

Owen County Council  
Minutes-July 20, 2021

Meeting was called to order by President Andy Wood.

Pledge of Allegiance was said, Opening Prayer was given by Nick Robertson.

Roll was called; Public signed in-attached for permanent record.

A motion to approve the minutes from May 10<sup>th</sup>, May 25<sup>th</sup>, June 14<sup>th</sup> Work Session, and June 14<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Verl Keith. Motion carried 6-0-1Abstention/Chuck Hess.

#### Old Business

Peter's Municipal Consulting was not present relating their report was not ready at this time.

Attorney Jim Bryan gave a brief review of the County Funds dated July 14<sup>th</sup>; noting thirteen funds are still in the red with the General Fund still a negative \$272028.71. His presentation included 2021 and 2022 Budget Reviews and Proposed Changes based on the Monthly Ledger Report ending June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Bryan then reviewed a proposal-spending Plan for the General Fund that he had put together for consideration to help with the continued deficit/negative balances. There have been cuts, layoffs, and other cost reductions by departments and officials in an estimated amount of \$300,000 to be applied toward the negative balance. After reviewing the estimated/projected revenue from various Funds and areas that can be utilized the following motion was made to request approval from DLGF to use: (Specifically Attorney's Proposal-Attached for permanent record)

LIT Edit Fund #7332 in the amount of \$800,000 applied as follows: Personal Services-\$50000, Supplies-\$350,000, Other Services-\$350,000, and Capital Outlay-\$50,000.

Riverboat Fund # 1191 \$304,716.05 for Professional Fees-\$45,000, County Legal Fees-\$79,999.99, Publication Legal Notices-\$4000, Supplies-\$7738.20, Other Services-\$7341.86, Copy Machine Lease-\$15,636, and Utilities-\$145,000.

Jail Housing Fund# 4906 \$55,000, Medical Prisoners-\$55,000.

Sheriff Fuel Reimbursement Fund# 4913 \$60,000.

Correctional Facilities Fund#1233 \$85,000.

Motion was made by Chuck Hess to proceed with the Plan as presented with a Public Hearing to be held on August 11<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm; seconded by Nick Robertson. Motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Hess' motion also included to advertise the Budget Hearings for August 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and a back-up day of the 13<sup>th</sup> if needed with all beginning each day at 8am.

Mr. Wood thanked him for his time and proposal and helping close the Gap.

Next Mr. Wood asked of Members to consider the LIT Tax increase. Mr. Neff wanted clarification that the numbers on the report did not reflect prior reductions/appropriations-Mr. Bryan confirmed correct. Also, it does not include the Fall Settlement that will be received in December-Mr. Bryan confirmed correct.

Polly Chesser added that normal protocol of projecting high on expenditures and low on revenue; we must be in the black by November 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Robertson was concerned with having everything as far as numbers ready by the Hearings, Ms. Reeves will make the proper advertisements that will allow review of the numbers to assist with the budgeting process. He also commented about the other members considering raising taxes, Mr. Wood related that the preliminary conversation only has been made about increases and will be decided at a public hearing and the proper steps taken. Mr. Hess added that the reasons for being here were because somebody hit the wrong button and cost us \$910,000, and Covid for 2020. He specifically wanted to know if the amount could be recovered from the State or the person who pushed the button-Mr. Bryan confirmed no.

Prosecutor Don VanDerMoere asked what it was going to take to bring the Funds square? Attorney Bryan explained that the proposal was a best guess to a level playing field or closing the gap with multiple funds being exhausted and no let up of the draining. Mr. VanDerMoere related that he had spoken with Mr. Wood earlier and in preparing for this meeting had anticipated arguing to keep employees and funds—Is that what we are still doing tonight? Mr. Wood related that would be coming up under new business later in the meeting. The reason he was asking, if proposing tax increase and reducing expenditures outside the general fund for the rest of 2021-Mr. Wood related that from August to the end of the year with the reductions and possibly sustain a 2022 Budget without considering some cuts. Mr. Bryan related that they are looking at a \$1.8 Million dollar deficit and anything that can be cut; should be considered.

Mr. Bryan provided a Planning Calendar for an Income Tax Increase and ask Council Members if they wanted him to prepare an Ordinance for a LIT Tax Increase for the August 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting? A consensus vote was taken to allow him to prepare it for consideration. 5-2/Hess-Robertson against.

Next Mr. Bryan presented and read Ordinance 2021-13 Surveyor Perpetuation Fund allowing reductions from his Fund to pay the Building Administrator costs for job related duties. Affidavits were presented as well and it would become effective August 1<sup>st</sup>. A motion to approve the Ordinance was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Anton Neff. Motion carried 7-0.

Mr. Wood opened the Public Hearing at 8:05 pm. Mr. Neff reviewed the proposed list of reductions and appropriations that had been advertised. A motion to approve the list was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Ms. Chesser. Motion carried 7-0. Mr. Wood closed the Public Hearing at 8:20. A short break was taken.

#### New Business

Frustration amongst Members and Department Members about the Objection of the meeting and trying to do what is needed to reduce the deficit unfortunately added some heated conversation and disagreements.

