

## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

### REGULAR SESSION August 2, 2022

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, August 2, 2022, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Steve Huggins, Seth Whicker, Chuck King, Jim Oswalt, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from the July 7, 2022, Regular session. Motion carried 7-0. Motion was made by Chuck King, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from the July 5, 2022, Joint Executive session. Motion carried 7-0.

**Transfers:** Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the transfers in the Clerk's Records Perpetuation Fund, Project Income and Community Corrections Grant II fund. Motion carried 7-0.

**Additional Appropriations:** Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Jim Oswalt to approve the additional appropriations in Plat Book Maintenance, Supp Adult Probation Service, Supp Juvenile Probation Service, Wells County CASA Grant, CCMG 2021-02 Bridge 403, and CCMG 2022-01 Bridge 19. Motion carried 7-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Jail numbers reported were 88 total inmates; of those 33 are pretrial Superior, 24 are pretrial Circuit, 15 F6 DOC and 4 DOC. Monthly reports were also presented.

### **2023 Budget Requests**

**Recorder:** Carolyn Bertsch presented the Recorders general fund budget request of \$87,025, which included a 5% increase in wages. The Identification Security Protection budget request was \$13,000. Bertsch also requested additional wages for the Recorder and Recorder Deputy to be paid out of the Recorder's Perpetuation fund for a total annual wage for the Recorder of \$55,000 and the Deputy annual wage of \$41,250. The wages paid out of the perpetuation fund would have to be tracked to assure the wages were used for preservation of records. The budget request for the Recorder's Perpetuation Fund was \$35,510.

**Clerk:** Beth Davis presented her Clerk's office budget request of \$323,704, which included an additional \$3,000 to the Clerk wage and an increase of 5% for Clerk and Deputy wages. The requested Election Board budget was \$77,520 and the requested Perpetuation Fund budget was \$48,000, which included a part time position that she is requesting a wage of \$15.00 per hour. Davis explained that election equipment is aging. There are 78 machines with an estimated cost of \$3,000 each to replace, at current pricing. Her request was for Council to think about starting a fund allowing a percentage or set amount of the unexpended general fund balance, each year for a determined number of years, be transferred into this fund. Future election needs could be expended from that fund. The average annual unexpended general fund dollars are approximately \$400,000. Vicki Andrews suggested putting those funds into the Rainy Day Fund, to be used for any unexpected expenditures, if not needed for election needs.

**Southern Wells Referendum Renewal:** Acting Southern Wells Schools Superintendent, Steve Darnell, presented to County Council a Resolution that was passed by Southern Wells Schools renewing the referendum tax levy of 0.127. This levied amount expires in 2023 but Southern Wells wanted it to be on the 2022 General election ballot instead of having to have a special election in 2023, which the school would have to pay for. Darnell just wanted to inform Council and answer any questions they might have.

**Ameresco:** Mark Heirbrandt and Daniel Nemeth, Ameresco representatives, presented County Council with a jail project progress update. The summary of projects being upgraded were Lighting inside the building and parking area, HVAC, control system replacement, roof replacement, remodel and addition of the intake area, hot water issue, water upgrade, parking lot replacement and reconstruction. The total project is 70% complete. The project is on schedule and anticipated completion is December 2022. A fire protection system variance was granted from the state after bidding which created an owner's allowance. Currently the allowance is \$109,000 and will come back to Wells County when the project is complete. Council President Steve Huggins asked Mark Heirbrandt if there were any other savings above the 109k that could be shown and given back to the county's taxpayers. Mark stated directly that there were no more savings with the project and so no other monies could be returned.

**LIT Property Tax Credit Allocations:** Darren Bates, Data Pit Stop, discussed LIT Property Tax Credits with County Council. Qualified Residential Property was eliminated as an option for Property Tax Relief five years ago. Wells County elected that option initially. The state requires each unit redistribute their credit allocations to an active Property Tax Relief option when changes to LIT are made. Wells County made those changes for 2022 but did not change the allocations. Wells County Council must now do it to comply with the current options. Bates stated that allocations into the 1% Allocation Type for 85% and into 2% Allocation Type for 15% would mirror current allocations as closely as possible. A notice to taxpayers was presented to County Council with those changes. Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Scott Elzy to publish the Notice to Taxpayers on proposed Local Income Tax Ordinance 2022-16, with a public hearing on September 6, 2022, at 7PM. Motion carried 7-0.

**Review of 2022 Estimated Property Tax Levy Limits and Circuit Breakers:** Per IC 6-1.1-17-3.6 the County Council at the first meeting in August of each year shall review the estimated property tax levy limits and the estimated reductions due to circuit breakers for each taxing unit in the county. Recommendations made by the council shall be distributed to all taxing units. Council members reviewed the reports that were provided by the Department of Local Government finance and did not see any significant changes in the levy limits; the reports were only showing increases from the growth quotient of 5%. Wells County property taxes are still low enough that we are not seeing much of an impact due to the circuit breakers. The largest percentage of the circuit breaker loss in Wells County is due to the over 65 deductions. Motion made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to notify all taxing units within the county that no recommendation is being made on the estimated 2023 property tax levy limits or the 2023 estimated reductions due to circuit breakers. Motion carried 7-0.

**Public Comment:** Leon Berning updated County Council regarding the newly created assistance fund for connections to sewer services. Donations totaling \$3,500 have been received to date. One application has been received and that application did qualify for assistance. Berning is hopeful that more donations will be received. He was appreciative of the support for this project from the community.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Council adjourned at 8:50PM.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

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President, Steve Huggins

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Vice President, Seth Whicker

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Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor