

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION February 2, 2021

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, February 2, 2021, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Steve Huggins, Seth Whicker, Todd Mahnensmith, Chuck King, Vicki Andrews, Scott Elzey, Jim Oswalt attended virtually, and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: Motion made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from the January 5, 2021 meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

Transfers: Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Chuck King to approve the transfers in the General fund from the Auditor and Circuit Court and also in Project Income fund, Rainy Day fund, and Community Corrections Grant 1. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: Motion made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Chuck King to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General Fund for the Jail for \$55,000. Motion carried 7-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 70 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 21 pretrial Circuit, 12 DOC and 14 F6 DOC. Sheriff Holliday submitted the monthly reports as well as the 2020 Annual Jail Report. Also presented was statistical inmate data for Council, preempted by questions at a prior council meeting. Included in that data was historical jail population, inmate population forecast, other housing for inmates and a Jail staffing review to be used if beds are increased at the jail.

Bluffton NOW: Mike Lautzenheiser, Bluffton NOW President, presented to Council the Bluffton NOW 2020 Annual report. \$67,000 was raised in fundraising efforts to cover project and operating costs. A local rap artist held a concert on the plaza. A music fest and mural fest were other weekend events that were held on the plaza. Local shopping events as well as a farmer's market were other attractions to draw shoppers downtown. Virtual events were a community prayer vigil and two concerts. Many events were cancelled due to COVID. Downtown occupancy has increased: first floor occupancy is at 90.9%, second floor occupancy is at 66.9%, third floor occupancy is 36.2%. Lautzenheiser emphasized that even with all the down sides to 2020 it was a great year for Bluffton's downtown.

Elevatus: Cory Miller and Dave Sholl provided cost estimates for three options for jail pod bed expansions. Included in the total cost of each estimate was \$4,430,000 for a jail renovation as well as an energy savings project which includes a new roof and HVAC system. A 50-bed addition to the jail has an estimated cost of \$14,652,600, a 75-bed addition has an estimated cost of \$19,032,600, and a 100-bed addition has an estimated cost of \$22,147,800. Kitchen equipment upgrades and increased dry good storage space would suffice for the 50 and 75 bed expansions. The 100-bed expansion would require more kitchen space. Chuck King reiterated that he did not want the Highway garage to take a back seat to the jail project(s). Commissioner Kevin Woodward was on hand and commented that that would not be the case. Council President Steve Huggins also commented that the board would not let that happen. Commissioner Blake Gerber added that he has been touring newly constructed Highway facilities to get pros and cons of construction from the new facility personnel.

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

Resolution 2021-01: A resolution was presented to Council authorizing the transfer of money from one budget classification to another. The Clerk had requested a transfer of \$1,189.53 from Fund 8902-2020 Cares Act Grant fund into the County General fund. These funds were received from the state for reimbursement for election supplies. Motion made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Seth Whicker to approve Resolution 2021-01 to allow a transfer from Fund 8902 into Fund 1000. Motion carried 3-0.

Adjourned: 8:26 PM Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Seth Whicker to adjourn.

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President, Steve Huggins

Vice President, Seth Whicker

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor