

## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

### BUDGET SESSION August 13, 2024

The Wells County Council met in budget session Wednesday, August 13, 2024, at 8:00AM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Steve Huggins, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

#### OPENING

The first budget meeting for the 2025 Budget Year started with Council Members meeting with all Elected Officials and Department Head to review their 2025 budget requests.

**Commissioners:** Commissioner President Jeff Stringer presented a budget request of \$4,071,474 for the Commissioner's general fund budget and a request of \$1,306,000 for the LIT Economic Development Fund. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Commissioner Stringer discussed increases in liability insurance costs, and a reduction due to the Public Information Officer being removed from the budget for 2025. A building inspector has been added to the LIT Economic Development budget for 2025. Stringer said the need comes from homes in the county not being up to code, federal financing is also a problem.

**Solid Waste District:** District President Blake Gerber presented a budget request of \$118,580. This amount is reimbursed to the county 100%. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Gerber stated that the Solid Waste District budget was incorporating Rural Town Cleanup for \$20,000 for 2025.

**Highway and LR&S:** Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar and Highway Engineer Nate Whitacre presented a total Highway budget request of \$5,203,481, LR&S Budget request of \$615,500, and Cumulative Bridge request of \$1,155,000. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Salt and sand were reduced due to the current stock. Bonar plans on purchasing new machinery to update the aging fleet due to high maintenance costs for outdated machinery. Bonar mistakenly listed his stipend amount at \$28,000, it should be reduced to \$27,000 annually. Vialytics, a comprehensive AI powered intelligent road management system has been implemented by the highway. This system records and catalogs road inventory, then recognizes inventory control issues. The highway has increased software maintenance for this software.

**Surveyor:** Jarrod Hahn presented the Surveyor budget request of \$121,985, the Drainage Board request of \$23,110, and the Corner Perpetuation request of \$33,000. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Health:** Sahara Wall presented a Health Department budget request of \$158,130, Local Public Health Services Fund budget request of \$551,203, and Local Health Maintenance budget request of \$36,162, and a Local Health Dept. Trust Budget of \$41,662. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Requested is a full-time Environmental Health position for a wage of \$37,500 for 2025 in the Health Department budget.

**Assessor:** Laura Roberts presented the Assessor general fund budget request of \$145,851, the Reassessment Fund budget request of \$313,372, and the Sales Disclosure Fee Fund request of \$4,900. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Seth Whicker questioned why there was such a large operating balance in the Reassessment fund. Auditor McCormick suggested redistributing the levied amount in the future, if needed.

**Recorder:** Carolyn Bertsch presented the Recorders general fund budget request of \$98,230. The Identification Security Protection budget request was \$4,000. The Recorder's Perpetuation Fund budget request was \$27,164 for part time clerical assistance. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Treasurer:** Kathy Peeper presented a budget request of \$164,783. A 5% increase in wages was requested. Peeper discussed increased revenue regarding interest on investments. Interest earned in 2023 was \$810,822.28, 2024 to date is \$598,225.69.

**Court House:** Bobbie Studebaker presented a budget request of \$343,791. A 5% increase in wages was requested. Studebaker noted that new heating controls might be necessary in 2024 or 2025, which is not budgeted, so Council is aware.

**IT Department:** Roger Richardson submitted a budget request of \$231,634. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Coroner:** Cliff Thomas presented a budget request of \$87,474. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Extension Office:** Bill Horan presented a budget request of \$277,203. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Veteran:** Dewey Randall submitted a budget request of \$51,874. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**EMA:** Rick Velasquez presented a budget request of \$105,368 for his general fund budget and \$9,100 for the LEPC Fund budget. A 5% increase in wages was requested. Council requested several line adjustments; PPE Supplies reduced to \$0; Repair/Maint. Supply reduced to \$0; Repairs & Maintenance reduced to \$1,000; Room Rental reduced to \$0; Machinery/Equipment reduced to \$1,000; and Vehicle reduced to \$3,500. An overall reduction of \$19,500 in the EMA budget request.

**Area Plan & GIS:** Mike Lautzenheiser Jr. presented his Plan Commission budget request of \$193,206 and his GIS budget request of \$46,925. A 5% increase in wages was requested. Lautzenheiser requested increasing his board pay to \$70 per meeting. Lautzenheiser spoke in favor of the Commissioner request for a Building Inspector and suggested, if approved, that position to have an office in the Area Plan space.

**Soil & Water:** Eric Johnson presented the budget request of \$45,660. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Prosecuting Attorney:** Colin Andrews presented his general fund budget request of \$710,462, his Pre-Trial Deferral fund budget request of \$21,471, and his Pre-Trial Diversion Budget request of \$1,125. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Andrews is proposing moving two IV-D employees, who are being paid half of their wages from IV-D incentive, to being paid wholly out of the general fund. General fund dollars that are spent on IV-D can be reimbursed back to the General fund at 66%, if reported as such. Currently two employees are getting a stipend of \$750 annually for additional duties, Andrews requested increasing the amount to \$2,500 annually for each employee.

**Superior Court:** Judge Andrew Antrim presented his budget request of \$197,450. A 5% increase in wages was requested. The largest percentage increase in his budget was for translation services, which he stated is becoming an ever-increasing issue.

**Circuit Court:** Judge Kent Kiracofe presented his general fund budget request of \$932,896, the Supp Public Defender Fund budget request of \$15,000, Jury Pay Fund budget request of \$5,000, Adult Probation Fund budget of \$151,060, Juvenile Probation fund budget of \$7,220, the Urinalysis fund budget of \$15,000, and the Substance/Indigent Fund budget request of \$1,310. A 3%-5% increase in wages was requested. The Juvenile Public Defender line increased substantially in that budget; Kiracofe stated that two juvenile public defenders will be paid out of that line.

**Community Corrections:** Community Corrections presented a general fund budget request of \$136,374, a Project Income budget request of \$175,060, a Community Corrections Grant I budget request of \$222,657 and the Misdemeanant Fund budget request of \$17,103. A 3.5% increase in wages was requested. Poindexter has 26 offenders a day currently, when asked he stated that he could manage up to 40 offenders per day without hiring more help.

**Sheriff:** Sheriff Scott Holliday presented the general fund Sheriff's Office budget request of \$2,320,990, the Jail budget request of \$1,871,060, and LIT Public Safety budget request of \$563,171. A 5% increase in wages was requested. Two additional jailers were included in the jail budget request.

**Clerk:** Beth Davis presented her Clerk's office budget request of \$354,394. The requested Election Board budget was \$34,800, the Perpetuation Fund budget was \$3,000. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Statewide 911:** Mike Miller presented the Statewide 911 budget request of \$520,000.

**Auditor:** Lisa McCormick presented her general fund budget request of \$248,004, Auditor's Ineligible Deduction fund budget request of \$6,000, Plat Book Fund budget request of \$13,970, and the County Elected Official Training Fund budget request of \$5,000. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

McCormick requested an increase of 2% in wages above what is granted for other offices, due to the time sensitive nature of her offices' job duties. \$3,000 in office supplies is budgeted in Auditor's Ineligible Deduction fund, McCormick cut \$3,000 from the Auditor's budget in Supplies.

**Innkeepers Tax Collection Fund:** Scott Elzey, Innkeepers Tax board president, presented the Innkeepers Tax budget request of \$80,000.

**County Council:** County Council presented a budget request of \$55,434, LIT Correctional/Rehab Facility budget request of \$339,038 which covers the jail bond payment, Rainy Day had a budget request of \$250,000, the Cumulative Capital Development Fund budget request of \$652,000 which covers the Highway bond payment, LIT dedicated to PSAP budget request for \$400,000, and LIT dedicated to EMS budget request for \$351,220. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

The most requested increases to 2025 budgets were wages.

The next scheduled budget meeting will be on Tuesday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 6:00PM followed by a meeting on Wednesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00PM, and Thursday August 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6PM, all meetings are only if needed.

**Recess:** meeting recessed until Tuesday, August 20<sup>th</sup> at 6PM.

#### WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

---

President, Seth Whicker

---

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

---

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor