

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

February 7, 2023

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, in the Commissioner's Room located on the first floor of the Whitley County Government Center. Members in attendance were Chair James Argerbright, Thomas Warner, Thor Hodges, James Argerbright, Joan Western, Nicholas Brewer, John Barrett and Vice-Chair Kim Wheeler was absent. Others in attendance were Auditor Tiffany Deakins, Commissioners Chad Banks, Theresa Baysinger and Robert Schuman, Commissioners Assistant Cami Hippenhammer, HR Director Jennifer Shinabery, Chief Deputy Auditor Tamela Tincher, Sheriff Jason Spencer, Chief Deputy Sheriff Todd Cook, Deputy Billy Maddox, Communications Director Janelle Schmitt, Jail Commander Sean Martin, EMA Director Amy Biggs, Treasurer Kay Gatton, Recorder Rosemary Brown, Assessor Kim Erdly, County Engineer Brad Allen, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, Mark Sturtevant, Ardonna Angel, Kim Patterson, Steve Carender & Gene Cruise From Surf Internet, Rachel Hartman, Sarah Haag, Ryan Null, David Warner, Angela Grable, Nathan Myers, Jennifer Esterline and New Channel 55 was present.

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

Chairman Argerbright started the meeting with an apology to EMA Director Amy Biggs, at the previous Council meeting Jim had called Amy out on an encumbrance request, and wanted to let everyone know that he shouldn't have done that and it was unprofessional. He also wanted to apologize to anyone else that may have been offended by his comments.

SURF BROADBAND APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION: Gene Cruise and Steve Carender were present from Surf Internet to bring forth more information for Council that might aide in their decision to use ARP funds to fund broadband in the County and allow for Surf to apply for a matching grant. Members of the public took turns making statements of why they thought the Council should approve the \$1.7 million request for broadband. Councilman Brewer gave his thoughts stating that he is and has been in agreeance to move forward with the request as he wants the County to be prepared for the future and its needs. Other members of Council made statements as why they were for or against the request. Councilman Warner made a motion to approve the \$1.7 million dollar request from the ARP funds as long as there is an agreed upon contract, seconded by Brewer, the motion did not pass as the vote was 3/3 with Argerbright, Western and Hodges voting against.

BAKERTILLY APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION: The Council had previously approved ARP appropriations for using BakerTilly for the comprehensive financial plan in the amount of \$164,409.64. Attorney Shipman completed a resolution for the spending that needed to be formally signed. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-05, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 6/0 vote.

MOTOROLA APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION: The Council had previously approved ARP appropriations to Motorola for the purchase of hand-held radios for the Sheriff's Department in the amount of \$227,153.30. Attorney Shipman completed a resolution for the spending that needed to be formally signed. Councilman Warner made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-06, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 6/0 vote.

LEGAL DEPUTY PAYMENT APPROVAL & E911 REQUEST: Sheriff Spencer let the Council know that he had signed off on his contract, and it is the same copy that he worked with Kim Wheeler and George Schrupf on. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the contract, seconded by Hodges, Hodges stated that he and Spencer had a private meeting regarding this and commended Sheriff Spencer for his willingness to think of the County and come to an agreement on the contract. The vote passed with a 6/0 vote. Sheriff Spencer is seeking Council approval to be allowed to pay his legal representation out of his Commissary fund. This is not something that had been approved in the past however after speaking with State Board of Accounts and his lawyer this should have approval from the Council. Councilwoman Western made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Brewer and passed with a 6/0 vote. Sheriff Spencer and Communications Director Janelle Schmitt were present to seek approval to move forward with the refresh/update on the dispatches Solacom phone system. This update will be able to be moved to the new jail location with no problem, however if they do not get the update going now the dispatch bill will be charged more as it will be out of date. The \$36,133.76 will come from the E911 fund as this is an adequate expense. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Warner and passed with a 6/0 vote.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: Chair Argerbright asked that Paula Worden come up and explain her request that was approved at the personnel committee meeting. Paula is seeking approval for two new positions, one is a full-time re-entry coordinator at a salary of \$45,00 and the other is a part-time nurse making \$32.08 per hour. Both of the positions are grant funded and will be hired as such and would no longer be a position if the grant were to go away. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve both of the positions, seconded by Western and passed with a 6/0 vote. Amy Biggs was next to request an increase for the Deputy Director position as it was re-classified with WIS. This new salary would be a CIVILIAN POLE II at \$52,827. Warner made a motion

to approve the request, seconded by Barrett, and passed with a 6/0 vote. Hodges wanted to know how long this position had been full-time and factored wrong, Amy stated that for at least three years. She also let Council know that as of today she has four applicants.

- **COMMISSIONER REPORT:** Commissioner Banks gave Council the report from the Commissioner meeting. Banks let Council know that they had approved a scope of work to have BakerTilly keep up on the comprehensive financial plan. This is something that both Commissioners and Council wanted to keep up on as it is very beneficial to the County.
- Commissioners think it is a good idea to involve Council in the claims approval process so they can see and understand more of what goes on in departments spending. Argerbright sat with Commissioner Schuman Friday and Monday to review claims. Argerbright, Brewer, Western and Barrett all agreed to rotate those duties.
- Commissioners are looking into possibly changing the CUM CAP rate from the now .0150 to at most .0333. This recommendation came from BakerTilly as a part of the comprehensive financial plan and would allow the County to generate approximately \$390,000 more revenue.
- The bond sale went well for the jail, there was a possibility that the rate could come in as high as 5.5%, however the County was able to get a 3.84% and an A+ rating from S&P.

IN THE MATTER OF MINUTES: The Council reviewed the January 4, 2023, regular meeting minutes, Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Warner and passed with a 6/0 vote.

IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS: Argerbright had a claim for the County Council dues in the amount of \$140 that Commissioners wanted to know if Council wanted this to be paid. The expenses are what allow for Council to receive communication from state agencies. Hodges made a motion to approve the claim and to be paid from the Commissioners budget, seconded by Brewer, and passed with a 6/0 vote. Members of the public voiced some concerns pertaining to the location of the new jail, as well as wanting to know future plans of the current jail location. Commissioner Banks stated that at this time the Commissioners do not know for sure what will happen to the building, but it will not be left abandoned. Another constituent wanted to let Council know that they feel the County needs to update their website and make themselves easier to be reached.

There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Argerbright adjourned the meeting at 10:00 AM.

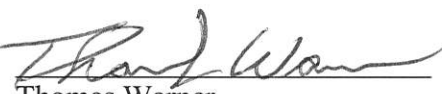
WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL


Chair James Argerbright


Vice Chair Kim Wheeler


Nicholas Brewer



Joan Western


Thomas Warner


Thor Hodges


John Barrett

Attest:


Tiffany Deakins, Auditor