

*Town of LaFontaine Town Council Meeting  
Minutes March 9, 2026  
13 W Branson St  
LaFontaine IN 46940  
765-981-4591*

*Nikki Brubaker  
Lori Brane*  


Present were Jerry Bowman, Conner Hineman, Kim Shepherd, Gary Herring, Chris Harrison, Sharon Pattee, Wendy Black, Tom Simpson, Josh Shepherd, Tracie Hensley, Mat Galligan, Jeff Smith, Tina King, Maria Smyth, Eithel Eib, Lori Brane, Nikki Brubaker and Jordan Tandy. President John Krhin was absent.

Lori called the meeting to order. Lori made a motion to approve the February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026 meeting minutes, Nikki seconded, vote 2-0 approved.

**Chris Harrison from Commonwealth Engineering presented updates on current projects:**

- **Park:** The project is running smoothly. After speaking with Mike Klienpeter (the grant administrator) he said everything on his end is going well. Commonwealth is near completing the design and scope of work. They will go over that on the virtual call Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>. Mike Kleinpeter also told Chris that he will be sending out the notices of the public hearings.
- **Water:** Regrettably, Laura Hammond has retired early. Rob Belucchi is looking at where to go from here. He would have been at the meeting but his vehicle broke down.
- **Geo Bag:** Chris has been working with Jeff on this. They sent over the monthly report of operation to Chris Lacocho to review and advise what the town's annual demand would be. Chris expressed that he understands Jeff is hurting on hauling sludge accordingly. It will require a construction permit and a modification of EMP (Environmental Management Permit).
- Conner Hindmen let the council know that Kleinpeter was the only grant administrator that applied to be our grant administrator on the Park Project. Kleinpeter is getting his contract together to present to the board.

**Marshal Report presented by Mat Galligan:**

- Calls for service: 28
- Traffic Stops: 26
- Assist another agency: 2

- Background check: 1
- Ordinance violation: 2
- Routine patrol

**Fire Department presented by Tom Simpson:**

- 1 Fire call
- 10 EMS calls

**Utility Report presented by Jeff Smith:**

- We will be investing in new expansion wheels for the meters. With the new meters, they can detect backflow, which our old meters could not do. They are detecting back flow in numerous homes. It is not large amounts but it is detectable and the State would like the utility dept to correct it. The expansion wheels have a check valve built inside them that only allows the water to flow forward and not backward. Any house that gets detection will get the expansion wheel. Lori wanted to clarify for the minutes that this was a solution to the problem that was discussed at last month's meeting with Jay Gillespie, Jeff said yes.

**Park Report presented by Wendy Black:**

- Reminded everyone of the next park board meeting Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 5pm.
- Boots and Bows event update, the event raised just over \$500. Gave thanks to the community for their support of the event.
- The public hearing meetings will be March 30<sup>th</sup> and April 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm in Town Hall. She reminded everyone that it is important for the public to attend. This is when they can give their input on the design of the park, going forward in the future and the allocation of this first grant money and funding of that.
- She recognized Gary Herring's hard work on the hill side at the park. She reminded that if there was anyone interested in helping, please keep track of your time and let town hall know so that we can keep track of in-kind hours for future grants.
- Anyone with any fundraising ideas or events is asked to attend the meetings.
- Gary updated everyone on a new speaker for \$175. And a stand for \$23. He has \$198. wrapped up in it, he is not worried about being reimbursed right now but does want to be reimbursed.

**LCA Report presented by Maria Smyth:**

- The Great Clean Up. Everyone is encouraged to meet at Town Hall at 8am on Saturday March 28<sup>th</sup>. Republic Service will be providing safety vests and a

dumpster. Solid Waste is providing trash bags that are biodegradable. Bring your own gloves. Volunteers can pick up along State Rd 15 if someone will drive along with hazard lights on. More information will be made available on social media.

- Tracie and Maria went to the Indiana State House on Thursday March 5<sup>th</sup> to accept LaFontaine Community Alliance's designation from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA) Downtown Affiliated Network (ODAN). This is a great thing for LaFontaine, opening opportunities for grants and education.
- Maria recognized the utility dept for all their hard work during the last snow storm.

Wendy spoke up to ask if Jordan had found out about adding a park board member from outside of the town. Jordan explained that according to the bylaws, it must be someone who resides in the town limits, that is based on Indiana Code.

**Clerks Report presented by Tracie Hensley:** Pam is attending the State Board of Accounts conference in Plainfield so Tracie presented the clerks report.

- The town received \$17,277.54 in reimbursement for Jeff's training for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2025.
- The annual financial report is completed and submitted to DLGF. It will be published in the paper next week. A copy was presented to each council member.
- Beacon Bank has stopped paying interest on the checking account. For that reason, Pam moved 1 million to a 48-month CD at Beacon Bank to receive a higher interest rate. She also moved \$500,000 to a savings account that has a better interest rate.
- All banks are reconciled and balanced.
- Tracie added that she attended the State of Our Communities and gave recognition to our utility department. She also reminded everyone about the opening of Knob Hill LLC at 22 W. Branson St. Lori asked if there would be a ribbon cutting, Tracie said that they will revisit that and would like to have one.
- Tracie had asked Conner Hineman to speak on the Wabash County Development Corporation and the work that they are doing. It is a 501-3C, not for profit entity. It came from the Imagine One 85 plan and was established in 2024. Its goal is to attack the housing crisis in Wabash County. Through finding vacant and blighted properties across the county, renovating them, and selling them at average area median income or affordable market rate which is anywhere from \$125,000 to \$250,000. The group just purchased their first home in LaFontaine 11 S Main St. Renovation will begin in the next month or so. Completed homes are 301 S Maple St in North Manchester. Other properties purchased are 1007 N Wayne St in North Manchester, 645 Washington St. in Wabash. He reminded everyone to reach out if they know of any vacant or blighted properties. Lori asked how many

August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 but also, she suggested they get the EyeOnWater app to monitor their usage, she also explained that the clerk's office is seeing that with the new meters being more accurate compared to the old meters not working correctly, some homes have seen increased water usage. Josh Shepard said that all he is requesting is that we show proof they are using that amount, Tracie said that the app would show the accurate usage. Jeff explained that the meters are calibrated at the factory and the utility dept does not have the calibration tool here. The meter is calibrated, tested, and guaranteed from the factory. He said he will contact Matt from Badger Meter to see if he can get him the certifications for the Shepherds specific meter and where it was tested but he has no way of testing himself. Jeff reiterated that the old meters were not as accurate as the new meters. Kim brought up that people had brought up the high bills on the Facebook page and that one person had said "this is ridiculous, my bill was over \$600." Tracie responded that yes, and we have been working with her and it looks like it may be a toilet leak. Tracie explained that it is hard when people are posting on the Facebook page instead of calling or coming in to see what is going on with their account. She also explained that the bills are not just water. The utility bill is water, wastewater, stormwater, and sanitation. Tracie offered to look at the Badger site with the Shepherds after the meeting, they agreed and will stay after the meeting.

Lori motioned to adjourn the meeting, Nikki seconded, vote 2-0 approved

Respectfully Submitted,

Tracie Hensley