

Owen County Council
Minutes-September 12, 2022

Meeting was called to order by President Polly Chesser.

Councilman Chuck Hess began by singing the National Anthem, prayer led by Nick Robertson, and Pledge of Allegiance 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. A motion to approve the August Regular Meeting Minutes and August Budget Hearings Minutes was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Andy Wood. Motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Bryan had provided a Financial Review Summary for the General Fund, Fund Comparisons, Major Operating Balances, Jail Project and Jail Facilities Tax, Certified Levy Rates, December Property Tax, and LIT Edit. All reports are attached for record. More specific conversation was about the new jail with an estimated \$28million dollar expense, and the costs were still of concern. Some members feel the can just keeps getting kicked down the road. There had been a meeting about the jail with commissioner and companies involved, and Mr. Hobbs noted he had not been invited to it. Mr. Hobbs and Ryan White both agree that if they do not have staff to run it, and they are here to serve the taxpayers and that raises are necessary. He also feels that the project is still affordable. Possibly have the Jail Garmong and Zurcher attend the November Meeting was agreed upon. Again, Mr. Bryan reviewed all the possible areas for funding. Mr. Wood is still concerned with it not being nailed down (so to say) when this is going to happen, raises and were still nowhere closer to making a decision, with no real directive. Mr. Hess agrees they have not been given enough information to make the decision. Mr. Bryan related that holding off was made by Garmond to hold off. Bond Issues can be given at the October Meeting. The commissioners had tabled the Jail Project until next year due to financial concerns.

Old Business

2023 Budget Review was given. Corrections/Changes from the August Hearings was given. A motion to add a 10-15% cushion for Liability Insurance was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Carried 7-0.

EMS and exploring the cash balance and possible options of funds was discussed. A motion was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson to have a draft ordinance to pay off the building loan by the end of the year. Carried 7-0. Also, DLGF had related and a copy of the Indiana Code to use 15% of cash balances for consideration. A motion was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Andy Wood to have a draft ordinance only to further review/consider the Rainy-Day Code. This information had just been received this morning during a pre-budget meeting. It was agreed to discuss them further at the upcoming meeting on the 26th.

ARPA Funds review included the categories/buckets that have already been set. Mr. Bryan related that at the commissioners meeting they had discussed the option of giving the highway an additional \$500000, as the council had not given raises. It is also being proposed to start paying general fund line items from the ARPA monies to offset the pending negative amounts of \$448000 and \$524000 that also would e considered for raises for the courthouse employees. Ms. Chesser noted that this was a good example of not working together. She had attended a meeting and had not been allowed to speak. It was agreed that discussion needs to be had in moving forward, Mr. Neff and other members agreed also. This will be going to the Commissioners and then to the council on October 11th.

Holiday Pay for Dispatch and EMS was approved at the last meeting, and this completes the Sheriff's Department of Employees owed of \$1249 with a motion to pay from Riverboat from Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Carried 7-0.

Mr. Bryan reviewed the pending WTH Bill and that the Auditors Office had already paid the claim and that it would need to be decided for 2023.

Public Hearing-Additional Appropriations was opened at 8:25. Mr. Hess read the list presented and made a motion to approve; seconded by Andy Wood. Carried 6-0-1/Neff. Hearing closed at 8:28pm.

New Business-

Jennings Township Trustee Sue Nichols presented the 2023 Budget for approval. She indicated that it was the same as last year. A motion to approve was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Verl Keith. Carried 7-0.

A motion to approve the appointment of Jennifer Abrell to the Library Board was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Anton Neff. Carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Anton Neff to approve the Circuit Court Additional Appropriation Request of \$582.17. Carried 7-0.

A motion to approve the transfer of funds for EMS was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Nick Robertson. The motion included an amendment to increase the request to \$16000. Carried 7-0.

Christine McBride-Health Department presented a State Grant Application in the amount of \$110000 for Co-Agra School/Child Vax. A motion to approve the appropriation was made by Andy Wood; seconded by Chuck Hess. Carried 7-0.

Highway Greg Melton and Rachel Whiting presented additional appropriations requests for MVH-\$171, MVH Restricted-\$932.61, L&R-\$915.88, MVH-\$27500. Per an email that had been received regarding an emergency road closure it was agreed to advertise the amount of \$48000 (and then agreed to double it) so he would have the funds to replace the expenses from Fund 1135. A motion to approve advertising the requests was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Andy Wood. Carried 7-0.

Mr. Melton then asked to move the new employee office support staff position/Level C entry level (vacating a driver position) that was approved for 2023 and advertise for it now. He feels he has the funds available since he hasn't had full staffing throughout the year. A motion to approve was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess with Transfers. Carried 7-0. The hourly amount starting rate will be \$18.519.

A motion to approve the Salary Ordinance Confirmation Summaries was made by Andy Wood; seconded by Chuck Hess. Carried 7-0.

Elected Officials-

Angi Frank related this would be her last meeting as Coroner and introduced Shelby Hunter as the candidate she supported. An additional request will be made at the next meeting for body bags. An employment agreement had been proposed to allow current employees to also serve as deputy coroners. Pending review by Attorney. Mr. Neff thanked her for her 22 years.

WTH Contract Kathleen Lamb reviewed again as to who would be paying it for 2023. Currently, it is in her budget for 2023. It has been related it is for support not public safety. Mr. Neff offered the \$5400 could be placed in the general/commissioners possible. It makes since that it should be paid from Mapping and review of user licenses. It had been paid from mapping in the past, which is now in the building department.

Mr. Hess asked if any of the additional appropriations could be included in the September 26th meeting. Advertising may be an issue, but Ms. Reeves will contact the paper.

No Public Comment, Attorney Comment, Auditor Comment, or Council Comments were made.

A motion to adjourn was made by Andy Wood; seconded by Chuck Hess-Carried 7-0.