## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

## **REGULAR SESSION December 22, 2022**

The Wells County Council met in regular session Thursday, December 22, 2022, at 1:30PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 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.

<u>Minutes:</u> Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2022, meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

<u>Transfers:</u> Motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Jim Oswalt to approve the transfers in the General Fund for the Treasurer, Recorder, Sheriff, Commissioners, and Jail, and the transfers in the Community Corrections Grant II Fund. Motion carried 7-0.

Poka-Bache Agreement: A proposed Poka-Bache agreement was presented to County Council for approval. As stated in the proposed Resolution, the Poka-Bache Connector Trail will, when completed, result in the enhancement of the Northeast Indiana region by supporting the regions health and wellness, spurring economic growth, improving access to the natural environment, and attracting additional tourism. Michael Lautzenheiser was on hand to present the resolution to Council. Lautzenheiser stated that the coalitions' goal is to bring an economic benefit to the communities, not a financial burden. Wells County will not need to contribute to any portion of the trail outside of Wells County, Lautzenheiser stressed. The Poka-Bache Coalition is formed by local governments: Wells, Allen, Dekalb, and Steuben Counties and the cities and towns within each county. The Coalition will try to find additional funding options for each participating entity. Each entity has an option to bow out of the agreement if the funding is not economically feasible. The Wells County Commissioners have previously approved a similar agreement, that agreement was subject to final approval by Council and subject to the approval of the agreements of the other participating units of government. Motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Chuck King to approve Resolution 2022-15 approving a form of interlocal agreement for the Poka-Bache Connector Trail. Motion carried 7-0.

<u>Chip Spreader:</u> Bonar stated that his current chip spreader is 21 years old and in need of repairs. Repairs would total approximately \$96,000. Bonar obtained two quotes for new chip spreaders which came in at approximately \$400,000 each, in December pricing had increased to \$433,000. An Ohio manufacturer has had one come available at a cost of \$398,000. This spreader has more options than the two quotes he had previously received. Lead time for a new chip spreader is a year, the next chip and seal season would be lost. \$760,000 was left unspent from his 2022 Highway budget, his intent was to purchase the chip spreader in 2023 using an additional appropriation for that purchase. Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve of the purchase of the \$398,000 chip spreader. Motion carried 7-0.

<u>Highway Employee Retention:</u> Shawn Bonar explained situations within his department that have him concerned. He has lost 8 employees, from May of 2021 to the current date, to other area businesses and government entities due to higher pay. He suggested longevity pay as well as overall increases in his departments salaries to help keep personnel. Steve Huggins thought that something should be done with wages, but the new highway garage will help with morale. Scott Elzey commented that the manager needs to look at all ways to improve morale, including pay. Bonar thought the proposed

increases would be approximately 18% on top of the 7% given for 2023. Also discussed was Ordinance 85-2 which states that all new full-time employees in a nonelective position shall be renumerated at a salary rate of \$500.00 below the position's base rate for a period of one year from the date of hire. Rumschlag felt it hurts morale, he was encouraging the County to eliminate that Ordinance. Personnel within most departments each have the same salaried amount. Vicki Andrews felt the idea behind that Ordinance was for a reduction in the first year for training. Council would like to revisit the topic during the January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**2023 Salary Ordinance:** Motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Jim Oswalt to approve the 2023 Wells County Salary Ordinance 2022-31. Motion carried 7-0.

**Appreciation:** Plaques were presented to Jim Oswalt, 1999-2022, and Chuck King, 2015-2022, in recognition and appreciation of their years of service on Wells County Council.

**<u>Adjourned:</u>** 2:31 PM motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to adjourn.

	WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL
President	Vice President
Attest: Lisa McCormick. Wells Count	<i>y</i> Auditor