

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

August 6, 2024

The Whitley County Council met in regular session at 8:00 am on Tuesday, August 6, 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 Auditor Tiffany Deakins, Commissioners Banks, Baysinger & Schuman, Chief Deputy Auditor Tameia Tincher, Sheriff Jason Spencer, Chief Deputy Sheriff Todd Cook, Billy Maddox with the Sheriff's Department, Community Corrections Director Paula Worden, Todd Geiger from the Extension office, Dale Buuck & Abbey Anthony from the EDC, Highway Director Ryan Getts, Assessor Kim Erdly, Treasurer Kay Gatton, Health Director Scott Wagner, Liane Rambo and Jason Knothe from Micropulse, and Zain and Abid Bengali from Indiana Materials Processing.

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

ABATEMENT REQUESTS:

- Economic Development Corporation Director Dale Buuck and Abid Bengali with Indiana Materials Processing were present to request a 5-year real property tax abatement. This abatement would be to build a warehouse to be able to open up space for additional production and more employees eventually. Councilman Wheeler made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-12, seconded by Western and passed with a 7/0 vote.
- Economic Development Corporation Director Dale Buuck and Liane Rambo with Micropulse were present to request a 5-year tax abatement for Micropulse. This abatement will be for personal property to fill the 65,000 square foot expansion with equipment and tooling that was just completed. Councilman Warner made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-13, seconded by Wheeler and passed with a 7/0 vote.

TRANSFER REQUEST: Engineer Brad Allen was present to ask Council to allow for the funds that were received for the sale of a 4-wheeler be transferred from CUM CAP where there were receipted into and put into his equipment & program maintenance line item in his county general budget, to help cover costs for the side-by-side that was purchased this year. The request is to transfer \$5,000 which is the proceeds from the auction. Hodges made a motion to approve, seconded by Barrett and passed with a 7/0 vote.

ARPA APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION FOR JAIL ANTENNA: Commissioner Banks presented an ordinance to pay \$82,913.43 out of ARPA to Motorola for the new jail antenna. Councilman Hodges made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-14, seconded by Brewer, and passed with a 5/2 vote, with Western and Argerbright voting against.

REVIEW OF ESTIMATED PROPERTY TAX LEVY LIMITS: Council members had a discussion on the levy's that are set by the Council for the County. Councilman Wheeler made a motion to approve the max levy limits with no change, seconded by Warner and carried with a 7/0 vote.

HEALTH FIRST INDIANA BUDGET APPROVAL: Council members reviewed the budget that was presented for the Health First Indiana Fund. Councilman Barrett made a motion to approve the budget with a 3% increase for personnel. If the Council approves a different amount for salaries that budget will need to be updated to reflect the amount approved. Seconded by Hodges and passed with a 7/0 vote.

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 2024 longevity December 26, 2024. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve the letter as presented, seconded by Barrett, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

2025 ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL SCHEDULES: Council reviewed the 2025 accounts payable and payroll schedule dates. Barrett made a motion to approve both requests as presented, seconded by Hodges, and passed with a 7/0 vote.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE:

- The Extension office would like to add a part-time position for approximately 20 hours per week to be able to assist with the STEM program. Todd Geiger gave Council a brief overview of why the position is needed. Personnel Committee gave a favorable pass for this request. Wheeler made a motion to approve, seconded by Western and passed with a 6/1 vote, with Brewer against.
- The Prosecutors Office would like to increase the pay from \$78,000 to \$90,000 for the Deputy Prosecutor position that they are trying to fill. At the \$78,000 they cannot find a qualified candidate. The personnel committee wanted to have the Council discuss and decide on this request. Barrett made a

motion to approve the \$90,000 salary for the Deputy Prosecutor position, and to take effect as soon as the position gets filled. The motion also included that this position will not be included in any cost-of-living increase for 2025. Seconded by Wheeler, passing with a 4/3 vote with Hodges, Brewer and Warner voting against.

- Paula Worden and Sheriff Spencer were present to seek Council approval to move the JCAP position to the Sheriff's budget for 2025 as that is where the position should be housed. Paula had applied for a grant to have a JCAP re-entry coordinator at Community Corrections and was approved for that grant, however with COVID that stopped the progress. Now that the jail is almost completed the JCAP position should be under the Sheriff as that is what the position is for. Paula would still like to be able to have her re-entry coordinator position as well. Warner made a motion to approve the JCAP position be under the Sheriff's budget starting in 2025 and be paid from the opioid funds that the County has been receiving and allowing Paula to fill the re-entry coordinator for Community Corrections as well. Seconded by Brewer, passing with a 6/0 vote with Hodges abstaining as this vote could be a conflict of interest for him as the person currently in that position is family.
- Sheriff Spencer would like to have his merit deputies removed from the salary ordinance and have their own ordinance. He feels that Whitley County wages are well below the area and would like to see an approximate 17% increase and have merit deputy's wages looked at every other year instead of yearly. Councilman Brewer made a motion to table the request until the rest of the County employees wages are discussed, seconded by Wheeler and passed with a 7/0 vote to table.
- Sheriff Spencer is requesting 3 new deputy positions for the 2025 budget. This request would allow for better coverage in the County as well as get the Sheriff's Department in a better position to move to 12-hour shifts. This is something that the Sheriff would like to move towards as well as the staff. Barrett made a motion to table the request, seconded by Brewer and passed with a 7/0 vote.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT:

- Commissioner Banks wanted to thank the personnel committee for considering keeping the JCAP program going, that is a very important piece of trying to keep the recidivism numbers down for Whitley County.
- Commissioner Banks reported that there needed to be emergency work done for the courthouse. Atlas discovered a hole in the copper roofing while they were completing work on the courthouse, they submitted a quote for \$47,773 to fix the repairs. Maintenance Director Mark Sturtevant reached out to another vendor Dahm Brothers to see about obtaining a quote from them as well, however they would not even give a quote for work as they would not be able to get to it for the rest of the year. Commissioners signed and approved the quote so the work could be completed, and this will be paid from Cum Cap.
- Since the power outage in town last night the AC unit on the Government Center was not working properly and that is currently being worked on.
- Commissioners are working on figuring what to do with the county's phones as they have recently discovered that the lines are housed and run through the current jail and will need to be moved. Currently Commissioners are thinking possibly the server room at the Government Center.

IN THE MATTER OF MINUTES: Council reviewed the July 2, 2024, regular meeting minutes. Councilman Brewer made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Hodges and passed with a 7/0 vote.

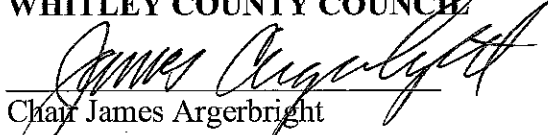
IN THE MATTER OF OTHER BUSINESS:

- The Council would like to set an additional meeting so that they can discuss the 2025 budget, and 2025 potential employee wage increases for cost of living. Council set Tuesday August 13th at 4:00 pm as the meeting date and time.
- Paula Worden asked the Council how they would like to move forward with possibly spending ARPA funds on the renovations for the Community Corrections building. Council would like to have Commissioners present the request at the next Council meeting.
- Auditor Deakins let Council know that the issue that she and Treasurer Kay Gatton had been working on with the Redevelopment funds had been taken care of and now everything balances and matches between the funds and bank accounts. State Board of Accounts did review this during the 2023 audit that had just finished.

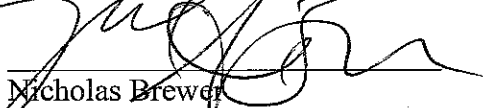
Councilman Hodges wanted to let constituents know that the Solid Waste Board is working with their attorney to review the only bid that was submitted for the curbside pickup for 2025.

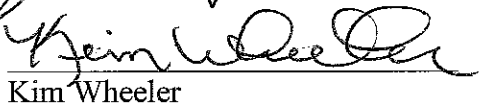
There being no further business and no further questions or comments from the public, Chair Argerbright adjourned the meeting at 9:55 AM.

WHITLEY COUNTY COUNCIL

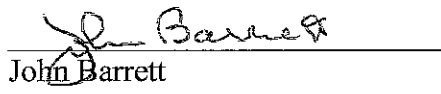

Chair James Argerbright

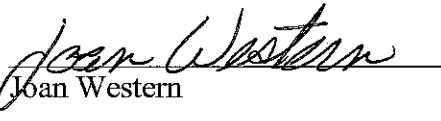

Vice Chair Thomas Warner


Nicholas Brewer

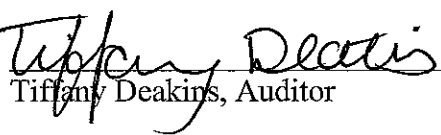

Kim Wheeler

Electronic Attendance/Note Yes
Thor Hodges


John Barrett


Joan Western

Attest:


Tiffany Deakins, Auditor