

Owen County Council
Meeting Minutes-December 13, 2021

Meeting was called to order by President Andy Wood at 7pm.

Pledge of Allegiance was said, and Opening Prayer was given by Bruce Hamlin.

Roll was called and public sign in sheet attached for permanent record.

Absent: Verl Keith, Mr. Wood asked Debbie Keith for an update on Verl, relating that he is still having issues since his eye surgery.

Also present was Attorney Jim Bryan and Auditor Sheila Reeves.

A motion to approve the minutes from November was made by Anton Neff, seconded by Nick Robertson.

Motion carried 5-1 Abstention/Hess who was not present at the meeting.

Mr. Wood began with the 2022 Meeting Dates List that Ms. Reeves had prepared for review. A motion to approve the Dates was made Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Motion carried 6-0.

M. Bryan provided Financial Reports for comparisons and current balances of the General Fund-still negative \$179,613.65 and added that Settlement is due and will bring us out of the red going in to 2022.

Other negative Funds include Payroll Clearing-\$524,578.73, Covid #8903-\$2286.64, Covid#8904-\$8000, Community Crossings-\$448,942.89, Covid#9157-\$2462.69, Emergency Preparedness-\$4005.37, PHEP#9162-\$155.77, and Hazard Mitigation#9167 -\$3307.69 with most being Grant Funds that are reimbursable so balances will vary. The Reports also show the receipts versus expenditures for LIT and Riverboat. He feels that everyone working together has allowed for the positive outcome in turning around the deficit. He also added that it is what it is; but a continued monitoring of the receipts and expenditures must be done.

He then reviewed the 2022 Budget and the DLGF 1782 Notice that had been received specifically for the Highway Department. The State had cut the Budget by \$238792. A budget reduction had been prepared and will be presented by Mr. Melton for approval. He noted that this is not a cut in revenue.

Mr. Bryan then gave a general outline for the ARPA Funds-Plan that has been approved by the Commissioners with the amounts for Premium Pay-\$300,000, Infrastructure-\$250,000 and \$1.5 million for other administrative costs. The Plan is in the early stages of being developed and will require the Auditors Office to compile the number of hours worked for all full-time and part-time employees for the year of 2021 before review by Barnes & Thornburg to review final amounts of compensation to be paid. It will be late January or February before the amounts will be approved by Council.

Bruce Hamlin, Debbie Keith, Judy Tucker and Marce King were present to make sure that Council kept in mind that those same ARPA Funds can be utilized for infrastructure that include water and sewer projects to help improve our County. Ms. King reminded them that we are part of the Readi-Initiatives and that funds allotted toward these projects could be matched up to \$50 million dollars. Mr. Hamlin specifically wanting to make sue that water projects are kept at the top of the list to offer quality of water to residents.

Mr. Wood called the Additional Appropriation Hearing to order at 7:39pm. Resolution 2021-43 was presented for the Highway in the amount of \$150,000, Resolution 2021-44 Jail Housing-\$3119.47, Resolution 2012-45 Justice Partners-\$60000 and Resolution 2021-46 EMS \$10000 were presented and approved with a motion by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson. Motion carried 6-0. All Transfers presented by Probation-Donna McElroy were approved with a motion from Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Motion carried 6-0. Public Hearing was closed.

Health Department-Christine McBride presented Grant Fund Budgets for Fund 9162-PHEP \$25000, Fund 9163-Covid Vaccine 42975.17, Fund 9164 CoV2 Testing Clinic \$100000, and Fund 9165 Vaccine Administration Fees \$48799.09. Mr. Neff asked for clarification on \$85000 amount. It was explained that these would put monies in her funds to get them out of the red as these haven't been presented yet. All Grant Funds appropriated amounts were approved with a motion made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Motion carried 6-0.

At this time Andy Wood wanted to acknowledge Kenny Anderson and his long-time service as the County Assessor due to his resignation effective December 31, 2021. He had tried to get him to attend tonight.

911 Dispatch-Kathleen Lamb began with her current/continued staffing issues and will now with the latest resignation of Allan McBride. They will continue their hardest to provide the services needed and she herself will have to continue working the floor and trying to keep up with her own job duties as well.

