OWEN COUNTY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 3,2026 @ 6:00 P.M.
COURTHOUSE 2ND FLOOR
YouTube Live Streamed-Owen County Government

Call To Order

- Council President Polly Chesser called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Nick Robertson offered the opening prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Members present: Steve Carrell, Polly Chesser, Joe Frye, Verl Keith, Anton Neff, and Nick Robertson
- Auditor Sheila Reeves was present.
- Daniel Browning arrived at approximately 6:30 p.m.
- Members of the public were reminded to sign in.

Approval Of Minutes

- Council reviewed July 13, 2026, minutes. Corrections and clarifications had been incorporated into the version distributed for review. The minutes had not been acted upon during the special jail meeting because that meeting was limited to jail matters.
- Frye moved to approve the minutes as presented; Steve Carrell seconded 6/0 approved

Monthly Financial Report

- Auditor Reeves presented fund-balance reports through July 31 and projected through August 15, including anticipated payroll and claims. Updated reports will be provided for the August 26 budget hearings.
- Balances were generally anticipated, but additional appropriations should be monitored closely through year-end and during the budget process.
- Council requested continued monthly or 30-day reporting to help identify changes and trends.
- Budgeted liability insurance, workers' compensation, and similar costs will be charged to outside funds before year-end, so available balances are accurately reflected.

Employee Health Insurance

- The County's claims experience had limited competitive alternatives. Anthem and another carrier reportedly declined to quote, and updated information was expected at an upcoming Commissioners meeting. Departmental budget requests included a possible 19.9% increase for planning purposes. More precise information will be reviewed during the 2027 budget process.

Property Closing and Fund Balances

- Fund 9181 was closed pursuant to prior Council action.
- Approximately $610,000 for the remaining land-transaction difference was paid from Fund 1233. The property closing occurred the previous Thursday.

Jail Project Review

- Council confirmed that the property's closing had been completed, and the County's land purchase was official. No action was taken.

Public Hearing - Additional Appropriations

- The additional appropriations public hearing was tabled until August 26 because information had not been entered into the State's DLGF portal in time to satisfy the required 14-day notice period.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioners' Request - HR and Administrative Positions

- Council received job descriptions for possible Human Resources and Administrative positions.
- The County Attorney had reviewed the documents, but it remained unclear whether the duties would be combined or assigned to separate positions.
- Auditor Reeves expressed concern about dividing duties between a new administrative position and the Auditor's statutory responsibilities. She stated that she could not attest to documents involving matters in which her office had not participated or maintained appropriate oversight.
- Council tabled the matter for the budget workshops, when it will review the need, structure, division of responsibilities, and possible 2027 funding.

Municipal Unit Strategic Task Force

- On-line training was held earlier that day, and templates were provided for required notices and organizational documents.
- Town Clerk Cheryl Moke for Spencer and Donnie Hall Gosport were identified as required board participants.
- A meeting was tentatively scheduled for August 31, subject to coordination and confirmation, with preliminary meetings possible to review financial information.
- The task force was described as the State-law mechanism through which the County fiscal body coordinates with other municipal units regarding future local income-tax distributions associated with the 2029 restructuring. No action was taken.

Highway Operations Coordinator - Hours Clarification

- Council acted to clarify intent and resolve the existing 35-hour schedule.
- Neff moved to confirm the Highway Operations Coordinator as a 40-hour-per-week, 2,080-hour-per-year position; Steve Carrell seconded 6/0 approved

NEW BUSINESS

Circuit Court Grant Request

- Council reviewed a Circuit Court grant application that required no County match or other financial obligation.
- Neff moved to acknowledge and approve the application with the understanding that it required no County match or financial obligation second by Frye seconded6/0 approved

Probation Department Additional Appropriation - $30,000

- Probation requested to advertise $30,000 for care of patients. Council had recently approved $10,000 for the same line, but most had been spent. The new request was an estimate for a pending case of unknown duration and cost. Council emphasized that any unused balance should remain in the fund.
- Robertson moved to advertise the $30,000 additional appropriation second by Keith 5/1 approved, Frye voted No.

- Final consideration was scheduled for August 26 after public notice.
- Council noted that a probation representative should have been present to explain the request.

Sheriff's Department Additional Appropriation - $110,000

- Council had previously received a presentation regarding the requested equipment.
- Frye moved to advertise a $110,000 additional appropriation for Sheriff's Department equipment seconded by Carrell 6/0 approved
- Final action will follow advertisement and public hearing.

911 Dispatch Transfer Request and Overtime

- Council considered a request initiated under the former Director 911 to transfer approximately $36,000, potentially from group insurance, for overtime through the remainder of 2026. Members did not want to reduce the insurance line before confirming that year-end obligations could be met.
- Employees receive approximately eight scheduled overtime hours per pay period under the current staffing and schedule.
- The overtime line had approximately $1,283.77 remaining.
- Vacancies may have created available balances in wages, insurance, or other lines within Funds 1222 and 1235.
- Council agreed that overtime funding would be needed, but both funds should first be reviewed to identify the proper source without creating a shortage elsewhere.
- Neff moved to postpone the transfer until August 26 or the September meeting, depending on when sufficient financial information became available second by Frye 6/0 approved.

Agenda Submission Requirements

- Kristy Risk withdrew an agenda request; Council stated that anyone requesting agenda time should provide an advance summary of the subject, consistent with the detailed information generally supplied by department heads. No action was taken.

Property Tax Levy Limits and Circuit Breaker Information

- Auditor Reeves presented the State reports required for review at Council's first August meeting. The reports addressed estimated levy limits, circuit-breaker reductions, current budgets, local income-tax distributions, individual taxing units, and other information relevant to the 2027 budget process.
- The figures may change during the budget process and will ultimately be incorporated into State budget forms. The review applies to taxing units throughout the County, including the townships and the towns of Spencer and Gosport. Council must provide written recommendations or distribute its approved minutes to those units.
- Neff moved to enter into the record that Council had received and reviewed the required property-tax levy and circuit-breaker reports second by Frye 6/0/1 approved Robertson abstained.

Salary Ordinance Confirmation Summaries

- Neff moved to adopt the monthly salary ordinance confirmation summaries into the record and authorize the Council President to sign them second by Robertson 7/0 approved.

Elected Official and Department Head Comments

EMA Siren Battery and Padlock Appropriation

- The approximately $9,920 request for siren batteries, locks, and related items was moved to August 26 to satisfy the DLGF portal's 14-day notice requirement.

911 Director Vacancy

- The 911 Board met and made their recommendation with the Commissioners in executive session, and further direction was expected. The job description was posted, and applications would be forwarded for review. Council also discussed the historical practice of the 911 Board recommending a candidate to the Commissioners. No action was taken.

Public Comment

911 Operations, Overtime, Staffing, and Consultant

- A member of the public questioned projected 911 overtime of approximately $80,000, the 12-hour schedule, staffing and retention, employees working alone, management, training, pre-arrival instructions, Board oversight, the Director-selection process, and the scope and results of the prior approximately $50,000 consulting contract. The speaker stated that he had previously offered consulting services at $30 per hour.
- Discussion included whether alternative schedules or additional employees could reduce overtime and whether the consultant had adequately interacted with dispatch staff. Council noted the difficulty of maintaining two dispatchers around the clock and compared recurring 911 overtime with EMS scheduling.
- Council agreed that the budget hearings should include analysis of staffing, schedules, overtime, the cost of additional employees, minimum coverage, employee safety, consultant responsibilities, and the need for clear 911 leadership. No action was taken.

Central Square Software Bill

- Auditor Reeves reported that responsibility for an outstanding Central Square software bill remained unresolved. Approximately $39,000 had been paid by the Sheriff's Department in January 2025.
- Council requested review of the contract to identify the signer, covered services, departmental users, and prior payment allocations. Potential users included in the Sheriff's Department, 911 Dispatch, EMS, and other public-safety departments. Appropriate contract-service lines can then be adjusted to fund the obligation. No action was taken.

2027 Budget Workshops

- Council will convene August 26 at 8:00 a.m. for pending appropriations and other regular business before beginning budget hearings.
- Departments were asked to provide complete requests, accurate figures, supporting explanations, and justification for changes. Council intends to complete as much work as possible during the principal workshop days, with follow-up meetings as needed.
- Review will include wages, employee benefits, the benefits matrix, local income-tax and property-tax growth, revenue limits, jail financing and debt, and departmental operating

needs. The workshops begin the 2027 budget process and are not the final opportunity for decisions.

Highway Department Additional Appropriation

- Highway requested $58,750.77 from Motor Vehicle Highway Fund 1176 for two MacAllister grader lease payments. The County had paid an earlier lease invoice and received a refund; the appropriation would restore that refunded amount for upcoming payments.
- Neff moved to advertise a $58,750.77 additional appropriation from Fund 1176 for the next grader lease payments seconded by Browning 7/0 approved.

Special/Additional Council Meeting - August 26

- Chesser moved to conduct a Council meeting on August 26 at 8:00 a.m. before the budget hearings/workshops second by Browning 7/0 approved.

Adjournment

- With no further business, a motion was made to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned.