

Councilperson Garrett believes this is a very good zoning change, especially for this parcel and the businesses that are in and have been there. This probably should have been done a while ago so reiterates the belief of this being their due diligence in good zoning. Questions called. An all-in-favor vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. INTRODUCED.

ORD. 9-25 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF MUNCIE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING ORDINANCE FROM THE BV VARIETY BUSINESS ZONE TO THE R-3 RESIDENCE ZONE ON PREMISES LOCATED AT 2524 S. MACEDONIA AVE., MUNCIE, IN 47302.

A motion was made by Basham and seconded by Garrett to Introduce.

President Mason stated this change in zoning would be to reflect its current residential use after its split for a parcel for commercial use.

A gentlemen that did not state his name for the record explains is like a hardship. The people looking to purchase have a loan for it but it is an FHA loan with a deadline of 2 weeks to close. Ultimately, they cannot buy the house unless it is zoned Residential. With the FHA, it can't be Variety Commercial. The people have worked really hard on this because they're trying to close it and have already had the house inspected. Additionally, the date that they're wanting to get the appraisal is on the 5th so ultimately, they'll have to this closed within 2 weeks or will have to start the whole loan process over again.

Councilperson Selvey questioned legal about suspending the rules. Council Attorney Dan Gibson explained that the Council would first need to vote on the introduction, then someone would need to make a motion to suspend the rules and the vote would have to be unanimous (to adopt an ordinance on the first reading), then they would have to do another motion to adopt.

Councilperson Garrett thinks suspending the rules is a great idea. He wanted to add that with the FHA loan this is going to have already passed all sub-standing building laws under ordinance. As they think to suspend, he reminds them this has already succeeded and what they would consider when looking at for someone to move into the property has been decided leading them to approve living standards.

Selvey asked about the quality of the property and what can be shared with her before she considers her vote to suspend the rules. He replied it had always been a house but the house was acquired through the purchase of the commercial property. The entire house was remodeled and they now want to sell it alone but through the FHA the interested buyers cannot move forward unless it were a business due to the zoning. However, someone has always lived there in the house. Selvey asks if this was his first remodel. The unnamed gentleman replied no and has been doing this his entire life. Selvey then asked if he has ever been cited by the Building Commissioner or the City of Muncie on work he has completed. He replied no.

President Mason made note that the Planning Commission has favorably recommended this zoning change by an 8-0 vote. Questions called. An all-in-favor vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. INTRODUCED.

5-MINUTE RECESS

A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Gullion to Suspend the Rules to consider adoption. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. RULES SUSPENDED. A motion was made by Basham and seconded by Garrett to Adopt. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

ORD. 10-25 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF MUNCIE COMPREHENSIVE ZONING ORDINANCE FROM THE R-3 RESIDENCE ZONE TO THE BV VARIETY BUSINESS ZONE ON PREMISES LOCATED AT 3700 BLK E. CENTENNIAL AVE., AND LOT 2 IN THE NANNIE HAVEN SUBDIVISION, MUNCIE, IN 47303.

A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Powell to Introduce.

Kathy Vannice, Ashton Land Surveyors, representing Donna Drake and Drake Properties, explains they are bringing this before Council to change it from a R-3 Residence Zone to a BV or Variety Business. This property is part of multiple properties that Drake Properties have purchased over the years. She holds up some photos of some of the houses that they have purchased, rehabbed and placed back onto the tax records of Delaware County which as of 2024 amounts to an increase of \$5 million. This property in particular when purchased housed a barn in deplorable condition but have recited and refurbished it. As it was mentioned, it is sitting at an R-3 Zone and they do have a right to have it without the house because of a variance. However, usage is the problem and it cannot be used. She is here asking for a rezone to BV so that under Section 16 it can be used as storage for building materials. This is not a spot rezone. The east adjoiner is of the same zoning and the barn right now is sitting completely empty and completely rehabbed. They also plan to ask for a variance for the corridor standards because the building sits further back and is not going to be used for anything other than temporary storage for incoming building materials and are secured until being taken to the rehab site. President Mason confirms this received a favorable recommendation from the Planning Commission. Vannice apologizes for forgetting to mention that but yes.

Councilperson Selvey recalls being a previous critic for that piece of property but later went out and surveyed it herself. She likes all the improvements they've made and you really have to be there to see the consideration and amount of money they put into making sure they are within all the requirements being asked of them. She is very happy with the result and notes going from one end of perspective to the other.

Councilperson Basham adds that he, too, went out to see it and they've completely rehabbed the property so it is now amenable to its neighbor. He is aware they have worked very hard satisfy that neighbor and make him happy. Vannice agrees and mentions a light on the south end of the building that he once complained about has since been disabled so there is no electricity running to it leaving it unable to shine in on the backside. Basham comments the privacy fence is above beyond. The rest of Council agrees. Vannice points out the new fencing and gravel so there is no chance for anybody to cross through the backyard.

Selvey wants to know the timeline in case she decides to make a motion to suspend the rules. Vannice wasn't going to push her luck but wanted to ask if they would consider doing so. She also refers to the currently tabled ord. 27-24 being the one that Council was so critical of so if they pass this then there would be no need to consider taking further action the tabled ordinance. Questions called. An all-in-favor vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. INTRODUCED.

A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Mason to suspend the rules to consider adoption. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. RULES SUSPENDED. A motion was made by Basham and seconded by Selvey to Adopt. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

ORD. 11-25 AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE MAXIMUM SALARIES OF EACH AND EVERY MEMBER OF THE MUNCIE POLICE DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA, FOR THE YEAR 2025.

A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Powell to Introduce.

Matt Wagley, Deputy Controller, alongside Craig Wright, Controller, expressed this being the ordinance fixing the salaries for Muncie Police Department for 2025 and goes along with the consideration of the contract in resolution 7-25.

President Mason clarifies that the Chief and Deputy Chief salaries have changed along with other officers. Councilperson Gullion refers to section where it states the raises will take effect on January 5, 2024 and assumes that is a typo. Wright replied yes and it would be January 1, 2025. Council Attorney Dan Gibson comments they would have to make that amendment before adopting.

Chris Deegan, Deputy Police Chief, is here to answer any questions about salaries the Council may have. President Mason refers to the increase in Deputy Chief and Chief compensations in a change from a stated annual salary to a stated bi-weekly pay. Deegan explains in years past they have had annual salaries for everybody across the board but made the decision to switch to bi-weekly salaries as it is what all the civilian salaries are so just trying to fall in line with that. The year 2027 will also be a year where there will be 27 pays and not 26 so they are looking to get ahead there. The contract was negotiated for 5% so they calculated that for every annual salary from the previous ordinance and broke it down in a bi-weekly salary which is what is being presented tonight.

Councilperson Selvey references both the Chief and Deputy Chief compensations both increase and if they could tell the public by how much. Deegan replied 5%, same as the rest of the Department.

Councilperson Gullion asks if that 5% includes benefits or gear, etc. Deegan states those specifics are more in line with the contract part of it while this just deals with the salaries. All the benefits carved out for insurance and retirement is all part of the contract coming before the Council later in the evening.

Councilperson Powell asks the Controller if these increases will be financed through the opioid settlement money. Wright states yes and explains that was just introduced with ordinance 7-25. Powell confirms those are the unrestricted funds. Wright answered yes. Powell wonders if this will exhaust those funds and Wright said yes, it will for this year. Selvey asks if there is a time limit on when those funds have to be used. Wright answered no.

Audie Barber thinks the opioid funds are going to run out but agrees with everybody making as much money as they possibly can. Pay them as much as we can afford. However, he is afraid of Council adopting these raises and contracts. They received 10% raise alst year and are getting a 5% raise this year. By all means, he wishes for them to get a 50% raise... but if we don't have the money to pay our bills that means we are going to

raise taxes. About a year and a half ago he mentioned something about a LIT tax and claims he isn't very bright but can see that LIT tax coming and it is coming quick. Some people already know what he is talking about. They're going to force the Council to adopt it and then going to hold it over their heads that they voted and approved to give these raises when we don't have the money. Then, turn right around and raise the LIT tax and end up saying "there you go." Barber claims his LIT tax runs him about \$40 a week on his paycheck. It is comparable to his own sewage bill which went from \$23 to \$42. Taxes are being raised and these people can't afford them with minimum wage jobs. Every time you raise taxes it's \$20 here and \$20 there so these people are not going to be able to afford these tax raises. Let's live in our means! If you have a gas bill at your house and can't afford to pay it, quit spending until you get the money. We have to stop the spending or we are going to run out the rest of the few people we have left in this town because taxes are going to be too high. He just doesn't understand it. He likes the money he earns and being able to spend money on what he wants but they're taking it out faster than he can make it... and he makes good money while half these people make about ¼ of that and can't afford it. The City Departments will love the Council for approving these big raises but they can't do it with the tax break and tax money coming in. This will force the LIT tax and that is what is going to happen. Mark his words as he said it a year and a half ago and is saying it again today. Get ready because it is coming.

Councilperson Green mentions the funds being used and dealt out of the opioid settlement. These individuals in emergency services are the very ones that deal with this on a day-to-day basis and should receive this for what they are doing. He has no problem with allowing this to go through and thinks it should because that is part of their job. It has been extended and the funds have been set aside. The state came in and now they should be able to provide them.

Audie Barber, again, claims giving them the money is fine but questions if they think they'll be back and ask for a 5% reduction when the money is gone and they are unable to pay the difference. Will they ask for a reduction or come up with that money somewhere else? The opioid money is not going to last very long so they will have to come up with another solution. Powell tells Barber that, from her understanding via an email from Mayor Ridenour, the opioid settlement money is not going to be used next year and is an 18-year process so they will have more money to spend on other endeavors. Barber asks how much. Powell informs it differs every year, unrestricted and restricted abatement funds, and from what Mayor Ridenour has said we haven't spent any yet. And, regarding his comments on the LIT, the first she has heard about it is earlier this week in another email from Mayor Ridenour so she believes it is in the beginning discussions. She confirms there have been no discussions as of yet but that is a conversation Barber will have to have with Mayor Ridenour. Barber promises it is coming. Questions called. An all-in-favor vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. INTRODUCED.

ORD. 12-25 AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE MAXIMUM SALARIES OF EACH AND EVERY MEMBER OF THE MUNCIE FIRE DEPARTMENT OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA, FOR THE YEAR 2025.

A motion was made by Selvey and seconded by Powell to Introduce.

Craig Wright, Controller, explains this is the same as the previous ordinance in fixing the salaries for the year 2025 only this one being specific to the Fire Department – it is the same 5%. Chief Burford is here to answer any questions. President Mason questions the total amount of the opioid settlement. Powell insists that being a question for Mayor Ridenour or the Controller. Wright states as of right now, the unrestricted account is \$526,072.77 and there's a total of \$1,664,523.28 which includes the restricted account. Councilperson Gullion confirms the restricted is the \$1.138 so is different. Barber questions if that is the total which Gullion responds no, just what we have right now. Powell adds that is an accumulation of 4 years.

Powell refers to their Council admin conversation in December when they talked to Mayor Ridenour about a different use for the opioid settlement monies that was originally earmarked for a Community Center in Heekin Park but has been shifted to go toward this use. She just wants to make sure that there's funding for that Community Center in Heekin Park so they aren't robbing Peter to pay Paul. Mayor Ridenour explains it was decided it was important for Public Safety to get the increases and there is still plenty of funds primarily through EDIT believed to be available for that. Councilperson McIntosh reiterates for clarification. Mayor Ridenour states

yes, what the City is putting in, those funds are available through EDIT. McIntosh make sure the plans are ongoing and the Center is still going to happen. Mayor Ridenour says yes, absolutely, they are still working on it.

Audie Barber tells the Council they just spent \$500,000-some out of this \$1.4 million (referencing ordinance 7-25) but AFSCME still doesn't have their contract which is a problem. He asks the Council to table this and show strength in numbers and to fellow AFSCME workers. They didn't lay down due to not having a contract and still got up and came out to clear the snow-covered roads this past winter season. They are only going to get a 3% raise, possibly 2%, because they were asked to give up the "me too" clause. He doesn't know if they are putting the cart before the horse or not but they're giving these raises on the contracts but haven't even voted on them yet. He doesn't know the order of that or how that works but maybe they should do the contracts first and then the raises. Council Attorney Dan Gibson clarifies that these ordinances being discussed now to change the salary are for introduction and won't be adopted until next month. Both Police and Fire agreements are on the agenda tonight for adoption. Mayor Ridenour assures the Council is well-aware of this but wants to mention for the public that the AFSCME agreement has been approved. It went to their membership and the membership voted for it and informed the Administration just today that they should have the signed agreement from AFSCME tomorrow.

Wayne Scaife mentions getting a raise last year and questions that the was money set aside for the Community Center (which for years he has been advocating for) is going to be done away with and the Council is just okay with it. Numerous councilmembers mutter no. Scaife continues it will never happen if it gets put on the backburner again but now, they plan to use this money so the Center isn't going to happen. Numerous councilmembers mutter that not being the case here. Scaife states it has been going on since the McShurley Administration so the money is there. McIntosh insists the Mayor just said he was going to continue efforts. Powell adds with EDIT dollars. Scaife tells the Council to come on... Keep that money for the Center and use that EDIT money for this. Numerous councilmembers express that being a decision made solely by the Mayor. Scaife argues the Council are the ones to vote and ultimately decide, though. Gullion explains they just introduced the fund transfer tonight and haven't taken any additional action on it yet. Scaife is just saying going to happen and they know it. It's going to happen.

Matt Wagley, Deputy Controller, mentions that the raises with backpay for AFSCME will hit this upcoming pay on Friday. The entire Council nod their heads as they are delighted to hear that. Questions called. An all-in-favor vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. INTRODUCED.

RESOLUTIONS:

RES. 3-25 A RESOLUTION OF APPROVAL FOR THE 2024 CHANGES TO THE OFFICIAL ZONE MAPS FOR THE CITY OF MUNCIE.

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Garrett to Adopt.

President Mason summarizes this will approve changes to the zoning map to reflect zoning amendments that have previously been adopted by Council. Kylene Swackhamer, Planning Commission, is here for the introduction. All the 2024 zone changes that came before them and were approved have been incorporated into the official City of Muncie maps and updated on GIS mapping systems. There was a total of 6 so the Council should have received the compiled list of that and she is here for any questions. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

RES. 4-25 A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE AFFIRMING MUNCIE AS AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY FOR ALL RESIDENTS.

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Garrett to Adopt.

Charlize Jamison states for the last several years Muncie, Indiana has wanted people to come and make our city their home, even compensating or offering some of them financially to do so. We are actively acquiring and building housing that people of all income levels can live in and afford. Good things. We have spent millions of dollars making our cities infrastructure more accessible to those with disabilities, such as sidewalks and curb cuts.

We have a history of being a welcoming community. The City Administration, this one and in previous years, have supported events such as Pride events and transgender awareness events as well as supporting other important causes throughout the year. Yet today we are experiencing a concerted effort throughout our country and our state to whitewash and wipe away any semblance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Resolution 4-25 makes a strong statement in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion which is being said instead of DEI. We need to say the words, “diversity, equity, and inclusion” because with DEI, there are those who would turn that into an ugly slur and it's anything but. It's an important cornerstone for our city's future. If we want people to come here and live, which we do, we need to make this a strong, welcoming, inclusive community for everyone. Shirley Chisholm once said, “if they don't offer you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” Let's make sure the City of Muncie always has plenty of chairs and if we don't then let's build a bigger table.

Councilperson Selvey wishes to share her experience being immigrant and not being born in this country. She came to Muncie and became the person she is now because of every person that has since crossed her path. She looks throughout the auditorium and sees Dr. Whitaker who was one of her supervisors at Southside Middle School. A lot of people in Muncie have helped her through when she was in college and waiting tables to get her education. Then she made the decision to run for Council and had many people supporting her. People like her can come to this county and work hard if given the opportunity and give back. She doesn't believe there are many people in Muncie that could say she doesn't work hard and fight for the people here. There are more people like her that want to be included so open your hearts and ask “What would Jesus do?” She thanks everyone that has believed in her and given her opportunities. This is a no-brainer for Muncie.

Councilperson Garrett wishes to add the fact we are all allowed to think and believe in what we think we need to believe in and that is why that American flag flies. It is what separates us from every other country in the world. He lives by a quote, “Community only grows when you plant a tree with shade you will never enjoy.” Let's all be good stewards and plant trees. Even if we are not going to enjoy the shade under that tree, someone else will. He believes it is what we are here for and wants his kids to plant trees that other people can have shade for.

Councilperson McIntosh thanks Councilperson Gullion for helping write this resolution in the way he wanted it to be expressed. As he was the sponsoring councilperson, he knows the struggle he had to endure growing up in this city. It was tough but he was well-loved. To be the first African American President of United Auto Workers, Local #287, and have President Obama's campaign team ask him to introduce him when he was speaking here in 2008 lets him know that not only him but people like him can have those opportunities.

Councilperson Powell states as an occupational therapist she deals with people with physical disabilities and kids that are on the spectrum. It is about those kids too. She wants to make sure that all her students and people she has touched as far as an occupational therapist to help make their lives better that they have that opportunity. This is a lot broader than what they've been told. Skills for the job of living. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

RES. 5-25 A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE TO ENCOURAGE RELIEF, PROMOTION, AND OR COMMUNICATION FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE CITY OF MUNCIE.

A motion was made by Basham and seconded by Garrett to Adopt.

Julie Snider, AP Government Teacher at Central High School, has a civic engagement project class requirement where students have to attend Muncie City Council meetings in the fall but actually have to take part in the spring. This is this year's group presenting the resolution they drafted. They have all done a great job. She names all of her students: Isobel Quirk, Aaron Coggeshall, Ethan Klinger, Emma Judge, Isaiah Voss, Chet Clark, Sadie Hanna, Ian McDaniel, and Jacob Collins.

Isobel Quirk states when their class was presented with this project, they knew they wanted to create a resolution that strengthened our community. They saw a need to shine a light on the small businesses here in Muncie and wanted to come up with ways to better their promotion. Each member of the class read aloud a section of the resolution. Quirk reads, “A resolution of the City of Muncie to encourage relief, promotion, and/or communication for small businesses in the City of Muncie.” Coggeshall reads, “Muncie is a city that thrives when

connected with small businesses, however, that connection between small businesses and the community has been lackluster within the past decades. The introduction of big chains has been overshadowing, and small businesses have not been given opportunities to connect with the city better.” Klinger reads, “Providing more opportunities for smaller businesses to apply for tax abatements could relieve and support them. In the downtown district, outside of periodic events, the foot traffic is lacking. For example, people attend weekly events in the city like First Thursdays and Farmers Market. However, these events tend to see the same people week after week, and if we expand promotional opportunities for small businesses and events, we could attract new, recurring shoppers.” Judge reads, “Attracting more students to downtown could also see an increase in attendance, which can be accomplished by giving discounts to student IDs. Presently there is no committee for collaboration between the City and small businesses, leading to underrepresentation. A proposed Committee for Small Business could include a collection of members from the Muncie/Delaware Chamber of Commerce, Muncie/Delaware Black Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development, ECI Small Business Development, and small business owners from the community which could work as a middleman and inhibit a strong connection between small businesses in Muncie and the City.” Voss reads, “Small businesses employ 46% of the workforce in the USA and have traded 55% of net jobs according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. According to the Indiana Small Business Administration, small businesses saw a net decrease in 24,451 jobs last year in Indiana.” Clark reads, “The US Bureau of Labor statistics found that 20% of new businesses fail in the first 2 year and 45% in the first 5 years, mainly due to cash flow problems. In a survey conducted by the 2025 Muncie Central AP government class with over 115 responses from members of our community, the main factor that would cause more people to shop locally would be the implementation of “discount days” where shops would all give out sales on the same day. Hanna reads “Among all survey responses, one of the largest agreed-upon issues regarding local business was that people tend to forget about small businesses as well as the problem of convenience. This could partially be due to the lack of advertising and accessibility for these businesses. Our goal is to provide better opportunities for these businesses to get their name out there at an increased amount, ultimately resulting in more cash flow for them to work with.” McDaniel reads “Another cause of this in downtown Muncie is the perception of lack of parking space. This perception of lack of parking creates hindrances to those who want to do Downtown, leading them to not even see these small businesses because of the location. A third complaint from the survey is the short or inconsistent hours. Many people claim that local stores close too early, meaning they can’t make it during the later hours.” Quirk reads “The Common Council of the City of Muncie supports the establishment of a collection of members from the Muncie/Delaware Chamber of Commerce, Muncie/Delaware Black Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development, ECI Small Business Development, and small business owners from the community.” Coggeshall reads “The Common Council of the City of Muncie supports an expansion of promotion for local businesses and will encourage a package aid for Small Businesses in Muncie. These benefits could include: discount days, increased promotion of free public parking and more visibility of potential tax abatement opportunities.” Quirk asks if the Council has any questions.

Councilperson Basham does and wants to know more about the survey they conducted. How many people did the survey go out to and what was their rate of response? Quirk replied they received around 115 responses and the survey was posted on social media platforms and Mrs. Snider posted it on her Facebook. Basham asks if it is known if those people were mostly students, community leaders, etc. Quirk informs it was a wide-range of ages (some were retired, others were in their 40’s, 30’s, and some high-school-aged kids as well).

Councilperson Garrett asks what prompted them to come up with this. He remembers Mrs. Snider’s high-school government class and praises how phenomenal she is at her job. He asks what prompted them to come up with this because he has been on Council for a while and this is probably the best one yet from Mrs. Snider’s students. This is one he thinks will impact the most and they can jump on and get something done with. The way they’ve said there isn’t enough days and they don’t do enough discounts per day really hits home because that is something that could actually be done. When they came together, what was the idea? Quirk relays they had a lot of options to begin with but narrowed it down to this topic because they actually wanted to do something that would influence the community. They tried to think about problems they felt Muncie faced and felt like the smaller businesses here are somewhat disconnected from bigger business-type areas located on McGalliard, for example.

They felt the Downtown area was a completely separate part of Muncie and they wanted to connect them so those smaller businesses in Downtown could have just as much of an opportunity as those bigger businesses located on Tillotson and McGalliard.

Councilperson Selvey refers to the surveyed individuals and is curious if any of them were current business owners to see what is working for them and what their needs are. Quirk responds no, they didn't ask any current business owners.

Councilperson Gullion advises she was lucky enough to be the one who got to work with the class this year and it was a great. They actually wrote this. Gullion did a little editing and provided some ideas here and there but the students came up with all the ideas on their own in terms of how to work with small businesses. Mrs. Snider apologizes for forgetting to thank her. Gullion maintains how much fun she had.

Selvey questions if the results of the survey are going to be published somewhere, like the school's website? Quirk informs they have all the results so could definitely do that. They can even send them to Council via email. Selvey appreciates that.

Garrett advises with experience it gets easier to publicly speak but all the students spoke great and upfront tonight. The drew everyone in. Referring to Mrs. Snider, this is what you get when you have a teacher in a classroom that allows open-minded thinking. One that allows these kids to think for themselves. When kids are taught but not shoved one way. That is what Mrs. Snider does. She does a great job of allowing people to make up their own minds to bring things like this to light. It is a collective group of kids that brought this idea forward. He thanks them and Mrs. Snider for another great class and another great year. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

RES. 6-25 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE TRANSFERRING FUNDS WITHIN THE CITY OF MUNCIE COMMON COUNCIL BUDGET.

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Garrett to Adopt.

Councilperson Powell explains the budget was set before the Ethics Commission was set up and in order to live stream those meetings, which Council feels is very important, some funds were needed to be able to do that. Council Attorney Dan Gibson has graciously agreed to pay for that out of some of his fees so provides thanks for that. His commitment to making sure there is that level of transparency and effort so that people are able to take in that meeting is wonderful. She just wanted to explain why they are transferring those funds. It just moves them from Attorney Fees to Other Services & Charges for the livestream meetings of the Ethics Commission. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

RES. 7-25 A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA APPROVING THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE GREGG WINTERS MEMORIAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE LODGE #87.

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Selvey to Adopt.

Brandon Qualls, President of the Gregg Winters Memorial Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #87, Muncie, appreciates the time to speak tonight. This contract is an attempt to try and move the Muncie Police Department into being competitive with other agencies in the state and support for this contract is appreciated. Over the decades (long-term), municipalities have historically been able to underpay their law enforcement all across the country because there was a line of civilians lined up down the street and around the block willing to come and answer the call and serve their community. Unfortunately, all across the country that is not the case anymore. Departments all over the country are struggling to properly staff their departments in order to serve their community. New officers are actually a rare thing. Within the last several years agencies are actively recruiting from other agencies to fill the vacancies within their own department with lateral transfers. When Qualls was hired in 2012 there was well over 100 applicants trying to be hired by the Muncie Police Department. MPD would complete one hiring process a year and at the conclusion had dozens of individuals on a hiring list just waiting for an opening. Now the department runs a hiring process whenever they can get applicants that apply. The last process which started just last month saw 3 individuals. Historically, once background investigations are

completed and testing for PERF such as medical and psychological testing, they will be lucky to have one left. He can say, without hesitation, that if it were not for the numerous lateral hires made over the last several years that we would be in a staffing crisis. We would have to resort to restricting calls for service as many other agencies have had to do across the state and country. This is obviously not the level of service we want to provide. MPD has completely changed how applicants submit their applications now making it much easier. The Mayor has offered lateral transfer bonuses to try and entice lateral officers to make the move. A company was brought in and hired to utilize advertising and QR codes to try and recruit. Officers are attending job fairs in town and advertising as well. Since January 1, 2025, Muncie Police Department has already had 5 officers leave. There was just one time and for a very short amount of time we were at full staffing. We have not been able to get to full staffing for years and most of that time we've had numerous openings that cannot be filled. Most of Council has had discussions with Qualls about this in the past but he would like to share some statistics. Having looked at the certified salary list from 2023, 2024 and 2025 and just to be clear this list only includes departments that are under the 77 Pension Fund. It does not include Sheriff's Departments or sometimes college departments or other small departments that are not on that pension fund and instead on a different fund. Depending on which stats you look at, Muncie is around the 12th largest city in Indiana by population. In 2023 the Muncie Police Department was 102nd and pay. In 2024, even with a 10% raise, we were 98th in pay. In 2025, assuming the 5% is approved, we will drop 5 spots to 103rd in pay. Some of these agencies that are above us are small departments such as Hartford City with a base salary this year of \$70,000. Some of the agencies that are making considerably more money than Muncie are towns he has never even heard of nor has any sort of idea where they're located within the state. These agencies take a fraction of the calls that the Muncie Police Department responds to. To date, MPD has already responded to over 7,000 calls for service this year. It is not unusual on a busy 12-hour shift for the shift to take over 100 calls for service. Due to the staffing issue, most shifts are working at minimum staffing numbers, which is 10 officers, and it doesn't take too many serious calls to tie those officers up and for other calls for service come in be stuck waiting. The raises proposed for 2026 will move MPD closer to being competitive but help from the Council is still needed. Recently, New Castle Police signed a new contract for their department and LIT was increased. Their salary will be \$68,269 in 2026 and \$74,413 in 2027. We cannot afford to not be competitive with those kinds of agencies that are so close and take a fraction of the calls. A few months ago, Qualls conducted a survey on the department and one of the questions was "has another agency actively recruited you in the last 12 months?" and 69% of the officers said yes. Qualls can say, personally, that he has had 3 agencies actively recruit him in the last 12 months. Here is a short explanation for anyone who isn't sure of how the 77 Pension Fund works; Qualls has been with the MPD for almost 13 years. If he goes to another agency under the 77 Pension Fund then he takes his service time with him. That means if he left today, he could go to another agency and make considerably more money, work for 7 more years to lock in his 20-year pension and draw his pension at that rate. It makes it pretty easy to see why we are having trouble keeping officers when they are thinking about themselves, their family and the long-term financial planning. We have to do better in order to be competitive with these other agencies. He knows a large number of officers on MPD are waiting and watching to see what happens before they make a decision. If something doesn't change, he fears there will be a large number of officers leave. He asks for Council support and help in getting the department to where they are needed to be. He appreciates the time and will stand for any questions.

Councilperson Garrett brings up the lateral transfers and claims that is like a double-edge sword because they are actively seeking us as hard as we are them. Qualls replies yes, we are taking on laterals but also losing officers to other departments. He has been told by other FOP Presidents and Presidents of other agencies that they love getting people from Muncie because they are a much smaller town with less call volume. They know when they get a Muncie officer that they are experienced, have seen a lot things and don't have to spend a lot of time getting them up to speed when hiring them on. Garrett is glad he brought that up. One of our 2-year officers going somewhere else means we are losing valuable experience given we have already had around 7,000 call runs for this year. Qualls explains a lot of the laterals we have gotten (not all but a lot) are from smaller agencies but have also lost quite a few laterals by either going back to their agency after big pay raises came through or lateraled to yet another agency so it is hard to even been able to keep the laterals brought on. The Ball State Internship Program has been implemented and that has been very beneficial but even those do not stay. They end up graduating and

going to another department and we are wasting money and time training them. It leaves the worry of us turning into a training department where officers just come to get good training and leave to go to another agency.

Councilperson Dishman questions how many police officers we lost this year. Qualls states 5 officers have left since January 1 that haven't been replaced and believes we are down 7 or 8 right now. Dishman asks if that is due to them not making enough money. Qualls insists he cannot speak for all of them but part of the survey asked officers if they were to leave then what would be the reason. Overwhelmingly, the answer was money but second highest was call volume. If you could go to another agency, get paid considerably more and take considerably less calls, it makes sense. Dishman then asks if the officers were pleased with the contract. Qualls replied yes, obviously they're hopeful for 2026 because even with the 10% last year and the 5% this year we have dropped 5 more positions. There are 100 agencies making more money than us with the call volume that we have and that's just in the 77 Fund. We would be much, much lower if they were to consider all the Sheriff's Departments and factored in all those salaries. The Delaware County Sheriff's Department and Ball State Police Department are right behind the Muncie Police Department right now in salary.

Councilperson Selvey mentions the LIT being brought up so wants to talk about the elephant in the room. She asks him to explain for the public and hear it from his perspective the percentage and if it is going to be the same for everybody? Because when he mentioned people make "X" and "Y" it doesn't really help so what is the percentage of their income tax? Could he provide examples and what would it be dollarwise per week or per month. Qualls doesn't have those numbers with him because he wasn't expecting to talk about that tonight. Selvey comments it has been discussed though. Qualls is aware but just doesn't have those with him and doesn't want to speak and be incorrect about it. But can say it's percentage-based based on your income. A lot of the counties around us have a higher rate already. He believes Henry County just raised theirs to just over 2% with a new contract they did with their department and that is why they were able to give them the raises they needed. We lost one officer to New Castle before that even happened because he knew it was coming even after trying to convince him to stay. Qualls spoke with him and knows Deputy Chief Deegan spoke with him trying to convince him to stay but he told them, "No this is happening. I'm going to make way more money and take considerably less calls for service."

Selvey wants to know how is MPD is going to inform the public, not just the Council, about the percentage because the blame will fall on all 9 councilmembers. They understand the needs of MPD safety because it is very important and not cheap to keep people safe. If she were to be asked if they were willing to pay 'X' much more percentage for better public service then she would say yes. What is the outreach going to be toward the community? How are they going to let them know? Qualls expressed that obviously working with Council and having public discussions once they have the numbers prepared. He apologizes for not having the numbers tonight but obviously plans to be open and honest and talk about what the issues are (much like what he did tonight). To talk about the about the numbers and have the chance for a public discussion on it and share that information with the general public as to why it's needed and what the numbers actually are. Selvey confirms MPD plans to do that through Council. Qualls responds no, once that process get started and as the FOP Representative would have to clear it with the Executive Board but will probably put some statistics and numbers up on the Facebook page so it is shareable so that the information could be disseminated to more people than just the people that attend these meetings or watch the live-stream. Selvey was not trying to put him on the spot. Qualls understands.

