Est

Martin

County

THE MARTIN COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

MINUTES

The Martin County Council convened in regular session on Monday, September 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, Andrew Beaver, and Jim Hamby. Also attending was Auditor Michelle Norris.

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

**RE: PUBLIC HEARING OF THE 2024 BUDGET**

President Dant opened the meeting of the public hearing for the 2024 budget. President Dant stated minutes of the special meeting of the budget workshop on August 21st need to be discussed. In regards to the mileage reimbursement in the Surveyor’s office, President Dant asked what was entered in the budget. Auditor Norris stated mileage was taken out of the budget because the Surveyor stated he would rather cell phones be reimbursed. President Dant stated during the meeting he stated he suggested the mileage be left in the budget. Councilman Hamby stated the Surveyor did not want to fill out the mileage voucher to be reimbursed. President Dant stated that is between the Surveyor and the Commissioners. The Council agreed they want the mileage to be left in the budget in the amount of $2,500.

Councilman Greene asked if the cell phones had been discussed for the Surveyor in the amount of $2,500. President Dant asked if other departments have cell phones which the County pays for and if there is a policy in the handbook regarding cell phone reimbursement. Commissioner Cody Roush stated the Judge and Prosecutor both receive $100 per month in cell phone reimbursement, but there is no County policy regarding cell phones in the handbook. Highway Administrative Assistant Theresa Ray stated the Highway Superintendent has a plan the County pays for which is $45 per month. Sheriff Greene stated if the phone is a government owned phone there is unlimited everything on a smart phone for around $35 per month. A motion was made by Councilman Gregory that $2,500 be left in for mileage reimbursement and the cell phone will be tabled until the Commissioners bring it to the Council, seconded by Councilman Beaver. All in favor, motion passed. The minutes will be updated to reflect the change.

President Dant stated he had a comment over the budget overall. The last meeting when the Council met with FSG, FSG had stated the budget is sustainable but there is no cushion for additional appropriations throughout the year. Additional appropriations will be needed and inevitable, President Dant stated the money will have to come from cash balance since the County is already at max budget. Councilman Albright stated the County has always had enough of a cushion and the estimates are generally on the conservative side. Revenues come in above estimates, which is where you hope to get the money when it is tight. Councilman Albright stated all the revenue are estimates and there is a cash balance. Councilman Albright stated he did not expect the 2024 budget to come in at this good of a number with adding a million-dollar ambulance service. President Dant asked if the Council was willing to take the chance the revenue will come in at more than expected. Councilman Albright stated the cash reserves is not an abundance of cash but it is enough to operate with and should be enough to go ahead with the 2024 budget. Councilman Albright stated the budget is better than a lot of budget numbers in years past. President Dant stated there needs to be long term planning items in the budget for equipment replacement.

Councilman Albright stated the County has taken on the ambulance with the hope that income will increase and effect the cash reserve. If the ambulance does half-way well, the County will not need to get into the cash reserve, but if it does not do well the County may have problems. Councilman Gregory stated there is equipment at the Highway Department which is starting to get questionable and there are plans for new equipment. President Dant stated the County has taken the chance of counting on the inmate money and is budgeting that money. Sheriff Greene commented he will do everything he can to keep the out of county inmate money. Unless State law changes and jails are emptied out across the State. Councilman Albright stated money the Sheriff is bring in now is going to the 2024 budget and is not being counted. This is because the 2023 revenue expectation of $250,000 has already been brought in and additional money is still being brought in. There is a bit of a cushion because of the out of county inmates the Sheriff currently has.

Councilman Greene stated it never hurts to cut when they are able, he would like to address the Surveyor’s office again. Councilman Greene stated he does not see a need for two full-time surveyors in the office. Councilman Greene stated it sounds like the deputy is doing a lot of the work for the Assessor and Auditor’s offices. If the elected position is cut to the same pay as a commissioner, it would save the County $30,000-$40,000. President Dant asked if that would still be with benefits, to which Councilman Greene replied yes it would be the same as a commissioner. Auditor Norris stated a commissioner is paid $9,367 each per year. Councilman Greene stated it was just a suggestion. President Dant asked what the Surveyor is currently being paid. Auditor Norris responded $41,053. Councilman Greene stated his other suggestion is to wait until the current Surveyor’s term is over, which would be the end of next year, and would be in the 2025 budget, to change the salary. This way whomever is running for Surveyor would know what to expect for pay. Deputy Auditor Teresa Wininger asked how many hours would be expected for the Surveyor at the reduced pay. Councilman Greene stated the person would be elected like a commissioner so it might be something they could talk to Daviess County about the scheduling for their surveyor. Councilman Greene stated the County can not make the surveyor work certain hours since they are elected. Deputy Auditor Wininger asked what happens if the County can not get someone to run for that position, has the Council estimated what it would cost to contract the position out. Councilman Greene stated it is also unknow if someone is going to run at $41,000 because they have already said they are doing it too cheap. Councilman Greene stated they would need to cross that bridge when they get there.

Councilman Albright stated if a non-licensed surveyor is elected, he believes the State statute requires the salary to be half the price of a licensed surveyor. Councilman Albright stated if you have a non-licensed surveyor and then a licensed surveyor is elected, the licensed surveyor gets a salary of at least double the former non-licensed. Councilman Albright stated the Council does need to keep that in mind if a non-licensed surveyor is elected. If the salary is left at $41,000 for a non-licensed surveyor and the next election a licensed surveyor is elected the salary would have to be raised because of State statute.

Councilman Albright suggested to deal with the surveyor proposal after the Council gets through the budgets for 2024. Chief Probation Officer Stephanie Helton gave the Council the state code for the office of surveyor- 36-2-12 for further reading on statute. President Dant stated the issue will be tabled until the 2025 budget, but would need to be made known before someone files for the upcoming election between January and the end of February.

President Dant stated last Thursday he received an email from Judge Wright-Ryan regarding other options for an additional employee in the probation department. The position would be for a case manager would be able to help with the probation officers’ caseloads. Option one would be a salary of $34,944 per year part-time at 28 hours per week with no benefits. Option two would be $36,400 yearly salary full-time with benefits.

Chief Probation Officer Stephanie Helton stated the administrative assistant looks different, the Court had asked for a pay range rather than a set dollar salary, CPO Helton is asking for a range for the administrative assistant as well. Adding in the range would be the cost difference from the original salary proposed which is $2,200 difference. President Dant asked if the raise would be implemented right away. CPO Helton stated they would hire someone at the base of $15 or $15.50 per hour and after ninety days increase the pay depending on the job performance to $16.00 or $16.25. President Dant stated he was under the impression that the pay raises were good for the department heads to give latitude to hire people at different rates based on experience and skills and would give more freedom to give performance-based raises. President Dant stated it was not his intention to do the pay range and then to instantly get the high range right away. Councilman Albright stated $15 per hour is about the bottom of the pay for everyone right now. CPO Helton stated the original rate was $15.50 which allowed her to give a $.50 raise. At the $28,665, is the $15.50 per hour allows for a $.50 raise. President Dant stated this was prior to the proposed 5% raise.

CPO Helton stated she has numbers to give the Council. The administrative assistant position comes out of the probation supplemental adult, which it should not, it should come out of the general fund. CPO Helton stated last time she was in front of the Council someone asked a question regarding last year’s probation numbers. July 31, 2022 probation had only brought in $11,000. The month of July of 2023 CPO Helton brought in $11,000. As of December 31, 2022 probation brought in $30,000 for the year. As of July 31, 2023 probation has brought in $65,000. President Dant asked what changed from last year. CPO Helton stated the Court orders probation and one of the conditions of probation is they must pay their probation fees. Rather than discharging them when they have not followed the court orders and paid the fees, CPO Helton is not discharging from probation until the fees are paid. CPO Helton stated if the fees are not paid then the Court has a hearing and the Court is asked to extend probation, fine in judgement, or waive the fees. The consensus of the Court has been probation is a privilege and time was served on probation rather than jail and the person agreed to pay the fees.

Councilman Gregory stated he was understood from the last meeting that a part-time position was eliminated in the probation department to give more money in the budget. CPO Helton stated that was correct, that part-time position was eliminated in the amount of $15,500. Councilman Gregory stated by eliminating that position she has almost half the money needed to fund the $34,944. Councilman Greene asked what the issue was with keeping the salary the at what 2023 was at $15,500. CPO Helton stated a case manager will have many more responsibilities than an administrative assistant. Councilman Greene stated the Council is trying to cut the budget and this would add to the budget. Councilman Greene would like to hold off a year and talk about it again for the next budget. CPO Helton stated the Council will not see the same results for twelve months next year if the position is not added because she is working over one hundred hours and she will not be able to sustain that. If the Council wants a chief to run the probation department for the County and assist the Sheriff in ensuring public safety the County needs to staff the department. Indianapolis says the probation officers should not have over 137 on the case load, and Martin County is way over that amount. CPO Helton stated she is accumulating comp time and there is no time to take it.

Councilman Beaver asked if numbers have doubled of people on probation since last year. CPO Helton stated not doubled, but they have greatly increased probation wise. Martin County has the pre-trial program that did not exist last year and are pushing about 40 in the program. That consists of weekly reporting, weekly drug screens, the department is collecting the money for those drug screens or the bond is revoked because that is on the court order.

Councilman Beaver stated he is in favor of trying to fund the part-time position because both positions are stretched thin and overworked. Councilman Albright agreed because if the County has to fight labor laws more than $35,000 will be paid. Commissioner Roush stated in his past three years of experience we have done nothing but grow employees in the County and have never trimmed any fat. Councilman Albright stated the Highway Department has cut positions. President Dant asked Commissioner Roush what positions he thinks could be cut. Commissioner Roush asked why offices can not share deputies. Treasurer Lori Carrico stated there has to be knowledge to go between offices. Commissioner Roush stated everywhere he has worked he has to be cross trained. President Dant stated there is value in cross training.

Sheriff Greene stated he has been employed by the County since 2006 and now is the best he has seen the probation depart run with holding people on probation accountable. If the probationer messes up, they go back to jail. President Dant stated to keep in mind that CPO Helton may not always be employed in the department so when the next CPO is hired and it does not have the same outcome that is when positions will be cut.

Auditor Norris stated the dollar amount can advertised for the budget is the highest it can be, it can not be raised at this point. There can be an additional appropriation done in January for the increase. The Council decided to table the decision until January and agreed to allow CPO Helton to put out feelers but not to advertise.

President Dant asked if there were any other comments regarding the 2024 budget. There are raises built into the budget at 5% across the board to which the Council agreed to stay with. The Council asked the Auditor if any progress had been made on the server quote. Auditor Norris stated she has asked for quotes but has not received any back.

President Dant read notice to taxpayers for Martin County with a civil max levy of $2,774,943 with a property tax cap credit estimate of $30,200. The notice to taxpayers was also read for the Martin County Solid Waste Management District which has a budget of $437,500. Both these notices have been posted on Gateway at: budgetnotices.in.gov President Dant asked for any public comment in regards to the 2024 budget. With no public comments from the audience, a motion was made by Councilman Albright to close the public hearing for the 2024 budget, seconded by Councilman Gregory. All in favor, motion passed. The public hearing for budgets portion of the meeting was closed at 7:00 pm.

The regular meeting was opened at 7:00 pm.

**RE: MINUTES**

The minutes from the regular meeting held August 7th were approved with a motion by Councilman Albright, seconded by Councilman Gregory. All in favor, motion passed. The minutes of the special meeting on September 6th were approved with a motion made by Councilman Gregory, seconded by Councilman Beaver. All in favor, motion passed. The minutes of August 21st will be revised and presented at the next meeting.

**RE: 4-H HIGHLIGHT**

4-H Member, John Hart, came before the Council to let them know he had donated the proceeds of the auction of his show pig to 4-H. This money will be used for other 4-H members. Mr. Hart stated he has started farming on his own last year and was involved in an accident where he was hit on the highway by another vehicle while driving his tractor. Mr. Hart would like to give back to the County and the 4-H program, he felt it was the right thing to do. He does not want to take things for granted and would like to help others out. The Council thanked him for his donation.

Extension Director Dena Held stated one of the reasons she asked Mr. Hart to come share about his decision to give back to 4-H, with the 4-H pledge it references the head- the way we think and critical thinking skills, heart- generosity, empathy, and caring, hands-action, getting involved, and help. Mr. Hart’s donation is a testament to his character and his family. This is a highlight of some of the great things they see in 4-H. The Council expressed the appreciation to Mr. Hart.

Director Held stated the 4-H year is ending on September 30th with the new 4-H year starting on October 1st. The 4-H Council will be holding “Twenty Days of Terrific”, in which the 4-H Council will cover the $20 enrollment fee for 4-H members 3rd through 12th grade, October 1st through October 20th.

**RE: WHITE RIVER MILITARY COORDINATION ALLIANCE UPDATE**

Director Held presented to the Council the White River Military Coordination Alliance outreach from July of 2023. The Alliance is a community organization which was formed five years ago and Director Held serves on the board as an appointee at will of the Commissioners.

**RE: TRANSFER REQUEST**

The following transfer request was submitted to the Council for approval from the Coroner:

From: 1000.007.4000.11 Equipment $800.00

To: 1000.007.3000.17 Transport Fees $800.00

A motion was made by Councilman Beaver to approve the transfer request from the Coroner, seconded by Councilman Greene. Councilman Hamby sustained. All others favor, motion passed.

**RE: ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS**

**Additional Appropriations**

Motor Vehicle Highway- Fund 1176

Utilities $1,500

PERF $8,500

Health Insurance $35,000

HSA/Opt Out $6,000

Trash $600

Professional Services $23,000

**TOTAL FOR MVH FUND $74,600**

A motion was made by Councilman Albright to approve the additional appropriations for the motor vehicle highway fund, seconded by Councilman Greene. All in favor, motion passed.

**General Fund- Fund 1000**

Coroner

Autopsy and Labs $10,000

Commissioners

Social Security $20,000

PERF $20,000

**TOTAL FOR GENERAL FUND $50,000**

A motion was made by Councilman Beaver to approve the appropriations for the general fund for a total of $50,000, seconded by Councilman Greene. Councilman Hamby sustained. All others in favor, motion passed.

**RE: SALARY AND WAGE ORDINANCE CORRECTION**

Auditor Norris stated while she and Deputy Auditor Teresa Wininger were reviewing salaries for the 2024 budget it was found there was a typing error in the 2023 salary and wage ordinance. In the line for the part-time correction officer the salary and wage ordinance was typed as $2,700 but the budget submitted to the State was for $27,000. The amount was budgeted correctly but a new salary and wage ordinance for the position needs to be approved. A motion was made by Councilman Hamby to approve the corrected salary and wage ordinance for the part-time correction officer, seconded by Councilman Albright. All in favor, motion passed.

**RE: SUPPORT LETTER FOR FORMER NU-TAP BUILDING**

A letter was read from Martin County Alliance Executive Director Jessica Potts asking for the Council’s support in trying to obtain a preservation grant from the DNR to be used to stabilize the former Nu-Tap building. The Town of Shoals has agreed to allot $100,000 of EDIT funds to be put forth to revitalize the building. Director Potts is working with Indiana Landmarks on a historic preservation grant through the DNR. $75,000 of the $100,000 will be earmarked as matching funding for the grant. The grant is a 50/50 grant and the maximum which can be matched is $75,000. If awarded, the project will gain $75,000 more in grant funding to help revitalize the masonry work of the building.

The grant proposal is due October 6th. Indiana Landmarks and Director Potts have a goal of having the application turned in by Friday September 29th. Letters of support are needed as part of the application. A maximum of 20 letters are needed and points are given for each letter of support obtained. They will be notified at the end of January if they have been awarded the grant and construction would be able to be started early Summer of 2024. A motion was made by Councilman Hamby to sign the support letter, seconded by Councilman Gregory. All in favor, motion passed.

**RE: LETTER FROM INDIANA FIRST ACTION**

President Dant stated a letter was received from Indiana First Action regarding election integrity. The letter will be emailed by the Auditor to all Council members and can be read by audience members after the meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:36 pm with a motion made by Councilman Gregory and seconded by Councilman Gibson, all were in favor and the motion passed. The next regular Council meeting and budget adoption will be held Monday, October 2, 2023, at 6:00 pm.

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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