

## WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

September 6, 2023

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Wednesday, September 6, 2023, in the Commissioner's Room located on the first floor of the Whitley County Government Center. Members in attendance were Chair James Argerbright, Vice-Chair Kim Wheeler, Thomas Warner, Thor Hodges, Joan Western, Nicholas Brewer, and John Barrett. Others in attendance were Commissioners Chad Banks, Theresa Baysinger and Rob Schuman, Auditor Tiffany Deakins, Deputy Auditor Tamela Tincher, Commissioners' Assistant Cami Hippenhammer, Treasurer Kay Gatton, Assessor Kim Erdly, Health Director Scott Wagner, Dale Buuck from the EDC, Sheriff Jason Spencer, Communications Director Janelle Schmitt, Highway Director Ryan Getts, Engineer Brad Allen, Tara Meyers and Madalyn Sade-Bartel from WC Solid Waste, Mark Sturtevant and Zack Sands.

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

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2024 WHITLEY COUNTY BUDGET & SOLID WASTE BUDGET:** Chair James Argerbright opened the public hearing for the Solid Waste budget. Solid Waste member Madalyn Sade spoke with Council to let them know that there was a 5% across the board increase for all expenses. The board is also looking to increase fees to taxpayers to potentially \$75 from the current \$53. Councilman Argerbright closed the public hearing for the solid waste. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the budget as presented, seconded by Hodges, and carried with a 7/0 vote. Argerbright opened the public hearing for the 2024 Whitley County budget. There being no input from public the hearing was closed, and after several conversations several motions were made, see below.

- Councilman Wheeler made a motion to approve a 3% cost of living increase for all employees and asked that all raises be taken out of ARPA funding, after some discussion Wheeler amended his motion to be 3% out of current budgets, Warner seconded the motion, and the motion did not pass. The vote was 3-4 with Hodges, Brewer, Barrett, and Western voting against.
- Hodges made a motion for a 5% increase to all employees except for Council and those whose salaries are set by the state. Seconded by Brewer however did not pass with a 3-4 vote with Argerbright, Warner, Wheeler and Western voted against.
- Western made a motion to approve 4% increase for all employees excluding Commissioners, Council and state set employees. This motion died with a lack of a second.
- Hodges made a motion to approve a 4.5% increase to all employees excluding Council and state set employees, seconded by Brewer however did not pass with a 3-4 vote, with Argerbright, Warner, Wheeler and Western voted against.
- Hodges made a motion to approve a 4% increase to all employees excluding Council and state set employees, seconded by Brewer however did not pass with a 3-4 vote, with Argerbright, Warner, Wheeler and Western voted against.
- Western made a motion to approve a 4% increase to all employees excluding state employees, Warner seconded the motion, the vote passed with a 4-3, with Hodges, Barrett and Argerbright against.
- The Sheriff's salary was then discussed, Wheeler made a motion to approve the Sheriff at 4% increase, seconded by Brewer and passed unanimously with a 7/0 vote.

Hodges made a motion to approve the 2024 Whitley County budget with the 4% increases, seconded by Barrett and the budget passed unanimously with a 7/0 vote.

**SAND STRATEGIES UPDATE:** Zack Sands was present from Sand Strategies to give Council an update on the progress that is being made with the broadband committee in Whitley County. There was a slideshow presentation as well as a map of underserved, served and unserved households.

**LONGEVITY PAY DATE LETTER:** Auditor Tiffany Deakins presented a letter for Council approval for PERF. PERF requires a letter approving any additional pay dates. Payroll will be paying out 2023 longevity December 28, 2023. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the letter as presented, seconded by Warner, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**ARPA APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION:** Council requested during budget meetings that the repairs that are needed for the courthouse come out of the ARPA funding. This resolution appropriates the funds to be spent on the projects. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-14, seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**APPROPRIATION DISCUSSION:** Highway Director Ryan Getts was present at the prior Council meeting to inform Council that an additional appropriation would be before them in September to be passed to cover costs that Commissioners requested for calcium chloride to be applied to dirt roads. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**APPROPRIATION REQUEST:** Engineer Brad Allen was present to seek Council approval to appropriate funds from a reimbursement for equipment that was purchased to assist with a redevelopment project. Redevelopment voted to reimburse the Engineering office for the equipment & transfer the funds so the funds just need to be appropriated. Wheeler made a motion to proceed as presented, seconded by Warner, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS:** Health Director Scott Wagner was present to give Council an update on the 501C3 possibilities for the Courthouse and Museum. The Museum would be an easy transition because the board is already a 501C3. There would just need to be a campaign to raise funds to cover costs once fully switch over. The Courthouse would be more difficult to complete, Scott has been speaking to a representative from Allen County that has been informative.

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:** Councilman Warner presented items that were approved at the August personnel commit meeting. The first request was to increase deputy coroner per call pay. The current is \$100/call the committee is suggesting \$160/call. Barrett made a motion to approve the increase effective immediately, seconded by Western and passed unanimously with a 7/0 vote. The second request was to have all Circuit and Superior Court job descriptions be updated to the same wording regarding attending trainings/conferences. Warner made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**2024 ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL SCHEDULES:** Council reviewed the 2024 accounts payable and payroll schedule dates. Council member Warner made a motion to approve both requests as presented, seconded by Brewer, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

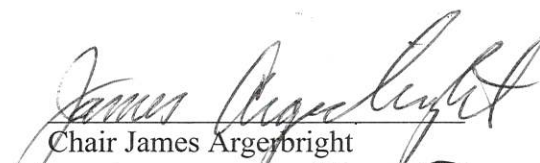
**COMMISSIONER REPORT:** Commissioner Banks gave a quick report stating that Commissioners are working with Scott Wagner on updating the sewer ordinance. He also let Council know that the jail is still moving along nicely and appears to have a wall going up. Commissioner Baysinger stated that the tentative completion date is July 31 of next year.

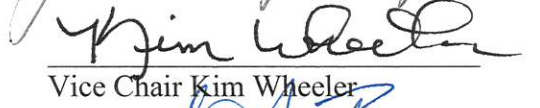
**IN THE MATTER OF MINUTES:** Council reviewed the August 8, 2023, regular meeting minutes. Argerbright noted that a change was made to a typo on the second page of the minutes. The change was fixing a dollar amount to be \$26,104.75. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve the minutes with the change, seconded by Wheeler and passed with a 7/0 vote.


**IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS:** Western wanted to remind everyone to go see the new building for the Community Foundation as they still have two open houses.

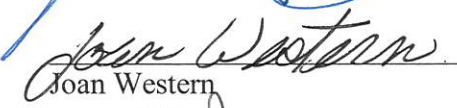
There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Argerbright adjourned the meeting at 9:26 a.m.

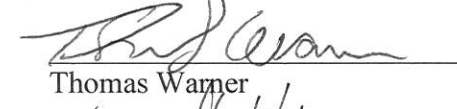
**WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL:**


  
Chair James Argerbright


  
Vice Chair Kim Wheeler

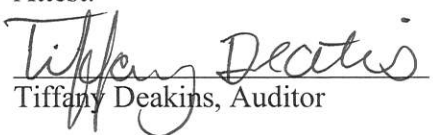
  
Nicholas Brewer

  
Joan Western

  
Thomas Warner

  
Thor Hodges

  
John Barrett

Attest:  
  
Tiffany Deakins, Auditor