

Owen County Council
Minutes-May 10, 2021

Meeting was called to order by President Andy Wood.

Pledge of Allegiance was said, and opening Prayer was led by Chuck Hess.

Roll was called, all members present. Public Sign in sheet will be attached permanent record.

A motion to approve the minutes from April 12, 2021, was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess.

Motion carried 7-0.

A ten-minute recess was taken because of sound issues. Motion made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Carried 7-0. Meeting restarted at 7:17pm.

A Final Copy of the Crowe LLC Report was presented via Cell Phone by Mr. Berry for approval. Noted that the Commissioners had accepted the Report at their last meeting. Mr. Neff confirmed that no changes or modifications since the report was given. Mr. Berry confirmed no changes. Mr. Wood asked about the Audit Reports and the contents contained and why were they not addressed at that time? Mr. Berry replied per the 2018 Report and typically they are presented to the Office Holder who it may have affected, and Commissioner and Council Presidents are part of that Out-process. The negative Clearing house Fund and negative balance was mentioned in the last two Audits. SBOA posts the Audits on their websites. Mr. Hess asked about the actual report and information provided; Mr. Berry related specifically that this was a financial review not an audit as he is not a CPA and not allowed. He feels that this was to be a way to find a problem that had occurred as to why certain things had not been paid in 2020; this report does not do them any good. Something did not get paid from multiple offices-He wants to know what items did not get paid.

Encumbrances and Additional Appropriations were not done, and why not done and negligence was done by whom? Mr. Neff still feels that there are valuable in the report with the fact of an outgoing and incoming auditor that allows some helpful information and direction. A motion to accept the Report was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Anton Neff. Motion carried 7-0. Mr. Wood thanked Mr. Berry for his work.

Next Attorney Bryan reviewed the 2021 Budgets and current fiscal analysis per the Crowe Report pages twelve and fifteen recommending and/or suggesting cutting expenses and raise revenue to square amounts. As of the April 30th, fifteen funds were in the red. Realistically a cut of 20% is needed. Accounts need to be reviewed and corrections made to give an exact look at numbers for further review. It was agreed that Departments cannot continue to turn in same budgets and that actual expenditures need to be shown. It was suggested to possibly call a special meeting to look at funds with cash balances and start moving monies to clear the General Fund and balance others in the red. Mr. Wood stated that all funds are on the table. Mr. Neff requested a master list to use a checkoff and compared to options, Mr. Bryan related he could create a 95% list of areas to look at. Judge-Kelsey Hanlon commented that she had looked through some of the Statutory Requirements for some of these funds and that needs to be part of these decisions being considered and may require ordinances, so action needs to be taken now versus the timeline that has been set. Sheriff Hobbs stated that Departments need to know what to do. Basically related, is for Council to tell them what to do and move on.

A meeting date was set for Tuesday-May 25th @6pm. Council, Commissioners and Departments are encouraged to provide any and/all ideas or possibilities to help achieve these goals.

At this time Resolution 2021-11 Hiring Freeze was presented and read Attorney Bryan. Concern for Public Safety Departments needing to be exempt from the freeze was discussed. How long is the duration of the freeze and what avenues do departments have if they cannot afford not to hire/replace an employee. He related that at some point freeze or cuts must come from somewhere to meet the budget. Mr. Wood offered to Elected Officials to fill out and submit the form to them tonight for approvals.

At this time, a motion to the postpone the Freeze Ordinance was made by Nick Robertson; seconded by Chuck Hess. Vote was 2-for/; 5-against. Motion died for lack of majority vote.

A motion was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Amy Casebeer to adopt 2021-11 as presented. Motion carried 5-2 with Robertson/Hess against.

Mr. Wood Re-opened the Public Hearing at 8:30pm. Noted that member Amy Casebeer had to leave due to mother's health situation. Mr. Wood asked for Sheriff Hobbs to lead in a prayer for her.

