

Owen County Council
Minutes-November 14, 2022

Meeting was called to order by President Polly Chesser.

Opening Prayer was given, and Pledge of Allegiance was said led by Second Class Scout Austin Minor.

Neff gave a brief introduction noting that he is working on his Citizenship project to shadowing and engaging in community. He offered that his brother had won the AIC Essay Contest too.

Reeves introduced the new County Attorney Dana Kerr to members.

Present: Polly Chesser, Verl Keith, Andy Wood, Anton Neff, Amy Casebeer, Chuck Hess, and Nick Robertson.

Also present auditor Sheila Reeves.

Minutes were tabled. Monthly Financial Reports were provided for review ending October 31st and one as of today's date as well. Neff asked for verification on Settlement; Reeves related on Wednesday-16th

Ms. Reeves provided copies of the DLGF-1782 Notice that had been received approving all the 2023 County Budgets that had been submitted. At this time, they are required to review and make any changes and/or accept.

Neff regarding the Sheriff's Budget wage totals was a \$2500 difference. Hobbs agreed to let it ride out and possibly might have to do an additional appropriation later in the year.

Ending Cash Balance-Health Plans

Wood-Health Department to build Cash Balance can use other funds if necessary. A new Core Values Program is being introduced at the State for all Health Departments.

Chesser and Neff then reviewed the remaining \$112608 and possible options with raises for closing the gaps. ¼ to the midpoint, 12% gap, affected number of people, employee level details, concern with elected officials are all options discussed.

Raises would not include Sheriff, Jailers, Deputies, Dispatchers, Two Office Highway Positions, Clerks, Circuit Court, EMS (except admin), Probation/Mandated, Building at 26% estimated cost \$53000.

Robertson feels that they have already looked at individually and feels they need to look at Elected Officials. A motion was made by Robertson; seconded by Casebeer to give all elected officials a 6% raise. The positions were listed, and estimated amounts given based on the position; not an individual.

A friendly amendment was made by Hess; seconded by Neff to remove Council and Commissioners from the proposed raises. Robertson withdrew his original motion.

Neff figured 30% which is more than halfway to midpoint. Estimated amounts for the Clerk-2800, Assessor-2544, Recorder-1800, Coroner-7300, Auditor-1900, and Treasurer-1800 for an estimated total of \$85000.

A motion was made by Wood; seconded by Chesser to approve 30% less Commissioner and Council.

Neff a monkey wrench for the highway which is less than the target. Greg Melton had a proposal prepared to present. Although it has a lot of moving parts and concern with a cash shortfall a motion to accept his proposal was made by Hess; seconded by Keith. This will include vacating two pos and cutting more for a total of 25 truck/laborers/seasonal employees. This gives his total budgeted amounts at \$2981193, however they agreed to leave the extra advertised funds at the \$3million.

Additional discussion regarding the new administrative position and baseline pay at 19.686. with these changes the new total amount is 2981424. Motion clarified and passed 6-1/Neff.

A final motion made by Wood; seconded by Neff to approve a 30% pay raises for all employees not on the original list that had already received raises earlier. The motion included Chesser, Reeves, and Neff consulting with each other to submit the 2023 Budgets with an estimated cost not to exceed \$85000. Passed 7-0.

Chesser asked about the new Highway position, Neff saying it was to catch up on road inventory. Asking of Gary can it be done on contract; he referred them to Greg about vetting of roads and bridge issues, shuffling staff around but still feels it will bring money into the County. Keith would like to allow Greg part-time wherever he needs it. Wood reminded of WTH when here saying that they can help rectify it and most likely not year-round. Neff feels that the problem needs to be identified and solid information before committing. It had been asked about a contract position with no action taken on it. Greg related that the Commissioners already have a contract with WTH and have vetted this position. Casebeer, relating she thinks its no easy task and the people in the office don't have time to do it. Whiting says the County has known for thirty years that it's been wrong. Hess asked what really is the problem, we think there are more roads than recorded; maybe hire company to rectify is an option. While it has been approved for 2023, he feels there is still missing information to decide. Greg reminded them that the Commissioners do the contracts, and if this does go through that he will have Whiting doing the job as she already knows the roads. Hess is needing more substantial information and evidence to change his mind. Melton feels they have lost faith in him to do the job. WTH gave information on the process. Robertson made a motion to take back position and give truck driver. Died for lack of a second. Keith made a motion to keep it as is; seconded by Robertson for discussion and was to revisit in December Meeting. Robertson withdrew his second.

Wood stated a lot of pushbacks from the community and made a motion to take it out of the 2023 Budget; seconded by Robertson. Motion passed 3/2-Neff-Keith/2abstention Casebeer-Hess.

ARPA Fund Plan Review-Burton related no plan at this time. Had originally okayed with raises for the courthouse employees and that didn't happen. Council can't pick and choose. Request to modify to use for Roads. In the amount of \$500000, and that would leave a balance of unused monies for the same amount at this time. A motion to accept the Road Plan presented was made by Neff; seconded by Keith. Carried 7-0.

Chesser opened the Additional Appropriation Hearing at 10:14pm. A motion to approve the requested list presented and read was made by Hess; seconded by Robertson. Carried 7-0. List available for review. Chesser closed hearing a 10:16pm.

New Additional Appropriation Request List presented that also included transfers was approved for advertising with a motion from Hess; seconded by Robertson. Carried 7-0.

Reeves related that the Care of Patients Line Item is negative \$79730. A motion to pay from the Riverboat Fund was made by Hess; seconded by Neff. Carried 7-0.

Next Reeves presented a request for an extension on the personnel policy and maximum allowed balances. She has two employees with several accumulated hours from over the years and being short staffed does not have any way of getting them out of the office by the December use-it or lose-it. Members agreed that it should be across the board and approved a six-month extension for all departments. A motion was originally made by Wood to grant it only to the Auditor and then seconded by Neff. Motion was withdrawn by Wood. EMS Cris Lunsford also added that he was having to work and struggling to get his people out too. The motion to grant across the board was made by Neff; seconded by Robertson. Carried 6-1abstention/Hess who feels they are opening a pandoras box. Chesser feels the sad part is that this has been years in the making. Robertson feels they have put these offices in this position too.

A motion to allow Chesser to sign the Salary Confirmation Summaries was made by Neff; seconded by Hess. Carried 7-0.

Public Comment-

Victor Vaillette says this meeting has somebody sniffing so listening livestream was hearing it.

He asked Neff if he could use screen projection because it would've been nice to see what Neff was seeing. Reeves said yes it could have but they were not using LOW tonight, so they didn't have it turned on. Also, that she didn't even have what Neff was reading from. Next, he reminded them that when Tim Berry-Crowe gave his Report he tried to tell them to have a County Manager, the need is still there. He feels the county can afford it especially when they are paying \$13333 for a part-time attorney.

Barron Barnett-County Roads, hire outside firm and have them mark them. Take Report, vote and certify and then give to highway and state for certification.

Jeff Marks-Likes idea of having salaries adjusted properly, but they should recognize that the best services are needed as well.

Neff does a wonderful job at the legislative breakfast each month to address the Road Funds issue with our State Representatives.

Agrees with Victor they need a County Manager.

No Attorney comments, Auditor comments, or Council Comments were made.

A motion to adjourn was made by Hess.