Councilperson Powell deemed first and foremost that not one member on Council is not supportive of public safety. She recalls conversations with both Polcie and Fire about how supportive the Council actually is. They see Muncie has historically, over the past 5 or 6 and at least 7 years, become a training facility for other departments and is something they talked about pre-2019. This contract they are being asked to consider tonight with the Police Department is a 2-year contract. The first year is 5%. What about the second year if that doesn't happen? Qualls insists there is not a contract for 2026. If that does not happen then the contract will expire, per the language, on December 31, 2025. Powell verifies that means this could very well be a one-year contract if that doesn't happen. Qualls states that is correct. Powell then has a question for Mayor Ridenour or Controller Craig Wright. Governor Braun has been talking about property tax reform which could potentially cut property tax revenues by 15% to 20%. That is just one of the different things they are hearing and she knows it has gone

through several iterations. She questions if they have any projections on what Muncie is going to lose in property tax income in general. Mayor Ridenour knows what the original SB-1 stated but that was already adjusted down by the Senate and is in Conference Committee now so doesn't want to speculate on where it is at this point. He is pretty convinced something is going to happen. Powell asks he is convinced *what* is going to happen. Mayor Ridenour responds that there will be property tax reductions and therefore cities, towns, schools, counties, will all face possibly less revenue from that source. He insists he has not heard any of the discussions today but is aware there were several mayors there but does not know where it is at this point. He does, however, know it's in Conference Committee. Powell asks if we have property tax revenue losses then how are we going to address those? Mayor Ridenour believes they will all have to get together and figure out the best method. To speculate is probably not ideal as there are old Chinese proverbs that say "80% of what you worry about doesn't come to pass" so why don't we wait and see where they are. They're just now into the second third so let's let them get through the second third then we'll get into the final third of the Committee. But believe him when he says he talks with State Senators and State Representatives regularly and did just today stating his opinion. But he doesn't have a vote. Powell makes sure he understands why she has asked if we are going to be losing a significant portion of our property tax revenues why that would cause concern. Mayor Ridenour replied absolutely, which is why he recommended they would all get together and figure it out.

Councilperson Gullion adds the Mayor being right about it being in Committee right now but she does have some numbers and the original was starting off around \$2.4 million loss just in the first year. Mayor Ridenour confirms (and adds there is \$3.1 million for the County – Gullion comments they are just talking about the City since this is a City Council meeting and they are the City Council). That doesn't include schools, the library, etc. The amended version came down to \$250,000. We are talking somewhere between that for the general public to know what kind of numbers they mean. Mayor Ridenour mentions it is a lot of money and we will feel it if it is \$250,000 and will feel it a lot more if it is \$2.4 million. But they will work together and figure out the best route to go forward.

Audie Barber wants them to pay these officers as much as they can afford. The property tax reform was discussed which hasn't been done in the past 8 years so it could possibly happen but don't assume. He believes this contract the Council is getting ready to adopt as a resolution needs to be tied in with the raises because once this is accepted in as a resolution then per the language, they would have to approve the money to give the raise in the resolution that was just passed. Powell refers to FOP President Qualls just saying it is contentious on those increases. Barber understands that it is 5% this year but the Council will have to consider adopting the raises next month then they have already approved the contract consisting of said raises this month. They are voting on 2 different resolutions that should be put together. Powell understands what he is saying but this is retroactive. Qualls confirms. Barber claims if they pass the resolution containing the contract then MPD will automatically get their raises because they just voted on the first reading of the raises. Powell insists they have introduced the appropriation to cover the 5% raises for 2025 as well as the salary ordinance which will increase those salaries for 2025 and are now considering adoption of the contract which will, most certainly, increase the salaries 5% in 2025. Barber wishes them to take the 10% out for now. They voted to bring up the 5% raise but now are going to do this contract in a resolution that is forcing their hands to automatically give the 5% raise because the contract (which will be passed tonight) has the language specifying the 5% raise. Why do we have to have an ordinance to change it to give their 5% raise. Attorney Gibson intervenes because the law requires a change to the salary ordinance and ordinances have a second reading process. Barber thinks once they pass this contract that it automatically approves the raises. Attorney Gibson adds subject to the salary ordinance being increased and adopted. Barber thinks they could then just go back to the contract and say it was agreed to provide the increase. He is just afraid of taxes and thinks we are going to get taxed and lose more businesses, more people, etc. We can't afford to lose too many more people in this town because our taxbase is going down and wishes we could pay everyone in public safety \$100,000 a year. They deserve every penny they get but let's not put our necks on the chopping block because we don't have the money to spend. Let's take it from the EDIT Funds or funds that aren't being used on public services. Let's slow some of these projects down instead of wasting \$4.5 million a year on whatever we want.

Deputy Chief Chris Deegan has been involved in numerous contracts going back to 2015 as a negotiation member, as the President of FOP, and as a member of the Muncie City Police Administration. This is not something that should be taken lightly but there's appropriate public forums to have these hard discussions. That is what government exists for, as well as the MPD, City Council and this community. Mr. Barber said himself 3 or 4 meetings ago when Deegan was up presenting information that this was his platform to vent and appreciates all he has to say in his opinions tonight. The introduction, or the possible introduction, of anything tax related (the evil word in government taxes) leads to this forum existing so that we can talk about this. We have a staffing crisis at the Muncie Police Department which Deegan has personally been banging that drum for 10 years now. He just thinks it's good that we all come together and try to work as a community to figure out what this resolution is. We cannot, repeat cannot, be as large of community as we are and woefully underpay our public servants the way that we are. Referring to the comments made by Quall, just look at what we've done. We've increased the salaries, if approved, by 15% in 2 years. That's a home run 99% of the time but we are so far behind from transgressions of years past it is beyond pointing fingers and placing blame or whether we are a Democrat or a Republican. This community has the obligation to protect the people that protect it because of the workload they experience and deal with on a day-to-day basis. We have increased our EAP and Psychological Services Programs tenfold over the last 5 years to try to provide resources to the people that help this community. That is why these forums and meetings exist so that we can all talk about it and he thinks that if we get to the point where somebody introduces a piece of legislation it is an opportunity for everyone to talk about it. You don't have to like it. He doesn't want to pay any more taxes than he has to but who knows where we will end up. But this discussion has to be had. We've got to come together as a community and have these discussions because that is what this is for.

Sgt. Amy Kesler, MPD, wasn't going to speak and didn't tell any of her bosses she was going to because she didn't think they would have let her. She achieved her childhood dream to become a police officer with the City of Muncie Police Department in 2001. She remembers taking her test in a room filled with over 100 people trying for the same job. Over her years of service, she has seen how the public's view of cops has changed dramatically. The uniform she wears resembles the same uniform worn by men and women who have done horrible things to other humans. You can't turn on a television or scroll through an app on your phone without seeing an incident where an officer wearing this distinctive uniform, the same one she is wearing tonight, is fueling this issue. Even past members of her own department have aided in this perception. The reality is basically sometimes we feel hated and unwanted by our community. With all that said, she has recently found a beautiful and new motivation to keep going. For about the last 3 years she has been doing community engagement, officer wellness, and overseeing the MPD Social Work Program. She is a crisis intervention team coordinator and focuses on mental health issues and addiction in our community. Her team does homeless outreach, harm reduction, opioid outreach, among many other things. She will be ensuring that officers in Delaware County will get the best training available to deal with those in crisis. The Muncie Police Department is evolving. She attends neighborhood meetings, does talks in the community, and programming in our schools. She has learned that most people do not hate us and most people want to see us in their neighborhoods. People want to see police interacting with their children. People want to get to know us and they appreciate the sacrifices that we make. People need us to be transparent and educate them in what we do each day. People want to feel safe inside their homes, at the parks and events. They love for us to be present and to know that if something were to happen that we would be there to help them. She has found a new love for her profession and sees new culture in her department. She loves and respects her community and gives thanks to so many citizens for giving her this motivation. Our community was thirsting for the MPD as a department to be more transparent and visible. Due to the fact that every department in the U.S. is suffering from manpower issues, for years we were struggling to have enough just to do the basics. We had to concentrate on training policies and making ourselves better and even putting herself and her partner into the role they have today was a huge sacrifice. Her Administration supports this style of policing and is doing everything that they can to expand it. The men and women she work with are seeing our community in a new light. Officers who would normally shy away from public events are realizing how rewarding they are. She has seen some of the most amazing interactions between the men and women on MPD with our citizens. We need to see that not everyone hates us. The community needs to see that we are humans who

