

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

BUDGET SESSION August 20, 2024

The Wells County Council met in budget session Monday, August 20, 2024, at 6:00PM 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, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

Council members had discussions on each department, going through the budget book by page and line.

Commissioners: No adjustments were made by County Council in the Commissioners budget. Commissioner President Jeff Stringer was in attendance. Council members discussed the position of Building Inspector that was proposed in the LIT Economic Development budget. Stringer was asked if additional funds would be required for a computer or other office supplies. Council member Huggins also inquired if we could partner with the City for a building inspector. Stringer stated that this is in the planning stages, if allowed to have the position, more conversation will follow. He is planning on connecting with the City of Bluffton to see if sharing is a possibility. The council agreed to leave the Building Inspector position in the budget.

Solid Waste District: Council member Scott Elzey suggested adding River Cleanup into the Solid Waste budget. Auditor Lisa McCormick stated that the Solid Waste District would have to approve the addition into the District budget. A discussion will continue after a decision is made by the Solid Waste District.

Highway, LR&S, and Cumulative Bridge: The ERC Stipend for the Supervisor was reduced from \$28,000 to \$27,000 in the Highway budget. There were no adjustments in the LR&S or Cumulative Bridge budgets.

Surveyor: Two line items were cut from the Surveyor budget. General repairs were reduced from \$1,600 to zero, Cellphone usage was reduced from \$720 to zero.

Health: A full-time Environmental Health position was proposed in the Health budget at an annual wage of \$37,500. A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the full-time Environmental Health position for 2025. Motion carried 4-2 with Brandon Harnish and Vicki Andrews voting no. No adjustments were made to the Local Public Health Services fund, the Local Health Maintenance fund, or the Local Health Dept. Trust Account fund.

Assessor: Appeal expense was cut from the Assessors budget, \$4,200 was budgeted and was reduced to zero. Appeal expense was also cut from the Reassessment budget, \$15,000 was budgeted and was reduced to zero. There were no adjustments to the Sales Disclosure budget.

Recorder: Two line items were reduced in the Recorders General fund budget. Travel Lodging & Conf. Fees were reduced from \$1,100 to \$500, and Training & Seminars was reduced from \$1,100 to \$500. There were no adjustments to the Identification Security Project budget or the Recorders Perpetuation budget requests.

Treasurer: Two line items were reduced in the Treasurers General fund budget. General Repairs was reduced from \$200 to zero, and Dues & Subscriptions was reduced from \$700 to \$475.

Court House: No adjustments were made to the Court House budget.

IT Department: No adjustments were made to the IT Department budget.

Coroner: Two line items were reduced in the Coroner General fund budget. Toxicology was reduced from \$7,500 to \$5,000, and Dues & Subscriptions was reduced from \$850 to zero.

Extension Office: No adjustments were made to the Extension Office budget.

Veteran: Nine line items were reduced in the Veterans General fund budget. Postage was reduced from \$350 to \$300, Professional Services was reduced from \$1,200 to \$1,000, Travel/Mileage was

reduced from \$800 to \$700, Printing & Advertising was reduced from \$800 to \$700, Travel Lodging & Conf fees was reduced from \$700 to \$600, Dues & Subscriptions was reduced from \$350 to \$300, Training & Seminars was reduced from \$600 to \$500, and Memorial Day Expense was reduced from \$2,100 to \$1,600.

EMA: Nine line items were reduced in the EMA General fund budget. PPE Supplies were reduced from \$5,000 to zero, Other Services were reduced from \$3,500 to zero, Repair/Maint Supply was reduced from \$6,000 to zero, Travel Lodging & Conf Fees were reduced from \$3,000 to \$500, Repairs & Maintenance was reduced from \$2,500 to \$1,000, Room Rental was reduced from \$1,000 to zero, Machinery/Equipment was reduced from \$4,000 to \$1,000, and Vehicle was reduced from \$6,500 to \$3,500.

Todd Mahnensmith joined the meeting after the start, his vote was not recorded for prior motions.

Area Plan & GIS: No adjustments were made to the Area Plan & GIS budgets. Lautzenheiser Jr. had requested an increase in Board pay to \$70. The council did not increase Area Plan board pay and would like to keep all boards consistent in pay.

Soil & Water: No adjustments were made to the Soil & Water budget.

Prosecuting Attorney: The Prosecuting Attorney had requested 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. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish to fully fund the two employees out of the General Fund. There was no second motion and Harnish withdrew his motion. A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brandon Harnish to fund one full salary out of the General fund and keep the second salary half out of the General fund and half out of the IV-D Incentive fund. Motion carried 7-0. Three line items were cut from the Prosecuting Attorney General fund budget. Truck Maintenance was cut from \$500 to zero, Vehicle Fuel was cut from \$3,000 to zero, and Vehicle was cut from \$4,500 to zero. The Council wants to keep a firmer grip on vehicle purchases within departments. Andrews requested an increase in a stipend for two of his employees, the requested increase was from \$750 to \$2,500 annually. The County Council did not grant the increase.

Superior Court: No adjustments were made to the Superior Court budget.

Circuit Court: No adjustments were made to the Circuit Court General fund budget, the Supp Public Def Services budget, the Urinalysis fees budget, the Juvenile Probation budget, the Jury Pay budget, and the Substance/Indigent fund budget. Judge Kiracofe has requested a new position in the Supp Adult Probation budget, Probation Officer #7, County Council had questions for the Judge before approving that position.

Community Corrections: No adjustments were made to the Community Corrections General fund budget, the Project Income budget, the Misdemeanant budget, or the Community Corrections Grant I budget. The County Council would like to look at future staffing adjustments regarding offender ratio.

Sheriff: Two lines were reduced in the Sheriff's budget. Police Pension was reduced from \$540,249 to \$506,249, and Service Contracts were reduced from \$48,000 to \$29,100. Two additional jailers were not approved, and the Service Contract line was reduced from \$50,000 to \$48,600. No adjustments were made to the LIT Public Safety budget, or the Vehicle Inspection budget.

Clerk: No adjustments were made to the Clerks General fund budget, the Election Board General fund budget, or the Clerk's Records Perpetuation fund budget.

Statewide 911: No adjustments were made to the Statewide 911 budget.

Auditor: The Office Supply line was reduced from \$3,000 to zero. The Auditor had asked for a 2% additional increase in wages above the 2025 overall raises for her department. The requested increase was not granted. A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the HB 1328 stipend of \$2,500 for the Elected Auditor for 2025 for ongoing Commissioner and Council

support. Motion carried 7-0. No adjustments were made in the Plat Book fund, the Auditors Ineligible Deduction fund, or the Elected Official Training fund.

Innkeepers Tax Collection Fund: No adjustments were made in the Innkeepers Tax Collection Fund.

County Council: Council members discussed Council wages prior to discussing the entire County wages. The discussion included mention of not increasing County Council wages or 3%, no matter what the wage increase was for the rest of the county employees. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to increase the County Council wages by 3%. Motion carried 6-1, Steve Huggins voted no. No adjustments were made to the County Council General fund budget, the Cumulative Capital Development budget, the Rainy Day budget, the LIT Correctional/Rehab Facility budget, the LIT – Dedicated to PSAP budget, or the LIT – Dedicated to EMS budget.

Council members discussed wages for Wells County full and part-time employees. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to increase all full and part-time employee wages by 3% for 2025. Motion carried 6-1 with Brandon Harnish voting no.

Adjourned: County Council adjourned the budget meetings at 8:47. The motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Steve Huggins. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor