

Owen County Council
Minutes-September 26, 2022

Meeting was called to order by President Polly Chesser.

Prayer was led by Chuck Hess; and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was said.

Present: Polly Chesser, Verl Keith, Aton Neff, Andy Wood, Amy Casebeer, Chuck Hess, and Nick Robertson. Also present was Attorney Jim Bryan and Auditor Sheila Reeve. Public sign in attached for permanent record.

2023 Budget Review-

Proposed Budget copies, Tax Rates were provided for review for each department, with a current total amount of \$17,967,671. Additional corrections/changes were made to the Circuit Court, Maintenance-Courthouse, CASA, Highway and LIT Edit. Changes attached for permanent record. Ms. Reeves related that any/all proposed changes following the meeting tonight must be entered into Gateway by tomorrow for advertising of the Public Hearing-October 11th@ 6:30pm.

A motion to increase for advertising purposes only General Fund-\$4.5 million, LIT-\$1m, PSAP Sheriff-\$3.25Million, and MVH-\$3million was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Carried 7-0. A motion to approve/submit to DLGF the Notice to Taxpayers current amounts plus the four increases was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson. Carried 7-0.

Andy Wood started with based on conversations today and accusations over the weekend he feels they should put the Highway Position on hold until after they can dig a little deeper and figure things out. Polly Chesser not that they won't do, but just on hold. They moved on to Agenda Items in order and will come back to this issue.

Ms. Reeves provided an email from DLGF related to the Jennings Township Budget. The original motion to approve has allowed for the maximum rate to be used. While only minimal, a motion was made by Chuck Hess to approve as presented; seconded by Nick Robertson. Carried 7-0.

In that same email she had related that she had omitted the Developmental Disabilities adjustment. Those numbers will be reflected with all the other changes and copies sent for review for the October Hearing.

Mr. Wood restated he does not feel comfortable with moving forward with the Admin Position. Ms. Chesser said a lot of concerns/comments had been brought to her. Again, it's not that they won't approve it, just on hold. Mr. Neff clarified that a vote to swap positions in 2023 was requested at the last meeting to move up in 2022. Did Greg Melton make that decision, or the Commissioners was asked of Gary Burton. He replied it was a decision made by Greg; He commented that he took that at as No. Mr. Burton offered that he thought Mr. Melton's thought was due to loss of revenue and inventory issues of only 632 miles and feels it is closer to 850 miles of roads. He further related that the original maps were colored in crayons and pencils and is costing us monies from the state. Mr. Wood then asked if Melton had resigned over the weekend? Mr. Burton stated absolutely not. Mr. Wood offered that Mr. Melton was upset and had left the meeting. Mr. Burton asked if he was speaking for Greg. Mr. Burton stated it was not a conflict of interest and not nepotism. Two people had applied for the position, and one was hired. Mr. wood feels there is an elephant in the room because everybody has talked about it. Mr. Wood to Commissioner Lowe-do you have any concerns with the hire? He only would state he had talked with his constituents and concerns have been made aware and they are not going to throw him under the bus. To Commissioner Curry-he replied-no. It was also noted that Curry has taken over as liaison at the highway and Burton now is over buildings. Burton commented that the attorney was sitting out there with his law books--ask him. Mr. Hess still has concerns what did or didn't happen and that its unfair to put them in this position. It was asked of Ms. Casebeer if Greg had asked for thirty more days. Ms. Casebeer stated she was abstaining from any conversation. Mr. Hess stated obviously something occurred in between to be that upset. Mr. Burton stated Table it. Mr. Hess feels that they were smacked across the

head. Mr. Burton asked how were they going to look into it? Ms. Chesser feels due to concerns they should postpone until they can decide to reverse/delay. Mr. Hess to Ms. Chesser commented that no constituents called him. Mr. Burton said he hates to think social media runs County Government. Mr. Hess agreed with that comment. In defense of all taxpayers, it's a problem that social media is the only way they find out. Issues from social media/ another family member. Mr. Hess to Mr. Wood asked to postpone action took. Mr. Wood said rescind. Mr. Robertson asked if the position had been filled and Mr. Burton replied yes by Mr. Melton. Mr. wood to Mr. Hess-Temporary reverse action taken and reevaluate. Ms. Casebeer acknowledged that two applications were received. Mr. Wood feels they should talk with Mr. Melton, due diligence. Mr. Neff asked was there any value to call an executive meeting for personnel with legal and commissioners? Mr. Wood asked Ms. Casebeer if Greg was asked to stay for thirty more days—she replied that's what she thought he said. Mr. Burton stated to Curry and Lowe if Melton had resigned, and all said no he has not resigned. Ms. Chesser asked if he had resigned on Friday; Ms. Casebeer said they would have to talk with Melton. Mr. Hess feels Melton is a great guy and wants to speak with him directly and wants to know what initiated his problem and even if smoothed over he still wants to know what happen. Ms. Casebeer commented the public is saying nepotism, but Mr. Bryan is saying its okay. Mr. Melton is not there to ask questions of and to be professional and listen to out constituents on filling that position. We can't ignore the taxpayers. Rachel Combs added it is a problem when social media is the only way to find out stuff, and it's always another family member getting a job. Mr. Wood withdrew his original motion of tabling. Mr. Hess made a motion to advertise an Executive Meeting session prior to October 11th meeting at 6pm for personnel issues. Mr. Neff asked for a friendly amendment to postpone/reverse/put on hold with the decision that was made two weeks ago and put on hold and reevaluate. The meeting will be with council only and then others if necessary. Seconded by Andy Wood. Ms. Casebeer asked if it was the entire position or just the issue? Ms. Reeves feels that if the position is put on hold; it should be related to Melton so he can plan accordingly. Mr. Robertson asked if that position had been filled; Burton said that would be a question for Melton and timeframe to postpone. Where are they going to find the facts? Mr. Wood said at the 10/11 meeting. Motion carried 5-1/Nick-1/Amy. Motion Carried.

911-Kathleen Lamb related that she has one employee gone and one leaves for active duty on October 1st. She has part-time monies and will not exceed 28 hours as a temporary hire. Ms. Lamb will draft a part-time job description and present at the next meeting.

Public-Lori Warner was concerned that at the last meeting her nine-year-old granddaughter was on social media blasted out by Victor Vaillette. He did not have her parents' permission. Sign on door? Hess to Victor-Pixel out? This is a public place. All meetings are on YouTube. Mr. Neff asked if Policy on situation openness and the situation being sensitive. Further discussion will be made at future meetings. Mr. Bryan will look at compliance for social media. Ms. Casebeer commented about nepotism, may not be legally wrong, ethically moral?

Public Member asked for the total of budgets; and Ms. Reeves offered copies after DLGF meeting and would be available in the afternoon. Ms. Combs commented that members tagging posts on social media is where some of the conflicts began and escalate from comments. Mr. Hess added he wished more people would think like her. Ms. Casebeer said the position it put Greg in, not fair. Even though it may not be legally wrong; the public thinks it ethically and morally wrong. Mr. Hess reminded them that they have scheduled a meeting and should not be discussing anything further. Mr. Vaillette complemented members for addressing a difficult situation.

No additional comments were made the Attorney, Auditor or Council Members.

It was agreed so much legal, needed to be careful. A motion to adjourn was made by Chuck Hess. Carried 7-0.