took this job to serve them. They need to see us interacting with citizens in a positive and kind way. We need to see that our citizens just want the quality of life that they deserve. Citizens say that they would love to see officers stop and play a quick game of basketball with the kids in the park and gets requests for officers to attend events and give talks. Community leaders support us and encourage us and there's so much more we all want to do but this takes funding, officers, and manpower. It breaks her heart when she has to tell people she can't come to their event because she doesn't have enough officers because she and her team have worked so hard and they just don't get it. They don't get that she can't pull people from the road and can't afford to pay them overtime. The days of 100 people applying for positions are over. The last hiring process she helped with she believes there were 10 and maybe 6 showed up and that was considered a lot. It takes funding to pay overtime which she has already said. It's simple. If you wanted to be a cop knowing what road you had ahead of you wouldn't you start by choosing the department that would pay you the most? Right now, that's not the Muncie Police Department. This will get worse if the funding decreases or even stays the same. She fears the future of the Social Work Program and the Community Engagement Division if the funding issues aren't considered. She fears for the officers that are working 12-hour shifts with sometimes 10 officers serving our entire community. Please consider sometimes that would only mean 5 cars. Sometimes there is an officer that can't be on their own yet and that happens quite often. She fears that training will become bare minimum as required as you might see in other police departments and can't imagine our citizens not financially supporting this positive movement that she sees happening between law enforcement and our community. She hopes by the time she leaves this career that the Muncie Police Department could have bettered their relationship with our community. She would like to have many more social workers and many more interactions with youth. Her and the MPD Chiefs would love to have 10 Community Engagement Officers. They would like to be able to have time to stop and play basketball with the kids but there just aren't enough people. We can't hire people because we're not paid enough and that's the bottom line. She would ask that in considering any issues with supporting their budget request, which to be honest she is clueless to; she hears what Council is saying but just knows how it makes the officers feel that it even has to be discussed that way. She listens to the community and knows this is what they want and what they support.

President Mason has witnessed the engagement that Sargeant Kelser as well as Officer Phillips do. It is very important to the communities to see officer engagement and applauds them for what they do.

Councilperson Dishman knows exactly what Sargeant Kelser is talking about when saying people have a different attitude about the police department. He recalls attending neighborhood events in the park at Morningside and the first thing he heard from a parent was "you better straighten up or I'm going to have that police officer take you to jail." He said to that mother she shouldn't tell that child that because if he needs help one day that is who he will need to go to. The Police Department was there because we had just gotten our brand-new squad cars back then and he was taking pictures of the kids in the squad cars. He would say to them as they were coming out that is the only time he wants to see them in the back of that police car. It was a real eventful Neighborhood Association gathering in the park. The Fire Department was there as well and the kids just love those firetrucks too. He recalls telling kids if they ever need help either go to a policeman or fireman and they will help you. We try to teach the parents not to tell their kids to think mean about police and that mother eventually understood that. Sargeant Kelser recalls that being the part of her speech she had to skip because of some of the stuff they have to go through with the public. They have set up booths and heard mothers, fathers siblings tell people that "we don't F with 12." It is heartbreaking. It is heartbreaking to have a mother tell you that they teach their children to fear police. This has to change and she thinks that her bosses have finally got enough people to somehow pull a few of them out but to be quite honest some days it is frustrating because they are trying so hard to get invited to things and she will call a supervisor on the road and ask to borrow an officer. The public gets sick of just seeing her and Officer Phillips and the two of them, being a white and black female, do not represent the entire Police Department. She still needs some guys there. That is the reality of it. She is happy and thankful with what they have but they need more. She does the officer wellness for the entire department and will have many people come into her office to talk to her in private. A lot of people in the world deal with trauma through alcohol and addiction but police doesn't have that choice or they automatically lose their job when that happens. But, at the same time, she works every day to help citizens on the street that are addicted and sometimes it causes confusion that they are sacrificing what they are

doing to help those but if it's one of her fellow coworkers they're blasted in the media, made fun of, or humiliated because of their trauma. Basically, they spend a lot of money on therapy. The hardest part is understanding that money is money but she knows what the citizens want and what they're telling her. This Council represents her citizens. If they can make it work through all these complicated things that Deputy Chief Deegan and Sgt. Qualls are talking about then make it work because we are making progress.

Brian Ashton, Muncie Police Department, wasn't planning to speak tonight but after hearing Sgt. Kesler just wanted to add a few extra points. He is the Training Director for Muncie Police and has been doing that for about 8 months now. He sees some of what she sees but at a different perspective. The bottom line is if we don't get adequate pay, we lose personnel (we've been talking about and beating that drum all night). Patrol cannot suffer those losses when we lose personnel so the places they do suffer, for example, is Community Engagement, Detectives, and Narcotics, which are all essential services for a robust police department. The Patrol Division is, of course, immediate response but they're not really the long-term solution in most cases as it is those other divisions that offer those things. Besides those things suffering, the other thing that suffers is training. Where Sgt. Kesler can speak to what our local community wants, he (as well as anybody in this room) can speak to what the nation wants which is better trained police officers. We've made strides in that direction. For example, we have added 10 hours of de-escalation training this year which is something that has been a nationwide push. It is invaluable. Also, a 4-hour CPR and Trauma response type training is done annually which is not a requirement but just things that have been added they now advocate for and strive for. MPD also is trying to put every officer on the department through CIT which is the Crisis Intervention Training that Sgt. Kesler mentioned being a coordinator for. All of those things take a lot of time and in doing all those things they detract from the manpower coverage on the road and we just can't do both. We have to have personnel and to have personnel we have to have adequate pay otherwise we cannot train them up to the standard not only required through state law but the standard MPD wants which is significantly higher than what the state law actually demands. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

RES. 8-25 A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA APPROVING THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE MUNCIE FIREFIGHTERS LOCAL #1348 I.A.F.F.-A.F.L./C.I.O.,C.I.C.

A motion was made by Powell and seconded by Gullion to Adopt.

Jason Chafin, President of Muncie Firefighters Local #1348, thanks the Administration, Finance Committee, and Councilperson Basham who sat in on all of the negotiation meetings. Everyone has worked together to find the monies to do what we can with what we have. Is it enough? No, it's not. The Fire Department deals with things much like the FOP. Members lost since January 1 amounts to 4, 3 of which were trained Paramedics. Those were big losses and if we continue to be a training ground we will continue to lose. The fire certified salaries are more exact than police because they don't have Sheriffs, other people or agencies, etc. Most Fire Departments are a PERF 77 Fund Fire Department which totals about 123 in the state of Indiana. In 2023, before the 10% raise received in 2024, we were number 88 out of 123. That 10% raise jumped us to number 64 but with the 5% this year we drop down to number 72. Why? Keep in mind this is March so we are already (somewhat) behind and know what everybody else has done because it took us a little bit longer to get to this point opposed to other cities in the state. 73 departments in the state of Indiana got 6% or more. 44 departments got over 10%. FOP President Qualls mentioned New Castle and Henry County passing a half a percent LIT to give all their City employees, Public Safety included, a 31% raise over 2 years. New Castle Fire Department now makes more money than the Muncie Fire Department and are now 7 spots ahead of us on the certified salary list. New Castle is only 8 miles away and take way less runs than we do. We took 17,800 calls last year, many calls have 1+ hour to consider medical transports to the hospital were needed, house fires, etc. These aren't 10-minute calls. They took 17,800 calls with a staff of 122 (fully staffed) but a majority of the time aren't fully staffed. That ratio, 17,800 calls with 122 people, puts us as the busiest Fire Department in the state of Indiana. There is no one that can beat us with that ratio. There are departments that take more calls than us but have 400 or 500 employees. Those cities include Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, South Bend, and Evansville, to name a few. Again, per capita we are the busiest

Department in the state of Indiana. Chafin provides thanks to everyone for what they have been able to do and we need to continue to keep working towards as a community to make sure that we keep our employees. They worked with the Administration last year and created an in-house version of the Certified Physical Agility testing. If we can get people to apply that live here in Muncie, they'll be less likely to leave. That is even with our pay being less. Reason being they are taking care of their family members and taking care of their community. Prior to 2024, for you to apply to a Fire Department anywhere in the state of Indiana you had to have a CPAT card (which stands for Certified Physical Agility Test). There are only a few places in Indiana where you can get one of those cards, Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Valparaiso. The first step in applying for MFD was to go get a CPAT card which are up to over \$200 apiece and had to take a day off work, drive to whatever city to pick up the card and then possess it. They started seeing that only the kids that could afford it and really wanted to be a firefighter would go out and get these \$200 cards and just apply everywhere. It was first come first serve. They agree to the first one to come in with a job offer but if something better comes along they will just lateral transfer right out. They were seeing that happen over and over and over again. One small step was purchasing the equipment, making room in their training facility and seeking approval from the state to be able to put on our own Physical Agility Test. We aren't passing out cards yet but have the ability to mimic that test so that every person that applies only for Muncie Fire Department can come and do that test for free right here in Muncie. They are hopeful that will help recruit more Muncie kids in the coming weeks. Their Fire Prevention Bureau goes out to the schools and does all that stuff to try and recruit as well as various activities in the community every day. The Career Center sends kids to look at their trucks and ambulances religiously. We are a training ground for Paramedics that go to IU LifeLine to get their ride time. We've recruited some Paramedics fresh out of school due to their partnership with IU LifeLine (which has also been referred to as Paramedics school). There are things we can do to try and help recruit locally but it is only going to be so much. We have Muncie kids that leave for Fishers and could never compete with Carmel/Fishers. We could keep passing taxes but ultimately, those communities just have things going there in which we do not in this generation of Muncie. One thing we can do is continue to work to get the pay as best as we can to where we aren't losing people. The last 2 employees that left MFD left for South Madison Fire territory which basically covers small Pendleton, Indiana and a couple smaller towns around them averaging about 3,000 calls a year yet beating us in pay by almost \$20,000. That is why this 5% and potentially 10% raise is actually dropping our level. There are dents in the road but still understand the community they work in and love the community they work in. Most of the firefighters don't want to work in any other community and will continue doing that work. He is willing to answer any questions.

Councilperson Powell recalls previous discussions with President Chafin and can say that not one person on Council doesn't support Public Safety. In reviewing the contract, she confirms it is a 2-year contract and the first year is 5%. Chafin states yes and explains the Firefighters contract is a little different compared to the FOP contract in a sense of if we don't pass any taxes and go into negotiations next year then they could look at the financial pictures and ask what could the City of Muncie afford. The Firefighters agreement is 2-years with 3% in 2026 with no tax changes and/or 10% with tax changes. Chafin then harkens back to the conversation a few minutes ago regarding Senate Bill 1 which could force tax changes on us, as we all know. We follow our lobbyists and not always are our lobbyists at the State House and PFFI State representatives on the same side as AIM (lobbyists for the cities) but on this issue they are on the same side. We want to make sure our counties and cities aren't drastically impacted by this potential legislation. We have got to keep an eye on that in the next couple months which could force our hands in some way. Luckily, we have been good stewards here in Muncie in the sense of taxes as we are the 69th lowest LIT tax city/county in the state. There are 92 counties and only 11 have a lower tax than we have. We haven't raised ours since 2015 taking effect in 2016 which is basically a decade now. Every other county around us has done it multiple times during that time frame. That is why every other county around us has much higher rates than we do. That benefits those people in those counties because a lot of them drive here to work so they're getting the best of both worlds because actually if you own property, it gets offset by a LIT tax. Those people that live in the counties surrounding us are getting a really good deal right now because they're paying lower property taxes and come to work here and pay a lower LIT tax. Obviously, those are discussions for days to come but he did want to share the few statistics he had.

Powell thanks him for almost overwhelming them with information and everything she has asked for he has provided. Gullion agrees. Chafin will keep doing his best at it.

Dishman asks, as he did with Police, if the Firefighters were happy with their contract. Chafin doesn't recall how the vote went exactly but knows it was pretty overwhelming when came time for ratification. Yes, they were happy with an asterisk he would say. They are hopeful for the 5% and 10% but when their buddies from other departments say they just received 31% or 30% like Bloomington leads them to second guess it. It is like Keeping Up with the Joneses almost. Dishman questions how many people the Fire Department has lost. Chafin states they have lost 4 since January 1 just off the top of his head but over the last few years it is well over 20 or 30. Some were, of course, retirements and losses but believes they hired 23 last year in one big recruitment class to try and get them back up to proper staffing and are getting ready to hire more to replace the 4 that just left. It is a never-ending battle. Dishman asks if they are below minimum staffing. Chafin explains minimum staffing is their daily contractual amount so they always have the minimum staffing. It is just when they lose the overall numbers, the Chiefs have to monitor the overtime budget. They'll save money on the line item that contains the salaries but eventually then Chief Burford will be back asking for more overtime from their salary line item if they run low because we're paying less salaries but more overtime. It's one of those balancing acts when we fall below our numbers. He refers to the training aspect and how we have people on our lists to hire. Assuming they still want the job, he believes the Fire Merit Commission will be hiring some candidates from that list soon. However, there is anywhere from 3 to 6 months' worth of training to be able to get them on the street. They experience that gap anytime they lose someone and go on to hire someone else in preparing them for their job. Dishman thanks him and President Qualls for their leadership and participation on the contracts.

Councilperson Selvey asks Chafin the same thing she asked Deputy Chief Deegan about the salaries and requests he send it to the Council. She wants to see comparisons between LIT taxes in other cities along with the increase. Chafin can provide those details tomorrow. She wants to see data, numbers, and charts and would appreciate if the MFD would put that information out there for the public on the website. She also recommends MPD and MFD to create some kind of brochure to pass out so when they are having these discussions the public is aware. Chafin agrees and informs that being something they done last time (previous term in which Powell and Dishman were councilmembers) and will do it again. He understands Council being in a difficult position being the taxing authority, based on population of Muncie. This tax is a county tax, not a city tax, but recalls watching the County struggling just like Muncie. This will definitely be a conversation they have to have in public with everyone. Selvey refers to the other part of the information she wants is for the conversion of percentages provided to dollar amounts. People need to see numbers. Chafin understands and agrees that absolutely makes sense. It would be different for someone making \$100,000 verses somebody making \$40,000 or less. Basically, we know from our previous LIT tax that for every quarter raised would generate somewhere around \$300,000. He believes the limit is a little over 3% but we have over half of our LIT tax that is unused (since we are 69/92 counties) and have worked to keep it low as possible. We have only used it one time, other than the EDIT that was built in, since the enactment of it which was property taxes. As you raise it each quarter, it about \$3.5 million and we still have 1.5% to spend. Again, a 10% raise wouldn't need 1.5% but that is not what they are asking. That would be like throwing the touchdown, Hail Mary, now we are done but if any future problems appear, like Senate Bill 1, we've already tied our hands. Obviously, a 10% raise or a 25% to 50% raise would mean discussions with the Council and Administration. In addition, we all have to sit back and watch if Senate Bill 1 takes effect, then they would need to raise the rates as well due to our Governor saying this will be passed and cities and counties have to deal with it.

Powell confirms last time that MFD and MPD went out into the community with regard to what Selvey mentioned, like a brochure or pamphlet, we actually converted those totals into real objects. For example, 'X' = a 20 oz bottle of Coke. Those would be very useful if and when that discussion comes up. She wanted to add recognition to FOP President Qualls as well for being so patient regarding his contract. They both did great communicating with her and providing documents and details she was happy to pass along to the rest of Council.

