Owen County Council

Meeting-June 10, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

Courthouse 2nd Floor

YouTube Live Streamed-Owen County Government

Meeting was called to order by President Polly Chesser.

Opening Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call and public sign in

Council members present: Polly Chesser, Anton Neff, Verl Keith, Nick Robertson, and Steve Carrell

Council members Absent: Andy Wood and Amy Casebeer

Auditor Sheila Reeves

Approval of minutes motion made by Carell to approve the meeting minutes from May 13,2024 seconded by Neff passed 5/0.

Financial Update and Settlement Distributions: Reeves has two reports due to Settlement and LIT Distribution. The current balance in the General Fund is $5,107,788.47, other amounts have been put in Economic Development, Sheriff's PCAP Fund, Spencer and the Town of Gosport and each of the Townships. Check was received on May 30, 2024, from the State it is a three-day process from time of receipt, scheduled on June 3, 2024. These reflect the current balances. There is still payroll and claims to process June 19, 2024, approval and disposition on June 21, 2024, these figures will not be as high as last month. There will be a 4-week period in July in which she will ask Commissioners pay any out of cycle claims to avoid paying any late fees. Reeves cautioned the Council to be conservative because the funds need to last until December distribution. Copies are included in the packets showing both distributions.

OLD BUSINESS

Code Enforcement Officer: Kerr is in the process making edits and changes to the Unsafe Building Premises Code Authority, originally set up for Commissioners, the decision was made to approach the BZA to see if they are interested, have not heard back from BZA. If not there can be an Authority set up with similar composition to the BZA. Should know more on the 20th, it is a change that is coming down the pike. Chesser commented that they would be able to move forward once the Authority is established. Neff questioned about timeline wants to have something established before the Commissioners meeting on the 3rd of July 2024, this enables to move forward with the Code Enforcement solution. The position was approved but the job description will need to be edited before approval, this will affect the Building Inspector position and may need some changes. Robertson made a motion to postpone the Code Enforcement Officer position from moving forward until next meeting since the documentation has not been put together for the due process and who would be on the board, Neff asked if it would need to be readvertised, if the contingency to not release funds until the criteria is met. Neff continued about base pay of $18.43 per hour and 1144 hours per year. Discussion continued about wages and wage increase in base pay for Building Inspector, Council prefers to address this in Budget Hearings, Council moved on to additional appropriations.

Public Hearing for Additional Appropriations: Communications Center Neff questioned Director Anderson as to whether she had communicated to her Advisory Board or not and if they were on board with the proposal of contracting for the new service that you outlined or what the new service for the appropriation for today of $50,000 for other services. She described the improved efficiency of Total Response. has it gone before the 911 Advisory Board are they aware of it did they approve it and is their backing for this particular request? Anderson was not able to meet with the 911 Advisory Board, she had not received their approval or backing. Neff would like to put the appropriation on hold, would like to find out if it would require some modification from the Advisory Board whether you know whatever proposal that might be that as it relates to your department because that's their function. I'm not saying that we won't do it or it's a bad thing what I'm saying is we want to make sure that those stakeholders are definitely consulted and have had their opportunity, I appreciate your efforts to do that, It just doesn't sound like that's been done yet so if that's okay, Anderson replied no problem.
Neff made a motion to proceed with the following appropriations barring any public comment on anything else (See attached).
Storage fund 4015-00900 to 4908-11400 regular wages with contingency of changing the code will need to see that at our July meeting before things get released, with the only change in in Pay involving the new part-time code enforcement officer as discussed motion seconded by Keith 5/0 approved. Following up on 911 hold off on advertising the appropriation, there will be more appropriations to go along with that.

Jail Committee Project Update: There was a meeting with several items discussed, Chesser, Sheriff White, Bill Snodgrass, Matt Miller and Commissioner Burton journeyed to Missouri to visit a project designed by Elvatus which is right in our budget. Chesser asked for an update on appraisals, Burton stated the contract for Elvatus Architectural design was signed 6/10/24. Appraisals will be ready by 6/14/24. Robertson asked why the project was not put out for bid since we worked with RQAW in the past, Burton replied RQAW does not have a design like the one they toured, designs are not required to be bid on. Conversation continued about the selection of the architect and the money spent previously on designs, a feasibility study for a jail, approximately $250,000.00. Public comment: a question was raised about why these individuals flew out to Missouri and other Council members did not know or realize they had taken the trip. Public comment continued: A question arose how the contract was signed before it was completed, Attorney Kerr explained that the terms of the contract were done, it was based on the final edits with the attorney, edits that did not concern the price or terms, the edits explain what was happening, these changes were made, this is very common. Burton stated that the attorney did his job. Burton explained that the feasibility study will roll over to the architect, so the taxpayers are not out of that money. The architectural contract is a percentage. What was the percentage of the contract ask Robertson, the contract wasn't available for the answer. Neff stated I think we want to be clear here so just to make sure everybody understands you're saying that the professional contract is for Professional Services which is under a little different bid process, that kind of thing it's not as stringent if you will or even existent you can make that decision and I think we get that but when it comes to construction it is different, that part can be put out for bid. The potential downfall of that when you have a design build situation is that you are now limiting yourself to that particular company's product or their designs and their rights. I think just because of the size and nature of the project and the fact that the public is watching very closely over this project I think maybe there is a miscalculation there I think it would have been wise to maybe reach out a little bit broader just for the effort to make sure there weren't other firms that could offer their option or their architectural design in the state. Burton explained there were only three. Neff continued "I think just making some kind of an effort would have been a good thing from a public standpoint, so people understood", Burton replied meeting was public and it's on YouTube it's done, and it's been voted on. Neff responds I know I just think it's unfortunate, that's just my opinion I think that it was clear at the work session a while back that we wanted to be basically in an effort to be open and transparent those were some things that we wanted to see and I think that folks that follow

