

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION February 7, 2023

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

Minutes: Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the minutes from the January 3, 2023 meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Additional Appropriation request for LIT Economic Development. Motion carried 7-0. Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve the Additional Appropriation request for Highway Maintenance & Repair. Motion carried 7-0. Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation request for Supp Adult Probation Service. Motion carried 7-0. Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the Wells County CASA grant. Motion carried 7-0. Todd Mahnensmith questioned Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar about the Additional Appropriation for the County Highway Garage Fund. Mahnensmith wanted to know if there was any itemization to show what the additional funds would be spent on. Bonar stated that he has purchased small items out of the highway budget, but the itemization of items to be purchased out of the County Highway Garage fund has not been updated currently. Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the County Highway Garage fund. Motion carried 6-1, with Todd Mahnensmith voting no.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 69 inmates, 19 pretrial Superior, 27 pretrial Circuit, 12 F6 DOC and 4 DOC. Sheriff Holliday submitted the monthly reports and the 2022 annual jail report. Sheriff Holliday discussed the use of Sheriff Deputies on his staff supplementing the Ossian Police Department with coverage when Ossian personnel is not available. Sheriff Holliday will bill the City of Ossian \$45.00 per hour for coverage hours. Holliday will be coming back to County Council for additional funds in his overtime line if the need continues for additional coverage. Construction is nearly complete; contractors are completing punch list items. Holliday presented for Council approval a Resolution to agree to certain Sheriff's Commissary Fund Disbursements. An Exhibit A was attached listing the agreed upon expenses. Motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve Resolution 2023-01 agreeing to certain Sheriff Commissary Fund Disbursements. Motion carried 7-0. Seth Whicker discussed Sheriff participation at the meetings and suggested his attendance be reduced to January, April, July, and October annually. The Sheriff will email jail numbers monthly for County Council review.

Veterans Annual Report: Dewey Randall updated the Commissioners on the 2022 activity in the Veterans Office. Walk-ins, incoming calls, outgoing calls, claims, questions, and POA were all up in 2022. Veteran deaths were down in 2022. A spreadsheet of geographic distribution of VA expenditures was distributed.

Economic Development Annual Report: Economic Development Director Chad Kline presented the 2022 Economic Development annual report. Kline went over the Key Activities including business

expansion & retention, industrial attraction, education & information, Grant Assistance, Collaboration & Networking and Community Site Development. Wells County Economic Development partnered with Adams Wells Manufacturing Alliance and the Wells County Foundation for National Manufacturing Day 2022; local students were participants. Tourism marketing and development is a focus for promotion and marketing for visitor activities in Wells County. The report indicated \$27.5 million in new investment, 29 new jobs and \$1.3 million in new payroll. Workforce availability is an area that Economic Development continues to work on efforts that will promote the community as a place to maintain and start a new residence. The 2023 projects include continued speculative building space, a mixed-use development project in Downtown Ossian, increased tourism, population attraction and population retention for Wells County, training programs to meet the needs of Wells County employers, Support and guidance to projects awarded READI funds, and develop brand identity for Wells County marketing efforts.

Tourism Commission Appointment: Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to appoint Scott Elzey and Zane Herr to the Tourism Commission effective immediately through December 31, 2023. Motion carried 6-0, Scott Elzey abstained. Beginning in 2024 these appointments will move to two-year appointments.

Library Updates: Sarah MacNeill presented an update of statistics for the Wells County Library. 346 children completed the 1000 books before kindergarten program. The library participates in block parties, home book reading programs for daycare, a hoopla streaming program, board games have also been added to the inventory. The winter reading program donates books to Kate's cart when goals are met. The library staff is digitizing area maps. Stats for 2022 are up with 876 new library cards, audio books have increased, physical checkout of books have increased, overall the stats are above or even with pre COVID numbers. Staffing is good with 44 employees including the Ossian branch, 13 full time employees.

Highway Wages: Michael Vanover opened the discussion on highway wages. He stated that turnover is the biggest struggle for a business. His wish is to keep employees in house and decrease disparity. A spreadsheet had been distributed via email prior to the meeting. An overall budgeted increase amount for 2023 was listed at \$49,520.99. Scott Elzey asked when the effective date would be, Bonar stated immediately. Mahnensmith noted that in addition to the increased budgeted amount proposed, there would be PERF and Social Security benefits as well. The matrix longevity increases .5% compounding for each year of service. Whicker commented that employee #1 would increase 27% for 2023 if the increases are implemented, based on that employee's longevity. Huggins questioned how the matrix would apply for an experienced employee coming from another county. Bonar stated that the experience would not carry over, they would not know our area. Harnish discussed the cost of CDL classes, Bonar estimated the cost at \$5,000. The 30-hour class would have to be scheduled; Bonar did not know the availability of the classes. Harnish reiterated that this funding would come from highway funds and not income or property tax. Motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Steve Huggins to implement the highway pay matrix as presented effective immediately. Motion carried 7-0.

Travel Policy: Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the updated travel policy (Misc. 2023-03) as presented. Motion carried 7-0.

Adjourned: Meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM. Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor