

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION November 9, 2022

The Wells County Council met in regular session Wednesday, November 9, 2022, 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, Chuck King, Jim Oswalt, Vicki Andrews, Scott Elzey, Auditor Lisa McCormick, and County Attorney Colin Andrews.

Minutes: Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from the October 4, 2022, regular session and the October 13, 2022, joint Executive Session. Motion carried 7-0.

Transfers: Motion was made by Chuck King, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the transfer in the General Fund for Superior Court, also Cares Act Infectious Disease and Community Corrections Grant II. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: Motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the Additional Appropriation requests for LIT Economic Development, LIT Public Safety, Local Health Dept Trust Account, Supp Adult Probation Service, 20.205 CR 200 S Clark to SR1 and Local Trax Grant 20.205. Motion carried 7-0.

Part-Time Remote: Blake Poindexter came before County Council requesting a change in status for a part-time employee regarding the number of hours of work per week. In the current handbook it states that a full-time affordable care act employee can work 30 hours per week. 30 hours of work makes the employee eligible for legally mandated benefits such as Health/Disability Insurance, Worker's Compensation, and Social Security benefits. These employees are not eligible for Vacation Days, Paid Days off, Holidays, Sick days, Bereavement Leave, Leave of Absence and County retirement benefit programs. Part-time employees are capped at 28 hours per week. Chuck King stated that there has already been a long discussion on this subject at a prior meeting. Vicki Andrews echoed that the subject has been discussed and agreed upon previously. No action was taken on the change of status for the part-time employee.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 85 inmates of those, 29 are pretrial Superior, 32 are pretrial Circuit, 15 F6 DOC and 1 DOC. Sheriff Holliday also provided monthly reports. Construction is complete in the public parking area. Fire Dampers are installed in the renovated portion of the Jail. Occupancy in the renovated area is anticipated to be early December.

Administrative Assistant 2023 Wage: Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. was requesting the same wage increase given to Deputies within the Courthouse for 2023. Lautzenheiser was asked if the Administrative Assistant was on the same pay scale as the Deputies in question. Auditor McCormick and Lautzenheiser reiterated that she was paid the same wage. Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Chuck King to increase the Area Plan Administrative Assistant wage to \$39,052 for 2023. Motion carried 7-0.

Innkeepers Tax: Audry Dudley and Chad Kline presented a proposed Ordinance regarding a Wells County Innkeepers Tax. The funds collected shall be used to promote and encourage conventions, trade shows, special events, recreation, and visitors in and to the County, including administrative and other incidental expenses. A Wells County Convention and Visitors Commission will be created to consult on

expending said funds. Dudley stated that this funding will help fulfill the mission and outcome of Wells County as well as stimulate retention and attraction to the community. This Commission will report to County Council annually with updates. The proposed tax will be five percent of the gross income derived from lodging income only and shall be in addition to the state gross retail tax imposed. This tax will be levied on every person engaged in the business of renting or furnishing, for periods of less than thirty days, any room or rooms, lodgings, or accommodations in any commercial hotel, motel, inn, tourist camp, or tourist cabin located in Wells County. Chuck King stated that he is 100% in favor of the creation of the Innkeepers Tax. Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Jim Oswald to move ahead with a public hearing for the proposed Innkeepers Tax on December 6, 2022. Motion carried 7-0.

Paddlefish Solar: A preliminary (declaratory) resolution was presented to County Council for review and comment. The resolution includes a ten-year real property tax deduction schedule and a ten-year personal property tax deduction schedule for a proposed solar energy generation facility. The project includes real property redevelopment or rehabilitation and the installation of new manufacturing equipment. The abatement schedule is for a 10-year 100% deduction. An SB-1 Statement of Benefits was presented to County Council for approval when the final resolution is presented to County Council. In the preliminary resolution Liberty Township was the only district listed, Jim Oswald questioned the addition of Chester Township in the resolution, it is shown on the map included in the resolution. Jesse Laniak, senior project developer with Paddlefish, stated that yes, it should be included in the resolution. The proposed resolution would create an Economic Revitalization Area. Motion was made by Jim Oswald, seconded by Chuck King to modify the proposed resolution to add Chester Township. Motion carried 7-0. Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Scott Elzey to adopt Resolution 2022-10 as amended for the creation of an Economic Revitalization Area and real and personal property abatement for public hearing on December 6, 2022, to consider a final resolution. Motion carried 7-0. An Economic Development Agreement will be presented to County Council on December 6th for approval.

2023 Sheriff's Salary Contract: Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the 2023 Sheriff's Salary Contract (Misc. 2022-12). Motion carried 7-0.

2023 Surveyor Compensation: Motion was made by Chuck King, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve Ordinance No. 2022-24 fixing the Compensation of the County Surveyor for 2023. Motion carried 7-0. The beginning salary for the surveyor for 2023 is that of a non-registered surveyor.

Public Comment: Leon Berning gave an update on the Regional Sewer District's assistance for low-income residents for decommissioning and connections to the new sewer systems in Liberty Center and Murray. Berning stated that three households have been assisted totaling \$5,322 in support. Craigville is scheduled for the Regional Sewer Districts next project, Berning noted that more donations will be needed for those residents.

Adjourned: 8:14PM Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Vicki Andrews to adjourn. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Steve Huggins

Vice President, Seth Whicker

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor