

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

March 5, 2024

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Tuesday, March 5, 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 Commissioners Schuman and Banks, Auditor Tiffany Deakins, Chief Deputy Auditor Tamela Tincher, HR Director Jennifer Shinabery, Commissioners' Assistant Cami Hippenhammer, Assessor Kim Erdly, Highway Director Ryan Getts, Sheriff Jason Spencer, Clerk Cindy Doolittle, Recorder Rosemary Brown, Dale Buuck, Coroner Scott Smith, Bradley Emerick, Savanna & Ashley Fettig, Matt Minier and Liane Rambo.

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

RMP TAX ABATEMENT: Dale Buuck with the EDC was present with Brad Emerick from RMP to request a 10-year personal property tax abatement. RMP currently has 43 employees and plans to hire at least 8 more before the end of the year. RMP is responsible for the medical device production of the plastic polymer pieces between the metal in orthopedic implants. Councilman Wheeler made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-06, seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION REQUESTS: Council was presented with three additional appropriation requests.

- JDAI was awarded \$50,150 in performance bonus funds for 2024 grant. Barrett made a motion to approve the \$50,150 as presented, seconded by Warner, and passed with a 7/0 vote.
- The Coroner was present to seek final approval for a radio purchase for the Coroner SUV. Hodges made a motion to approve the \$6,089.14 and be paid from county general, seconded by Barrett, and passed with a 7/0 vote.
- The Clerk was granted a \$22,000 grant for election costs and will be reimbursed for equipment purchase. Western made a motion to approve the \$12,000 request, seconded by Warner, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

ELECTION STIPEND REQUEST: Clerk Cindy Doolittle made a request for the Election Supervisor, Jessica Hockemeyer to receive a stipend as she did the year before for creating the data base and programing the voting machines instead of paying Microvote. The request is for \$1,000 for the Primary and \$1,000 for the General Elections. Cindy has funds in her budget currently to cover the costs. Western made a motion, seconded by Warner to approve the request, passing with a 7/0 vote.

EMS ARP ORDINANCE: Commissioner Banks spoke on behalf of Ordinance 2024-02 which will appropriate \$300,000 to pay for the EMS contract from ARP funds. Wheeler made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Brewer, and carried with a 6/1 vote, with Barrett voting against.

SALARY ORDINANCE & ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS: Auditor Deakins spoke on behalf of the amended 2024 Salary Ordinance and additional appropriations. The Council had already approved the salary changes, however the additional appropriations needed to be advertised and signed off on. Deakins stated that the Council received the updated Salary Ordinance in their packets with the changes highlighted. Warner made a motion to approve the additional appropriations and Ordinance 2024-03 that amends the previous salary ordinance, seconded by Brewer, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:

- Commissioner Banks introduced the new Veteran Services Officer Joshua Smit to the Council. He still has approximately 3-4 weeks left of training then will be able to start assisting the veterans with their needs.
- Commissioner Banks stated that the Commissioners met with Travelers & HILB Insurance to review the insurance plan for the county and is happy to report that our claims are very low, and that the renewal is coming soon.
- The construction is going good for the new jail and windows are being added. They are still waiting for NIPSCO to get approval to boar under US 30.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT VEHICLES: Scott Wagner let Council know that the new vehicles for the Health Department are in and can be picked up next week. He needs to know where the Council would like to have these paid for from. He has funds to cover in his cash balance if that is how Council would like to proceed. The total costs for both vehicles would be \$50,048. Warner made a motion to approve Scott paying for his vehicles from his 1159 fund, seconded by Brewer and passed with a 7/0 vote. Commissioner Banks let Council know that for the current vehicles there are plans for utilizing them as transport vehicles for the bailiffs to travel from the Courthouse to the new jail and possibly for a pool vehicle that can be utilized in other departments.

IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS: Chair Argerbright and vice-chair Warner met and had discussions with Commissioners and a few department heads regarding the Cum Bridge annual report and the ARP plan and making sure that the funds are allocated before the end of 2024. Argerbright wanted to know if the Council would like to have a special meeting with Commissioners or have these items be added to their regular April meeting. The Council stated that they would be fine with these items added to their regular meeting.

IN THE MATTER OF PUBLIC COMMENT: Matt Minear, Savanna Fetting, and Leanne Facer all from Whitley County Pride spoke to Council regarding the newly established Whitley County Pride which is a 501C3 organization. This organization wants to get more involved with Whitley County and stated that they have a website that can be visited for more information. www.whitleycountypride.org

Engineer Brad Allen wants to move forward with purchasing a side by side to take the place of the current 4-wheeler the department has. This was discussed at budget time last year and he wanted to see where the Council would like it to be paid from. The Council stated that he should obtain 2-3 quotes that have all of the same specifications to make the quotes comparable and make sure to get the Commissioners support to move forward to Council.

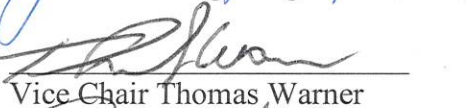
Veteran Service Officer Josh Smith introduced himself to the Council and constituents letting everyone know that he is eager to serve the Veterans of Whitley County.

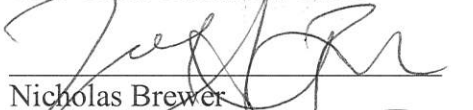
IN THE MATTER OF MINUTES: The Council reviewed the February 6, 2024, regular meeting minutes, Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Wheeler and passed with a 7/0 vote.

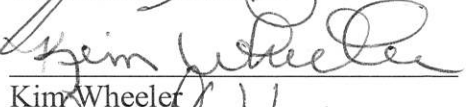
There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Argerbright adjourned the meeting at 8:53 AM.

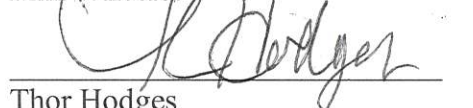
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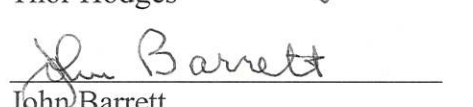

Chair James Argerbright



Vice Chair Thomas Warner


Nicholas Brewer


Kim Wheeler


Thor Hodges


John Barrett


Joan Western

Attest:

Tiffany Deakins, Auditor