

TOWN OF DUNE ACRES
COUNCIL MINUTES
June 17, 2025

The Town of Dune Acres Town Council met for its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at the Clubhouse. Council President Richard Hawksworth called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m., with Council members Alexander Stemer and Paul Woidke; Clerk-Treasurer Bonnie Hawksworth; and Town Attorney Adam Mindel in attendance. Commissioners present were Lee McKinley (Security), Dick Taylor (Maintenance), Tom Roberts (Building), and Robin Tenant (Environment). Rob Carstens (Beach) participated via Zoom.

The meeting was broadcast live and recorded via Zoom. The recording will be archived online for 90 days and can be accessed via this link:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes for the May 20 Town Council meeting minutes as presented. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

Clerk-Treasurer Hawksworth presented the May month-end financial report. The combined bank account balance as of May 31 is \$739,369.71. The Town has spent approximately 36 percent of its budget. Year-to-date revenue is \$284,989.46.

It was moved and seconded to approve the financial report. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS:

Clerk-Treasurer Hawksworth asked the Town Council to approve Accounts Payable Vouchers for June (http://duneacres.org/apv/apv_2025-06.pdf) totaling \$288,334.49. This includes the purchase of the new ATV, 50% of the 2025 annual fire contract, buoy installation, and payment for the recent roadwork. It was moved and seconded to approve the claims. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE: Council member Stemer received a response from Representative Mrvan regarding the Congressman's inquiry to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on behalf of the Town. Unfortunately, the response echoed what we've heard for the past 18 months: we are encouraged to continue reporting incidents, but federal agencies lack the authority to prevent rail operators from blocking crossings.

EXECUTIVE REPORT:

Council President Hawksworth presented his executive report for the preceding month including the following activities:

Train Crossing: Since the May meeting, the Mineral Springs Road crossing has been blocked six times for a total of approximately 279 minutes—an average of 46.5 minutes per incident. While the number of incidents remains the same as last month, the average duration is slightly above our historical monthly average.

Calumet Trail: President Hawksworth spoke with Porter County Commissioner Jim Biggs and Mike Jabo, Executive Director of the Department of Development & Stormwater Management, regarding the lingering construction signs along Mineral Springs Road following improvements to the Calumet Bike Trail. Mr. Jabo explained that the project has not yet been “released” by INDOT. Once it is—expected by the end of June—the contractor will return to remove the signage. He also noted that the County plans to assess the need for additional bollards to prevent vehicle access to the bike trail, which remains an ongoing concern.

Garbage Collection: The town received a bid for town-wide garbage and recycling collection from Total Disposal. Republic Services has not responded to several inquiries, but it is hoped they will participate in the quote solicitation.

Fugitive Dust Release: At the end of May, several residents reported a “glittery” dust deposited on outdoor surfaces. It was identified as a material known as “kish”—a byproduct of steelmaking composed of graphite flakes, iron oxides, and other compounds. The town has been in contact with Cleveland-Cliffs, the National Park Service, and IDEM. It is believed the kish was released by a slag-processing contractor operating on site at the Burns Harbor facility, and under its own Clean Air Act (CAA) permit. IDEM stated the contractor, Phoenix Global, denied responsibility, but will be issued a warning. President Hawksworth corresponded with the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC), who works in the southern Great Lakes on issues related to air and water pollution. ELPC informed Hawksworth that Phoenix recently entered into a consent decree with the U.S. EPA and that its CAA renewal permit is currently open for public comment. ELPC is preparing a formal response and has invited Dune Acres to co-sign or submit parallel comments. Residents can comment on the permit renewal individually by visiting: <https://www.in.gov/idem/public-notice/public-notice-northwest-indiana/#porter>, scrolling to “Porter County,” and clicking the link for the Phoenix Global notice. Future incidents should be reported directly to the Cleveland-Cliffs Burns Harbor Complaint Hotline at 1-800-451-6027.

NPS Meetings: Indiana Dunes National Park Superintendent Jason Taylor will be visiting Dune Acres to introduce himself and take resident questions. The event will be held on Tuesday, August 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Clubhosue, featuring a short presentation followed by Q&A. Separately, Security Commissioner McKinley and President Hawksworth will meet with Superintendent Taylor and Chief of Resource and Visitor Protection Jack Corrao on Monday, July 23 to discuss parking at the Cowles Bog lot, which NPS has not actively managed this season to date.

Community Crossings: The recently enacted HB 1461 introduces reforms to the Community Crossings Matching Grant (CCMG) program. The first \$100 million of program funds will now be reserved for traditional CCMG projects, and the local match requirement for smaller municipalities has been reduced from 25% to 20%. Proposals to tie CCMG eligibility to a local wheel tax were not adopted, so it appears that Dune Acres’ situation will be somewhat improved. INDOT is still interpreting the new provisions and plans to update its application materials and guidance. It remains unclear whether the next round of grant funding will proceed as previously scheduled.

Flood Plain Administration: Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program requires the town to adopt and administer a flood plain ordinance. We did this in 2022. The ordinance, which was provided by the state to comply with federal law, names the president of the plan commission as flood plain administrator. President Hawksworth has contacted President Cornwell to ask him to serve, or designate someone on the plan commission in his stead. Dune Acres has very little flood plain, but there are at least a few shoreline homeowners who participate in the insurance program.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

BEACH:

Commissioner Carstens reported that NIPSCO has connected power at East Beach for summer events. Fireworks permitting is underway. Residents have reported increased ATV usage on the beach. Residents are reminded that ATVs are prohibited on the beach by local ordinance and NPS regulation. Commissioner Carstens reminds residents they may see authorized vehicles on the beach, including those operated by the National Park Service, Porter Fire Department, or Dune Acres employees or officials.

BUILDING:

Commissioner Roberts submitted four building-permit applications for consideration:

- Permit 2025-17 for the replacement of beach stairs at 92 West Road, in the amount of \$54,850
- Permit 2025-18 for remodeling work at 27 Crest, in the amount of \$220,000
- Permit 2025-19 for new construction at 18 Summit, valued at \$1.3M
- Permit 2025-20 for retaining wall and related work at 23 Crest, in the amount of \$35,000

Related to permit 2025-19 (18 Summit), President Hawksworth asked Mr. Christ Muvceski, the general contractor for the project, to confirm the agreement that access to the site would be from Summit Drive only and that any access from West Road is not permitted. Mr. Muvceski, who as present, confirmed this understanding.

It was moved and seconded to approve issuance of all four permits. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

ENVIRONMENT:

Commissioner Tenant is considering new projects and ways to update the Town cleanup workdays.

FIRE: None

MAINTENANCE: Commissioner Taylor discussed the need to extend the beach stairs at the Circle Drive beach access. From the floor, it was suggested to also consider renovating the stairs at West and Cypress, and the stairs leading from Oak Drive to Shore Drive. President Hawksworth noted the latter two projects are located on private property and would require cooperation with the property owners.

PARKS: None

ROADS: None

SECURITY: Commissioner McKinley asked that residents assist with identifying personal ATVs on the beach. It was suggested that signage might be helpful, and a Town email will go out by way of reminder. Council member Stemer noted that both ATVs and Golf Carts must be operated only by licensed drivers. Commissioner McKinley then addressed several personnel items.

- Promotion of security officer Irene Brown to the position of assistant chief/head of patrols with a commensurate salary increase. A motion was made to approve this promotion. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

Hiring of Kaden Hawksworth for a part-time position as security guard. McKinley noted Hawksworth would be working for the next few weeks before departing for college. A motion was made to approve the hire. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed with President Hawksworth abstaining.

Council President Hawksworth recommended formal council approval of Commission McKinley's decision to permanently remove security officer Eric Trowbridge from the schedule. A motion was made and seconded to approve this decision. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Insurance Coverage: Council President Hawksworth reported that Anton Insurance has been unable to find coverage for the liability gap. It was agreed by consensus to investigate other options,

NEW BUSINESS:

IDEM/Phoenix Fugitive Dust Release: President Hawksworth noted his comments in the executive report and stated the next steps for the Town will be to sign on to comments prepared by ELPC.

Clubhouse Rental:

Council members reviewed a request to rent the Clubhouse on July 19, 2025. It was moved and seconded to approve the request. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Tom Roberts recommended that some of the Clubhouse windows be replaced. He suggested convening a committee to procure estimates and offered to head it up. The Town Council approved by consensus the formation of a committee to evaluate options and costs.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm. The next regular meeting of the Town Council is on Tuesday, July 15, 2025 at the Clubhouse.

RICHARD HAWKSWORTH, Town Council President

PAUL WOIDKE, Town Council Member

ALEXANDER STEMER, Town Council Member

BONNIE HAWKSWORTH, Clerk-Treasurer