

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

INFORMATIONAL AND REGULAR SESSION

August 8, 2023

INFORMATIONAL SESSION 6:00PM

The Wells County Council held an information session Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at 6PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Steve Huggins, Seth Whicker, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, County Auditor, Lisa McCormick, and Darren Bates from Data Pit Stop. Vicki Andrews was absent. Darren led a discussion on Local Income Tax funding. Wells County currently has 23 LIT credits that are applied as credits on property owners tax bills. The credits amount to \$1,824,013 for 2023. Wells County Council is looking for ways to add funding for PSAP and EMS services. Darren suggested reducing some of the existing credits to put that funding into those buckets. Bates feels that the state will eventually eliminate all credits at some point. Bates stated, "the bottom line is you have to think about the future, I am trying to give you more funding to pay your bills". Examples of property tax bills for county officials for 2024 were presented to show the impact of proposed changes on the tax bills. The informational session ended at 6:44PM.

REGULAR SESSION 7:00PM

Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Steve Huggins, Seth Whicker, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick. Vicki Andrews was absent.

Minutes: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the minutes from the July 11, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 6-0

Transfers: A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the transfer in the Clerk's Records Perpetuation Fund. Motion carried 6-0.

Additional Appropriations: A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the additional appropriations in the General Fund for the Recorder, Surveyor, Circuit Court, and Soil Conservation (Soil & Water). Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the additional appropriation in the General Fund for the Drainage Board. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the additional appropriations for 2022-02 CCMG 450E Phase 1 and CCMG 2023-01 BR170 & BR85. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the additional appropriation for the Highway. Motion carried 6-0.

Review of 2024 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 showed increases from the growth quotient of 4%. 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 Brian Lambert to notify all taxing units within the county that no recommendation is being made on the estimated 2024 property tax levy limits or the 2024 estimated reductions due to circuit breakers. Motion carried 6-0.

Public Comment: Commissioner Jeff Stringer addressed County Council about current Health Department issues. There are currently two vacant positions within the Health Department. Stringer proposed combining the two positions into one and compensating that position up to \$75,000. The two positions he would propose to be combined are the administrator and environmental septic sanitarian. Stringer suggested Ryan Bennett for that role, Bennett resigned as the environmental septic sanitarian in June 2023. A part-time assistant position could also be created for the administration side, Stringer suggested. Stringer stated that he would like to see the Health Board play a more active role in problem solving. Commissioner Gerber was in attendance and echoed Stringer's statements. Stringer suggested using a zero-based budgeting system for Wells County. He felt it would give a better understanding of the budgeting process and how the funds are spent. Brandon Harnish felt that zero-based budgeting would be a more responsible approach to budgeting and echoed Jeff's comments.

LIT Property Tax Credit Allocations: County Council had discussion on Local Income Tax Credits and redistributing them into LIT PSAP and LIT EMS categories. Discussion included reducing the remaining .23 credits to .13 or possibly .11 and putting .08 credits into PSAP and the remaining .02 or .04 credits into EMS services. Each credit has a value of \$79,305. The .08 credits into PSAP would total \$634,439 and .02 into EMS would total \$158,610, .04 would total \$317,220. A motion was made by Brian Lambert, seconded by Scott Elzey to publish the Notice to Taxpayers on proposed Local Income Tax Ordinance 2023-12 with a reduction in credits of .12 with .08 going into LIT PSAP and .04 going into LIT EMS, the remaining credits will be distributed with 85% going to the 1% Allocation type and 15% going to the 2% Allocation type, the public hearing will be held on September 5, 2023, at 7PM. Motion carried 6-0.

Updated 2023 Wells County Salary Ordinance: A updated 2023 Salary Ordinance was presented to County Council for review. The updates included the county employee 20 year pay matrix and the removal of Ordinance 85-2 which states that all new full-time county employees shall be renumarated at a salary rate \$500 below the position's base rate for a period of one year from the date of hire. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the updated 2023 Wells County Salary Ordinance 2023-11. Motion carried 6-0.

Solid Waste Salary Contract Amendment 2023: An amended Solid Waste salary contract was presented to the County Council for review. The amendment included a wage modification for the Supervisor due to an approved matrix for all county employees effective July 1, 2023. A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the amendment to the 2023 Solid Waste Salary Contract (Misc. 2023-07) that modifies the Supervisor rate to include the Matrix. Motion carried 6-0.

Adjourned: Wells County Council adjourned at 7:45PM. The motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Steve Huggins. Motion carried 6-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor