

## WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

January 3, 2023

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Wednesday, January 3, 2024, 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 Thomas Warner, Kim Wheeler, Thor Hodges, Nicholas Brewer, Joan Western, and John Barrett. Others in attendance were Commissioner Banks, Chief Deputy Auditor Tamela Tincher, Planning & Building Director Nathan Bilger, Health Director Scott Wagner, HR Director Jennifer Shinabery, Assessor Kim Erdly, Tim Summers from the Maintenance Department, Maintenance Director Mark Sturtevant, Highway Director Ryan Getts, Judge Douglas Fahl, Commissioner's Assistant Cami Hippenhammer, Jenni Fulk from the Prosecutor's Office, Prosecutor DJ Sigler, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, Tim Kumpfer from Community Corrections, Sheriff Jason Spencer, Chief Deputy Sheriff Todd Cook, Billy Maddox from the Sheriff's Department, Damian Stafford, and Julie Argerbright.

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

**2024 ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** Chairman Argerbright opened the floor for nominations for the 2024 chairman and vice chairman starting with chairman. Councilwoman Western nominated Councilman Argerbright for chairman. Councilman Brewer nominated Councilman Hodges for chairman. Council took a vote on Councilman Argerbright for chair. This passed 4/3 with Hodges, Brewer, and Barrett against. The floor was opened to vice chair nominations. Kim Wheeler nominated Councilman Warner and Nick Brewer nominated Councilman Hodges. The Council took a vote on Councilman Warner for vice chair. This passed 4/3 with Hodges, Brewer, and Barrett against.

**VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER:** Commissioner Banks, Judge Fahl, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, and Northeast District Officer Cameron Lockner were present to discuss the Veterans Service Officer position. Councilman Warner stated that the Personnel Committee agreed this position needed to go to full-time. Lockner explained what the position does, requirements of the position and his support for why a full-time VSO is beneficial to the County. Judge Fahl and Paula Worden spoke on their support of a full time VSO as well. It was stated if the position was made full-time the job description would not change and the position would be monitored by the Commissioners. Western stated the position would cost about \$49,000 and about \$70,000 after benefits. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve making the Veteran Service Officer position full-time, seconded by Brewer, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**JOB RECLASSIFICATIONS:** Prosecutor DJ Sigler was present to request two job reclassifications in his office. Sigler would like the receptionist to be moved from a COMOT III to a COMOT II. Sigler stated that the courts caseloads have increased over the years and due to that the job duties of the positions have increased as well. The receptionist now has some increased job duties including organizing and helping with jury selection. The 2nd position he would like refactored is the Superior Court Admin. Sigler stated that due to adding another lawyer it has increased the case load for that position. He would like this position to go from a COMOT II to a PAT IV. Sigler stated that increasing these positions will not cause any other position to need an increase. Warner stated the personnel committee were unable to decide on this. Sigler stated he would need a \$6,000 additional if both increases were passed. Barrett made a motion to move the Superior Court Administrator from a COMOT II to a PAT IV with an increase of \$4,596 and the IV-D Receptionist position from a COMOT III to a COMOT II with an increase of \$1,966, seconded by Hodges and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**COMMUNITY CORRECTION ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION REQUEST:** Community Correction Director Paula Worden was present to request two additional appropriations. The Council previously approved the Veteran Treatment Case Manager position, but an additional \$78,468.00 will now need approved to fund the position. The second request is to change the part-time nurse position into full-time position with an additional request of \$87,942.00. Warner stated that both positions are covered by grants and if the grant is no longer received the positions will no longer exist. Wheeler motioned to approve the request with a total additional of \$166,410 as long as the grants are continued, seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**MAINTENANCE ENCUMBRANCE REQUEST:** Maintenance Director Mark Sturtevant was present to request an encumbrance into line item 1000.37004.000.0131 Equipment Repair & Maintenance to replace compressor #1 at the Government Center. Sturtevant received a quote from WSM in the amount of \$17,311. Councilman Hodges stated he would like to see other quotes. Councilman Hodges motioned to approve the encumbrance for the \$17,311, but asked Sturtevant to hold off on purchasing the compressor until they have received other quotes to see if we are able to find it cheaper elsewhere, seconded by Wheeler and passed with a 7/0 vote.

**IN THE MATTER OF THE 2024 BOARD APPOINTMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:** The Council reviewed the 2024 board appointments and assignments. Warner stated he will contact the South Whitley Library to see if Alice Nicodemus will be up this year and Barrett volunteered to contact Churubusco Library to see if Heather Allis will be up as well. The council voted to keep all assignments the same. Michael Schrader will serve on the Redevelopment Board. John Barrett will serve on the Community Corrections Advisory Board, and the JDAI Board. Kim Wheeler will serve on the Redevelopment Board. Thor Hodges will serve on the County Plan Commission, Solid Waste Board, and the Joint Advisory Board. Tom Warner will serve on the EMA Advisory Board, Personnel Committee and the LEPL Local Emergency Planning Commission. Nicholas Brewer will serve on the EMS Oversight Committee, Region 3A, and the Joint Advisory Board. Joan Western will serve on the Senior Citizen Board, EDC Board, and the Personnel Committee. James Argerbright will serve on the Personnel Committee. Councilman Warner made a motion to keep the assignments the same, seconded by Western, passing with a 7/0 vote.

**COUNCIL TABLET DISCUSSION:** The Council discussed the option to get tablets and go paperless. Councilman Brewer and Hodges stated their support of getting a tablet or laptop and listed off benefits of being paperless. Warner and Western stated they like paper and some concerns. Western would like an option to get a tablet after seeing how it works for the council members that would like them. 4EOS provided a quote of \$248 per tablet. Cami stated she found them at a cheaper rate. Hodges made a motion to move forward with getting tablets. Commissioner Banks stated that those who would like to have a tablet or laptop would need to have training provided by our IT company. Banks informed the council that the website is being updated to include an agenda builder to add attachments that pertain to the agenda items. After some discussion on the cost Hodges amended his motion to work with Commissioners on getting quotes on the tablets and laptops not to exceed a total of \$10,000, seconded by Brewer, passing with a 7/0 vote.

**IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:**

- Commissioner Banks passed out the Bowen Center annual report and let the Council know they are exploring changing the mental health provider for the County.
- Banks stated the LIT numbers from the State were released and the jail tax is up to 2.3 million.
- The Commissioners met with Mark Coonrad from HILB and he let them know we will be receiving a 19% decrease in our workmen's comp plan, but we are told to expect an increase in auto and property liability insurance.
- Since switching from Preferred IT to 4EOS the county has saved \$108,000. Cami has done a great job of finding computers at a lower cost on Dell as well.
- On December 18<sup>th</sup> they had the Highway bid opening, but the bids weren't sent to the limestone providers, so they are reopening the bids just for limestone.
- The Commissioners would like to create a building committee to work on the plan for the Community Corrections building. This committee would include the Commissioners, members of Community Corrections, the Maintenance Department, community members, and two Council members. The dates and times for the meetings will be determined once they have the members chosen. The Council chose to put Nicholas Brewer and John Barrett on the committee.
- The new jail roof deck is being removed and replaced. Banks stated they initiated that the roof repair would put them 3 months behind, but he believes it will be done sooner.
- Commissioner Banks and Health Director Scott Wagner gave some information on switching the mental health provider of the County from the Bowen Center to Parkview. Wagner stated this wouldn't be a cost savings and it is a 18 month process that has to be approved by the State. Banks believes that if we don't change providers this may improve our partnership with Bowen Center. The amount we provide is set by the State.

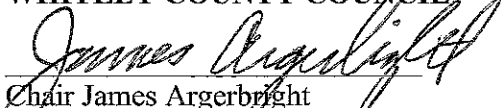
**IN THE MATTER OF MINUTES:** The Council reviewed the December 6, 2023, regular meeting minutes, Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Wheeler and passed with a 7/0 vote.

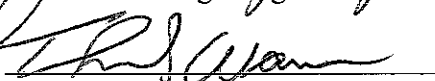
**IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS:** Health Director Scott Wagner gave a COVID update. Wagner stated that they were slammed with COVID, influenza, and RSV a week before Christmas. Influenza A & B has been seen in Whitley County. We are out of COVID tests. Barrett stated that you can get COVID tests from the post office.

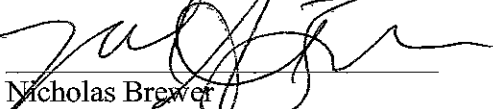
Dale Buuck from Whitley County EDC gave a quick update, stating they have 3 providers that have put in for a next level connection grant to bring internet to Whitley County. The federal government announced we will be receiving money to help with internet as well. Brewer stated there's a zoom meeting they can join on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

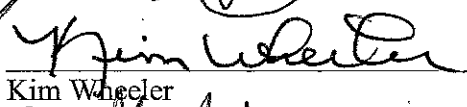
There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Argerbright adjourned the meeting at 9:32 AM.

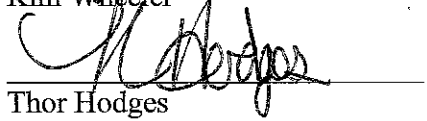
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Chair James Argerbright

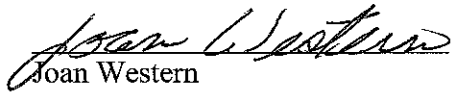
  
Vice Chair Thomas Warner

  
Nicholas Brewer

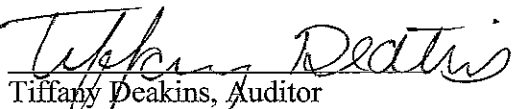
  
Kim Wheeler

  
Thor Hodges

  
John Barrett

  
Joan Western

Attest:

  
Tiffany Deakins, Auditor