

## **WABASH COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

The Wabash County Council met in session on Tuesday, May 26, 2015 in the Commissioner's Meeting Room of the Wabash County Courthouse. Chairman Mike Ridenour called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M. Seven Council members were present: Ridenour, Kyle Bowman, Randy Curless, Jeff Dawes, Matt Dillon, Claude Markstahler, and Bill Ruppel. Markstahler opened with a word of prayer and Ridenour led in the pledge of allegiance. The proceedings of the meeting were recorded by the County Auditor's office.

The first order of business was to review the minutes of the April 27, 2015 meeting. Curless made a motion to approve the minutes. Dillon seconded the motion; it passed by a vote of 7-0.

Ridenour asked for public comments regarding the meeting agenda. County resident Rob Pearson was present to state his objection to the Regional Cities Initiative and to Wabash County joining the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority as proposed and scheduled on the meeting agenda. He stated that during his past involvement with economic development and Chamber of Commerce projects, it was his experience that Wabash County benefits very little from regional partnerships such as the one being proposed. In his experience, the larger cities receive the project funding. He stated that the benefits are not worth the risk of Wabash County tax dollars and the county would be committed to the regional agreement for eight years with little input into what projects receive the funding. He would like to see county economic development funds being spent on local projects only.

Wabash City Mayor, Robert Vanlandingham stated that he initially had many of the same concerns as Mr. Pearson's but has since concluded that this regional partnership is different. He stated that Wabash County should be part of bigger economic projects that could benefit the entire Northeast region and that the RDA proposal has his full support.

President and CEO of Economic Development Group of Wabash County, Keith Gillenwater introduced John Sampson and John Stafford, members of the coordinating team of the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority to explain the Regional Cities Initiative and to explain the proposed ordinance to establish the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority. Sampson explained that Governor Pence and the State Legislature have concluded that single biggest threat to economic development in Indiana is population stagnation. He stated that Northeast Indiana's population growth is approximately .7% per year but Wabash County's population is declining in all age categories with the exception of the elderly. In the Northeast region, the retirement of the Baby Boomers will create a gap in the workforce of -20,000 workers. He explained that in order to attract and retain greater population,

the State is willing to provide \$84 million in funding to support the local quality of place projects designed to make our region a more attractive place to reside.

Mr. Stafford explained that the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and Greater Fort Wayne, Inc. are spearheading the process of assembling the Regional Cities proposal. They have formed a Steering Committee to oversee the process. Northeast Indiana will be competing for an initial \$42 million in matching funds in the State's 2015-17 budget to implement quality of life projects. The Regional Development Authority would be managed by a five member board, each appointed by consent of the executives of the member counties and municipalities. Board members must have at least five years of professional work experience in one of several fields. Board members may not be elected officials or employees of a member county or municipality and terms last four years with no term limits. There is an eight year minimum membership period. He stated that there is no financial obligation imposed upon the County by merely joining the RDA. The RDA may apply to the new state funded Indiana Regional City Fund for matching grants and loans. The local match may come from any type of revenue not prohibited by law or already committed to other obligations. The level of funding and projects funded are determined by interlocal agreements.

Mr. Sampson stated that by the week of June 15<sup>th</sup>, Northeast Indiana needs to gain commitments from counties and eligible cities interested in forming an RDA. A process for electing a board and initial set of bylaws will be proposed by the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority. The eleven county slate of proposed projects is due to the Indiana Economic Development Corporation by July 1<sup>st</sup>. He proposed that Wabash County become a member of the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority along with the following counties: Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wells, and Whitley. The Authority would consist of the entire area located within the legal boundaries of the county of Wabash as well as the territory of the other counties, cities and towns that are or will become members of the Authority. A proposed ordinance was given to all Council members for their review.

Discussion and questions followed. Question: Where does RDA get its funding after the \$84 million is gone? Answer: Third-party funding, state or federal grants or no further projects get done if money runs out. It was decided to involve as many counties within the Northeast region as possible to create a bigger initiative. Each county or municipality must honor the terms of each individual project interlocal agreement even if state funding is depleted.

Question: What happens if the Northeast Region doesn't get funding? Answer: This is a competitive process but all the more reason to get in at the beginning and have a "say" in the formation of the board, the proposed projects, and other decisions to present the best Regional Cities proposal as possible.

Commissioner Barry Eppley encouraged the Council to join the RDA in order to make an attempt at getting some of the \$84 million in State economic development monies. He stated that there is “no obligation to pay or to stay”.

Ruppel made a motion to suspend the rules for a 2nd reading of the ordinance and proceed with the official vote. Curless seconded the motion and it passed by a vote of 7/0. Ruppel made a motion to approve Ordinance #2015-85-05 to establish the Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority pursuant to IC 36-7.6-2-3. Curless seconded the motion. The motion passed by a roll-call vote of 4/3 in favor. Each council member voiced their vote and explained why they voted as they did:

Bowman voted no. He stated that the proposed projects are questionable and he would rather work on projects for Wabash County through the local economic development group.

Dawes voted yes. He stated that he could see no “downside” as long as Wabash County retains the right to choose if we participate in the funding of the projects.

Dillon vote no. He stated that it makes no sense to be on the first track of the funding because the State could change the rules. He also questioned where the RDA funding would come from once the initial \$84 million is gone.

Ruppel voted yes. He stated that when new businesses are looking for a location they look for the “quality of life” in a community and so it is important to stay involved in the activity of the entire Northeast region. Wabash County is not required to fund any of the Authority’s proposed projects, only the ones that would benefit Wabash County.

Markstahler voted no. He stated that he sees no reason for Wabash County to join a regional authority because we aren’t attached to a major city.

Curless voted yes. He stated that he sees no “downside” and that this involves little risk. He wants to see more substantial proposed economic projects than “just bike paths”.

Ridenour voted yes. He stated that Wabash County could benefit from being part of the regional authority with better direction of economic development funds.

County Auditor Conrad submitted a proposed ordinance on behalf of County Recorder, Lori Draper who was not present. The ordinance explained that under a service agreement with Fidlar Technologies, the Recorder’s office provides remote access to recorded document information to professional researchers and to the general public through Fidlar Technologies software programs. The ordinance would establish user fees for access to the recorded information. Ruppel made a motion to suspend the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading of the ordinance and proceed to the official vote. Curless seconded the motion and it passed by a 7-0 vote. Ruppel made a motion to approve Ordinance #2015-85-06 establishing the user fees as stated within the ordinance. Curless seconded the motion and it passed by a 7-0 vote.

The next order of business was to address the Additional Appropriation requests. Sheriff Bob Land, representing the General Fund's additional and Dr. David Roe and Dr. Robert Beckett representing the Health Department's additional were present to explain the specific requests.

**ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS**  
**ORDINANCE #2015-85-07**

**WHEREAS, it has been determined that it is now necessary to appropriate more money than was appropriated in the annual budget; NOW, THEREFORE:**

**SEC. 1 Be it ordained by the Wabash County Council of Wabash County, Indiana, that for the expense of said county government and its institutions for the year ending December 31, 2015 the following additional sums of money are hereby transferred and ordered set apart out of the several funds herein named and for the purposes herein specified, subject to the laws governing the same:**

**COUNTY GENERAL FUND - #1000**

	<u>Amount Requested</u>	<u>Amount Appropriated</u>	AYE	NAY
Sheriff's Department – Garage & Motors #1000-22500.000.0005	\$ 1,326.51	\$ 1,326.51	7	0

Explanation: Requesting the revenue deposited into the General Fund on March 26, 2015 from the sale of the 1994 pick-up truck (\$502.00), the 2008 Crown Victoria (\$417.22) and the 2004 Ford Explorer (\$407.29) be appropriated into the Sheriff's budget, Garage & Motor account to offset expenses. No additional funding required, just appropriating revenue.

