

## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

### REGULAR SESSION April 2, 2024

The Wells County Council met in regular session on Tuesday April 4, 2023, at 7:00PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were Council members, Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Steve Huggins, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the minutes from the March 1, 2024, joint special session, the March 5, 2024, regular session, and the March 25, 2024, special session. Motion carried 7-0.

**Transfers:** A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the Transfer request in the General Fund for the County Extension. Motion carried 7-0. Molly Hoag distributed a Purdue Extension annual report flyer for 2023 to the County Council.

A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Transfer request in the General Fund for the Commissioner budget. Motion carried 7-0.

**Additional Appropriations:** A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation requests for Bridge 106, County Home Rd-CR 450E, and Bridge 71 Rock Creek Grant funds. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the Community Corrections Grant I fund. Motion carried 7-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported current jail stats: 74 inmates; 21 pretrial Superior, 36 pretrial Circuit, 4 F6 DOC and 9 DOC. Monthly reports were also presented. Holliday reported that the bathroom repairs are complete. An eclipse update was given by Sheriff Holliday and EMA Director Rick Valesquez. Holliday reported that there will be a large presence of coverage as well as on call coverage. Wells County, Bluffton, Ossian and Markle will have extra patrol coverage during the day and into the evening as needed. He encouraged preplanning as far as gas and any necessities that might be needed to keep the traffic flow down as much as possible. Valesquez distributed a State of Indiana Transportation flyer regarding traffic issues and a disaster declaration for April 8<sup>th</sup> that was granted by the Governor. Holliday reported that the DNR will have an increased presence at the State Park. Valesquez estimated an influx of between 20,000 to 50,000 tourists that could travel to Wells County.

**Innkeepers Tax Update:** Audry Dudley updated the County Council on the Innkeepers Tax. February through December 2023 collections totaled \$95,267.67. January 2024 collections totaled \$6,344.51. Dudley stated that the Commission is very pleased with the totals. Dudley presented the Wells County Visitors Commission 2024-26 Strategic Plan. Included in the plan were pillar statements and strategies including strengthen asset development, market activities and attractions, enhance organizational awareness, and data and evaluation. The collected funds support county maps, the upkeep of the website, event marketing grants, and mission statements included in the strategic plan. Groups or individuals traveling to the area can get resources, assistance, and the visitor guide for Wells County from the tourism office or from the tourism website. Dudley is confident that the influx of visitors coming to our community for the eclipse will have a positive impact on revenue totals for 2025. Grant programs are being offered through the Commission to organizations for event marketing support. The organizations that have received grant funds from the Commission are Friends of Quabache

Wonderland of Lights, Parlor City Christmas, WOOF Trail Run, Bluffton Parks Department, Bluffton NOW, Verizon Events Corporation, and Ossian Parks Department. The granted funds require reporting so data can be tracked. Dudley had 2022 statistics for Wells County which included \$5.1M in visitor spending, \$2.3M total economic impact for Wells County, 62 jobs were supported and \$500K in state and local taxes were generated.

**Amended 2024 Wells County Salary Ordinance:** An updated 2024 Salary Ordinance was presented to Council for approval. The updates, a \$27,000 stipend for the Highway Supervisor and a \$3,000 stipend #1 Bookkeeper for ERC duties and an additional Bookkeeper position, had been previously approved by the County Council. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve Ordinance 2024-06 Wells County 2024-3 Salary Ordinance. Motion carried 7-0.

**2025 Budget Dates:** 2025 proposed budget dates were distributed to the County Council for review. The proposed dates were August 13<sup>th</sup> for the meeting with the department head, August 20, 21, & 22 at 6pm for additional budget workshops, the public hearing on September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm, and the budget adoption on October 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Council President Whicker asked that Council look at their calendars for any conflicts. The budget dates will be presented at a future meeting for further review.

**Adjourned:** A 7:40PM motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brandon Harnish 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