

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

October 4, 2022

The Whitley County Council met in session at 8:00 am on Tuesday, October 4, 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, Thomas Warner, James Argerbright, Joan Western and John Barrett. Others in attendance were Commissioner Chad Banks & Theresa Baysinger, Auditor Tiffany Deakins, County Treasurer Kay Gatton, County Assessor Kim Erdly, Jason Spencer, Janelle Schmitt & Todd Cook from the Sheriff's Department, County Recorder Rosemary Brown, Mark Sturtevant from the Maintenance Department, Ardonna Angel, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, Clerk Cindy Doolittle, Highway Director Katy Fry, Engineer Brad Allen, John Phillips, Teresa Clark, David Waterman from Blue Lake Association, Sarah Haag, Kari Brubaker, Susie Whybrew, Gene Cruise from Surf and Rob Schuman.

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

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION REQUEST: Judge Rentschler was present to request an additional appropriation for his public defender line item of \$10,000. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve, with a second by Barrett and carried with a 7/0 vote.

2023 BUDGET ADOPTION FOR WHITLEY COUNTY AND WHITLEY COUNTY SOLID WASTE:

The Council reviewed the final budget amounts for the 2023 Whitley County budget and 2023 Solid Waste budget. Council member Hodges made a motion to approve Ordinance 2022-18 for the Whitley County Solid Waste budget, seconded by Argerbright and carried with a 7/0 vote.

The Council then discussed the 2023 Whitley County budget. The first item up for discussion was if Council wanted to give any sort of cost-of-living increase to employees. Council members spoke on what they thought would be appropriate to give. Warner stated that he felt something needed to be given and he felt 2% was appropriate. Argerbright stated that he felt a 3% would be more appropriate. Council member Hodges made a motion to approve a 3% across the board cost of living increase to all full-time employees excluding the County Council to receive nothing, Seconded by Barrett. Additional discussion took place with Wheeler and Western stating that he would be comfortable with 2-3% increase. The vote carried with a 6/1 with Warner against. The next discussion was for the elected officials that had asked for an increase, Councilman Barrett stated that he is in favor of the request. Councilman Wheeler made a motion to only allow for the elected officials to receive the 3% increase that all other full-time county employees are receiving, seconded by Argerbright, and carried with a 4/3 vote with Warner, Kumfer and Barrett against. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve Ordinance 2022-19 for the Whitley County budget after the changes in Gateway had been made to reflect the proper budget total, seconded by Barrett, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION REQUEST: Auditor Deakins explained that an additional appropriation was needed for the drain project assistant line item to county general as it was not budgeted in the beginning of the year. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve, with a second by Warner and carried with a 7/0 vote.

PART-TIME PAY APPROVAL: HR Director Jennifer Shinabery was present with Paula Worden from Community Corrections to seek approval for allowing a onetime part-time rate to be above the current part-time max of \$22.48 due to the job requirements being the same as the same full-time position. WIS recommends that we pay all part-time positions the same hourly rate as a full-time position that has the same job description because of the same job requirements. Jennifer stated that she would like to fix this in the future so that all part-time wages mirror the full-time wages. Councilman Argerbright made a motion to approve the request with a second by Western and carried with a 7/0 vote.

SOUTH WHITLEY BOARD RE-APPOINTMENT: South Whitley Library Director Vicki Builta is asking that the Council re-appoint David Warner to their board. Councilman Warner stated that he will abstain from the vote as he is related. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve, seconded by Hodges and carried with a 6/0 vote with Warner abstaining.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT REQUESTS: Highway Director Katy Fry was present with a few requests for Council. The first request was for approval to move forward with repairs that are needed on the highway building that was found while completing a drainage project. Commissioners gave Council a favorable pass to be paid from cum cap, the quote's range from \$17,420 - \$24,150. \$17,420 for Gruetttert Construction, \$19,300 for Block 51 and \$24,150 for Hilty Construction. Wheeler made a motion to approve the quote for Block 51 if all of the needed materials were available, seconded by Argerbright and carried with a 7/0 vote. Katy informed Council that she would like to pursue having a engineering study completed for Lincolnway west to help acquire grant funding in the future. The funding would come from the highway department if the Council would approve a transfer from another series, the cost would be \$44,000 to complete the study with USI Engineering. Commissioner Banks stated that at this point they would like to have a commitment from Council for the study

to move forward. Argerbright made a motion to allow Katy to move forward with the engineering study with USI, seconded by Wheeler and carried with a 7/0 vote. The last item for the highway department was to have Council approve a salary for the foreman position. WIS re-classified the head mechanic and foreman positions and stated that they were both falling under the same pay. WIS recommended adding wages to the foreman as they would supervise the head mechanic. Councilman Hodges made a motion to table until the personnel committee came to Council with a recommendation, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 7/0 vote to table.

LONGEVITY PAY DATE: Auditor Deakins presented a request for the 2022 longevity pay date to be January 6, 2023. Council member Barrett made a motion to approve the longevity pay date, seconded by Western, and carried with a 6/1 vote with Hodges against. Councilman Argerbright mentioned paying longevity out per pay rather than annually. This would allow for employees to receive their longevity as its earned, and they would not have to work at the county as of November 1st to be eligible.

FUND CLEANUP TRANSFERS: Auditor Deakins presented 7 transfers to cleanup unused funds that totaled \$15,040.06. These funds were just sitting unused and Deakins reached out to the DLGF and State Board of Accounts to see what the process would be to move them to county general. Warner made a motion to approve the transfers, seconded by Argerbright and carried with a 7/0 vote.

COMMISSIONER HEALTH INSURANCE: Commissioner Banks mentioned that at the last meeting Council decided to table the vote on whether to allow Commissioners to be eligible to receive health insurance or not. He reminded Council that a member of Council brought up that commissioners should be eligible during the budget meeting for 2023 budget. Council members took turns giving their thoughts and opinions as well as a few members from the public on whether they believed Commissioners should be eligible to receive health insurance. Hodges made a motion to allow Commissioners to be eligible for health insurance, seconded by Kumfer and did not pass with a 2/5 vote, with only Hodges and Kumfer voting for.

SURF BROADBAND REPORT: Gene Cruise was present to give the Council an update on a grant that Surf had applied for on behalf of Whitley County. This grant could award 5.2 million dollars to the County if accepted. Surf still needs the 1.7 million dollars of the ARPA funds from the County and would now contribute 3.3 million of their own funds. If this grant is awarded 9,500 households would be able to get fiber internet instead of just the approximate 770 households that had previously been presented.

ARPA RESOLUTION: Council has reviewed the ARPA Resolution and would like for the resolution to State that once Council approves the plan that the Commissioners still must come to Council for approval of the funds. Council is not comfortable with signing the resolution until a few questions can be answered by legal and the verbiage is changed to reflect the final approval to spend funds must come from Council. Blue Lake was present at the meeting to ask for a commitment letter from Council stating that Council is still going to give \$28,730 to help with an ongoing drainage issue. Wheeler stated that Council might be setting the County up for a standard that we do not want with getting involved in a private drain issue. Councilman Argerbright made a motion to approve the commitment letter, with a second by Hodges and passed with a 4/2 vote and Western abstaining.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT: Commissioner Banks gave a report from the Commissioner Meeting:

- Commissioner Banks informed the Council that the Commissioners have picked the final jail design for the new jail build and that is moving along well.
- The Commissioners are reviewing the current take home vehicle policy and who should have a take home vehicle. If an employee starts and ends their day at the workplace, then they do not see a need to have a vehicle.
- On September 19th Commissioners approved the Ritter study to be completed in conjunction with the city to see if a combined dispatch center is necessary for Whitley County. The costs will be split with the city.
- Commissioners are still in the process of obtaining a new IT for the County.
- Banks let Council know that Dani Tippman from the Museum has taken a full-time position outside of the County and that they will be looking to fill that position and the Commissioners are wanting to meet with the personnel committee to make this a fulltime position.
- Banks introduced the new Engineer Brad Allen who started with the County October 3rd.

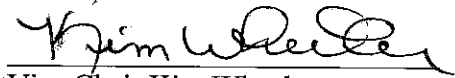
MINUTES: The Council reviewed the September 7, 2022, regular meeting minutes. Council member Hodges made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 7/0 vote.

OTHER BUSINESS: Sarah Haag from the public wanted to say to Council that she hopes they move forward with the internet for the county and to remember if it does need to be bid out that Council remember that other internet providers could have stepped forward before now to do the same thing and haven't.

There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Kumfer adjourned the meeting at 9:56 AM.

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

Chair Timothy Kumfer



Vice Chair Kim Wheeler

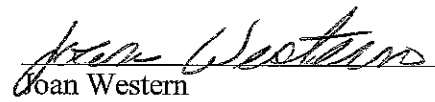


Thor Hodges



Thomas Warner

James Argerbright



Joan Western



John Barrett

Attest:



Tiffany Deakins, Auditor