Est

Martin

County

THE MARTIN COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

October 4, 2021

MINUTES

The Martin County Council convened in special session October 4, 2021, in the Commissioners’ Room at the Courthouse located at 129 Main Street, Shoals, Indiana. Councilmen attending: Warren Albright, Randy Wininger, James Stiles; Keith Gibson, Adam Greene; and Councilwomen Barbara McFeaters and Bowling. Also in attendance were Auditor Bobbie Abel, Danielle Murphy, Director Community Corrections; Mike Jones; Pat Jones; Commissioner Cody Roush; Recorder Rhonda Sanders, Treasurer Lori Carrico, Assessor Carolyn McGuire, Judge Lynn Ellis. Charlie Joyce , Financial Group Solutions (via Zoom), Prosecutor Aureola Wright, Barbara Hager, Nathan Hoffman, Surveyor, Kim Showalter, Miranda Beaver, Jail Matron, Greg Hamilton, James Williams, Director Solid Waste, Angie Risacher, Director Martin County Alliance, Sheriff Travis Roush.

President Albright called the meeting to order with the Pledge to the Flag at 6:00 pm.

The Public Hearing was opened by the reading of the Notice to Taxpayer by President Albright and the floor was opened for public comment.

Judge Ellis asked what the Notice to Taxpayer was. Auditor Abel stated that it was the Notice to Taxpayer that is posted on Gateway. Judge Ellis asked how her budget was advertised. Abel stated that the General Fund is advertised in lump sum.

Councilman Wininger asked if anyone had any comments. President Albright stated this portion of the meeting is for the budget only. Wininger stated he voted against the budget and will do the same tonight. He stated he wanted to go back to a year ago and made a motion to lower the tax rate. Auditor Abel stated that the process to change the tax rate is set by statute and the deadline has passed for January 2022. Councilman Greene stated that we are spending more than what we are bringing in feels the County would be broke by the end of a couple of years. Councilman Albright stated if you cut the percentage of what you collected you would be broke a lot quicker. Councilman Greene stated more is being spent than brought in. President Albright said a year ago they knew revenues would be down that is why it is not wise to change the tax levy until 2023. He does not see how in good conscience they could vote for a decrease in taxes with the long term financial effects of Covid not being known. He also stated that people are talking about giving the employees increased raises and said you can’t cut the budget and give increased raises.

Councilwoman McFeaters stated that the Greg Guetteraz of Financial Solutions Group, informed everyone at the last meeting that the Martin County budget for 2022 was stable. He advised that it will need to be monitored monthly as always. McFeaters asked Auditor Abel if the budget could be cut during the year if needed. Abel stated that the budget could be cut during the year if needed. As discussed in the previous meeting, once an employee position is budgeted that gives the department head the funding for the next budget cycle. A discussion followed about out of county inmate revenues. McFeaters stated that if we have fifteen out of county inmates it would generate just under $200,000.00. Albright asked Sheriff Roush if he would be able to sustain fifteen and Sheriff Roush stated yes, he would do his best and they are on the trajectory to receive $500,000.00 for 2021. It was stated that he has done a wonderful job, Sheriff replied that he didn’t know if he could sustain that. Councilwoman McFeaters informed that the budget is not based on out of County Inmates because it is variable, and we know it can change at any time. It was stated that approximately $350,000 was brought in last year.

Judge Ellis stated that Councilman Greene has a problem with the $200,000.00 and stated that the minutes reflect that he contacted the Financial Advisor and told them that the County shouldn’t count on the inmate revenue. She asked if their was a majority vote for him to contact the advisor and ask for the money to be removed. She wants to know why when there wasn’t a majority vote to remove the income. Albright replied that more than one person contacted the financial advisor to remove the money, when asked who that was no one replied. President Albright stated that five members voted to proceed with the budget, tonight’s meeting is the Public Hearing. Since the Council had previously voted to proceed, “does anyone object to the budget as is?” was asked. No one in the audience objected to the budget for 2022.

A motion to close the Public Hearing Portion of the meeting was made by Councilman Stiles.

Councilman Wininger objected to the budget, Judge Ellis stated that they had already voted, and it was approved 5/2 to proceed with the budget. Wininger pointed out that there are seven days to object. Auditor Abel stated that taxpayers have seven days to file an objection.

Councilwoman Bowling asked if anyone wanted to say anything to object. Charlie Joyce from FSG stated tonight’s meeting is just the public hearing and that starts the clock if someone wants to object. The actual adoption of the budget is in two more weeks. If someone wants to file an objection it would be addressed at that time. The final vote would be at the adoption meeting. Judge Ellis asked if at the next meeting they would be again discussing cutting positions and it was stated that the next meeting is for the Adoption of the Budget.