Curless made a motion to approve the request. Ruppel seconded the motion and it passed by a vote of 7-0.

**CEDIT FUND - #1112**

	<u>Amount Requested</u>	<u>Amount Appropriated</u>	AYE	NAY
Animal Shelter allocation #1112-30810.000.000	\$56,250.00	\$56,250.00	6	1

Explanation: This is the remainder of the Animal Shelter appropriation that was not budgeted for 2015.

Dawes made a motion to approve the request. Curless seconded the motion and it passed by a vote of 6-1 with Dillon in opposition.

**RAINY DAY FUND #1186**

	<u>Amount Requested</u>	<u>Amount Appropriated</u>	AYE	NAY
Personal Services #1186-17200.000.000	\$188,000.00	\$188,000.00	7	0
Other Services & Charges –several line items	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	7	0

Explanation: To appropriate funds to pay Commissioners' expenses that were not budgeted for 2015.

Dawes made a motion to approve the request. Dillon seconded the motion and it passed by a vote of 7-0.

**RIVERBOAT FUND - County share - #1191**

	<u>Amount</u> <u>Requested</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>Appropriated</u>	AYE	NAY
Animal Shelter allocation #1191-30810.000.0000	\$ 18,750.00	\$18,750.00	7	0

Explanation: This is the first quarter payment that was paid in March, 2015 but did not get appropriated.

Ruppel made a motion to approve the request. Curless seconded the motion and it passed by a vote of 7-0.

**STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH FUND - #8850**  
**ACCREDITATION FUND**

	<u>Amount</u> <u>Requested</u>	<u>Amount</u> <u>Appropriated</u>	AYE	NAY
Education & Training #8850-30110.000.0000	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	7	0
Mileage #8850-30230.000.0000	200.00	200.00		

Explanation: One of the requirements for being accredited is to attend training classes for "Lean 6 Sigma for Public Health Certification". There are also monthly meetings that are attended by the nurse. Currently, accreditation is voluntary but it will be mandatory by 2017 and so certain training courses must be completed by then. Accreditation opens the door to more state funding. Public health issues that concern many counties could benefit from the Regional Development Authority membership.

Ruppel made a motion to approve the request. Dawes seconded the motion and it passed by a 7/0 vote.

Clarification of the county's meal allowance resolution from a previous meeting was discussed Council. Ruppel made a motion to approve Resolution #2015-85-09 which designates the county employee subsistence (meal) allowance up to \$35.00 per day but with no specific amounts designated for each meal. Dillon seconded the motion and it passed by a 7-0 vote.

Gary Henderson, representative of the Lafontaine Town Council was scheduled on the agenda but was not present at the meeting.

Ridenour asked for comments regarding non-agenda items. County resident Jack Ferguson voiced concerns about Wabash County's current zoning ordinance and that, in his opinion, portions of the ordinance are unlawful. County Commissioner Barry Eppley explained that the Planning Director has been working on the revision of the zoning ordinance in order to save costs to the county. County Council member, and Planning Commission member, Randy Curless stated that the new zoning ordinance has been completed and is now ready for public advertisement. He stated that the Commission is scheduled to meet this evening and encouraged Mr. Ferguson to voice his concerns at that meeting.

Council reviewed:

Auditor & Treasurer's financial report for April 2015

Solid Waste Management District Profit & Loss comparison.

With no other business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned.

**The following individuals also attended the May 26th Council meeting:**

*\*If any names are spelled incorrectly, we apologize.*

Chief Deputy Auditor Marcie Shepherd and Deputy Auditor B.J. Grube, County Commissioners Barry Eppley and Scott Givens, Attorney Mark Frantz, Joselyn Whittaker, Ross Deitrich, Alan Tio, Bonnie Corn, Louella Krom, Jack & Sandy Ferguson, Laura Cole, Wabash Plain Dealer reporter Mackenzie Klemann, and The Paper reporter, Emma Sue Rausch, and "The Bash" representative, Tim Arnett.