

Decatur County Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Present: Danny Peters, Bill Metz, Melanie Nobbe, Ashley Hungate, Deanna Burkart, Ernie Gauck and Kenny Hooten

President Peters welcomed everyone to the Council's September 17th meeting; he then asked Savannah Ziegenfus to lead the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

(Meeting minutes and agendas are emailed to Council members the Friday before their Tuesday meeting)

The Council met with department heads on August 19th on their 2025 budget requests; regular meeting on August 20th; 2025 Budget Workshop on August 20th and held a Special Meeting on August 27th to discuss 2025 Budgets. Mr Peters noted on the August 20th Budget Workshop minutes, they should read Tuesday, August 20th not Monday, August 20th. Mr Hooten made a motion to approve all 4 sets of minutes with the correction as noted by Mr Peters and Mrs Hungate seconded the motion. Motion passes, 6 – 0.

Animal Control Director Minde Myers asked Council for approval to appropriate grant monies received last year from a stipend grant for meetings and travel and **Best Friends** for professional services. She had started to spend those monies before they were appropriated. The Auditor's office will advertise the 'additional' for Council to approve at their October meeting.

Rebecca Meyers, Greensburg Community Bread of Life, presented a request for \$10,000 from Decatur County for assistance for utilities which have increased since moving to a bigger building. She told Council almost 20,000 meals have been served from January through August of this year. Education classes are also offered once a month by the Bread of Life; a class where students helped seniors on using their cell phones; another class was on food preservation, cooking on a budget. They also meet once a month with area non-profit groups to review programs to make sure there isn't any duplication in services offered. The building is also offered to outside groups to rent for meetings. Mr Peters said the Council is allowing 50% of the requested amount for funding in 2025 and then ARPA will help, if possible, to supplement needed funding. Mr Metz moved to give \$5,000 to the Bread of Life out of the Riverboat Gaming Fund - 4903 and Mr Hooten seconded the motion. Motion passes, 6 – 0.

Mrs Burkart moved to approve the Health Department's request for 3 transfers - \$49.83, \$1,061.36, \$715 - and Mr Metz seconded the motion. Motion passes, 6 – 0.

Mrs Burkart made a motion to approve Area Plan's request for additional monies, \$5,842.50, for their attorney for extra hours working on litigation and Mrs Nobbe seconded the motion. Motion passes, 6 --- 0.

Mr Metz moved to approve ARPA Addendum 33, \$50,000 to Generation Hope and Mrs Hungate seconded the motion. Motion passes, 6 – 0.

Mrs Hungate moved to approve ARPA Addendum 34, \$200,000 for the County Blight Program and Mr Hooten seconded the motion. This will cover 2 years of the program. Motion passes, 6 – 0.

Mr Metz made a motion to approve ARPA Addendum 35, \$105,000 for new tasers for the Sheriff's Department and Mrs Burkart seconded the motion. There were 5 yeas and 1 nay. Motion passes, 5 – 1.

Mr Peters opened the **Public Hearing for the proposed 2025 County Budgets and the proposed 2025 Budget for Solid Waste**. He stated **Financial Consultant Reuben Cummings** has recommended the County General budget be set around \$12,100,000 and currently it is at \$12,765,190. Mr Hooten stated the increased budget for **Solid Waste** is due to increases for curbside recycling. Employees' salaries were

discussed as stated in the classifications in the salary study spreadsheet. Mr Hooten moved to close the Public Hearing and Mr Metz seconded the motion. Motion passes, 6 – 0.

Recreation/Sports Director Rob DeHoff is working on a plan to add synthetic turf to the front 4 ball diamonds at the Sports Complex as there hasn't been any upgrades since those diamonds opened in 2000. Games could be scheduled earlier in the year as well as late into the Fall – weather permitting -- plus it would eliminate some diamond maintenance issues. He did meet with the ARPA Committee to request some funding. The long-term goal is for additional restrooms, paving the back lot and storage facility for equipment. The Parks Department would take control over the scheduling and concession for all softball tournaments. He expects to see a return of investment in 5 – 6 years or less depending on the number of tournaments. Traveling teams prefer playing on turf plus it dries faster after a rain and most games wouldn't be cancelled. He told Council the turf for infield baseball diamonds is different from the turf used on football fields. Most turf companies offer an 8 – 10-year warranty and Mr DeHoff believes the turf would be good for 12 – 15 years; they also offer optional maintenance turf grooming packages. The Parks Department will make a 12-year budget plan for the maintenance and replacement of these diamonds. The 4 diamonds will be set up for all age levels, baseball and softball. The outfields will stay grass and he still needs to work on the back diamonds, he's hoping in 1 - 3 years those will be turned to turf. Mr DeHoff has estimated it will cost \$700,000 plus for installing turf on the 4 front diamonds; to include the restrooms, paving and storage the cost would be \$950,000 plus. He has asked other entities for funding. There will be expenses, such as security, to keep the public off of these diamonds when not in use.

Centerstone's CEO Suzanne Koesel and Robb Backmeyer came to answer questions on how the County's monies sent to Centerstone Mental Health Center are being spent. The last financial report received December 1, 2023, did not specify the exact dollar amounts spent on programs and the information was more regional-centered without breaking out Decatur County. Ms Koesel said Centerstone serves all ages- kids to adults, address all substance abuse disorders, offers affordable housing for a group of folks with mental health challenges and also works in 7 Decatur County Schools; Mr Backmeyer added that Centerstone has expended their crisis services. Decatur County has not paid invoices from Centerstone since December 6, 2021. Ms Koesel said over \$1,000,000 has been spent on staff and building expenses in Decatur County so far this year. She added that Centerstone has provided 18,539 services this year and there were 14,584 provided in 2023. Council asked for an itemized report of what those services are/were since no one they have talked to uses Centerstone. County Commissioner Jeremy Pasel cited the requirement that information in the most recent financial audit provided to the division of mental health and addition be included in Centerstone's annual report to the county fiscal body and county board of commissioners – he asked Ms Koesel why that hasn't been received by Decatur County Council and Commissioners and she said that requirement goes into effect in 2025. The big gap in communications between Centerstone and Decatur County has prompted officials to consider other mental health providers which Ms Koesel said there is a formal process to replace a designated mental health provider which Centerstone has been for the past several years. County Attorney Chad Smith cited Indiana Code 12-29-2-1.2 which states the County can choose whether to fund the mental health program as well as choose the provider. Ms Koesel said she is not clear on what the resolution process is, she hasn't had any communication from the Council. Council has been asking for a more in-detail report to know how many hours spent with County clients. Commissioner Pasel would like to see a monthly report since the annual report is not sufficient; also, the costs and how its being spent. Krista Duvall, speaking as a taxpayer in Decatur County, said she is very frustrated because 2 years ago she sat in a Council meeting where they asked for detailed information on how and what the county's funds sent to Centerstone are being spent and here we are again with the same questions and still no information/answers.

The last topic for discussion is the annual \$2,500 stipend for the County Auditor adopted by State Legislators, effective July 1, 2024, for additional work added to the Auditor's responsibilities. State Legislators also adopted a \$2,500 stipend for the County Clerks, effective July 1, 2024 and payable in each general election year, since most counties do not have a separate voter registration/election office. The Clerk does receive pay for being on the County Election Board, part of the Canvassing Board and the Board of Voter Registration, totaling \$3,800. Clerk Janet Howell told Council the State Board of Accounts does not consider this stipend as part of the compensation for the Clerk and Auditor.

Currently the language states the Council may approve these stipends. Council discussed the Auditor's salary is above the target salary from the salary study and no employee's salary will be reduced when above the target salary and they will receive the cost of living pay increase. Mrs Hungate moved to approve the stipend for both the Auditor and Clerk for 2024 and Mrs Nobbe seconded the motion. Vote taken: Yeas – 2, Nays – 3 and 1 member abstained. Motion fails.

County Recorder Dottie Robbins asked Council members to stop by her office as she is asking for help to bring up the morale in her office.

The next Council meeting will be October 15th , 2024 at 9:00 am at the Courthouse, Room 106. The Official Adoption of 2025 County Budgets and the 2025 Solid Waste Budget has been advertised for 9:15 am .

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

Danny Peters, President

Attest: _____

Date: _____