Audie Barber suggests the Mayor committing a little bit of his EDIT money toward these raises. Mayor Ridenour replied with an inaudible statement from his seat in the audience. Questions called. A roll call vote showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADOPTED.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Ralph Privett, Vice-President of the Granville Neighborhood Association, wished to address the many code violations in his neighborhood. He has called Code Enforcement but it seems like nothing is getting done. It was suggested to him to attend a City Council meeting and request the Council put more “bite” into codes. The code he is talking about specifically is parking. There is a lot of renters in the neighborhood and people will park their trucks right up by the front door of their homes. They’ll park boats in their front yard. 3 or 4 of the subcontractor/self-employed neighbors install all steel buildings and will bring in industrial and 30-ft industrial trailers. The neighborhood is residential and not built for 30-foot industrial trailers. His understanding is the code for Muncie is that you can park in your backyard, side yard, right-of-way at the road but from the front of your home to the right-of-way is considered a front yard and there is no parking in the front yard. One home contains gravel the guys have actually dumped halfway up the front yard so they can pull their ¾ ton trucks vertically up in the yard. They put the trailer in the driveway and have ruts 8 to 12 inches deep in the driveway. They’ll drag mud out into the street but we’re trying to clean up the neighborhood. It’s an older neighborhood that has been around since 1953. It could be a nice neighborhood if we just get people there to simply follow the codes and ordinances. We’re not trying to make an HOA or anything rather just enforcing of the codes and ordinances. He called Code Enforcement twice in February but there is still a boat, a 30-ft trailer, and 2 trucks still sitting in the front yard. He doesn’t see where Code Enforcement even came out but can’t assume. He recalls speaking to the previous Building Commissioner many times and being able to get a lot done with homes there. As far as the vehicle part of it, that is separate from what the Building Commissioner does. He told him that the parking code (like expired license plates, flat tires or storage vehicles) was rescinded because certain wording was being sent back to the Council to be revised. He doesn’t think parking in the front yard is part of that but requests the Council consider looking at the entire code since they are looking at and revising this other part. He sees Code Enforcement drive through the neighborhood but it just doesn’t seem like they are getting anything done. Another problem, too, is they informed him that they can’t do anything unless the vehicle is parked in the yard when they show up. You can obviously see gravel and ruts in the yard but the only person tagged to that vehicle is the person who owns it. It seems to him that the person who owns that home who is renting to this other person should be the one responsible for the damage to that property and they should have to enforce their renters to follow codes or pay the price. That is what he is asking for tonight. President Mason feels his pain. Privett explains the guys that are subcontractors with the trucks and trailers are good neighbors but their trailers aren’t. They need to get their trailers out so they can park in the driveway. It seems to him that these industrial trailers should have to have a lot to park in. He knows some of these places where they pick up supplies, like on of Streeter and Granville, which the secretary there told him that she thought most likely the guy that owned that business would let them park their trailers there. There is someone that parks theirs there, loaded, over the weekend and he doesn’t see it tampered with. He would think they could come to an agreement with whoever they pick up their supplies from. They all have these big huge lots and big huge buildings so he is sure they could park them there.

Dishman will be seeing the Building Commissioner about that. Privett has talked to Richard Rawlings about a property that has been empty for 4 to 5 years. Dishman has the same problem just down the street. Privett mentions them expanding out into other neighborhoods. Dishman explained a neighbor having a trailer perched up on its side being worked on. Privett thinks maybe that man used to live in his neighborhood because Code Enforcement made one guy pull his gravel out of his front yard and move the trailer. Dishman states the yard is all rutted out as well. He will get back with him after meeting the Building Commissioner. Privett, again, doesn’t believe that falls under the Building Commissioner as Parking Code Enforcement is separate.

Councilperson McIntosh sympathizes since he has to deal with the exact same thing next door. They pull in these big trucks with all these heavy metal rails on them. He has had to call Code Enforcement out and they

keep telling him that it is legal if they are in the driveway but it is an eyesore. The thing is there isn't anybody even living there. Privett explains if his neighborhood is similar and they can't really turn those trailers because residential streets are not built for them. They end up cornering into people's yards and knocking down mailboxes. People will even hammer in split posts at the front of their yard and string rope or wire across it to try and keep them out but they'll just knock it over. McIntosh is glad that Dishman is going to reach out to the Building Commissioner because that was going to be his next step. Privett, again, says he was told by the Building Commissioner to come here and ask the Council put more teeth into the code and ordinances so they can be enforced. The main thing is both the neighbors and Code Enforcement are both at work at the same time during the day so when Code Enforcement comes out can't do anything because they can only tag the vehicle because only the person who owns the vehicle is responsible. The landlord should be responsible for that yard. Clearly you can't park in the front yard but there are ruts and tire marks there so we know it is going on so the landlord should be fined before passing that information along to (or even evicting) the tenant.

President Mason thinks a lot of people are buying these vacant houses on tax sale and just using them. Privett knows at least 3 of the homes are owned by a landlord that lives in Yorktown who doesn't really care what they do. Mason hates having to look out your front door at that every day. Privett, again, says they can park in the back yard and the side yard but they aren't going to back the trailer up in the backyard and they're not going to put their trucks back there if they can't get the trailer in the driveway. However, if they put in gravel and park the trailer up in the driveway, they could put one truck in front of it in the driveway and the other truck parallel to the road and it would be legal. Other neighbors see them do that and get away with it so now we have a boat, car and 2 more trucks parked in front yards. People don't want to walk 20 feet to the driveway when they could walk 8 feet out the door and get in their truck. Lazy. Mason adds then they will do a minimum amount of work on the house to make it look like its being rehabbed. Privett made the comment Muncie doing a lot to beautify it such as parks and building new homes but in some of these older neighborhoods it is like they want them to deteriorate so they can tear them down and build new. He doesn't know. However, in his opinion, they aren't doing enough in the older neighborhoods with simply what we've got such as codes and ordinances to keep them from getting tore up.

Audie Barber claims he has said quite a bit already tonight. There were some examples of other cities cited by the Fire Department such as Fishers, Bloomington and Evansville. If you were to go look at those towns, you'll see they are a lot more industry with a lot more businesses. If we could get more businesses in this town that would be great as we seem to have lost a lot of business and factories. Maybe in the next 30 or 40 years everything from Noblesville will grow out towards Anderson and Muncie and we will all be one big state. But until then, just remember that LIT tax situation is going to be coming up and expect a 25% to 50% raise on the LIT tax. Other counties, cities like Noblesville and Fishers for example, got a 31% raise because they have the business there to support the raises. We don't have those businesses here. It is a shame because Muncie is a beautiful town. He wishes the Council could approve giving more money than they can afford to spend but it is not happening right now in Muncie. All he is asking is to be careful because that LIT tax is coming their way. Lastly, Barber apologizes for missing the last 3 Council meetings. He is back and just wanted to prove a point to some people.

Kristopher Bilbrey asked if any councilmembers have heard or have any understanding of what is going on with the Crisis Center. The Muncie Crisis Center started being talked about in an article of The Star Press in March 2023 which the Mayor said it had been in the works for the last 2 years. They said they started looking at the HUB for the Crisis Center in September of 2022 and there has been all kinds of stories basically since November. People have said it's open, it's not open, some people have said that it's open from 8:00 to 5:00 Monday through Friday which doesn't really seem productive because most people have crisis after those hours so that doesn't make a lot of sense. Bilbrey has been there several times since they've said it's opened and Meridian Services has been running it. The door is locked and nobody is inside. US Postal notes have been stuck on the outside and was there one day when Merry Maids was trying to get inside to clean the place yet nobody would let them open the door. We've paid a lot of money for this place and assuming we're still paying for utilities or whatnot here. He would like to try to figure out if we can get some kind of understanding of what is going on with it. He understands the Council may

not know currently but will be back to ask again next meeting. If they could find out between now and then that would be fantastic. The public deserves to know what's going on there. He has heard some people say that basically the City is out of it and that Meridian Services is running it now but that is nuts if that is the case because the City paid a lot of money for that which is concerning.

Councilperson Garrett pledges to get ahold of Mr. Bilbrey before the next Council meeting to let him know what is going on with that.

Councilperson Gullion advises the Council did get a little bit of an update on this recently. It is not much but the Mayor did share that it has been open about a month now and at the request of Meridian Health Services and the Police Social Workers they are doing a slow roll out of the program and will continue to increase the scope. That is the most recent she has heard about it. Bilbrey questions when she received that from the Mayor. Gullion responds this week.

Amber Greene, City of Muncie Communications Director, reiterates the email. The Crisis Center is open and has been open for a little over a month and is only taking clients from police calls at this time. That is at the request of Meridian as they are looking to do a slow roll because it is new and not like anything we have in the community currently and they want to get it right. The City of Muncie is waiting to hear from them as to getting more services going and updates are provided to Council when they are provided to the City Administration.

Councilperson Selvey puts Delaware County Commissioner Stephen Brand (who is sitting in the audience) on the spot. She wants to thank the Delaware County Commissioners for their latest resolution. It was a great move on their part and she hopes City Council will emulate it and come alongside them in support. She requests he explain a little bit about what they did and what the resolution was all about.

Stephen Brand, Delaware County Commissioner, wonders what resolution she is referring to. Selvey states the tax caps/budget. Other councilmembers and Brand both inform her that was the County Council and he wishes he could take credit but cannot. She wishes him to thank them from the City Council and apologizes for the misunderstanding.

ADJOURNED:

A motion was made by McIntosh and seconded by Powell to Adjourn. A vote by acclamation showed 9 yeas and 0 nays. ADJOURNED.

Harold D. Mason, President of the
Muncie Common Council

Belinda Munson, Muncie City Clerk
of the Muncie Common Council