

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION June 4, 2024

Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, June 4, 2024, 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, Steve Huggins, Brian Lambert, Brandon Harnish, Scott Elzey, and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from May 8, 2024, regular session. Motion carried 7-0.

Transfer: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve transfers in the General fund for the Treasurer and Prosecutor. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriation: A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the General fund for Circuit Court. Motion carried 7-0. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Additional Appropriation request for 20.205 Bridge #51 on CR 300W. Motion carried 7-0.

Bi-County Services: Tim Ramsey presented his annual financial update and request for funding for Bi-County Services to the Wells County Council. Tim stated that Bi-County's biggest challenge is staffing and retention, which has improved over the past year. 69 Wells County residents are served by Bi-County. Bi-County requested the same level of funding for 2025 as 2024, \$45,408.00. Adams County Commissioners and Council have approved the same contribution amount. A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the 2025 funding request of \$45,408.00 for Bi-County Services. Motion carried 6-0-1. Seth Whicker abstained due to being a member of the Bi-County board.

Resolution to Waive Noncompliance for Tax Deduction by Abatement: The Resolution was tabled until a representative from Heartland Broadband could be present for discussion.

Heartland Broadband CF-1 Compliance: A Special Session will be held by the County Council on the Resolution to Waive Noncompliance and the CF-1 Compliance so a representative from Heartland Broadband can answer questions regarding their untimely filing.

Supplemental LIT Distribution: Wells County received a Supplemental LIT Distribution for 2024. The distribution for the General Fund is \$594,024. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brandon Harnish to allow Attorney Storer to draft a transfer resolution from the General fund to Rainy Day for a \$500,000 transfer amount. Motion carried 7-0.

Utility-Scale Solar Tax Abatement Prohibition: To deter future solar tax abatement requests, the County Council discussed a prohibition resolution on utility-scale solar abatements. Wells County residents have been pushing back against utility-scale solar on farm ground. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Vicki Andrews to allow Attorney Storer to draft a resolution or ordinance to prohibit solar abatements in Wells County. Motion carried 7-0. The document will be on the agenda for the June Special Session.

Amended 2024 Wells County Salary Ordinance: An updated 2024 Salary Ordinance was presented to Council for approval. The updates included a stipend for the Clerk and Auditor that was approved at the May 8th meeting, and the wage specified in the Highway Engineer Agreement (Misc 2024-03). A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve Ordinance 2024-09 Wells County 2024-4 Salary Ordinance. Motion carried 7-0.

911 Radio Update Grant: Council President Seth Whicker initiated discussion on a matching grant application that would provide updates for all county emergency radios. This grant would provide updates to encrypt the current emergency radios countywide. Whicker thought the Wells County portion was estimated at \$200,000 to \$250,000. The Supplemental LIT distribution could possibly be used for those matching grant funds. Whicker will provide updates as warranted.

Adjourned: Wells County Council adjourned at 7:34PM. The motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Scott Elzey.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor