

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION March 7, 2023

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, March 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, Scott Elzey, Steve Huggins, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Todd Mahnensmith was absent.

Minutes: Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the minutes from the February 7, 2023, regular session and the February 15, 2023, special session. Motion carried 6-0.

Additional Appropriations: Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the Jail in the General fund. Motion carried 6-0.

Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve the Additional Appropriation request for LIT Public Safety – Co Share. Motion carried 6-0.

Motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation request for Sup Juvenile Probation Service. Motion carried 6-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 66 inmates of those 21 are pretrial Superior, 30 are pretrial Circuit, 8 are F6 DOC and 2 are DOC. Monthly reports were presented. Sheriff Holliday informed Council that he will have a shortfall in Sheriff overtime due to Deputy coverage for Ossian. Ossian is reimbursing for that coverage, so he will need an additional appropriation in the near future to put those funds back into his overtime budget. The jail renovation is nearly complete, landscaping will be complete when weather permits, the kitchen door is scheduled to be installed. Church services, and men's and women's groups have resumed. He expects the final walkthrough by the end of March.

Highway Update: Conor Jackson updated Council on the Highway Garage. The cold storage building is 95% complete, it needs trim and doors installed and a small bit of electrical. Salt storage is complete. Construction is on schedule for 2024 completion. Jackson will update Council again in June.

PTABOA Code of Conduct: Subject was tabled until the April 4th meeting, so all council members would be in attendance.

Amended 2023 Wells County Salary Ordinance: An updated 2023 Salary Ordinance was presented to Council for approval. The update, a highway matrix, and highway supervisor increase had been previously approved by County Council. Motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve Ordinance 2023-01 Wells County 2023-1 Salary Ordinance. Motion carried 6-0.

Tax Work Session: Darren Bates, Data Pit Stop, was on hand for a work session regarding taxes, property and income. Bates gave a history of what Wells County property tax rates were in 2007 to current. His example was of a property that had a value of \$84,000 in 2007 and the property tax bill was \$800 annually. In 2007 homeowners' property tax were paying 33-38% of the tax liability for Wells County. In 2008 state and local credits became available and the same property tax bill went down to \$386. In 2008 homeowners were paying 15% of the county tax liability. Currently that same house is assessed at \$185,000 and that tax bill for 2023 is \$1,374, using \$270 in credits. In 2023, 30-31% of the tax liability is paid by homeowners. He stated that Wells County has been good stewards of Wells County funds and if we need to pay our bills, credits should be reduced or eliminated to pay those bills. Bates is confident that the state will act to eliminate credits in the future. Tax bills would increase 4% if

credits were removed. Currently 23% of LIT is earmarked for credits on tax bills. Bates said that some counties are looked at as wasteful by the state if they give income tax credits to taxpayers and look for funding for other expenditures. PSAP is an expenditure that Council will have to fund for 2024. Bates suggested reducing the credit by 10% for PSAP. 13% would be left as a credit for the future.

Adjourned: 8:04PM Motion made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to adjourn. Motion carried 6-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor