

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION July 6, 2021

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, July 6, 2021, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Steve Huggins, Todd Mahnensmith, Chuck King, Jim Oswald, Vicki Andrews, Scott Elzey and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Seth Whicker was present via Zoom with no audio.

Minutes: Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Jim Oswald to approve the minutes from June 8, 2021, meeting. Motion carried 6-0.

Transfers: Motion made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the transfer request in the Cares Act Infectious Disease Relief Fund. Motion carried 6-0.

Health Department: Administrator Marlene Hoag requested approval from Council for days to be paid out to Lynn Blevins and Marlene Hoag for additional hours worked and vacation time lost during the COVID pandemic. Those funds would come out of the Cares Act Infectious Relief Fund. Hoag and Blevins were unable to take time off during the past year. The health department was the forefront of the pandemic fight. Her request was to have Council approval for the payout of those funds, Commissioners would then have to approve a policy for the payout. Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Chuck King to allow payment of the requested days upon approval of a policy by the Commissioners. Motion carried 6-0.

Additional Appropriations: Motion made by Chuck King, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General Fund for the Coroner. Motion carried 6-0. Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Jim Oswald to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the Drug Free Community Fund (CADA). Motion carried 6-0.

CADA 2021 Grant Request: Molly Hoag presented the 2021 grant request for Citizens Against Drug Abuse (CADA). Funds for the grants are collected through the "Drug Free Community Fund"; a total of \$20,544.07 was collected in 2020 for distribution in 2021. The grants are divided within four categories: Administration, Education/Prevention, Treatment/Intervention, and Judicial.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 69 inmates, 24 pretrial Superior, 15 pretrial Circuit, 14 F6 Doc and 10 DOC. The monthly Officer/Jail report for June was presented to Council Members. The annual DOC payment is for F6 prisoners, the monthly DOC payments are for the level 1-5 DOC inmates.

Library Update: Sarah MacNeill was on hand to present Council with an update on library activity. All services have been on the upswing post COVID. The patron count was up 6,000 from May to June. The start of the summer reading program helped boost that count. Teen interaction has been elevated as well. E-books and E-audio material has increased post COVID. AARP had a free tax service that took place in the library. The library staff oversaw scheduling. Sarah added that curbside service will continue.

Bondry Consulting: Oscar Gutierrez, Bondry Consulting, submitted a proposal to serve as municipal advisor to the Wells County Council and Wells County Commissioners regarding the Jail Renovation and the Highway Garage Project. Bondry will evaluate the financing options for both projects. His fee for

service is \$35,000 for a single bond transaction that includes both projects. If bonds are issued separately, the fee for a general obligation bond will be \$30,000, the fee for a lease revenue bond will be \$35,000. Motion made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Chuck King to formally engage, and approve the Bondry proposal. Motion carried 6-0. Bondry also presented a report on potential financing strategies for the Jail renovation and the Highway garage project. Oscar Gutierrez supplied options for each project utilizing property taxes as well as Local Income Tax. All options were calculated on a 20-year payment schedule. Based on the 2021 assessed valuation, property tax could be increased by .03 cents to allow an annual debt service payment of \$499,000. Oscar presented a county comparison that listed Wells County as the lowest property tax rate in the surrounding area. There was also discussion on Local Income Tax. Wells County has a portion of the Local Income Tax given back to the property owners as a credit on their property taxes. A redistribution of that credit could be shifted into LIT Corrections. Those recaptured funds could then be used to pay for the Jail renovation. Highway funding can ultimately come from property tax and the sale of the county farm. A Cumulative Capital fund has been established at a tax rate of .0167 for additional revenue beginning in 2022. The report included a proposed timeline for issuing the General Obligation bonds. Also included was a timetable for a Controlled project subject to a petition/remonstrance period. Council members will take the financing options under advisement.

Ameresco: Ameresco representatives were in the audience. Contractors for the Jail renovation allowed a hold on pricing until August 2021. Ameresco requested a Council vote stating that they were moving forward with the Jail renovations. The Commissioners will then sign a Notice to Proceed to set the renovations in motion. Motion made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Scott Elzey to proceed with the jail renovation project. Motion carried 6-0.

Heartland REMC CF-1 Compliance: Heartland REMC presented a CF-1 Compliance with Statement of Benefit form for approval. Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Jim Oswald to approve the CF-1 Compliance with Statement of Benefit form for Heartland REMC. Motion Carried 6-0.

Adjourned: 8:50 PM Motion made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to adjourn.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Steve Huggins

Vice President, Seth Whicker

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor