

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

September 7, 2022

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Wednesday, September 7, 2022, in the Commissioner's Room located on the first floor of the Whitley County Government Center. Members in attendance were Chair Timothy Kumfer, Vice Chair Kim Wheeler, Thor Hodges, James Argerbright, Joan Western, John Barrett, and Thomas Warner. Others in attendance were Auditor Tiffany Deakins, Commissioner Baysinger, Commissioner Banks, Planning & Building Director Nathan Bilger, Health Director Scott Wagner, HR Director Jennifer Shinabery, Nick Brewer, Assessor Kim Erdly, Mark Sturtevant Maintenance Director, Treasurer Kay Gatton, Highway Director Katy Fry, Commissioner's Assistant Cami Hippenhammer, Jennifer Stephenson and Mike Knafel from the Engineer's Office, Recorder Rosemary Brown, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, Sheriff Marcus Gatton, Chief Deputy Sheriff Jason Spencer, Todd Cook, Sean Martin, Scott Schmitt, and Janelle Schmitt from the Sheriff's Department, Solid Waste Director Jorell Tucker, Jay Fawver, Dakota Kreps, Nicki Venable, Teresa Clark, Sarah Haag, W.F. Koger, Gary Pattee, Nick Ames, and Beth Johnson from USI Engineering.

Chairman Kumfer called the meeting to order and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2023 WHITLEY COUNTY BUDGET & SOLID WASTE BUDGET: Chair Timothy Kumfer opened the public hearing for the Whitley County budget and the Solid Waste budget. Solid Waste Director Jorell Tucker reviewed his budget with the Council, which has been passed by the Solid Waste board. Councilman Argerbright spoke for Todd Geiger from the Purdue Extension and stated that Todd was unable to make the meeting but there were a few cuts from their budget that they feel might get them through the 2023 year.

There were not any further questions or comments from the public or Council at this time and Chair Kumfer closed the public hearing.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST: Community Corrections Director Paula Worden was present with several additional appropriation requests to clean up her funds after grant funding was determined. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve all of the additional requests, with a second by Argerbright and passed with a 7/0 vote.

Project Income User Fees:

Community Corrections:

1122.20000.000.0311	Supplies	\$6,000.00
1122.20002.000.0311	Janitorial Supplies	\$5,500.00
1122.20003.000.0311	Drug Testing	\$22,500.00
1122.20004.000.0311	Commissary	\$7,500.00
1122.22100.000.0311	Gas/Oil/Lube	\$4,900.00
1122.30000.000.0311	Professional Services	\$3,000.00
1122.33003.000.0311	Travel & Mileage	\$5,000.00
1122.34000.000.0311	Telephone	\$500.00
1122.38004.000.0311	Institutional Care	\$1,000.00
1122.41001.000.0311	Equipment	\$11,485.25

Opioid Response Grant:

Community Corrections:

8620.30012.000.0620	Professional Services	\$6,100.00
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Pretrial Grant:

Community Corrections:

9104.30000.000.9104	Professional Services	\$12,095.00
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Community Corrections Grant:

Community Corrections:

9310.11700.000.0310	Part-time	\$30,000.00
9310.12403.000.0310	Shift Supervisor	\$500.00
9310.12605.000.0310	Shift Supervisor	\$200.00

2023 LEVY DISCUSSION: Chair Kumfer explained that in prior meetings there was one levy that was needing to be decided on and that is for the Reassessment levy. Councilman Wheeler stated that he was not comfortable with taking the levy down to \$0 and would like to see a portion be left in there. Wheeler made a

motion to make the Reassessment levy be at \$100,000 for 2023, Councilman Warner seconded, and the motion carried with a 6/1 vote with Hodges against.

SOLID WASTE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT: The Commissioners passed the interlocal agreement with Solid Waste the day prior at their meeting and the Council also needs to pass this so that it can be sent to the Solid Waste Board for final approval. Councilman Warner made a motion to accept as presented, seconded by Barrett, and carried with a 7/0 vote.

HIGHWAY/ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT: Highway Director Katy Fry was present to let Council know that since the August Council meeting it had been brought to fruition that a split employee that is working in more than one office and should be paid to reflect such. So, the Drain Project Assistant that was approved at the August meeting to be solely paid out of the Engineering budget should be paid out of both Highway and Engineering. The Council would need to decide where benefits, longevity, cell phone etc. should be paid from. Councilman Warner made a motion to have the position, and all benefits ½ from Highway and ½ from Engineering, Western seconded the motion, and passes with a 7/0 vote. Katy also spoke to Council about the salary for the Foreman position. When WIS came back with a recommendation for the Foreman position they suggested that the position be paid higher than the Head Mechanic as the Head Mechanic reports to the Foreman. Council never gave a suggestion for this wage so Katy just needs to know what to tell payroll the wage should be. Council would like to see everything in writing before any decisions are made. Western made a motion to table until Council has received and reviewed the paperwork for the explanation, with a second by Barrett, and carried with a 5/2 vote with Hodges and Wheeler against. Katy also asked for a commitment letter from Council to help her obtain a Federal Grant (Safe Streets for All) that would total \$75,000. She would like a financial commitment of \$15,000. Where the funds are to be paid from can be figured out later, but she needs the commitment letter to be signed for the application deadline of September 15. Councilman Barrett made a motion to accept and allow for Katy to move forward and that the County would commit \$15,000 towards the grant, Councilman Argerbright seconded, and the vote carried being 7/0.

REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT APPOINTMENT: Councilman Kumfer informed Council that at the Commissioners meeting on September 6 they had signed and accepted an inclusion to add all of Whitley County into the Regional Sewer District if the property was not already in another district. This allows for a bigger pool of potential constituents that would be able to serve on the Solid Waste Board. This is being brought up as Chad Nix will no longer be serving on the board and has nominated Nicki Venable to take his place. Barrett made a motion to appoint Venable to the Regional Sewer District board, seconded by Western and carried with a 7/0 vote.

COMMISSIONER HEALTH INSURANCE: Commissioner Banks explained that during the 2023 budget meetings with Council that it was brought up that Commissioners should be offered health insurance because of the time that Commissioners must report to the office. Banks stated that in 2016 Commissioners and Council were no longer be eligible for insurance. Commissioner Baysinger stated that she cannot obtain a full-time job as well as be Commissioner because of the time that needs to be spent doing Commissioner duties. She stated that she pays roughly \$1,200/month for herself and child and that is just unfeasible. She likes being a commissioner and would like to run for election again and this would help with costs. Kumfer agrees that insurance should be offered to Commissioners for the number of hours that are expected. Western stated that she is not in favor of this, the budget is already not balanced, and this could add up to \$60,000 if all three Commissioners took employee family coverage. Warner stated that he is also not in favor of approving this because when you run for an elected position you know what you are in for. Hodges feels that Commissioners are paid part-time wages and offering insurance would be a way to offset the lower salary. Wheeler made a motion to table until Council has had a chance to discuss this with the Commissioners further, seconded by Warner and passed with a 7/0 vote.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: Councilman Kumfer stated that he had asked that the personnel committee be a standing agenda item for Council. At this time, he had nothing to report for that. Kumfer also asked HR Director Jennifer Shinabery if she had anything further to add and she also had nothing.

COMMISSIONER REPORT: Commissioner Banks gave Council the report from the Commissioner meeting. Banks let Council know that they are in works of getting a new IT vendor and have had department heads meet with 4EOS and Tricore to see what they thought. Banks gave a brief update on the new jail and where they are at. He said that the estimated amount for the new jail is right around 38 million dollars. The Commissioners will use funding from the jail LIT, CEDIT, bonding and maybe some help from the Redevelopment Commission. Banks stated that the Commissioners really want to work closely with Council during this process.

MINUTES: The Council reviewed the August 2, 2022, regular meeting minutes. Councilman Warner made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 7/0 vote.

IN OTHER BUSINESS: The Council reviewed the 2023 accounts payable schedule, payroll schedule and Council meeting dates. Council member Barrett made a motion to approve the 2023 accounts payable schedule and the 2023 payroll schedule, seconded by Argerbright and passed with a 7/0 vote. Councilman Hodges stated that he would be in favor of evening meetings so that the public might be more inclined to join. He stated that if not all he would like to see maybe every other month be an evening meeting. Kumfer agrees that the meetings should be in the evening as well. Wheeler stated that would make it hard to get department heads to come to the meetings and that he feels if they do come then they will need to be compensated for that time, he is against the idea. Councilman Wheeler made a motion to approve the 2023 Council meeting schedule as presented following the current schedule of 8 am meeting times. Councilman Barrett seconded and passed with a 4/3 vote, with Hodges, Kumfer and Western voting against.

IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS: Chair Kumfer asked if anyone from the public would like to speak, and there were several residents of Whitley County that spoke. They spoke on the need of fiber or a better internet option for the rural areas of Whitley County. Stories were shared about experiences with current providers and how they affect everyday life in times when technology is only advancing, yet Whitley County is so far behind. SURF Broadband was present to speak as well and answer questions. Chair Kumfer then wanted to let the public know that Council would not be voting on broadband as the proper steps have not been taken. There is an ordinance that needs to be put together for the ARPA monies and a plan needs to be put together on how the Commissioners would like to spend the funds. Once that has been completed and presented to the County Council then it can be voted on.

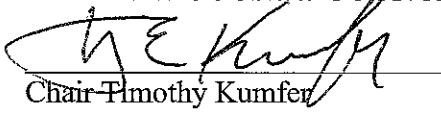
Auditor Deakins reminded Kumfer that there were still some budget items that needed to be voted on for her to be able to move forward with the budget process.

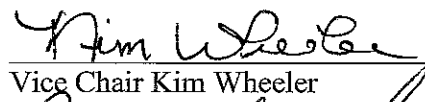
- Councilman Hodges made a motion to support the cuts that were recommended by Council and sent to department heads, with a second by Western. During further conversation Planning Director Nathan Bilger was present to ask that he have some funds given back that Council wanted to cut. Hodges thanked Nathan for his explanation but stated that if he were to need additional funding, he would ask for him and any other department heads to come to Council for additional appropriations if needed. The vote passed with a 7/0 vote.
- In the LOIT Public Safety budget, the Council needed to decide if they were going to approve the two new deputies that were requested by Sheriff Marcus Gatton and Chief Deputy Jason Spencer. Spencer stated the reasons that the department needs the additional help. Spencer also informed the Council that this would not mean that he would need two new vehicles if these positions were approved, they would hand down vehicles to the newer deputies. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the Sheriffs Department adding 1 new position not the 2 that were requested. Wheeler seconded the motion and passed with a 5/2 vote, with Hodges and Kumfer voting against. They would have been in favor of adding both positions.
- The Circuit and Superior court Judges are asking for a \$3,000 judges supplemental. Hodges made a motion to accept the \$3,000 per judge supplement, the motion died with a lack of a second. Hodges made a motion to change the judge's supplemental amount to \$4,000, the motion died with lack of second. Councilman Barrett made a motion to leave the judges supplemental amount the same as 2022 at \$2,000 per judge. Hodges seconded and the motion carried with a 7/0 vote.
- The maintenance director had submitted two options for the budget for 2023 and the Council needs to decide which option to go with. Warner made a motion to approve the higher option for the maintenance budget, with a second by Barrett and passing with a 5/2 vote, with Wheeler and Hodges voting against.
- Council needs to decide if they would like to give a cost-of-living increase to County employees for budget year 2023. Councilman Hodges would be in favor of waiting until the October meeting to vote on the cost of living to see if WIS will have completed their study by then. Hodges made that in the form of a motion that was seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.

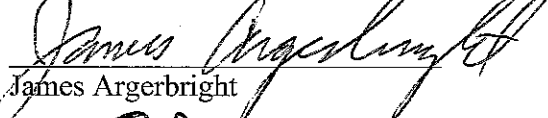
Council also wants to work on getting the Sheriff's salary set as well, Councilman Wheeler was asked to work with the Sheriff and Commissioners to get a contract agreed upon for the new incoming Sheriff.

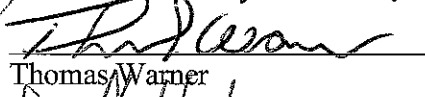
There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Kumfer adjourned the meeting at 10:15 AM.

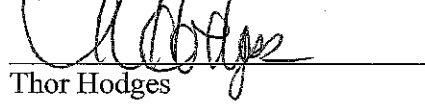
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Chair Timothy Kumfer

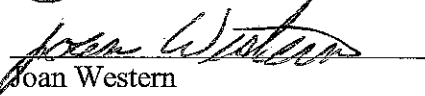

Vice Chair Kim Wheeler


James Argerbright


Thomas Warner


Thor Hodges


John Barrett


Joan Western

Attest:


Tiffany Deakins, Auditor