Additional Appropriation Requests were made by Sheriff Hobbs for \$31154.35 and 911 Director Kathleen Lamb requested \$1459.19 to correct errors of prior claims processed. Motion was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson to approve all requests with the clarification of the SBOA direction to move expenses from the General/not put in fund. Motion carried 6-0.

Hearing was closed at 8:37pm. A confirmation of the Appropriations was verified.

Sheriff's Department-Sheriff Hobbs informed members that the County would be receiving re-imbusement from the Schools in the amount of \$91000. He also reminded them that last year's shortfall in regular wages of \$156000 was some of these funds that had been expended. He requested that these monies be put in that line item specifically. Mr. Neff says that these come in as miscellaneous revenue as part of the General Fund. Continued discussion about how to address the shortfall in 2020 versus the inheritance of the negative balance in his 2021 Budget. Where do they make that up from? Riverboat possibly? Mr. Hess asked where the neglected monies is to be paid from; does it need to be reduced. These shortfalls are to be addressed at the next meeting to settle-up.

Pension Fund-Due to the financial processes that were not done previously; it was necessary to process the claims that had been submitted to maintain the Sheriff's Employee Pension from 2021 monies. A claim is now due for \$266341 by 12/31/21. Also, that next year's fund is going up to \$303398 for a full payment Hobbs offered a proposal to pay out of his Jail Housing Fund what was due along with his tax warrant and civil fees monies. If the Council would pay the Pension Fund with the noted increase for 2022; he would in turn offer to pay off the Storage Unit Loan. It was agreed to take under advisement. It was asked for the Auditor and Attorney to review and see where the pension funds had been spent as they were budgeted. Mr. Hess added that he is tired of the Jail Project to continually be putting off, He would recommend that this Council not accept this proposal until the commissioners agree to move forward.

Assessor Kenny Anderson presented two names for appointment to the PTBOA Board: Suzanne Simmerman and Bob Janke. A motion to approve the appointment with the waiver of the political stipulation. was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Anton Neff. Motion passed 6-0.

Highway Department-Mr. Melton had to leave so no business came before the council. Attorney Bryan did offer that the Highway had received the Community Crossings Grants and that the further Funds review are to be held in moving forward.

Economic Development Tax Abatement paperwork for Hoosier Energy was presented by Nicole VanDerMoere for signatures and approval. It was agreed that they had met all the requirements that had been set. A motion to approve was made by Verl Keith; seconded by Chuck Hess. Motion carried 6-0. Mr. Wood will sign the appropriate paperwork. Mr. Neff reminded members of the agreed REMC payments and expected timeline for payoff that might offer some relief soon.

Courtney Cole presented copies for the Drug Free Grant Projects for 2021. Six Projects include Sheriff-\$10000, Ct Services-\$, Ct Service Drug Testing-\$5000, Hooked on Fishing-\$2000, McCormicks Creek Elementary-\$4000,

and Hamilton Center-\$5590, all have been approved by the Board. A motion to approve the Projects and monies requested was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson. Motion carried 6-0.

Treasurer and Auditor's Report were provided for review and previously discussed by Mr. Bryan. At this time, Mr. Neff inquired from Treasurer Stutsman the current financial status as well as Settlement to be received on the 18th; Estimating around Ten Million to be received.

Mr. Wood related that for 2022 Budgets and implementing direction for making cuts with the projected target dates for budgeting timelines needs to be given. Cuts of 20% need to be considered and only 50 days for the receiving of the budgets and hearings to start. He thanked Mr. Bryan for keeping a pulse on the Funds and helping them move forward. Mr. Hess offered that the Council should suspend the Grant Funds in the amount of \$36000 to help alleviate some of the financial burden we are currently under.

Elected Officials-

911 Director presented a Freeze Exemption Form to hire/replace a dispatcher. A motion to approve the request as presented was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Anton Neff. Motion carried 6-0.

Sheriff Hobbs presented a Freeze Exemption Form to fill a vacancy for a road officer. A motion to approve the request as presented was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson. Motion carried 6-0.

Mr. Neff, on behalf of the Commissioners (Mr. Burton had left) presented an IT Transfer Request to move the funds that were appropriated backwards in hardware and software be approved. A motion to approve the change in name only was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Motion carried 6-0.

Clarification on the Maintenance Superintendent Position due to discussion was verified by Mr. Burton that it was a fulltime at 35hrs with the approval of up to 40 hours in the amount of \$2500 to cover the added hours as well as vacate the part-time position. Mr. Neff asked Ms. Reeves was she ok with that; she stated for the record that is not was said and approved in the Commissioners Meeting and it is not up to her to debate that she only takes the minutes. Anton Neff made a motion to approve the request as he has stated and confirm or formalize the motion at the next Commissioners Meeting; died for a lack of second. Mr. Hess asked why this was being addressed now and not at Budget Hearings; Mr. Neff said it had already been previously discussed and this was just finishing it up. Mr. Wood stated that it is not exactly clear on what was said, and it should probably be tabled. Mr. Hess asked of the Auditor what exactly what was not correct. She offered Mr. Bryan was also asked if he were clear on what was agreed upon whether than hiring two people the flexibility to work the time from 35-40 hours that he would be able to work. It will be re-discussed at the upcoming Commissioners Meeting on the 17th for confirmation of hours. Mr. Hess asked why they passed the hiring freeze and then sitting here considering an increase. Mr. Neff offered it would be a cost saving. Take the Courthouse Budget and check the correct amounts are there.

Public Comment-

Barron Barnett presented a list of demands for the council to consider addressing the current financial issues.

Mr. Neff added that he feels that they need to keep a pulse on Internal Controls as Council Specific for the May 25th Meeting; nothing formal at this time is in place. He had also checked with other Counties, none had anything either.

Copies of Salary Summaries were presented for signatures. A motion to allow Mr. Wood to sign the summaries as presented was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson. Motion carried 6-0.

Auditor-

The Storage Unit Bill for \$40649.10 was presented to request where to pay from. A motion was made by Anton to allow the Auditor to appropriate from the Edit Fund #4015 and the balance to apply toward the loan of the property. Seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 6-0.

Discussion of the Paycor-Payroll Status was tabled again as Commissioners have put it on hold. Mr. Wood has learned that there is now trouble linking up it on it; and now hearing it is not compatible.

Mr. Hess stated that LOW had said that they would be there for us, put on record.

Mr. Wood noted that when they had asked for the Crowe Report that there were problems and/or issues but they have taken action to address the situation. Mr. Bryan offered that everyone has been cooperative in working towards trying to help fix the problems at hand and moving forward. Mr. Keith offered that everyone is depending on the Auditors Office has a lot of responsibility and she is trying to do it right and all should continue working together, but the Council should not have to take all the heat from the previous processes. Various Council Members added comments that they intend to do the job that is needed, being optimistic and better comradery and transparency.

Brett Stutsman added that in full transparency; was there any offers for the hiring freeze 5pm deadline that goes into effect tomorrow. Any last-minute offers that went out prior to the freeze? Real curious to know. Mr. Wood related that at the last Council Meeting there was a proposal on the table to have a hiring freeze. There have been hires and calls received prior to tonight's meeting and persons hired. Discussion about action for Auditor was discussed with the Commissioner and Attorney, no action has been taken on it though. In listening to various meetings one thing is apparent that there seems to be at times of inflating the roles software/people/processes. He urges this body not to be put off a piece of the software system of the responsibility that people had and failure of processes of reviewing things that got us to this point. What are the Controls in place that checks what the spending is for budgets and appropriations? He is not hearing this in discussions. Sometimes he wonders if we would recognize it if it bit us in the palm. Mr. Wood reviewed earlier comments from the Attorney; and the process necessary to make sure the double check is being done and lastly the vote from Commissioners. Part of the Ordinance-what is the financial state of the county is to be presented as well and have been being done currently. Mr. Hess asked if the public could access; related yes through DLGF and Gateway.

A motion to adjourn was made by Chuck Hess.