

Decatur County Council Meeting

- Tuesday, April 15, 2025
- Present: Danny Peters, Bill Metz, Rick Nobbe, Ashley Hungate, Deanna Burkart, Ernie Gauck and Kenny Hooten
- **Opening and Administrative Matters**
- President Danny Peters called the meeting to order for the April session of the County Council.
- Don Schilling led the pledge of allegiance.
- The minutes from the previous meeting were distributed via email and a physical copy was available.
 - No corrections were noted, and a motion to approve was made by Bill Metz and seconded by Kenny Hooten. Motion passes 6-0.
- **Redevelopment Financials – RDC President Don Schilling**
- The Honda Economic Development Area was established in 2006 for a period of 30 years.
- The second page of the handout listed all redevelopment commanders; the third page detailed the Honda area.
- For 2024, total income from excess taxes was \$4.6 million.
- Expenditures for the year totaled \$3.3 million.
 - Interest payments amounted to \$768,000, with \$600,000 of that paid to the fire department.
 - Final payment on the highway garage was \$164,000.
 - Principal and interest payments were made on \$22 million of bonds originally issued for infrastructure.
- The bond production account is used for bond payments.
- The excess revenue account is used for redevelopment purposes.
- Decatur County Community Schools and Greensburg Community Schools can apply for funds via a grant request to the TIF board; both have received support in the past.
- The TIF account currently has three projects already approved for the year:
 - Finishing up the ball diamond.
 - Paving Michigan Road by Honda.
 - Funding emergency management storage.
 - Road paving in front of Honda (from the new stoplight onward): \$875,000 committed, not to exceed this amount, with costs split 50/50 between the city and the board.
- Mr. Schilling was commended for his management and knowledge of the financials.
- A letter was circulated regarding the need for someone to be trained to assist Don in the future.
- Next meeting scheduled for April 16, 2025, at 5:30, with a presentation by Matt Eckerle or Sam from Baker Tilly, covering the full financial overview.
- **Maintenance Supervisor Position**
- The council and commissioners previously agreed to a maintenance supervisor salary of \$50,000, appropriated for 2025.
- Three candidates were interviewed; summaries were sent to all members.
- The selected candidate requested a salary of \$60,000.
 - \$50,000 remains unspent in the appropriated budget for 2025.

- The county is currently reactive in maintenance, addressing issues only when they arise.
- The maintenance supervisor would enable proactive maintenance, potentially saving money by addressing problems before they escalate.
- The position would also relieve HR Director Patty Hensley, who currently handles both HR and maintenance supervision, allowing her to focus on HR.
- The candidate has strong technology skills, electrical and plumbing knowledge, and will serve as a point of contact for employees and department heads.
- The maintenance supervisor will handle smaller repairs (plumbing, painting, electrical) directly, reducing the need for outside contractors.
 - Last year, \$30,000–\$40,000 was spent on basic, reactive repairs.
- The candidate will be provided with an old Sheriff's Department vehicle and necessary tools (some to be supplied by the county).
- The maintenance supervisor will report to the commissioners.
- The position covers two facilities: the annex and the courthouse.
- The role is budgeted for 35 hours per week.
- Jake Bauer was hired to mow the highway department and annex, using existing equipment, resulting in significant cost savings compared to contracting out.
- Some members expressed concern about exceeding the budget and the impact on other positions, especially given the higher salary compared to other county roles.
- The long-term benefit of proactive maintenance and record-keeping for licensing/certification was emphasized.

- **Vehicle Use, Tracking, and Accountability**

- Discussion on whether the maintenance person should have a drive-home vehicle; consensus leans toward allowing the vehicle only for commuting to and from work, not for personal errands or out-of-county use.
- Jake Bauer currently uses his own truck to transport the mower; there is reluctance to provide him with a take-home vehicle. The proposed solution is to keep the vehicle at the annex, allowing Jake to use it as needed, likely once a week for mowing.
- The vehicle can be shared, with mowing scheduled once a week, possibly on weekends to fit Jake's job responsibilities.
- Importance of tracking the maintenance person's daily activities to assess value and justify the position for the 2027 budget next year.
 - Proposed methods include:
 - Comparing the number of contractor call-ins before and after hiring.
 - Tracking the number of requests from different departments and jobs completed throughout the year.
 - Considering a ticket system similar to IT's, possibly using an email-based request system that CCs supervisors for transparency.

- **Budget and Funding**

- The salary study was conducted to allow departments to manage their own compensation structures independently.
- Discussion on the challenge of comparing across departments due to this independence.
- Inquiry about sourcing \$10,000 for the position; confirmation that the salary is covered for this year and next.
- Motion made by Kenny Hooten and seconded by Deanna Burkart to approve the \$60,000 funding for the maintenance position.

- Hand vote conducted: Five in favor; Kenny Hooten, Deanna Burkart, Ashley Hungate, Rick Nobbe & Ernie Gauck. Two opposed; Danny Peters & Bill Metz. Motion passes.

- **Health Department Initiatives – Health Director Sean Durbin**

- The team now includes a certified pool inspector, enabling county pool inspections.
- Environmental team attended the international "wet show" (Water and Wastewater Equipment Treatment and Transport) in Indianapolis, learning about new septic systems and technologies.
- Membership in the Indiana On-Site Wastewater Professionals Association established.
- Alicia Nobbe named co-chair of the State Food Protection group, representing 92 counties and 94 departments.
- Alicia Nobbe holds both core and category 8 pesticide applicator licenses, allowing for mosquito spraying in the county.
- Although health departments are exempt from licensing, the department values proper certification due to chemical handling.
- Plans to expand mosquito control efforts, including larvicide treatments and monitoring (larva dips) in public areas.
- The department sponsors senior movie nights at Wolf Theatres, providing wellness checks for attendees.
- Leslie Straight, a nurse, is now a CPR instructor, bringing the total to three instructors in the department.
- Free CPR classes are offered to individuals, businesses, and agencies.

- **Community Health Initiatives and Programs**

- The organization hosted its third blood drive, continuing its commitment to community health.
- Vaccines for children are provided, with the program undergoing and passing a rigorous state audit inspection to ensure compliance and quality.
- Nurses are sent out to other agencies (e.g., Daisi) to conduct staff TB tests, saving both money and time for those agencies by eliminating the need for their staff to travel.
- Partnered with the library and the extension office to launch the "Food is Medicine" program.
 - An eight-week course teaching healthy eating, cooking techniques, and nutrition facts.
 - 12 participants attended, receiving weekly grocery bags and, upon completion, a prize such as a crock pot or air fryer to encourage healthy cooking.
 - Wellness checks were conducted, including blood pressure, pulse, A1c, blood sugar, and blood lipids, both before and after the program. The program is ongoing and ends in April 2025, with hopes of seeing health improvements, though immediate results may not be evident due to the short duration.
 - The initiative aims to use food as a means to manage chronic conditions before medical intervention is necessary.
- Toni Kellems, the public health nurse, initiated a tobacco coalition group, marking the first such group in recent memory.
- The department applied for an additional grant focused on tobacco prevention and cessation.
- Provided CPR training to the staff at Hickory Creek.

- **Recognition and Special Programs**

- The Health department was selected for a prestigious mentorship and training program in maternal child health policy innovation.
 - Only 10 local health departments nationwide were chosen; this department is one of them.
 - Maternal and child health is a key area of focus for the year, with related key performance indicators being tracked.
 - Decatur County is currently underperforming in these indicators.

- **Financial Overview and Funding Changes**

- A study by the Fairbanks School of Public Health and the Indiana Department of Health analyzed four core services over the first eight months of last year.
 - Preventative efforts saved the county \$1.8 million in just eight months by reducing the need for doctor visits.
- The department is facing a \$162,000 decrease in HFI funds for the next year, which is confirmed by the Senate.
- An additional \$125,000 decrease is expected in the immunization grant.
- Property tax implications are also being considered.
- Despite these reductions, the department has adequate funds and plans to apply for additional grants. There will be no request for an increased county budget next year.
 - Core services will continue, but some extra programs may be cut if necessary.
- The allocation for HFI funding is shifting from 60% preventative/40% regulatory to 90% preventative/10% regulatory.
 - Regulatory activities (e.g., tattoo regulation) are already well-funded, and increasing preventative funding is expected to yield greater cost savings.
- The Board of Health approved the promotion of Alicia Nobbe to Environmental Health Manager and Amanda Rich to Population Health Manager at the last meeting.