back up on this meeting or re-read about it, there's going to be a lot of folks that are not particularly happy with the way this happened and I think that's you know that's an error on our part you know the County's part by not doing that step and yeah it might have taken a little extra time uh but to have those companies come in and speak would have probably been a wise idea and it's done now. Conversation continued and Neff stated it was his opinion moving forward when we get to construction and other aspects of the project we're going to do everything we can to make sure people have a fair shake at this and we can help ourselves keep the cost low but also make sure that we're doing good for the public to know what we're doing and why we're doing things the way we are that's my opinion. Chesser stated we're all on the same page, we're trying do what's best for the taxpayers and be good stewards of their money. Attorney Kerr wanted to get on record that this is not a design build a design build is a company that you hire to do the design actually does the build. Neff stated this was a prefab architectural design. Is there another jail committee meeting set?

MYPATH: Kyle Hannon updating about the trail, it is going really well, the trail has been cleared, graded, underwater and graded again, stone and bridge abutments are in place when the paving and bridge are complete there will be a ribbon cutting sometime in September. There are economic benefits, increased property values, health benefits, etc. First multi-use trail in Owen County.

EMA Appropriation: Director Jack White asking for funds for batteries and restocking shelves for additional parts and supplies for sirens. Motion made by Robertson to approve the $3,643 out of River Boat for advertisement that White is asking for, seconded by Neff 5/0 approved.

Clerk Appropriation: Pulled request she was able to do some transfers okay for now.

Soil and Water: Tamra Bingham asked Mike Spinks from Town Council attending to listen to her presentation to Council, Town has not committed yet. Grant was applied for a LARE Grant (Lake and River Enhancement Program) from the DNR for the Riverfront Restoration Project and awarded $100,000 if they will be able to come up with additional funds from Soil and Water. The required permits have been obtained from the DNR none are required from the Army Corp of Engineers. Questions from Council members concerning the estimates, and process of the project. Suggestions from the members were to get your bids so you know how much you need and then get your key players together and see how each one might be willing to donate. Bingham will do her research follow up and return to revisit the project.

Sherrif Department Appropriation Request (see attached)
Robertson made a motion to approve and advertise the appropriation amounts seconded by Carrell, 5/0 approved.
Neff made a motion to approve the transfer request.

County Extension: Jim Luzar County Extension Director, request for phone system. Luzar presented an estimate stating there have been several issues with the phone system, no voice mail is a big factor. The system installation was in 2004. Robertson made a motion to grant the money for a one time give of $5,124.00 for the phone system bid from HICOM, from the 1000-061-30100 services and other charges reimbursable to fund from Riverboat, seconded by Neff 5/0 approved.

Communication Center Director Update/Requests: Cherie Anderson informed Council that Dana Kerr will send a letter to Barry Ritter, concerning cancelation of contract**,** we were able to get out of the contract. Anderson wants to appoint a radio committee to hear all proposals from the vendors at that point they can submit their sealed bids or proposals and go from there. Neff commented “The Ritter part is done I think the original point of that was to get professional help and advice from someone familiar with 911 Chesser exclaimed and have money to gain from it. Neff continued, I'm talking the concept here in discussion not necessarily the who, but it was to get that help and I know

that no one in County government you know has that expertise. Are you still open-minded to getting some assistance even if it's not with Ritter but maybe another individual or another firm other than just jumping right into the RFP and the only reason why I asked that is because the last time we did a radio project and I think we've talked about this, it was very vender driven and I think Polly Chesser was touching on that here and we you know you tend to get a bill of goods and yes there's a review but I think that it's probably best to have this new committee meet first and just regroup, then see what direction may be best as far as going straight into an RFP or whether it's seeking some professional help from a different angle or a combination of those things or maybe something we're not even thinking about. I want to make sure that we don't make the mistake we made earlier which you don't know about much about so we've got to be very careful with the vendor heavy side of it and yes they can be helpful but sometimes
they can hurt us and make sure that all the stakeholders that are involved which I would trust you're going to do fire law enforcement EMS make sure that all of those stakeholders are very much a part of this entire process I think that's going to be a winning solution in the end for us to maybe spare some expense and costly mistakes later on. Chesser states I think we are a little hesitant, Anderson replied she understands that was before her. Chesser continued there was a vendor that came in and they were supposed to decide what needed to be done, and it ended up worse off than before. Anderson said she could assure you there will be assurances built in that you do not get paid for completion of the project if it is not at least 85% better than we currently have. The Council asked if the committee would communicate with the 911 board, or is it the same people? Anderson: the frequency is a fire frequency so I wanted those people to pick the vendor, it will be better for the on boarding process, so yes, it is fire chiefs, EMS Director and Anderson, law enforcement has their own frequency so wouldn't be using this one Anderson feels she has spent so much time she states that it really just boils down to a couple of digital versions. Have the vendors come and present in other venders the board while the board is grading them to keep everyone involved with the process. Neff replied I would before you spend any more time working on putting thoughts or ideas or pursuing vendors, I would get the committee formed sit down get started and see what initial feed back you would get to start off on a little better footing, and it may save some time. You are not talking specific size for this committee, but you want to have all fire chiefs on board the EMS Director if he chooses to be on it, this is a voluntary situation. It would be wise to have a law enforcement person although they don't use the frequency, they still can access it, there is still going to be that interaction and a totally different perspective that may be helpful. It would be important to have EMA involved in some capacity. Anderson stated that she picks the people that would be using the frequency stated Anderson. Neff added that he would encourage her to go broad, have some extra voices and communication. Anderson said would try to get involvement from departments. Anderson continued with her update she has taken time visiting the different tower areas and the building that houses the radio equipment. The county only owns the tower, we lease the property. The structures are in very poor condition to keep equipment in. The attorney should look at the process of repair and security, and possibly leases. Carrell stated some areas communication is terrible, especially at Cataract the falls is one area if you have problems, it is virtually impossible to communicate. She communicates to probably have systems in place by the end of fall or early December. Hopes to get some quotes together for the next meeting on the structures. Anderson brought up that the Town of Spencer does not fund dispatch services she would like to get on the Town Docket and talk to them about funding two dispatchers. The Town set up raised the money for the computer system and pay for maintenance, so the town is paying their share. Wants permission to get on the docket for the Town. The training compensation policy is only for what is required by the job, or continuous training. Training compensation component somewhere down the road there was an internal problem is was getting turned in and mixed with payroll the simple fix is to shift that .55 cents an hour that everybody' is getting take it down to the base and take the training to zero, for the cleanup, then be compliant with our ordinance that is how it is spelled out the Proposal at hand, motion made by Neff and seconded by Roberts There are two individuals that would gain,11 cents each this encourages the dispatchers to take extra training which it is a good thing 5/0 approved.

Sheriff's Department Appropriation Request (see attached)

Supplemental LIT Request: Marce King from Spencer-Owen Economic Development
Discovered there is Supplemental Funds in LIT. King researched and discussed with the DLGF if Economic Development could use the funds $106,000 to EDC, $26,790 to Town of Spencer and $1,905.00. Neff explained there is no specific earmark stating where the money can go but it can be requested as an additional appropriation, used to be a capital improvement plan. King explained the process of getting funds for investment, always looking for additional money, quite a bit comes from private doners / sponsors to match for projects, it is very difficult because there's a lot of Economic Development projects that require you to have skin in the game. The council suggested that the ask should be during budget hearings King will be back and bring this for the budget hearings.

Salary Ordinance and Conformation Summaries: Neff made a motion to adopt the salary confirmations, seconded by Roberts 5/0 approved.

2025 Prebudget Hearing Discussion: Carrell asked about the wage study, Neff checked the compensation study is probably closed for the upcoming budget, they are booked as far as availability to do an update review and have new numbers available for hearing process this year, they could next year for Budget year 2026. Neff discussed the process of wage increase, job descriptions and how it may be figured whether it be a flat percentage or not.
All departments will get their actual budgets out of Low; do you want to give any direction on increases. The goal is to get the budgets out by the end of the month. Have your binders ready by the July 8 meeting.
Time Keeping/Time Clocks the Commissioners did not vote on an exact amount, a proposal you have a proposal tonight, the number of clocks is not decided upon. Not everyone has the training done. The Commissioners want swipe cards for the Courthouse, there are a few departments that may be using a mobile app or desktop. Robertson made a motion to appropriate up to $21,000 out of the Council fund and reimburse from River Boat seconded by Carrell, 5/0 approved.
State Board of Accounts will be here in the morning to do an audit on the ARPA Funds, there has not been an audit since Reeves has taken office.

Elected Officials: Treasurer Townsend talked to the Council concerning an Ordinance about the State collecting the Innkeepers Tax, it would be more beneficial and less work for the treasurer and more teeth to collect the funds.

Public Comment: When spending money take into consideration how many people will benefit from the services provided.

Motion to adjourn by Robertson, seconded by Carrell approved.