Owen County Council

Meeting-July 8, 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: Steve Carrell, Polly Chesser, Verl Keith, Anton Neff, Nick Robertson, and Andy Wood

Council members Absent: Amy Casebeer

Auditor: Sheila Reeves

Approval of minutes motion made by Neff to approve the meeting minutes from June 10,2024 seconded by Keith 5/0/1 Wood abstained.

Financial Update and Settlement Distributions: Reeves provided the Low Financial Reports from February to June 30th. This will help provide you with balances of what was spent for the first six months going into budget hearings.

OLD BUSINESS

Code Enforcement Officer: Kerr explained the BZA could not come to an agreement one way or another when proposed. The Hearing Board will now consist of a Commissioner, the Highway Superintendent, and the Health Department Administrator. The Code Enforcement Officer position has been posted. Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector should be changed to the correct title. Neff made a motion to approve a change to the job title to Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector Assistant in the Position Description seconded by Carrell 5/0/1 approved, Robertson abstained. Now that the authority for appeals has been determined, the appropriation for the position is complete, the Auditor can now take care of the matter for payroll. Chesser wanted on the record she would have liked to have seen three citizens that are not tied to government to be the authority for appeals. Kerr stated that the appeal process is not the last say they can take it to the courts.

Jail Project: Burton stated the Redevelopment Committee conducted by state guidelines is best way to take care of the transfer (via swap) of property. Burton will initiate the environmental study. Kerr is an environmental attorney. He will contact some companies to get some background research to see what the requirements may be. The RDC will meet at 2:00 on Thursday July 11, 2024. Discussion continued about the timeline, acreage amount, utilities, and whether the Council will be involved with the real estate. The old landfill sits on the county property Neff stated that costs for all IDEM testing and information, timber, and appraisal payment to come out of jail money.

911 Communications: Director Cherie Anderson talks about Total Response; Council members explained the appropriation process. Two-step process, advertising then a hearing. There was some confusion during this process. The equipment is already in use (the stand-alone version) it will need to be approved to avoid any legal action. Neff made a motion to proceed with using line 30100 out of the Council's budget up to $50,000 for payment of the invoice contingent on the reimbursement from fund 1222 for the full amount and advertised accordingly for that appropriation to be considered at our next meeting seconded by Keith 4/2 opposed by Robertson and Wood, approved.

Public hearing: Five appropriations advertised (see attached)
PSAP changed amount for intoxilizer $3,000 to $2,500
Discussion from citizens
Neff motioned to proceed with the appropriations changing the intoxilizer amount to $2,500. The first two from Council funds and reimbursed by Riverboat Fund, the other items from their direct funds, seconded by Carrell 6/0 approved.

New Business:

Innkeepers Tax: Shellie Townsend requesting to get signature on an Ordinance# 2024-016, adopting a change to the way the Inn Keepers Tax is collected, from the County moving to the State. Motion by Neff to proceed with adopting Resolution 2024-016, seconded by Wood, Townsend explained it will free up some hours for her department, there is no cost involved, 6/0 approved.

Transfers & Additional Appropriations: (See attached) Motion by Neff to proceed and advertise the appropriation and transfers. Seconded by Robertson 6/0 approved.
Neff makes a motion to proceed in allowing the president to sign off on the salary confirmations (see attached) seconded by Carrell 6/0.

2025 Pre-Budget Hearings Discussions: Reeves stated most budgets are in, except the larger budgets. Discussion continued concerning options.

Elected Officials and Public Comment: Barron Barnett Jackson Township Trustee, voiced concerns of the cleanup of 2 properties in his district, these will be a big dollar item. Joe Frye stated the figures Barnett provided are low, also considering the fact of the salary for the part time Code Enforcement Officer. Townsend stated the Tax Sale property buyers will be disqualified to purchase properties if said buyer is on the Code Violation list. Concerns continued about the Jail Project, not enough communication between board individuals, of the Commissioners and Council. Hobbs stressed the fact that the public needs to be informed about decisions that are made concerning spending the taxpayers' money. There are so many unanswered questions. Wood made a motion to have President Chesser contact the Council attorney concerning the jail project, seconded by Neff 5/0/1 Robertson abstained he is not comfortable with the cost of an attorney. Neff emphasized the importance of looking at different options from an outside opinion. The question arose concerning the 911 Advisory Board, Neff gave a brief synopsis of what transpired, stressing communication between the first responder departments, the 911 Advisory Board is the component that makes sure things run smoothly. Lunsford stated he is getting a new ambulance on Thursday. Neff stated good discussion and made a motion to adjourn.