

Owen County Council
Minutes-March 14, 2022

Meeting was called to order by President Polly Chesser.

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

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

Absent: Andy Wood.

Also present: Attorney Jim Bryan and Auditor Reeves. Public sign in sheet attached for permanent record.

A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Verl Keith; seconded by Amy Casebeer.

Motion carried 5-1 abstention Chuck Hess/absent at last meeting.

Old Business

Jim Bryan gave an overview of the current financial status to include the current balance of the General Fund of \$829,072.09 with all major funds having a positive balance. A copy of the balance with receipts and expenditures, negative, and historical grant funds was provided for review and attached for permanent record. A copy of the Auditors Monthly Financial Report and Claims Docket were also provided.

Mr. Bryan then reviewed the Jail Project. The Commissioners have agreed that the original proposed cost of \$22 million is not possible and have sent it back to the architects for a \$15 million range. After review of the specific Funds that would be used toward the project, he emphasized that once the contract was signed that the monies would be dedicated and must come first in all budgeting processes. A goal of increasing the general fund as high as possible to help with loans and interest rates was a necessary step too. An updated Proposal/Plan is expected to be given at the April Commissioners meeting.

Next reviewed was Liability and Workman's Compensation Insurance. A decrease in workman's compensation of \$52000 and a slight increase in liability. Transfers will be made by departments from one line item to the other so no additional monies will be needed. A specific payment plan has been set-up to assure payments and allow departments to plan accordingly with their revenue streams.

Mr. Bryan related Council has made good choices but still somewhat fragile and still need to be aware of the financial situation in moving forward. Continued updated reports will be given each month.

ARPA Funds-Premium Pay

Mr. Bryan reviewed the approved Plan that was passed by the Commissioners at their last meeting. A copy of the employees that were eligible was given. Mr. Bryan reviewed the allowable five categories. The guidelines that had been set by them was anyone employed from January 1, 2021, to December 6, 2021, as a full-time employee would receive \$2000 and any part-time employee with a minimum of 800 hours would receive \$1000 with all the required payroll taxes to be paid from the amounts, it is not a bonus pay. In addition, were guidelines for anyone exceeding certain number of hours and/or pay amounts. He related that there was one employee that exceeded the average earned amount of 150%-that being Ms. McElroy. She offered to not except the money, but it is not allowed to be waived. A motion was made by Anton Neff; seconded by Chuck Hess to pay Ms. McElroy. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion to approve Ordinance 2022-013 in the amount of \$300000 for Premium Pay was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. An amendment to use the same Ordinance number 2022-013 also includes Administrative Costs-\$30000 and Infrastructure/Highway-\$1,610,155.92. with a motion by Mr. Hess, seconded by Ms. Casebeer. Motion carried 6-0. A motion to allow the Auditors Office to immediately process the Premium Pay separately was made by Mr. Neff, seconded by Amy Casebeer. Motion carried 6-0.

An additional motion was made by Mr. Hess for a corrected total amount of \$1,940, 155.92. The motion was seconded by Ms. Casebeer. Carried 6-0. If additional funds are needed it can go back to the commissioners to add to the bucket. Sheriff Hobbs asked that one of his employees be considered as he was cut during the

layoffs earlier and had to be brought back under a contracted position. Mr. Bryan related that the Treasury Department guidelines were clear on the definition of "County Employee". A motion was made by Chuck Hess; seconded by Anton Neff to allow Mr. Bryan to look at other possible categories for the Sheriff. An amendment was made to the motion to include the deputy coroners. Motion carried 6-0.

New Business

Compensation Structure Review -Ms. Chesser related that the first meeting had gone well. Job Descriptions updates and base pay amounts were specific items discussed. It was agreed to schedule another meeting on the 29th with the committee to continue work on the updates and/or direction in moving forward. A timeline to have a plan in place by April or May is their goal. A copy of an updated Compensation System Overhaul Report was presented by Mr. Neff and will be attached for permanent record that relates the process that has been done to date and future goals for an overall Structure Update. Another meeting has been scheduled for March 29th at 9am.

Judge Kelsey Hanlon and Judge Lori Quillen presented an amended 2022 proposed wages request to allow for raises for their employees (Attached for record) A total of \$252,202 was needed for the request. A brief review of cuts made in 2021 and feels this is a kickstart and at no cost to the general fund. Ms. McElroy also had a proposal to present tonight and if approved could be used toward this. Sheriff Hobbs has also offered to give \$10000 from his Commissary Fund to help fund the request. Ms. Hanlon stated it was frustrating to have to keep coming back. Lynn Walters provided numbers that showed that the Courts had given monies back from 2019 to current to help the general fund and council for needed cuts.

