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Martin

County

THE MARTIN COUNTY COUNCIL

SPECIAL SESSION

JULY 18, 2023

MINUTES

The Martin County Council convened in a special session on Tuesday, July 18, 2023, in the Commissioners’ Room at the Courthouse located at 129 Main Street, Shoals, Indiana. Councilmen attending: Jordan Dant, Adam Greene, Warren Albright, Keith Gibson, Monty Gregory, Jim Hamby, and Andrew Beaver. Also attending was Auditor Michelle Norris.

President Jordan Dant called the meeting to order with the Pledge to the Flag at 5:30 pm.

**RE: SHERIFF DEPARTMENT MID YEAR WAGE INCREASES**

A special session of the Council was called to discuss Sheriff Department mid-year wage increases. Sheriff Greene stated he has had two deputies and one dispatcher turn in resignations this week. Sheriff Greene hopes with a wage increase it will attract new applicants. The Department has been advertising for months with no success. Sheriff Greene stated they will not be able to match other counties pay rates and pay does not solve everything, but it can make a difference. One of the deputies who turned in their resignation is going to Lawrence County and will be starting at $57,000 with a pay raise next year up to $62,000. With the proposed mid-year increase, this deputy would be making $49,000 in Martin County and would also be eligible to receive a longevity bonus at the end of the year. Other agencies offer overtime pay while Martin County does not.

President Dant stated the financial advisor, FSG, has run a sustainability report with the 20% raises included. President Dant stated at first glance it looks like the raises are sustainable in the budget.

Courtney Hughett asked Sheriff Greene if he has found that once an employee leaves Martin County for a larger county, does the employee ever later want to come back to a slower pace and less activity. Sheriff Greene stated he has not had anyone who has went to other sheriff’s offices and then wish to come back. Sheriff Greene stated he does not believe the job load would increase in other counties. Anther county may have three to four times the call volume but they will also have three to four times as many officers. The cities also have bigger departments than Martin County and have specialty units within those departments.

President Dant stated HR Director, Amy Rincker, had presented a handout to the Council giving a comparison of Martin County Sheriff’s Department wages in relation to other counties across the State. The report compares the sheriff, deputy, correctional officer, jail commander, and dispatch. Of those five categories Martin County is in the bottom five of every county except for Sheriff which is in the bottom ten.

President Dant stated this report speaks volumes regarding the Sheriff’s inability to retain help after personnel are recruited, outfitted, trained internally, and sent to academy. Sheriff Greene stated the last few years the department has averaged three per year who had to go through the police academy for four months. That is twelve working months a deputy is removed from the County just for the police academy, which does not include the recruiting and hiring process or training process. The department is a deputy and a half down from just replacing people each year. The department goes from nine deputies to seven point five due to training. Vacations take off almost another two deputies. Actual functioning deputies are about five point five, who are actually supporting the County.

Councilman Albright asked if the Sheriff’s Department pays for the academy. Sheriff Greene responded that it does, the cost to attend the academy is about $1,000 and is usually paid from the commissary fund. Ammunition for training at the academy is purchased by the County. The taxpayers pay the wages of the deputy while he or she is attending the academy, as well as gas, whether it is Plainfield or Evansville. Sheriff Greene stated in Plainfield the recruit stays and is housed there, in Evansville the recruit drives every day. Councilman Albright stated including benefits for that time there is $15,000-$20,000 invested in that employee for that four-month period.

Councilman Gregory asked what it will take to get the department officers. Sheriff Greene stated he believed a 20% increase will give the department a good chance to find applicants. When increases were given two years ago, they believed that they were going to have people beating the doors down for jobs, but they do not. Councilman Albright stated the Sheriff’s Department is housing more than enough out of county inmates to make the sustainability report work. Every time a wage increase is given something changes and the wage is not competitive again.

President Dant stated wages in general over the last three years have done nothing but skyrocket, the average wage continues to climb. Whether or not we are keeping up with market, President Dant stated he feels like this is a step in the right direction. The budget will be sustainable based on the out of county inmate count staying up where it currently is. Sheriff Greene stated he sets the out of county inmate rate at $35 per day to be marketable, other counties have the rate at $37.50 per day per inmate. Councilman Beaver asked what happens if Vigo County decides to pull it’s inmates from Martin County. Sheriff Greene stated there have been two other counties within the last week asking Martin County to hold inmates. Councilman Albright stated in the short term the cash balance would have to be used while other counties are pursued for out of county inmates. Sheriff Greene stated the history of the increase in cash balance reserves almost matches exactly the inmate revenue each year.

Courtney Hughett asked if the wage increase was for deputies and jailers. The Council responded the raise would be for full-time deputies, jailers, and also for dispatchers. The cooks will not be included at this time.

The part-time deputies, jailers, and dispatchers will have a pay range in which the Sheriff can determine the range. President Dant stated there is a range for all Sheriff’s Department employees and the reason for that is to give the Sheriff some flexibility to hire someone in depending on experience, skill set, or years of experience.

A motion was made by Councilman Albright to approve the salary and wage ordinance for the Sheriff’s Department wage increases, seconded by Councilman Hamby. All in favor, motion passed.

**RE: CLERK VOTER REGISTRATION PER DIEM**

President Dant read a letter from Martin County Clerk, Julie Fithian, in which she stated she was recently informed that any county clerk that acts as a voter registration officer is entitled to a per-diem. IC-3-7-12-22 addresses circuit court clerk as voter registration officer per diem compensation. Section 22- in a county where circuit court clerk serves as a voter registration officer the clerk is entitled to per diem compensation. The per diem shall be paid out of the general fund of the county in the same manner as election expenses are paid. Clerk Fithian reached out to other counties to see what they pay as a per diem. She received fourteen responses in which the per diem ranged from $3.50 to $13.50 per day with the average being $8.85 per day. Of the four counties with registered voters with less than 10,000 voters the average is $10.25 per day. Based on this information Clerk Fithian is asking for $5.00 per day for serving dual roles.

President Dant stated he has spoke with the County Attorney who had no issues with the per-diem. The financial advisor asked the Council to check with the State Board of Accounts. Auditor Norris has confirmed with the State Board of Accounts that the per-diem can be paid to the clerk and would not be an instance of dual office holding as both the Court duties and election duties belong to the Clerk of the Circuit Court. The compensation should be on the salary and wage ordinance and include the per-diem for voter registration.

Councilman Albright asked if the per-diem could be paid for this year or had to wait to be paid next year due to the clerk being an elected official. Auditor Norris stated she would reach out to the State Board of Accounts to get that answer. A motion was made by Councilman Hamby to approve the per diem of $5 per day for 222 days per year for the Clerk of the Circuit Court contingent upon the ability to start when the State Board of Accounts states it is legal to do so, seconded by Councilman Gibson. All in favor, motion passed.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm with a motion made by Councilman Gregory and seconded by Councilman Greene, all were in favor and the motion passed. The next regular Council meeting will be held Monday, August 7th, 2023, at 6:00 pm. The department budget meetings will be held starting at 8:30 am on August 21st, 2023.

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Jordan Dant Adam Greene

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Warren D. Albright J. Keith Gibson

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Andrew Beaver Jim Hamby

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Monty Gregory

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

Michelle Norris, Martin County Auditor