

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

BUDGET SESSION August 23, 2023

The Wells County Council met in budget session Wednesday, August 23, 2023, 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 began wage discussions with the county employees who received matrix approval in 2023, Courthouse, Annex, and highway employees.

Steve Huggins felt that no increase was necessary, Brandon Harnish would agree to a 1% increase, Todd Mahnensmith would agree to no more than 2%, Scott Elzey was agreeable to 1%, and Vicki Andrews concurred on 1%. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve a 1% increase on wages for the 2023 matrix employees, add the Elected Officials to the matrix at a wage which is 20% over the 20-year matrix employee for their department, the Coroner will be calculated at 1/3rd of the Surveyors annual wage. Motion carried 7-0.

Wage increases were discussed for all other employees not included in the 2023 matrix, Sheriff, Jail, Probation Officers, County Council, Commissioners, and all part-time. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve a 3.5% increase in wages for the Sheriff's department, jail, Probation Officers, County Council, Commissioners, and all part-time employees. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the maximum a part-time employee could make per hour, except in special cases where the Department Head may request additional compensation per hour and County Council approves the request, at \$16.50 per hour. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Brian Lambert, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve an additional position at the highway department for a highway worker. Motion carried 7-0.

The Sheriff had requested an increase in the part-time jailer range to between \$16-\$20 per hour. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to increase the pay range for part-time jailers to \$16-\$20 per hour. Motion carried 7-0.

The Coroner had requested an increase call rate for her on-call Deputy Coroners to \$125 per call. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to increase the on-call Coroner rate to \$100 per call. Motion carried 7-0.

Prosecutor Colin Andrews has requested a part-time investigator position for his department with an hourly pay rate of \$21.00. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the part-time investigator for the Prosecutor's office with an hourly rate of \$21.00. Motion carried 7-0.

Chief Probation Officer Greg Werich requested a \$5,000 stipend and the title of Assistant Chief Probation Officer to be paid out of the Adult Probation User Fee Fund. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the Assistant Chief Probation Officer stipend of \$5,000. Motion carried 7-0.

The highway department submitted a new job description for the bookkeeper. Their request was to increase her wages up to the median courthouse employee \$39,859. A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to increase the bookkeeper wages to \$39,859 with a 1% increase for 2024. Motion carried 7-0.

The clerk requested an increase for the Election Board Secretary and Board members for 2024 of \$500 annually, the request was denied.

The clerk had requested \$202,000 for new poll pads in the Election budget. At a prior meeting County Council had discussed moving that expenditure Rainy Day. The funding is available to pay for that out of the General Fund.

The health department requested an increase to \$25,000 for the Health Officer, the request was denied. Community Corrections requested an increase to \$25.00 per hour for a part-time field officer, the request was denied.

The Sheriff requested an increase in wages to \$20 per hour for the part-time security officers, the request was denied. Security will increase, like other part-time employees, by 3.5%.

Also requested by the Sheriff was a full-time Courthouse Security position. The council had questions about the position, the full-time Courthouse Security position was tabled. Council members would like a job description to be provided for more clarity.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Brian Lambert to reduce PPE supplies in the EMA budget to zero. Motion carried 5-2, Scott Elzey and Steve Huggins opposed.

Adjourned: County Council adjourned at 6:54. The motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Scott Elzey. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor