

## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

### REGULAR SESSION January 3, 2023

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, January 3, 2023, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Steve Huggins, Seth Whicker, Todd Mahnensmith, Vicki Andrews, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

**Re-organization of Board:** Council member Steve Huggins asked for nominations for President of County Council for 2023. Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to appoint Seth Whicker as Council President for 2023. Motion carried 7-0. Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Steve Huggins to appoint Vicki Andrews as Council Vice-President for 2023. Motion carried 7-0.

**Minutes:** Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the minutes from the December 22, 2022, Regular Session. Motion carried 7-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 71 inmates, 24 pretrial Superior, 26 pretrial Circuit, 15 F6 DOC and 0 DOC. Sheriff Holliday provided his monthly and annual reports including the report of Officer Activity for December 2022, the Commissary Fund report, 2021-2022 Comparisons, and the K-9 2022 Activity Statistics Report. Holliday reported that the jail renovation is ready to cross the finish line. The completion of small projects is the remainder of the renovation. Sheriff Holliday stated that the communication during the snow event was excellent between all departments.

**Highway Wages:** Shawn Bonar and Nate Rumschlag were in attendance to discuss highway wages. Council was revisiting this topic from the December meeting. Shawn Bonar stated that with the new employees there were some issues with the last snow event. A couple of plows went into the ditch, and one took out a power pole. He would like to increase retention and attraction with an increase in wages for the drivers, road foreman and mechanics. Council member Steve Huggins was in support of the increase that was presented and made a motion as such, but no second was made on that motion. Following further discussion on the wage topic Huggins rescinded his motion. Huggins does not want to micromanage the department and feels Bonar can budget his needs. Council member Vicki Andrews asked Bonar what will happen if you give longevity and increased wages and that does not solve the problem, what would you ask for then? A reduction in the size of truck and an increase in the number of trucks and employees would be needed if he could not keep CDL drivers, was Bonar's response. Wage comparisons were presented with area private sector employers. Seth Whicker stated that comparing county wages with private sector wages was not a viable comparison. Scott Elzey stated that we can't keep matching the other county's wage scale (Huntington in this example) every time we lose an employee to another county. He also requested a line-by-line comparison of the 'existing' and 'proposed' wage changes to better understand what Bonar was trying to accomplish. A discussion ensued about aging equipment and the need for updated equipment. Rumschlag explained that a 10% increase in wages would also allow for budgeting for new equipment. He stated that without competitive wages, employees might not be available to operate the equipment. Council member Brandon Harnish requested a listing of current equipment, current budget and wage increases to be evaluated for better clarification. Bonar and Rumschlag were instructed to bring plans for flat rate increases and job classification specific increases to the February 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Todd Mahnensmith believes recruitment needs to be developed further.

**Travel Policy:** The current travel policy has been in force since 2019. Auditor McCormick was requesting an increase in the daily meal allowance, which is currently set at \$30, gratuity is capped at 15% reimbursement. She was proposing a change to a \$50 daily rate with 20% gratuity. Sheriff Holliday was also in attendance and felt the increase was necessary. He has had instances of being charged \$20 for just the morning meal. Clerk Beth Davis submitted via email that she would propose a \$60 daily allowance with no gratuity limit. Motion was made by Brian Lambert, seconded by Steve Huggins to amend to travel policy daily meal rate to \$50, with an additional 15% gratuity limit. Motion carried 6-1, Brandon Harnish voted no. The policy will be amended and brought back for approval on February 7<sup>th</sup>.

**2023 Board Appointments:** Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to appoint Vicki Andrews as an alternate for Jerome Markley on the Area Plan Commission, to appoint Scott Elzey to the Bluffton NOW board, to re-appoint Vicki Andrews to the Chamber of Commerce Board, Seth Whicker to the E911 Advisory board, Steve Huggins to the Economic Development Board, Todd Mahnensmith to the EMA Advisory Board and the EMS Board, to appoint Richard Jackson to the Regional Sewer District board to finish the term for Mike Mossburg which expires on December 31, 2023, Vicki Andrews to the Solid Waste District board, and Brandon Harnish to the Wells County Trails board. Motion carried 7-0.

**2023 PTABOA Appointment:** The 2023 PTABOA board applications were discussed. Council member Brandon Harnish had concerns about re-appointing Judy Affolder to the board and felt the current Commissioner PTABOA board members, who have served for a year or less, were more than capable of handling the appeals process. Harnish's objections were that Affolder was not a resident of Wells County, she has a background as a former County Assessor and she had confusion, in his opinion, over a PTABOA motion passed in the spring of 2022. Council member Vicki Andrews stated that she had a conversation with the Assessor who was concerned with the lack of experience on the board and would value the experience of Judy Affolder. Affolder has a Level III certification and years of experience. Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to re-appoint Judy Affolder to the PTABOA board for 2023. Motion carried 4-3, Steve Huggins, Brian Lambert and Brandon Harnish voted no.

**2023 Solid Waste Salary Contract:** Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Solid Waste Salary contract for 2023 (Misc. 2023-01). Motion carried 7-0.

**Annual Contract Disclosure Policy:** Council members signed the Annual Certification of Elected Officials on Compliance with County Contract Disclosure Policy.

**Encumbrance:** An Encumbrance summary was presented to Council for their acknowledgement. The General fund had \$591,624.03 in unexpended funds for 2022, which was approximately 5% of the approved General fund budget.

**Transfers:** Transfers within a major classification in a department may be made without County Council action by the Auditor's office if that action is approved by County Council. Transfer paperwork will still be emailed to them listing the inter department transfers. Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to authorize the Auditor to transfer funds within the same major classification for 2023. Motion carried 7-0.

**Adjourned:** 8:32 PM motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to adjourn.  
Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

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President, Seth Whicker

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Vice President, Vicki Andrews

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Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor