

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION December 3, 2024

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 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.

Minutes: A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the minutes from November 6, 2024, regular session. Motion carried 7-0.

Transfers: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the transfer in the General Fund for the Surveyor. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the transfer in the General Fund for the Election Board. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the transfer in the County Home Road-CR450E fund. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General Fund for the Jail. Motion carried 7-0

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation for the Community Transition Program (CTP) fund. Motion carried 7-0.

EMS Annual Report: Trent Bucher and Rick Piepenbrink presented the EMS annual update. Bucher stated that the EMS averages 8.5 runs per day of which 2/3 are chargeable. Medicare and Medicaid patients have significant discounts that are mandated, which historically are 65% of their runs. EMS collects 33% of what is charged. Three locations are maintained to provide timely responses to all areas of the county. The average response time is 6:57 per run, the goal is 13 minutes in the County and 9 minutes in the city. EMS wages have increased due to the labor market hence the foundation balance is decreasing, increased County assistance will help defer total depletion.

Full-Time Prosecutor: Prosecutor Colin Andrews addressed the County Council regarding this body granting permission to allow him to become a full-time prosecutor. The Indiana Code provides that if a prosecutor is to designate himself as full-time, the County Council must sign a consent that will be sent to the State Comptroller. Andrews plans to go to full-time status in January or February of 2025. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve and allow the President to sign the consent of the County Council form for a full-time Prosecutor. Motion carried 7-0.

Innkeepers Tax Update: Audry Dudley updated the County Council on the Innkeepers Tax. Total to date tax collections are \$172,363. Dudley presented the Wells County Visitors Commission 2024-26 Strategic Plan. Included in the plan were pillar statements and strategies including strengthening asset development, market activities and attractions, enhanced organizational awareness, and data and evaluation. The collected funds support county maps, the upkeep of the website, event marketing grants, and mission statements included in the strategic plan. Groups or individuals traveling to the area can get resources, assistance, and the visitor guide for Wells County from the tourism office or from the tourism website. Maps have been created for Quabache State Park, and Downtown Bluffton businesses. The maps will be distributed online as well as local establishments.

EMA Evaluations: Council President Seth Whicker informed the County Council that the Commissioners are conducting EMA interviews. In his opinion, the Commissioners would like to increase job responsibilities for the EMA Director, as well as the base wage. Whicker was informed that the average wage for surrounding areas is \$65,000 annually. The EMA Director and part-time directors' wages are reimbursed by 50% back to Wells County from the State. The County Council agreed that if the wage increased so should the job description, of which the Council would like to see the new and old job descriptions side by side.

2025 Board Appointments: A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to re-appoint Tony Garton to the Alcoholic Beverage Commission board for a 1-year term effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to appoint Vicki Andrews to the Area Plan Commission board for a 4-year term effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2028. Motion carried 7-0. If an elected official is appointed by their board to serve on the Area Plan board the appointment term follows the officials' term.

A motion was made by Seth Whicker, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to re-appoint Scott Elzey to the Bluffton NOW board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to re-appoint Seth Whicker to the E911 Advisory Board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Vicki Andrews to re-appoint Steve Huggins to the Economic Development board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Steve Huggins to re-appoint Todd Mahnensmith to the EMA Advisory board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to re-appoint Todd Mahnensmith to the EMS board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to re-appoint Daryl Shrock to the Huntington City/Town Public Library board for a 4-year term effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2028. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to re-appoint Judy Affolder to the PTABOA board for a 2-year term effective January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2026. Motion carried 6-1. Brandon Harnish voted no.

A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to re-appoint Vicki Andrews to the Wells County Solid Waste board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Steve Huggins to re-appoint Brian Lambert to the Wells County Trails board for 2025. Motion carried 7-0.

Adjourned: 7:50PM motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brandon Harnish to adjourn.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor