

Decatur County Council Meeting

Tuesday, September 19, 2017, Room 106

Present: Ernie Gauck, Danny Peters, Judge John Westhafer, Kenny Owens, Bill Metz and Larry Meyer.

President Gauck called the meeting to order. Jeff Emsweller led the Pledge of Allegiance to our Flag.

After Council members reviewed the August 22nd meeting minutes, Mr Metz moved to approve the minutes and Mr Owens seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 – 0. The Council then reviewed the minutes for the August 22nd budget meeting. Mr Owens moved to approve those minutes and Mr Peters seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 – 0.

Mr Gauck opened the **Public Hearing on the Proposed 2018 Budgets**. Mr Gauck asked **Parks and Recreation Director Bob Barker** if he has removed \$30,000 from his 2018 Budget request. Mr Barker stated the **Parks Board** discussed a \$55,000 reduction as stated in an August 24th email from the County Auditor. The projected income for 2018 will not support a budget more than \$525,000. Mr Barker said his Board made two tough decisions last night: 1) not to operate the pool in 2018 and 2) cut one full-time employee. Mr Gauck asked what the income is on the ball diamonds and Mr Barker answered saying that income goes into the ‘grants fund’ to maintain the diamonds. Mr Barker also stated the Commissioners used to pay for the **Parks Department’s** health insurance, but now he’s expected to include it in the Parks Budget. Several people spoke about the vital roles the pool, ball diamonds, city park- they all attract visitors to our county as well as people looking to move here. **Government Finance Consultant Reuben Cummings** explained how the restructuring of the property tax system, creating ‘tax caps’, has crippled every unit of government. County Councils all over the State have one alternative which is adopting local income taxes to make up the short fall of receiving less property taxes.

Health Department Office Administrator Carol Beck thanked Council members for approving the Health Department’s proposed 2018 budget. The increases in fees charged by their department have resulted in about \$40,000 more to date compared to 2016. Council thanked the Health Department for making the hard decisions to keep that department going. Local restaurant owner Karen Cyman voiced her concern over the increased fees- especially the food permits (\$40 to \$200) and septic permits (\$50 to \$500). As a small business owner she stated that big of increase makes it hard to make a profit.

Erin Thomas of Catch-A-Ride which is part of the Thrive Alliance Group apologized to Council members for the lack of communication in not requesting 2018 funding from the Council. She presented information on the number of ‘riders’ using their services of which sixty percent of their clientele is **Developmental Services Inc** employees. Ms Thomas asked the Council to reconsider giving \$4,000 in the 2018 budgets to **Catch-A-Ride**.

County Assessor Dorene Greiwe explained her concern on the Council’s request to reduce the **2018 Reassessment Budget** to \$100,000. Duties mandated by the State require outside contracts and those have to be paid either by **Reassessment or the Assessor’s budget in County General**. Ms Greiwe said she could cut the part-time help, but when she and her deputies have to attend required, week-long ‘level-maintaining’ classes, the Assessor’s Office will be closed.

Tourism Board members Roy Middendorf and Karen Cyman voiced their support for a salary increase for **Tourism Director Gary Herbert**. Council members decided to leave Mr Herbert’s 2018 salary the same as his 2017 salary- \$38,000. Ms Cyman told the Council Mr Herbert is a great asset to **Tourism** as he ‘hit the ground running’ because of his previous work experience and he knows everybody. Mr Herbert believes since he didn’t ‘take the County’s health insurance’; he should be given a stipend of \$5,000 to pay for him and his wife’s health insurance.

County Treasurer Brenda Dwenger asked Council members to reinstate the \$2,000 request in her 2018 equipment appropriation. Ms Dwenger had to replace a ‘dead computer’ in first couple of weeks when she took office, so she really would like that \$2,000 instead of the \$750 the Council had penciled in. Ms Dwenger has spoken with Amy Kiser of **First Financial Bank** who suggested the Treasurer’s Office begin

accepting credit and debit cards for property tax payments, which is more convenient for people and less burdensome for the Treasurer.

Mr Owens moved to approve the Cumulative Bridge request for an additional of \$250,000. Mr Metz seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 – 0.

Mr Meyer moved to approve all requests to transfer monies with departments’ budgets and Mr Westhafer seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 - 0.

Mr Owens moved to put \$4,000 for **Catch-A-Ride** in the Riverboat Gaming Fund. Mr Metz seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 – 0.

Leslie Straight and Charity Wilder of New Directions asked Council members to ‘come closer to the \$12,000 mark’ for the 2018 budget since they had set \$5,000 for New Directions to receive in 2018. Ms Straight and Ms Wilder cited the small facility limits the number of people they can serve; so they try find ‘safe places’ in neighboring counties. Mr Gauck asked Ms Straight to come back in February or March, 2018, so the Council can ‘see where our finances stand’.

Mr Meyer said it makes sense to upgrade the Treasurer’s equipment line by \$1,250 making it the full \$2,000; so he move to allow the request and Mr Westhafer seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 – 0.

Council did not increase the Tourism director’s 2018 salary as requested. They try to keep the pay for jobs with similar responsibilities within a certain pay range.

Joe Curran asked the Council what happens when you give law enforcement a big empty jail- they fill it up. We’re a tiny county, so why build a new jail doubling the capacity? Why aren’t elected officials working together to make our legislators fix this jail overcrowding? Why aren’t we addressing the opioid –drug problems?

County Prosecutor Nathan Harter shared the September 19th jail list with Council members and told them Decatur County has the highest ‘pre-trial incarceration’ numbers in the State.

County resident Wade Farr told Council members in his experience working as a jailer, EMS and a fireman there’s a steep incline in crime and it’s not going down anytime soon. Mr Farr stated it’s a must to build a new jail with three hundred beds.

Bryan Robbins asked if there have been any discussions on creating a “Drug Court” to speed up the trial process. He also asked if drug treatment facilities are being included in the County’s plan.

Mr Metz moved to adopt the **2017 Amended Salary Ordinance** and Mr Meyer seconded the motion. Motion carried, 5 – 0.

Mr Gauck thanked everyone for attending today’s Council meeting.

The Council’s next meeting will be October 17th at 9:00 am. The Council will formally adopt the **County’s 2018 Budgets**.

With nothing else to come before the Council, Mr Peters moved to adjourn and Mr Owens seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Ernest Gauck, President

Attest: _____

Date: _____

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