A motion was made by Nick Robertson; seconded by Amy Casebeer to grant the request with needed adjustments. Ms. Chesser was concerned with the long-term sustainability of the request. Mr. Neff would like to see something done overall for everyone. Mr. Keith asked how this would affect the 2023 budget with what was proposed with cutting the entire commissioners court. Mr. Hess stated that they've given, taken back and they have presented another positive request and it is needed. A friendly amendment by Mr. Hess was made to proceed and fine tune the numbers with the Auditor's Office. It will show the new classifications, amounts for the current structure, and focus on the dollar amounts needed. Ms. Casebeer commented that it was great seeing people work together. Ms. Quillen related that she has/is trying to work with others to help find ways to allow for raises for employees. Motion carried 4-2 against/Mr. Neff and Ms. Chesser. Another Motion was made to advertise for an Additional Appropriation from the General Fund in the amount of \$22000. Motion made by Anton Neff; seconded by Nick Robertson. Transfers will be provided to the Auditor to process as well to allow for the funding of the approved appropriations. Motion carried 6-0.

Recorder Loretta Foster had provided a letter of request for a full-time employee. The Letter included general office statistics since she had taken over in 2019, projects she has completed and the fact that out of 92 Counties she is one of only two in the state that have no full-time employees. She related that it difficult to operate with two part-time employees and recently lost one and finding it difficult to find a replacement, especially at only \$10.50/hour. The total amount requested was \$25,096.98 for the employee and health benefits would add an additional amount if a new hire would choose to receive them. She stated it is not working, and she does not want to use her perpetuation fund as she has other projects planned. Ms. Chesser feels they should have never cut the position to begin with. Mr. Keith asked if would put her in a bind to wait until July to allow for more statistical information on the general fund. She was asked how often she uses her part-time, Ms. Foster relating it depends plus she would be forced to continue as she is right now. Mr. Neff said she could use some of the current funds with the vacant part-time opening. A motion was made by Nick Robertson to grant a full-time position; seconded by Chuck Hess. Again, concern from where to appropriate monies from was of concern, utilizing her perpetuation monies was discussed. A vote was called for of 3 in

favor- Chesser-Robertson-Hess; and 3 against/Neff/Casebeer/Keith. With a “tie” vote there was question/discussion on who/if a tie breaker could be made. Attorney Bryan said no, therefore the motion died for lack of a majority vote.

Probation-Donna McElroy presented updated information on payroll increases. A breakdown of the funds available and funds needed was reviewed. The job and workload that Kevin House does is extremely important for the department and would be a terrible loss if he should leave. They are specifically asking for a \$5/hr pay increase for him with the agreement that if he should leave that the amount would not carry forward. The others would be brought to mid-range. Ms. Chesser wanted it verified that if the Grant Funds are gone that there is no job; Ms. McElroy said that they all understood that. Mr. Keith agreed if no general fund monies were used. Mr. Robertson feels that she has always ran a tight ship in her department.

Based on discussion a motion to allow the requests was made by Mr. Robertson; seconded by Ms. Casebeer. Motion passed 5-1 against/Neff. Further discussion from Mr. Neff clarifying reconfiguration of the position- Database IT Work. Mr. Neff made a motion to amend, separate and re-class; seconded by Ms. Casebeer. Motion passed 6-0. The final step was to re-classify the database related duties and the five dollars an hour. Motion made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 6-0.

Probation Department Transfers-A motion to approve the Transfers presented in the amount of \$9240.80 was made by Mr. Neff; seconded by Mr. Hess. Motion carried 6-0.

Treasurer Diane Stutsman and Auditor Reeves presented a proposal for a full-time position using available funds from the current budget/auditor p-time and the auditors endorsement fees fund. Again, concern using general funds came from Mr. Keith and Ms. Chesser asking if it would be sustainable. Ms. Stutsman explained she only has seasonal positions with funding of \$8005. Mr. Neff asked if this would maintain the seasonal positions. He further added that this similar proposal was made at time of cuts. Ms. Stutsman emphasized the workload and maintaining of millions of dollars a year and things needed to get back to the way they were and asked for them to re-instate the full-time position. Ms. Chesser asked if she would be willing to use her part-time monies for the request. She noted that the SBOA Audit she did not have any write ups and that’s what it takes, not asking for raises just wants to be staffed. She asked if the ARPA monies could be used; Mr. Bryan explained the allowable uses and basically said no. Further review of the proposal amounts needed was given and the following motion was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff to allow for a full-time position with the funding options presented and that the current Part-time position will end on June 1st. This would also eliminate the part-time position in the auditor’s office. Mr. Robertson felt it would be a travesty to the Recorder. Mr. Keith feels it is an important department due to taxes and settlement and supports the request. Motion carried 5-1 against/Robertson.

EMS Director Cris Lunsford related that he didn’t have anything to present at this time as he was asked not to ask for raises. Mr. Hess was extremely upset that he had been directed not to do so. Mr. Neff wanted it noted that Cris has been working very hard on other issues including shift times.

CASA information was tabled pending information from Beth Eaton, but Ms. Hanlon related that she would have great news next month.

911 Director Kathleen Lamb related that Senate Bill#158 had passed on minimum training requirements for dispatching. She related that they already are doing this plus additional training. She reviewed project status’ regarding the CAD Server move, VHF changes were done by J&K with only minimal issues.

Highway Superintendent Greg Melton presented his ARPA Road Plan for their review and wanted it known that it included four bridges. He next distributed a copy of pay increases and related that the “Part-time” Matrix was broken and requested to utilize his current balances to bring scale up to \$15.792 an hour that was the current county rate for his employees, specifically for truck drivers. A motion to grant his request was made by Mr. Robertson; seconded by Mr. Hess. Further discussion from Mr. Neff relating he did not support

the request as he hadn't had a chance to look at it. Ms. Chesser reminded him that all requests were to be given by the Wednesday deadline dates so they could review the information. The motion ended up in a tie vote of 3 for-3 against/Neff-Chesser-Keith. Motion died for a lack of a majority vote.

Sheriff Hobbs offered that they were working on a project in Taylor Township with the Trustees to use their Building as a Training Center and Substation. This would be at no cost to the County and to open in April.

Holiday Pay Issue-The issue had been tabled a couple of months ago and further clarification is needed.

Ms. Lamb was wanting clarification as another Holiday Pay Cycle is upon us. The number of hours worked versus schedules. Are they going to go back-retro hours to twelve for her staff? Michael Browning still had the same concerns. He had not received a copy of the new policy yet either. Mr. Hobbs again said the policy updates come from the Department Head and he will look into it. Mr. Hobbs added that the county handbook sucks, and it needs re-written/updated. Mr. Bryan reviewed that the County Policy that was passed in January 2021 was across the board, with EMS Policy being separate and it is eight hours. Ms. Lamb said they got paid and are they going to go back and retro dispatchers? Ms. Reeves said that she will pay what is submitted and informing them they will be short in the funds. Mr. Neff gave a summary of day units versus hourly units. Mr. Browning is still concerned with the policy and its fairness of being compensated. Mr. Neff feels that a meeting with Departments to review the issue is needed.

Asset Plan-Next Ms. Reeves presented a request to hire a company to prepare the State required Asset Management Plan. It was written up by SBOA Audit this year for 2019 and 2020. The cost of the Plan is \$4000 and would be paid from the Endorsement Fee Fund#1150. A motion to approve the request was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Robertson. Motion carried 6-0.

Salary Ordinance Confirmations were presented for review/signatures. A motion to allow President Chesser to sign them was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Motion carried 6-0.

EMA Director Jack White presented a request to use funds in the amount of \$1,089.36 from Fund#4900 to purchase a laptop computer, Motorola programming software, programming I button and cable for the programming of 800MHz Radios. A motion to approve was made by Mr. Hess; seconded by Mr. Neff. Motion carried 6-0.

No comments from Elected Officials were made. Mr. Hess made a statement as elected officials they don't run the offices and apologized to Mr. Lunsford again for not being able to present a request for raises for his employees.

Public Comment-

Brett Stutsman asked about the ARPA Funds and using them to help rebuild the General Fund Balances. Solving long term problems and being creative in spending with the two million here and what is to be received. As he understands the needs for roads and bridges, but he thinks it's important not to be the exclusive focus with the money and need to climb out of debt. The Commissioners and Council need to come together and not allocate all of it to new expenses and use ARPA in other areas. Mr. Hobbs asked members exactly how many meetings they have had together with the commissioners to discuss the uses. It was agreed other than it being discussed in several meetings individually they had not met directly with each other as boards.

No further comments from the Attorney were made.

No further comments from the Auditor were made.

No further comments from the Council were made.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Hess.