

Special Decatur County Council Meeting

With Decatur County Commissioners

Tuesday, March 7th, 2024

Present: Danny Peters, Bill Metz, Melanie Nobbe, Ashley Hungate, Deanna Burkart, Kenny Hooten and Ernie Gauck; County Commissioners Mark Koors, Jeremy Pasel and Tony Blodgett.

President Peters opened the special meeting; he then asked Mr Metz to lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr Peters said he was asked to call this meeting between the Council members and Commissioners to discuss the **Special Purpose Jail Tax and the Food and Beverage Tax**.

Mr Metz prefers not to adopt the Food and Beverage Tax and not lower the Special Purpose Jail tax; maybe use interest off of investments to help fund the pool project.

County financial advisor Reuben Cummings had answered Mrs Burkart's emails saying the Special Purpose Jail Tax may be lowered from 0.65% to 0.60% which would be about a \$36 annual savings per household per year while the Food and Beverage Tax would cost an average family \$41 a year. Mr Cummings had also spoken to Mr Peters saying the 0.05% reduction would reduce the revenues about \$350,000 a year, still leaving sufficient funds to support the Council's plans to pay the jail bond off in 10 – 15 years (2031 – 2035) and assuming there aren't any major reductions in employment for county residents. Mr Peters said reducing the Special Purpose Jail Tax could possibly be done at their next meeting or at their April meeting. **Sheriff Bill Meyerrose** voiced budget concerns for maintenance and operational costs down the road for the Detention Center.

Mr Hooten would like to see the Food and Beverage Tax put in a holding pattern as he is not in favor of using it for a pool but rather for the Fairgrounds as he believes that's a better investment for year-round purposes. He stated there is \$3,000,000 designated for a pool. He asked if the Council had ever adopted **Robert's Rules of Order** which could be used as a process to run our meetings but not be bound by them.

County Commissioner Tony Blodgett said the Fairgrounds were included in the projects submitted for the **READI 2.0 Grants**. Mr Pasel added a new community building, covered bleachers for the grandstands and an equine center are part of the Fairgrounds project; also, drawings for a future expansion as an event center. Mr Blodgett cited funds are needed to repair the Annex, pay off the new Highway Garage campus and the Animal Shelter building also is in need of repairs. Mr Pasel prefers using Economic Development Income Taxes (EDIT) to pay for repairs to the Annex which includes new roof, windows and blacktopping the parking lot.

Local resident Jeff Whitaker asked to see a detailed list of what it costs to build a new pool and what features are included in the \$5,000,000. He is not against a pool but is against building a pool we can't afford.

Parks and Recreation Director Teresa Kovacich said the new pool would not have a liner and the amenities are something needed to draw people/families to the pool so it's not just a body of water. Also, a new chemical building is needed for the new chlorination system while the bath house would be remodeled. The conceptual design provides what the community wants now and for future years.

Jim McIntyre asked Ms Kovacich to show him where a pool breaks even as pools are always subsidized. Mrs Burkart said the pool should have been addressed 20 years ago when attendance started dropping. Mr McIntyre asked about tax abatements to be paid to the County from the battery storage and solar projects. Mr Peters estimates between \$320,000 - \$380,000 in be paid in 2026. The 10-year tax

abatements are actually monies paid by the companies as economic impact fees to offset the County's property tax revenue loss.

Mr Blodgett proposed creating a committee of Council and Commissioners to make a list prioritizing and funding all of the County's projects. The Cumulative Bridge Fund is projected to have short falls plus the partnership with Greensburg on the Park Road Project will require an estimate of \$1,400,000 of County funds.

Mrs Burkart stated she's working on funding sources for the pool including a possible loan from the Community Foundation; she also agrees with Mr Hooten to keep the Food and Beverage Tax on the table.

The next Council meeting will be March 19th, 2024 at 9:00 am at the Courthouse, Room 106.

With nothing else to come before the Council, Mr Hooten made a motion to adjourn and Mr Metz seconded the motion. Council's regular meeting is adjourned.

Danny Peters, President

Attest: _____

Date: _____