- **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Program**

- The program officially began operations on February 2, 2025.
- Mike Eggleston, formerly the jail commander, is now the CIT coordinator and was the principal architect of the grant proposal.
- Desiree Moore, a full-time licensed clinical social worker, has been hired and works both in the jail and responding to calls.
- Two new field officers, John Bundy (Columbus) and Tiffany McFarland (Greensburg), were sworn in and are expected to be significant assets.
- The program was originally written for four field officers, but only two are being hired initially to monitor progress and needs.
- Since February 2, the team has responded to 40 calls, indicating early impact.
- The program is addressing cases where mental health issues are the root cause of criminal behavior, such as finding appropriate care for inmates with mental illness.
- Field officers will be special deputies with limited police powers as defined by law.
- The swearing-in ceremony for the new officers was attended by nearly 50 people, demonstrating strong community support.
- The City of Greensburg is supportive, having signed a memorandum of understanding at the last Board of Works/city council meeting; this will be presented to the commissioners for review in May 2025.

- Training is mandatory for all staff (jail and patrol), with a 40-hour training video, and is open to police, fire, and other first responders.
- The CIT program is funded by the grant, with an anticipated duration of five to six years.
- Detective Allie Sullivan was commended for recovering 12 stolen golf carts, highlighting the department's effectiveness.
- **Financial Transfers and Approvals**
 - Routine quarterly transfers were discussed and approved, including insurance, 911, and the county's portion of IT expenses.
 - The motion to approve was made by Rick Nobbe, seconded by Ernie Gauck, and passed without opposition.
- **Economic Development Payment Ordinance**
 - There is a need to establish a structure for managing economic development payments, similar to a TIF district, to ensure oversight and proper allocation of funds.
 - The current proposal is to place funds in a separate account labeled as a "community impact fee" (formerly "economic development fee").
 - There is a preference for council flexibility to establish separate accounts for different projects, rather than a single account for all funds.
 - The council should retain control over how funds are spent and have the ability to separate incomes as needed.
 - The first payment is expected in 2027.
 - Continued outreach to other communities will be pursued to gather best practices.
- **Comprehensive Plan Survey**
 - The comprehensive plan survey will be distributed via SurveyMonkey through the Southeastern Indiana region.
 - Distribution will primarily be by email.
 - There is concern about reaching residents without email access; alternative distribution methods will be considered to ensure all county residents have the opportunity to participate.
 - The survey was approved in March 2025, but re-approval was needed due to advertising requirements.
- **Legal Fees for Zoning Appeals and Area Plan**
 - The payment of \$5,145 is to be made to Melissa Scholl, the attorney for the Decatur County Board of Zoning Appeals and Area Plan.
 - There was a request to specify in the meeting minutes the purpose of the funds, ensuring clarity that the payment is for the county's own legal expenses, not for the attorney to perform work for external parties.
 - Example/Concern: A community member questioned if money was being taken from "the solar people," highlighting the need for clear documentation.
 - Agreement: The minutes should explicitly state that the funds are to pay for the county's side of legal fees and that these do not fall under the tax bill.
 - Explanation: The payment offsets cost the county would otherwise incur due to projects like the solar initiative, preventing taxpayer dollars from being used unnecessarily.
 - Several examples were cited where external project proponents covered county expenses:
 - RWE and battery storage projects provided similar funding for legal and assessment costs.
 - Honda may have done something similar in 2008.

- The battery storage project paid Rick Hall and Barnes and Thornburg for legal services.
- This practice is common for large projects, as it prevents the county from bearing significant upfront costs that may not result in approved projects.
- It was emphasized that this arrangement should be clearly communicated to the public to avoid misconceptions about the county’s financial dealings with project developers.
- A motion was made by Bill Metz and seconded by Kenny Hooten to approve the payment and process as discussed.
- The motion passed with all in favor.
- **Crisis Intervention Funding and Reimbursement**
- Total expenditures for crisis intervention were reported as follows:
 - Personal services: \$331,933.45
 - Capital outlays: \$181,088.18
 - Total: \$513,021.63
- The reimbursement process is structured quarterly:
 - Expenditures are submitted each quarter.
 - The foundation sends a check for the amount spent, allowing the remaining funds to continue earning interest.
 - This approach avoids withdrawing large lump sums and ensures efficient fund management.
- The total grant amount is \$5,000,000.
- The final reimbursement for the fourth quarter will be processed at the last meeting in December 2025 to close the year positively.

- With nothing else to come before the Council, Kenny Hooten made a motion to adjourn, and Ernie Gauck seconded the motion. Council’s regular meeting is adjourned.

 Danny Peters, President

Attest: _____

Date: _____