Next she presented an updated proposal-request for a salary increase for her dispatchers. Original/Updated Options were discussed that provided amounts needed between 2022-2025. A motion from Chuck Hess was made to commit to the base pay raise; seconded by Nick Robertson. Further discussion was concern for continued services with the lack of employees and not receiving qualified applicants at this time, the county financial situation and others that won't receive raises. Polly Chesser feels that this is the only way to alleviate the workload and that this is a Crisis Situation and a step in the right direction. Motion carried 5-1 against/Mr. Neff to proceed with a pay increase.

Mr. Hess made a motion for a salary increase starting January 2022 with a base pay of \$17.08/her for all dispatchers; seconded by Polly Chesser. Mr. Robertson noted that not all departments are under the same umbrella and how do they address this issue moving forward and not allowing them to fall apart. Ms. Lamb feels her fund/cash balances can carry the raises through 2026. She also noted that her building fund loan will be paid off in 2028 that will free up monies to carry the increases given. The motion carried with a vote of 4-2/against Andy Wood/Anton Neff in the amount of \$17.08/hr.

Next Judge Kelsey Hanlon and Judge Lori Quillen presented a proposal for pay raises for their employees also. They had lost one employee earlier due to budget cuts and worked with Council. Statistics for surrounding Counties of Greene, Putnam, Monroe, and Clay all pay more than Owen, with further comment that you can go to fast food places for more money. With the proposed amount for wages/Fica/Perf in the amount of \$12677.29 would be needed. Also noting that the loyalty of the staff, their dedication of picking up additional workloads has allowed for this proposal too. Continued discussion included fairness to other departments, General Fund still in the red with no assurance of how long the settlement funds will last in the new year to maintain 2022 budget, Ms. Casebeer offered that every department could have done something, and they had the guts-foresight to do it, Ms. Stutsman commented that she herself and Auditor had come with a proposal and was told no, and lastly was the Wage Study that had been done with no action taken on it.

Mr. Hess asked to set dates by the March Meeting to address the study, asking Ms. Hanlon could they wait until January meeting. Reply was no they needed to do it now; not wait ninety days. Mr. Neff stating that it would take time to put plans together; Mr. Hess acknowledging that they were at some fault in this and feels that something needs to be done. He even added that if something wasn't done by March Meeting he would resign. At this time Mr. Robertson made a motion to place the request on the agenda; seconded by Mr. Hess in the amount of \$13000 with Ms. Hanlon reviewing exact numbers with Mr. Neff. Ms. Chesser adding that they were not hiring to compensate the differences and Ms. Quillen was even giving funds of \$2200 toward it. Ms. Reeves noted that with the request being on the January Agenda it could be February before final DLGF approval. Mr. Wood called for a vote; 4-2 Against Mr. Wood/Mr. Neff. Motion carried. A copy of the proposal will be attached for permanent record.

Mr. Hess next made a motion to Start the Wage Study discussion with the commitment to complete and/or finalize by March. Second was made Ms. Casebeer; motion carried 6-0.

Highway Superintendent-Greg Melton related that all three of his funds were in the positive ending the year. And thanked everyone who helped in the process. Following the previous raises discussion, he wanted it noted that his budgets couldn't handle pay raises for his employees.

Copies of proposed 2022 Budget cuts in the amount of \$238792 was given for review based on the overall amount cut by DLGF. They were later accepted/approved with a 6-0 vote made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Robertson.

A fifteen-minute break was taken at 9:15.

Sheriff Hobbs only commented to everyone "Merry Christmas" and that we are all blessed, and directly to Mr. Stutsman with his health issues. He thanked Mr. Melton and his staff for a job well done with the storms.

EMS Director Cris Lunsford (was told Happy Birthday from yesterday)

Mr. Lunsford presented an additional appropriation request for \$50000 for the purchase of a new vehicle. A motion to approve the request for the January Public Hearing was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Motion carried 6-0. General update included their run volume was going to be more than last years of 3013 runs, and the second Covid surge has added to the volume. Mr. Hess wanted it noted in the minutes of the passing of former EMS Director Jarred Chaffin.

Nothing further from Ms. King-Redevelopment Commission.

DNR Timber Sales was to go before the Commissioners, not council.

Next Agenda item was for the current Salary Ordinance Confirmations. A motion to allow Mr. Wood to sign the summaries was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Robertson. Motion carried 6-0.

Highway positions had been filled to fix some problems and Mr. Neff wanted the changes formalized in a public meeting for BY2022. Temporarily vacate #19 Truck Driver, Re-activate #3 Laborer, in March re-activate #19 Truck driver with an employee passing of a certification, one of the laborers positions will fill the hole patcher and vacate the respective laborer position. (Proposal from Mr. Melton attached)

A motion to approve the changes was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 6-0.

2022 Salary Ordinance Discussion

Copies of the 2022 Wage Compensations for all Departments/Positions were provided for members to review referring to them as a snapshot subject to policies in place. Mr. Hess related he had received a call regarding the Education Component. They were regarding State Mandated Positions and that they follow Ordinance 2016-001 that has been used each year for budgeting. Mr. Neff stated that it is a "Councils" decision on adopting the policy. Direct question using Mr. White as an example includes no rank/shift and because he is appointed, and the base/cola/longevity spreadsheet identifies the overall process.

Mr. White specifically asked who authorizes the spreadsheet and how it was determined who was not on those positions? Mr. Wood related that lots of different things are used in them and in fairness all members vote. If it was a no vote-it would then be amended by the "Council". Mr. White wanted to know how it was mandated that some get it/some don't by law. Mr. Neff replied to additional pay in the amount of \$400 was set by Indiana Code. Mr. White wants a copy of the Salary and Education Document that shows probation. He further commented that if this is approved tonight it will happen again next year. Mr. Neff related that these are tools to help the board. Mr. White still feels they are built wrong. Mr. Hess asked if there was a problem with the ordinance? Mr. Neff stated that he Job Descriptions state. Mr. White had a copy of Job

Description that he had received. Mr. Neff said that was not the right copy. Mr. White stated that he had received the copy and even had to sign for it in November of 2020. Mr. Wood then offered that if a vote needed to be delayed-ok; but that it was a council document even though Mr. Neff is the one who prepares it. Mr. Neff feels he is being personally attacked and resents it and wants it made clear that it is Board Decision. Mr. Robertson asked if there still was a wage committee? Replies were there was no need for it any longer. Ms. Chesser asked how Mr. Neff can just be asked about payroll and feels it can be a conflict of interest and that maybe they do need a committee. Mr. Neff reminded them all that is why they approve/sign the salary confirmation summaries at every meeting when there are changes made. Mr. Hess asked if the wording should be fine-tuned? Mr. Wood suggested not to vote and have Mr. Bryan look at the documents and identify if there are any grey areas. Ms. Lamb stated that the appointed job description doesn't say "Degree" and Education component even if it doesn't say it.

At this time Mr. Hess made a motion to approve the 2022 Salary Ordinances leaving it open for changes pending the Attorney review as soon as possible. Seconded by Ms. Chesser. Motion carried 5-1/Robertson against. Mr. White was still concerned/confused if Job Descriptions had been sent out or not last year? He requested copies of the worksheet built and still feels it is a conflict, and the policies being used. Ms. Reeves will provide him the copies requested.

Next Council discussed the 2022 Budgets acknowledging the DLGF 1782 Notice that has been received approving all the Funds/Budget requests except for the Highway Department in the amount of \$238792. Also noted was the increase for the coroner; it was not considered due to the fact it had not been advertised as part of the Public Hearing that was held. Mr. Melton had presented a proposal for the areas he feels can be reduced. A motion to accept was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Robertson. Carried 6-0.

Ms. Lamb then requested approval to shifting some numbers and create a line item in her current budget to possibly fill with part-time hours due to her current staffing situation. Agreed the funds are available to do so.

Mr. Barnett offered his opinion regarding the ARPA Funds, and that the money is not free.

No further comments were made by the Attorney and Auditor.

A motion to adjourn was made by Chuck Hess.