In moving forward, the following actions were taken:

1. Clerk Lesliann Burton presented her current situation with an open position and the Election Registration as well. Members voted to downsize one person at this time.
2. Assessor Kenny Anderson presented a Freeze Exemption Request to fill his vacant position furthering explaining the importance of the job. A motion not to approve the request was 3-2-2/Wood-Casebeer.
3. Prosecutor Don VanDerMoere began with an overview of what his Office has provided that benefited the County and multiple Departments. He has done the right thing with his Funds and to be fair hogs at the troth caused the problems. Mr. Hess asked for clarification on who they were. Mr. VanDerMoere stated no one in particular; but its beyond unfair. At this time a proposed amount of \$45000 of the User Fund Account was offered to fund his staff allowing the reduction to the General Fund for the rest of this year and pro-rated for next year. He asked about Internal Controls after Angie Lawson and who was checking, why weren't people pitching fits with all the red flags that were there; Mr. Wood related that Transparency was a key factor in moving forward. Mr. Bryan offered that there were no checks and balances in 2019 and 2020 but feels that corrective actions have been put into place at this time. Mr. Neff thanked him for his assessment of the situation and comments that offers a broader issue of the importance of county government. Motion to use the User Fee Fund# 2500 in the amount of \$45000 was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess. Carried 5-2. Ms. Reeves will work with him and Mr. Neff for exact amounts. The split will be determined for the remainder of 2021 and 2022 will be decided at the budget hearings. Also Ms. Reeves related that SBOA had approved for a transfer to the Stop Grant Fund that had not been done by the prior auditor since the grant started in 2015. The amount is \$12762.50.

4. Health Officer Diane Wells and Administrator Christine McBride presented a proposal of reducing two full-time staff members down to 30hrs/wk and cutting three staff members at the Clinic with Ms. McBride and Ms. Chambers picking up some of the workload. Insurance has already been reduced from one employee. A motion to accept the proposal that would be an estimated cost savings of \$19-20K was made by Polly Chesser; seconded by Anton Neff. Carried 7-0. Noted was that they are not part of the General Fund so any monies given up will go to other departments outside the levy.  
Ms. McBride also related that they had received four Grants and provided copies to members. Mr. Wood asked if there was any indirect way that those funds could help the county anywhere? Dr. Wells said they must follow the grant requirements.
5. Recorder Loretta Foster related that her full-time employee is going to retire and that would reduce the General Fund for the remaining of 2021. Mr. Bryan will be presenting an Ordinance on August 11<sup>th</sup> to also allow use of the Perpetuation Fund for 2022. A motion to approve the proposal was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. Carried 7-0.
6. Extension Jennifer Abrell explained she was a small Department and had previously made some cuts in June. She has a part-time that is done August 5<sup>th</sup>, but she feels the position is essential to operations. Based on discussion Mr. Hess made a motion to cut one full-time employee; seconded by Mr. Robertson. Motion failed 2-5. Ms. Abrell reminded members that they said smaller offices could ask for exemptions. She added that she had already cut one position and shaved hours off another. A possibility of funds to be applied toward salaries through a grant is to be explored. Mr. Neff made a motion to cut the regular part-time position and keep the half-half with the funding received toward the position that would apply until the end of the year; seconded by Verl Keith. Motion carried 6-1.
7. Treasurer Diane Stutsman related the high importance of her department and their job duties including that they bring in Nineteen Million dollars a year with Tax Season being the busiest to provide Settlement on time. Daily duties of reconciling, verifying, sign-off and balancing of all checking accounts is essential. Internal Controls is maintained with a three-way process with the current staff. She reminded them that she had already given up \$3000 of part-time money and only having two people would make it extremely difficult to maintain. Following further discussion, a motion was made by Nick Robertson to cut one full-time position; seconded by Polly Chesser. Motion carried 5-2/Hess, Wood.  
Mr. Hess again commented that the hypocrisy that fellow members were doing was unfair. They didn't take a full-time from Extension but did from Treasurer Office and that is far more important. Ms. Stutsman is very concerned with the cut and takes it personally-seriously as her job requires a three-hundred-thousand-dollar bond and the funds/monies that they bring in are what make her unique in maintaining all statutory duties.
8. Sheriff Sam Hobbs began by saying he had already cut one full-time position and one part-time and he does not want to hear that he is over-staffed. He has also moved (4) Jailer positions to the Correctional Facility fund and paying storage units off for the County and is waiting on the attorney to provide an MOU to decline his Pay Increase that was just increased by the State. He added a Statement that if the Council, Commissioners and Departments don't come together, ask God for forgiveness, and bury the hatchet they won't survive. He has \$197000 and offered to use \$100000 from his Jail Housing Fund.  
The Emergency repair of the Chiller was added to the Appropriations list for \$85000.
10. Mr. Wood asked if Commissioner Burton was still here; no, he had left so no discussion was made on the Commissioner's Budgets.
11. Public Defender-Jacob Fish explained that he has lost one person and is having a difficult time finding someone based on the hourly wage. If the position isn't maintained, they would not be following the state compliance required and lose 40% of the program allocations. A motion to request an additional

appropriation from his supplemental fund in the amount of \$4600 to increase the hourly wage was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Ms. Casebeer. Motion carried 6-1. Noted he had also made prior cuts on 06/14.

12. Probation Donna McElroy related that they had already cut \$44000 from the General. Prior cuts were noted for that had been made.
13. Highway Superintendent Greg Melton related that he has already given up three full-time people and losing a truck driver at the end of the year. A motion to cut a fourth full-time position and allow one to be added back in 2022 was made by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 7-0.  
A brief update was given on the current condition of Roads due to the recent flooding. Negative Highway Funds are still in question for his 1173 Fund. It was not setup as was discussed in hearings last year. Ms. Reeves explained that SBOA says that if it was approved during hearings and the funds are available and do not exceed the 1176 appropriations it can be corrected. Council needs to confirm and the budget can be fixed. Motion made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Carried 7-0.
14. Mr. Hess made a motion to excuse EMA Director Jack White as he is the only employee in the Department; seconded by Anton Neff. Motion carried 7-0.
15. EMS Director Cris Lunsford related that he is still short a Paramedic and being understaffed, he is having to pick-up runs. A motion was made by Mr. Hess to forgo cuts as they are Public Safety; seconded by Mr. Neff. Motion carried 7-0.
16. Veteran's Service Officer budget was discussed and a motion by Mr. Wood to forgo cuts was made; seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 7-0. A motion to forgo Coroner's Office as well was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. Carried 6-1.
17. Auditor Sheila Reeves presented that she still had a full-time vacant position open that had been approved at the last meeting but was unsure of the cuts being made and didn't want to start someone and then have to let them go. Also, that she had lost the funds for the Paycor/Payroll program that is still pending decision by the Commissioners and a full-time position had already been cut for the 2021 year. A motion to cut one the full-time position was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Robertson. Motion 3-4 died for lack of majority vote. Ms. Reeves offered to cut the position to part-time due to all the other departments that had been cut this evening. A motion to reduce the position to 28hrs/wk was made by Mr. Robertson; seconded by Ms. Chesser. Motion carried 7-0. Also, Endorsement Fee Fund #1150 in the amount of \$2500 to be used toward a staff position will be advertised as an additional appropriation.
18. Councilman Hess made a motion to reduce the Council Budget by 20% in their salaries; it was confirmed that they can't take a cut as they are elected officials. Motion didn't carry.
19. 911 Director Kathleen Lamb related the new Comp-time Policy has changed her OT and only has \$5200 left in the line item for 2021. She is asking once again for the Council to consider allowing her to add a full-time Dispatcher. A report was presented for review and the cost effectiveness it would provide. The request is not from the General Fund, and she will be able to maintain it until 2026 with funds she has. She also offered that she would consider any of the persons that have been cut if they are interested. A motion to approve the full-time position was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Carried 7-0.
20. Public Hearing Confirmation  
The Advertised list for Additional Appropriation and Reductions was reviewed. A motion to approve the Fund's List was made by Ms. Chesser; seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 7-0.

Salary Confirmation Summaries were presented for approval and signatures. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Hess except for the maintenance that needs clarification. Motion carried 7-0. Regarding the Maintenance position it had been presented prior and needed further clarification from the

Commissioners based on the number of hours that was approved. A total of 2080 hours was approved and not to exceed 40 hours, and the part-time position had been vacated for the remainder of this year to help with deficit. Noted is that the commissioners are to request the part-time for their 2022 budgets. A motion to approve the salary ordinance and vacate the part-time position was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 7-0.

Custodian Marilyn Plus related that as of 08/09/21 she will be reduced to part-time per the commissioners. Council was not aware of the cut, and they would need to bring that information to them for action.

#### Public Comment

Barron Barnett presented a booklet on Regionalism and stating that free money is not free relating to the Comprehensive Plan being developed. Booklet will be attached for permanent record.

Jeff Marks commented that he had two observations that if he had written bad checks for five years he'd be in trouble, and that they do a lot of stuff and concern for the disasters facing the county and they have a lot of work to do.

Donnie Hall asked if the presentation tonight was the result of the hiring of outside consultant? Or who's plan was accepted and approved Peters? When will they get the Plan from Peters-Budget Hearing's? Council related that the presentation was given by the Attorney, and they approved it to address the ongoing deficit in the general fund. He also asked them to go home tonight and think about what decisions they had made and re-consider the cut to both the Assessor and Treasurers Office as they are viable offices to the county.

Attorney confirmed that he would have the Recorder Perpetuation Fund Ordinance at the next meeting.

Auditor Reeves provided copies of the Commissioners 2022 Budget Estimates, noted that \$6700 matching grant funds for OCRA was still pending to be added to the next list, and is working on Budget Hearing Department Requests and manuals, complete the Stop Grant transfers, Liability Insurance is still pending transfers out of the Commissioners fund; and additional bills were received today, and funding is going to be needed for it. Health Insurance Program is still pending Commissioner approval.

No additional comments were made by Council.

A motion to adjourn was made Mr. Hess.

\*\*YouTube did not work after the first several minutes of the meeting.