The motion to close the Public Hearing Portion of the meeting was made by Councilman Stiles, seconded by Councilwoman Bowling. All in favor, meeting was closed.

Opening of the regular meeting proceeded.

Minutes of the meeting minutes for the Meeting held on September 13, 2021, were presented. Councilman Greene had a clarification that he didn’t tell the financial advisor how much to lower the inmate money to and that he didn’t mention that the Deputy Prosecutor and Deputy Surveyor positions need to be cut. President Albright motioned to table the meeting minutes for review. He wants to listen the recordings.

Councilman Stiles made a motion to approve the minutes of September 16, 2021, Councilman Gibson seconded. All in favor, motion passed.

President Albright again made a motion to table the minutes of September 13, 2021, Councilman Greene seconded. Six were in favor of tabling the minutes Councilman Stiles being opposed. Motion carried.

Angie Risacher, Martin County Alliance Director, stated that Hindostan Days was a great success. She thanked everyone who participated. Risacher stated that a list of (fifty-eight) local businesses who will receive a portion of the $250,000.00 awarded to the County through OCRA will be presented at the Commissioner meeting the following night.

Additional Appropriations were approved as follows:

General

 Coroner/Autopsy & Labs was approved in the amount of $12,000.00, with a motion made by Councilwoman McFeaters, seconded by Councilman Stiles. All in favor motion passed.

Interfund Transfers were approved as follows:

General

 Auditor from Postage to Office Supplies in the amount of $500.00 was made by Councilman Stiles, seconded by Councilman Greene. All in favor, motion passed.

Kim Showalter stated she was upset when she read in the paper that the Council was speaking about eliminating a position in the Surveyors Office. She stated that there is a risk factor that needs to be taken into consideration and how dangerous this job is especially doing it by oneself. She hates to see a job cut but feels this is not the one to cut. Albright informed that at the last meeting they voted 5/2 to keep the budget as is. Greene advised that it should be more of an administrative job. Showalter asked who would do the field work if it was an administrator job. An audience member asked if they had ever investigated the cost of this and felt someone should investigate this before cutting the position. It was stated no. President Albright stated he heard it would be around $2000.00 per stone.

Councilman Greene feels there is no oversight or accountability. Councilwoman McFeaters asked where there was accountability with the other departments within the County. Councilman Greene feels that the other departments watch each other like a hawk and there was no need. The highway has accountability, and he feels the Surveyors office should have some. McFeaters stated she was sure that if the Surveyor was asked, he would provide the information. She asked if they ask any other department to come to the meetings for accountability. She feels if you had a concern about any department the department heads would be happy to come to a meeting. Councilman Wininger stated he had asked a couple of time in private, McFeaters informed that the Surveyor had come to Council meetings previously. Wininger said when they started this thirteen years ago it was not meant to be a permanent job, he asked if Councilman Albright could back that up and he stated no, it was an election. Assessor Carolyn McGuire asked to speak. Assessor McGuire stated that office is instrumental in helping with reassessment and help with the reading of and the transfer of deeds and splits. She stated at no time was this considered a temporary job. Albright stated that it is a state statute job with state statute responsibilities. Councilman Wininger stated that thirteen years ago he was a big proponent of the job, no one could find a starting place, give it ten years and be done, he knows because he was the guy, just wants it to be known.

 Councilwoman McFeaters said she is not an expert in surveying but believes surveying involves more than just finding stones, Greene stated that there is a lot of administrator work. She understands that our Surveyor’s Office does mapping for Martin County. Most Counties hire someone to do mapping. She stated the Deputy Surveyor was hired because it was cheaper than contracting the work to be done. They weren’t doing it to expand jobs and spend more money, they were doing it to save the County money. Any decision she makes, and she imagines everyone on the council makes also, a decision based on not what is best for themselves but what is best for Martin County and the money. Councilman Greene stated he hates to see more government growth and taxes with the County shrinking as a Republican Councilman. McFeaters believes in being responsible and believes in doing what is right for Martin County. She doesn’t believe hiring someone from outside of the County to do the job is the responsible thing to do. Kim Showalter stated she liked that Councilman Greene is asking questions. President Albright stated that they had already had the budget workshop. Teresa Harder from Soil and Water stated that she has used the Surveyors office on historical findings with disputes on property lines.

Judge Ellis asked to speak about the Wheel Tax. She asked that it be listed as a plan of things to do in the coming year. She said that we lose money because we do not have a Wheel Tax. Auditor Abel stated that this is true. We do not qualify for some Grants that are available for the Highway because Martin County does not have a Wheel Tax. Angie Risacher concurred, she stated that there were grants we could not apply for because there is no Wheel Tax in place in Martin County. Commissioner Roush asked who wants to build a $250,000.00 home on a dirt road. Judge Ellis said you have to spend money to make money, Martin County is dying on the vine. One of the biggest problems with Martin County is the roads. It’s beautiful here and we have nothing to offer. It could free up money to give employees a raise because it is hard to find someone to work at the current wages. If the grant writer is saying, we don’t qualify for grants because we don’t have a wheel tax why isn’t the Council making a decision that some of the Taxpayers would be ok with the tax. Commissioner Roush is in full support of what Judge Ellis said. Commissioner Summers also agrees.

Angie Risacher asked who was responsible for voting on a wheel tax. It is the Council’s responsibility. She offered her services to provide information on the subject. Councilman Wininger would like to have the gentleman from Purdue to come back. Auditor Abel stated that it was Larry DeBoer and he has retired. All of his presentations are available online.

Councilwoman McFeaters announced that we received Crane Timber money in the amount of $335,131.46.

A discussion followed about Martin County’s tax base being limited. Forty-eight percent of Martin County is non-taxable due to Crane, Martin State and Hoosier National Forest. Judge Ellis recommends contacting the State Representatives about Martin County. Angie Risacher stated she was ok with contacting our representatives but needs to have the County backing when she approaches them. You have to help yourselves before the Representatives want to help. A long discussion followed regarding wheel tax, roads and a plan.

President Albright presented the Martin County Solid Waste budget to be accepted into record as the Council in the binding authority over Martin County Solid Waste. It was asked if there are any objections. With no objections it was accepted into record with a motion made by Councilman Stiles,

Seconded by Councilman Gibson. All in favor, motion passed.

Sheriff Roush, Jail Matron Beaver and Jail Commander Presley, approached the Council about the hiring of correction officers. Roush stated they were still having difficulties staffing the jail. The hourly rate was raised to fifteen dollars an hour with no success. Surrounding Counties wages were discussed as being more than Martin County. They posted flyers and placed adds on social media. An open house will be held in the coming weeks. He is open to suggestions. A discussion followed about the possibility of the Deputies being upset over the increase to the correction officers’ wages, they did not believe it would be a problem. Sheriff Roush said the previous increase is not working. A motion to increase the hourly wages for corrections officers to $17.00 per hour was made by Councilman Greene, seconded by Councilman Gibson. With Councilman Wininger, Greene, Gibson and Councilwoman McFeaters in favor and Councilman Stiles and Councilwoman Bowling opposed. Motion carried.

Bobbie Abel, Auditor, submitted Resolution 2021-26 establishing the policy by which members of the Martin County Council may participate by electronic means of communication that was prepared by Attorney Lett. A motion to approve was made by Councilwoman Bowling, seconded by Councilwoman McFeaters. All in favor, motion passed.

Auditor Abel advised that a meeting needs to be held for ARPA fund planning. The first report is due to the US Treasury by October 31, 2021. A couple of dates were selected, and confirmation will be determined after speaking with Financial Solutions Group.

Prosecutor Aureola Wright introduced herself and gave a brief background. She wanted to say on behalf of the Department heads, looking forward next year, she would like to request that advanced notice of any issue the Council may have be given before the workshops, so the department heads could help with a solution before the workshops. President Albright thought everything was finished after the workshops. Prosecutor Wright stated that this has been a very confusing budget cycle. Councilman Albright again stated that he thought they were done after the workshop. Councilman Greene stated that things changed after the workshop. Councilman Albright reiterated that all of the figures were estimates including the out of County inmates. Sheriff Roush has never wavered from the fifteen inmates which would generate almost $200,000.00. If he holds fifteen inmates’ life is good, if he holds more all the better.

Important Dates:

Budget Adoption, Monday, October 18, 2021 @ 6:00 pm.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 pm with a motion made by Councilman Gibson and seconded by Councilwoman Bowling, all were in favor and the motion passed. The Special meeting for Budget Adoption will be held Monday, October 18, 2021, at 6:00 pm.

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Warren Albright Randy L. Wininger

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Sheri Bowling J. Keith Gibson

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Adam Greene Barbara McFeaters

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James A. Stiles

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Bobbie Abel, Martin County Auditor