

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

September 3, 2025

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, in the Commissioner's Room located on the first floor of the Whitley County Government Center. Members in attendance were Chair Thor Hodges, Vice Chair Nicholas Brewer, Kim Wheeler, Timothy Longenbaugh, Joan Western and John Barrett with Thomas Warner being absent. Others in attendance Commissioner Banks, Auditor Tiffany Deakins, Chief Deputy Auditor Tamela Tincher, Commissioners' Assistant Angela Brown, HR Director Jennifer Shinabery, Treasurer Kay Gatton, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, Assessor Kim Erdly, Sheriff Jason Spencer, Chief Deputy Todd Cook, Captain Billy Maddox, Amy Bechtold with Superior Court, Karli Hendry with Circuit Court, Recorder Rosemary Brown, Maintenance Director Mark Sturtevant, Clerk Cindy Doolittle, Highway Director Ryan Getts, Veteran Service Officer Josh Smith, Engineer Brad Allen, EMA Director Ed Scott & Deputy Director Brandon Rittenhouse, Bill Brice, Jacob Schrader, Matt Boyd, Mindy Muchow, Madalyn Sade-Bartl,

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

DEPARTMENT UPDATE: Councilman Hodges began the meeting by calling on each department head to give a quick update on their department.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2026 SOLID WASTE BUDGET: Chair Thor Hodges asked that Madalyn Sade-Bartl explain to Council the budget before he opened the public hearing for the Solid Waste budget. Hodges stated that he would like to see the wage increase for the director match the increase that the County gives. Hodges opened the public hearing for the Solid Waste and there were no additional comments from the board or public, Councilman Hodges closed the public hearing for the Solid Waste at 8:10 am.

ELECTION MACHINE PURCHASE DISCUSSION: Clerk Cindy Doolittle provided the Council with an updated quote for the purchase of voting machines, which totaled \$293,217.82 for 102 machines. Doolittle stated that it is up to the Council when to purchase the machines but need to know that they will need to be purchased before the 2028 Presidential Election. Council members had dividing thoughts, some thought they should be purchased right away, and others want to wait to see if the price will be changed because of the tariffs. Councilman Brewer made a motion to not order the machines and wait, seconded by Wheeler, passing with a 6/0 vote.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2026 WHITLEY COUNTY BUDGET: Hodges stated that he recommends the Council have the discussion on any wage increases for employees before he opened the public hearing for the 2026 Whitley County budget. Commissioner Banks wanted to let the Council know that with the Regional Sewer not receiving the funding that they were hoping to get that opened up approximately \$877,000 that the Commissioners would like to see used for revenue loss such as insurance payments. That would allow for those funds to roll back into County General. Councilman Hodges would like to see a lumpsum amount of \$317,633.79 that is the total of a 3% increase for all full-time employees get split between the total number of full-time employees. That would be \$1,612.51 across the board for all full-time employees, excluding the Council, and there were a few positions that would not get the full dollar amount as the advertised amount was not high enough. Councilwoman Western stated that she would be more comfortable with a 2% or 2.5% increase. After a lengthy discussion and a few amended motions, Brewer made a motion to go with a 2.5% overall increase for all full-time employees and paid evenly in the amount of \$1,343.76, excluding the Council and Probation Officers as their salary is set by the State, seconded by Wheeler, passing with a 6/0 vote. Hodges opened the public hearing for the 2026 Whitley County budget at 8:40 am and asked if there was any public comment. Assessor Kim Erdly asked about the 85% for Elected Officials and Chief Deputies and how the increase will affect that. Councilman Hodges stated that from the decision made the dollar amount is for all positions and would change that percent slightly. With no other comments Councilman Hodges closed the public hearing for the Whitley County budget at 8:41 am.

COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Matt Boyd from Columbia Township was present as he thought as a part of the new legislation change for townships he had to share the capital improvement plan for Columbia Township. Even though it is not a requirement and there will not be a request the Council asked that he continue and explain to them the new process.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION AND TRANSFER REQUESTS:

- Paula Worden was present with an additional appropriation request. The request was for fund 4103 – Donation Restricted Fund in the amount of \$500.00 for "supplies". Barrett made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Brewer, and passed with a 6/0 vote.

- Mark Sturtevant was present to have \$10,000 appropriated into his “overtime” account. This sparked a conversation with Commissioner Banks and where the County was at with trying to recoup overtime funds from the vendor that is having issues with the HVAC units at the jail. Commissioner Banks stated that Attorney Boxberger is working on the issue and has been in contact with the vendor. Brewer made a motion to approve the \$10,000 additional, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 6/0 vote.
- Ryan Getts was present with an additional appropriation request for \$292,717.12 to cover invoices that need to be paid for the already approved truck purchases. Councilman Hodges stated that these funds are to only go towards approved purchases and nothing outside of that. Barrett made a motion to approve the additional, seconded by Longenbaugh, passing with a 6/0 vote.
- Ryan also had several transfers that needed to be approved in the 1176 Motor Vehicle Highway Fund. This will be to cover his part-time seasonal mower that he did not budget for, he also did not budget for this in 2026 so will be back next year for approval.

1.	1176.22000.000.0176	to	1176.11510.000.0176	\$14,000.00
2.	1176.30013.000.0176	to	1176.11510.000.0176	\$1,900.00
3.	1176.33003.000.0176	to	1176.11510.000.0176	\$1,100.00

Councilman Longenbaugh made a motion to approve the transfers, seconded by Barrett, and passed with a 6/0 vote.

ARPA RESOLUTION: Commissioner Banks reminded the Council about his discussion at the beginning of the meeting regarding the Regional Sewer and the request to use those funds as revenue loss. This resolution would allow for that to be completed. Auditor Deakins stated that amount is \$877,799.12. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-05, seconded by Longenbaugh, passing with a 6/0 vote.

MOVE 3 DISPATCH POSITIONS TO COUNTY GENERAL: Auditor Tiffany Deakins stated that it has been discussed that we need to move approximately \$150,000 out of the E911 fund at prior meetings. Deakins wanted to make sure that this was voted on and her recommendation is to move 3 positions into County General to fix the shortfall, 2 dispatchers and the dispatch supervisor. Councilman Longenbaugh made a motion to approve the request and to start from July 2025, seconded by Barrett, passing with a 6/0 vote.

IN THE MATTER OF THE 2026 COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE: Council reviewed the presented 2026 Council meeting schedule, with no questions. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the schedule as presented, seconded by Brewer, passing with a 6/0 vote.

UPDATED JOB DESCRIPTIONS: HR Director Jennifer Shinabery presented the Council with a list of 21 job descriptions that needed to be updated to accurately reflect the hours they work. Western stated that she is glad this is being done and made a motion to approve, seconded by Wheeler, passing with a 6/0 vote.

SHERIFF DEPARTMENT 12 HOUR SHIFT APPROVAL: Captain Billy Maddox, Chief Deputy Todd Cook and Sheriff Spencer were available to answer any questions that the Council had regarding the changing of shifts for the Sheriff’s Department to 12 hours. This change will allow for every other weekend off; the deputies will work approximately 100 more hours a year and will still make the same annual amount. Maddox stated that this was voted on at a squad meeting and there was 1 against, 1 that didn’t vote, and all other deputies voted yes. This schedule will include a built-in 8-hour day so that deputies will be able to flex for 4 hours. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve the change to take effect in January 2026, seconded by Wheeler, passing with a 6/0 vote.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE: Councilman Brewer stated that the only other item discussed was the possibility or repealing Ordinance 2019-11 and instead instituting a policy.

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONER’S REPORT: Commissioner Banks gave the Council a commissioner’s report.

- Commissioner Banks gave the Council the quote to move the VHF equipment to the tower at the highway department. After discussion it was decided that the Council would like Commissioner Banks to move forward with the equipment move and to pay for the bill out of CEDIT. Councilman Brewer made a motion to proceed with the move and to be paid from CEDIT, seconded by Wheeler, passing with a 6/0 vote. Auditor Deakins stated that she will bring the additional appropriation request to the October meeting.

IN THE MATTER OF MINUTES: The Council reviewed August 5, 2025, regular meeting minutes. Brewer noted a typo that needed to be corrected. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve the minutes with the correction, seconded by Barrett, passing with a 5/0 vote with Western abstaining.

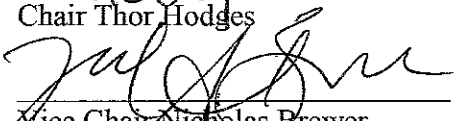
OTHER BUSINESS:

- Councilman Barrett wanted to ask if there was another Council member that could attend the Community Corrections Advisory meeting Thursday September 4th at noon in his absence. Brewer will be filling in for him.

There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Hodges adjourned the meeting at 9:36 AM.

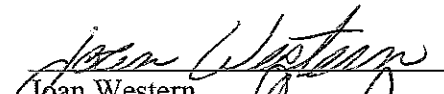
WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

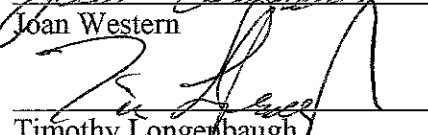

Chair Thor Hodges

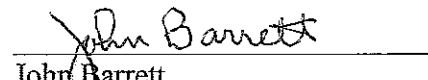

Vice Chair Nicholas Brewer

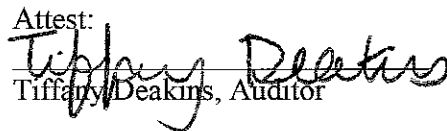
Thomas Warner

Kim Wheeler


Joan Western


Timothy Longenbaugh


John Barrett

Attest:

Tiffany Deakins, Auditor