

**WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARINGS & REGULAR SESSION
September 5, 2023**

Wells County Council held two Public Hearings and a Regular Session on Tuesday, September 5, 2023, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex meeting room, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Steve Huggins, Scott Elzey, Brian Lambert, Brandon Harnish, and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

**PUBLIC HEARING:
Local Income Tax Ordinance**

Wells County Council held a public hearing regarding the proposed Ordinance for Local Income Tax imposed within Wells County. The proposed ordinance will redistribute current Local Income Tax allocations. Council President Seth Whicker opened the floor for public comment, there were no public comments, the Public Hearing was closed.

**PUBLIC HEARING:
2024 Budgets**

Public Hearing on Rock Creek Conservancy: The 2024 Rock Creek Conservancy advertised budget estimate is \$90,950.

Public Hearing on Wells County Solid Waste District: The 2024 Wells County Solid Waste District advertised budget estimate is \$246,440.

Public Hearing on Wells County Budget: The 2023 Wells County advertised budget estimate is \$23,562,190.

Council President Seth Whicker opened the floor for public comment, there were no public comments, the Public Hearing was closed.

REGULAR SESSION

Minutes: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2023, regular session, the August 10, 2023, August 14, 2023, and August 23, 2023, budget meetings. Motion carried 7-0.

Transfer: A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve transfers in the General fund for the Coroner and EMA departments. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the additional appropriation for the Coroner in the General fund. Motion carried 7-0.
A motion was made by Brandon, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the additional appropriation for the Prosecutor in the General fund. Motion carried 7-0.
A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the additional appropriation for 20.205 County Home Rd-CR450E. Motion carried 7-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 58 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 20 pretrial Circuit, 4 F6 DOC and 8 DOC. Monthly activity reports for August were presented. Sheriff Holliday presented job descriptions for a proposed full-time court security supervisor and the current part-time court security. Full-time security was a 2024 budget request. Seth Whicker asked if Holliday thought the position

would be hard to fill. Holliday responded that he was hopeful that it would not be hard to fill. The required training could be fulfilled by the Sheriff's department. Vicki Andrews asked about how someone with experience would fall into the matrix, if hired. Up to five years is honored for a lateral hire on the matrix, Holliday stated. Todd Mahnensmith asked about weapons, Holliday explained that most of the security hires have their own weapons, which they use while on duty at the Courthouse. Those weapons and employees are approved and qualified by the Sheriff's department if they aren't already qualified by another agency. County Council approved a 3.5% increase in wage for Courthouse Security, Holliday had asked for \$1.00. Holliday asked Council to reconsider the wage increase of \$20 per hour, which would be \$1.00 an hour increase for 2024. Sheriff Holliday has quarterly meetings with County Council and requested to be absent in October. The Sheriff's department will have two transfers and an Additional Appropriation for the Fugitive Transport fund at the October meeting. The Fugitive Transport fund is infrequently used, only when there is need for a transport that requires outsourcing of that transport. County Council was agreeable with Sheriff Holliday not attending the October meeting.

Library Update: Dustin Brown and Sarah MacNeill presented updates on statistics for the Wells County Library. Dustin stated that study room bookings had increased 50%, meeting room bookings had increased 60%. The SBOA has completed the 2021-2022 audit with no issues. The Library's public hearing on the 2024 budget is being held on September 12, 2023. The proposed budget has a 3% increase in employee wages. The summer reading program had an increase of 12% in registrations and a 19% increase in pages read. 126 books were donated to Kate's Cart. The bi-annual children's book festival will be held October 7th with an Indiana author, Shannon Anderson, being the featured guest. Council member Brandon Harnish inquired about the American Library Association and the status of the Wells County Library's membership. Harnish stated that American Library Association has a mission statement of radical left-wing causes. MacNeill commented that the Library board will discuss this issue at the next board meeting, they are aware of the current issues. Harnish expressed hope that the Library will suspend their membership with the American Library Association. Dustin Brown stated that neutrality is key.

Ordinance 2023-12: Wells County Council held a public hearing regarding the proposed ordinance for local income tax imposed within Wells County. The proposed ordinance will redistribute the current local income tax allocations into LIT EMS and LIT PSAP funds. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve Ordinance 2023-12 Modifying Local Income Tax Rates. Motion carried 7-0.

Enhanced Access Fund Ordinance: The County Council was presented with an Ordinance to create an Enhanced Access fund. This fund will be for the collection of all fees paid by the public for any enhanced access to public information. Currently, the County Auditor has an access site for the public to view all transfer and plat books. The fund shall be used for the replacement, improvement, and expansion of capital expenditures or the reimbursement of operating expenses incurred in providing enhanced access to public information. The fund must be appropriated by the County Council. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve Ordinance 2023-13 creating an Enhanced Access Fund, #1154. Motion carried 7-0.

2024 Budget Discussion: Council revisited the Sheriff's request for a full-time security supervisor. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the full-time security supervisor position for 2024. Motion carried 7-0. Also revisited was the request for an increase of \$1 hourly for part-time security for 2024. A motion was made by Brian Lambert, seconded by Scott Elzey to

increase the hourly part-time security to \$20 for 2024. Motion carried 4-3, Vicki Andrews, Steve Huggins and Brandon Harnish voted no.

Adjourned: 7:53 PM motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Steve Huggins to adjourn. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor