Est

Martin

County

THE MARTIN COUNTY COUNCIL

SPECIAL SESSION MEETING

September 16, 2021

MINUTES

The Martin County Council convened in special session September 16, 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, Michael Sherfick, Chief Deputy Prosecutor Mike Fritch, Deputy Prosecutor Steven Teverbaugh, Andrew Benton. Greg Guerrettaz, Financial Group Solutions, Prosecutor Aureola Wright, Commissioner Aaron Summers joined virtually via ZOOM.

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

President Albright announced that the meeting was called to discuss the 2022 Budget and he asked Attorney Lett to attend and advise what could be discussed at the meeting.

Attorney Lett advised that the Council could discuss the budget and funding of the budget. Personnel matters could not be discussed. Continued funding of the position could be discussed. Lett advised that it is within the boundaries of the Councils function. Councilwoman McFeaters wanted to be clear and stated the deletion of a position is the Commissioners responsibility. Attorney Lett concurred by statute. Attorney Lett advises that the Council could not discuss job performance. The Council’s duties are County finances.

Greg Guerrettaz, joined the meeting for fiscal recommendations.

Auditor Abel presented in the Councils documentation an estimated budget, which included revenues and expenditures for the Budget year 2022.

President Albright spoke with Sheriff Roush, who was unable to attend the meeting, and that he stated he could maintain fifteen out of County Inmates. Councilman Wininger stated that the Council could not depend on out of County Inmate fees. President Albright, stated that we have been including the revenue every year. All revenue must be accounted for. President Albright reitterated that the Sheriff stated they could count on fifteen out of County Inmates. He said the budget could not be based on what if scenarios, it should be based on what has happed.

Auditor Abel, informed the Council that their packets contained the Budget Estimates, the financial statement and proposed tax rates. Auditor Abel included adjusted figures should the inmate revenue decrease for the Councils review. Out of County Inmate fees supports the County Budget but does not fund the budget. A discussion followed.

Greg Guerrettaz, stated that the projections at this time would suggest that the operating balance at the end of 2022 should be about the same as the operating balance at the end of 2021. A discussion followed concerning income tax and American Rescue funds. Guerrettaz stated the general fund is currently stable. It can change at anytime, that is why he recommends reviewing monthly operations.

Councilman Wininger asked if Monday night it was stated that the budget needed to be cut $200,000.00. Councilman Greene said he understood the same thing. Mr. Guerrettaz asked where this figure came from. It was stated that the figure came with the decrease of out of County Inmates. Mr. Guerrettaz stated that even with a decrease in the number of inmates the General Fund should remain stable. Again, it needs to be monitored and modified if something changes drastically. This led into a discussion regarding income taxes. It is the financial advisor’s recommendation that the Council should wait until they get through budget year 2023 before considering lowering income taxes. The financial repercussions due to Covid-19 are yet to be determined.

Councilman Greene feels that the Council should cut the 2022 budget now. Councilwoman Bowling asked if they are discussing the cutting of positions. President Albright asked Greg Guerrettaz asked if the 2022 budget was is a good place. Guerrettaz stated the budget for 2022 is stable. President Albright stated they should proceed with the recommended budget as is without further cuts. Guerrettaz stated monthly monitoring is crucial. Councilwoman Bowling asked if once a budget was approved could you cut the position that was funded. Advisor Guerrettaz stated it was his opinion and according to the Association of Indiana Counties that once it is funded you can not take it away until the following budget cycle, and advised they ask the County Attorney. Attorney Lett concurred with Guerrettaz’s statement.

Albright asked if they were ready to proceed with the budget as is. Councilman Greene stated they should proceed with cutting the current budget, Councilman Wininger agreed. Greene stated the Sheriff could keep the current number of inmates if they were careful with expenditures. Judge Ellis asked if anyone had looked into wheel tax or grants to help fund the budget. Greg Guerrettaz stated the wheel tax is a valid tax, it does go directly to the Highway Budget not the General Fund. There are not any grants that will help fund County Government, there are grants that help the County in other ways. Abel stated the grants out there are for housing, businesses and infrastructure. Commissioner Roush stated that Angie Risacher is currently working on all of the grants available for Martin County along with SIDC.

 President Albright suggested keeping the budget as was determined at the workshop.

Courtney Hughett, asked about surplus funds being estimated at a million dollars. Greg Guerrettaz stated he would not define it as surplus that it is operating balance for working capital. To meet monthly operating expenses in the general fund. It is not received in lump sum it is distributed over the course of the year and you need operating capital to function.

Councilman Greene, brought up not funding the Deputy Surveyor position and that he checked with other counties and how they operate. Councilman Wininger brought up the cornerstones and that they have been working on it for years. If they are not found by now what are they doing. Salary discussion followed. The Deputy Surveyor makes $15,820 dollars out of general fund. Greene felt this could be saved. He recommends bidding the work. Oversight on mileage was discussed. All mileage is paid via a claim voucher per state guidelines. Commissioners are in charge of oversight. Commissioner Roush stated there is no accountability. Assessor McGuire stated the Surveyor is helpful to her office and the Auditor’s Office. Recorder Sanders stated the Surveyor’s office help them regularly and that the Surveyor’s Office help the Taxpayers. Councilman Stiles stated that the Surveyor is an elected official. He asked why no one suggested this cut in August and now all of a sudden some have a problem with this office. Albright stated it is a state statute position and the County could incur additional cost without a Surveyor. They have been updating the stones which helps every taxpayer in the County. He stated that they have saved the Taxpayer more money than what they have spent in salaries. Wininger agrees historically but not currently. Abel stated that the cornerstones have to be found and verified they are still standing every ten years. It is an ongoing proces. Commissioner Summers stated he thinks the Surveyor and the Deputy Surveyor do an excellent job. Councilman Greene stated it wasn’t about the job it is about the money. Commissioner Summers said the county would be spending more money without them. Greene suggested removing the workload and taking bids from private surveyors. Albright stated that the Commissioners could do that if they choose.

Greg Guerrettaz stated he has another meeting to attend. Albright asked him to verify the numbers again. Mr. Guerrettaz stated with what we currently know the numbers are stable.

Councilwoman McFeaters replied that continuity within the Surveyors office is very important for the County, that someone who knows the County versus hiring an outside firm could cause another set of problems.

Councilwoman Bowling said it would only increase the general by approximately $15,000.00. Councilman Greene asked what the county could potentially save without a Deputy Prosecutor and Deputy Surveyor. Auditor Abel stated the Council is currently expending approximately $65,000.00 in the general fund only. She would not discuss the insurance as that is protected by HIPPA. Greene suggested more savings in the benefit package. Abel stated if the employees in question take the County Insurance it could possibly save more money.

Prosecutor Aureola Wright, stated that the Financial Advisor informed the Council that we were good to go during the initial workshop. She reminded the Council of the reimbursement of the Deputy Prosecutors wages. Wright said she didn’t understand why they were discussing the non-funding of the position within her office. She would need time to see if she could find places to cut her budget in order to keep the Deputy Prosecutor. Commissioner Summers asked if any of the Council had been to Prosecutor’s Office since she took office. Two said they had. Prosecutor Wright stated that she has an open-door policy and tries to be as transparent and available to the Council. She was not ready to rediscuss the position. She does not understand why we are going backwards at this time when the financial advisor is not advising cuts, but that we are stable. Why is this being rehashed, what has happened to make this an emergency, what changed. Commissioner Summers advised that they visit the office before making a rash decision. Wright said if it is an emergency to cut to give her time to go over her budget and asked that they go over other offices.

Councilman Greene asked what the meeting was called for. Councilman Wininger said that Councilman Stiles called for the meeting. Councilman Wininger stated he thought the budget needed to be cut $200,000.00. President Albright said originally, he thought the same but conferred with Auditor Abel and stated that was not the case. They were looking at a protentional revenue loss of $200,000.00. Councilman Stiles stated that Councilman Greene said he could save $400,000.00 and Councilman Wininger wanted to give a three percent raise that is why the meeting was called. Commissioner Roush said he doesn’t understand why the Council doesn’t want to save money.

Councilwoman McFeaters stated that they needed to decide if they wanted a two percent or a three percent raise. McFeaters recommends the two percent increase. She stated they can not compare Martin County to other Counties. Martin County doesn’t have the same tax base.

Questions from the audience were taken, names were not given as to who was speaking and a discussion followed.

A motion to keep the budget as is with no further cuts being made was made by Councilman Stiles, seconded by Councilwoman Bowling. With Councilmen Gibson and Stiles, President Albright, Councilwomen McFeaters and Bowling in favor, Councilman Greene and Councilman Wininger opposed. With five in favor, two opposed, motion passed.

Important Dates:

Safety Meeting for October 13, 2021 @ 9:00 am / 4:00 pm at the Highway Department

Budget Public Hearing and Regular Session, Monday, October 4, 2021 @ 6:00 pm.

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

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:26 pm with a motion made by Councilman Gibson and seconded by Councilman Wininger, all were in favor and the motion passed. The next Council meeting will be held Monday, October 4, 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