

WABASH COUNTY COUNCIL 2017 BUDGET HEARINGS

The Wabash County Council met on the second floor of the Courthouse in the Commissioners Room on Tuesday, September 6, 2016, and Wednesday, September 7, 2016 at 12:30 P.M. and on Thursday, September 9, 2016 and Monday, September 12, 2016 at 5:00 P.M. for the Wabash County 2017 budget hearings. Mike Ridenour called the hearings to order on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Council members present included Chairman Mike Ridenour, Randy Curless, Claude Markstahler, Bill Ruppel, Matt Dillon, Jeff Dawes and Kyle Bowman. Ruppel opened with a word of prayer and Markstahler led in the pledge of allegiance. Ridenour requested that all those in attendance silence their cell phones. Ruppel made a motion to approve the minutes of the Joint Meeting with the Commissioners from Tuesday, August 23, 2016. Dillon seconded the motion and it passed by a 7-0 vote. Ruppel made a motion to approve the minutes of the Monday, August 29, 2016 Council meeting which included the local governmental units' proposed budget reviews. Dillon seconded the motion and it passed with a 7-0 vote.

Tuesday, Sept. 6, & Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2016 Hearings - The 2017 proposed budgets were presented by the elected officials and the directors of the following departments: County Commissioners, Weights & Measures, Veterans Service Office, County Treasurer, County Clerk, County Recorder, Planning Commission, Probation Dept., Circuit & Superior Courts, CASA Grant Program, County Coroner, County Prosecutor, County Assessor, County Surveyor, Purdue Extension Office, County Highway, County Auditor, Soil & Water Conservation District, County Sheriff, Emergency Management, Central Dispatch, the County Health Department and the Wabash County Solid Waste District. The Salary & Personnel Committee 2017 budget recommendations included a \$1,000 increase for full-time employees and a 3% increase for part-time employees with a few exceptions within individual department budgets; the Sheriff Department, Veteran Service, Weights & Measures. Discussion included the use of Adult & Juvenile Probation Administrative Fees to fund some Probation department salaries. Historical Museum Director, Mitch Figert was present the first day to explain the museum's revolving loan and the county's contribution of \$35,000 within the CEDIT Fund. County Prosecutor Bill Hartley suggested that he or the Assistant Prosecutor be included as a member of the Jail Study Committee because the offender sentencing process begins with the Prosecutor's office. He believes that the experience and knowledge of the office would be valuable to the committee in consideration of a new jail. The hearing was recessed to be continued on Sept. 8, 2016.

Thursday, Sept. 8, 2016 Hearing - The Auditor's office had calculated a figure of at least \$1.8 million over the maximum levy after totaling the proposed 2017 budgets of the tax-rated funds and conferring with the Dept. of Government Finance. Deputy Auditor, B.J. Grube reviewed the budget form 4Bs of the five

tax-rated funds with Council as they were currently proposed. Council reviewed the departmental budgets again for possible budget cuts. Several department officials including the Clerk, Treasurer, Recorder, Sheriff, Surveyor, Assessor, the Extension office and Central Dispatch offered amounts that could be decreased within their budgets; supplies, repair expenses and software costs, etc. Emergency Management Director Keith Walters was asked to fund the department's 2017 vehicle request of \$30,000 from some other fund. Walters stated that he would be looking for a used vehicle to bring down the cost and that he would present the request at a later date. County Auditor Conrad stated that she could postpone the purchase of tax software for a total decrease in that departmental budget of \$272,424. Council's consensus was to decrease the Coroner's budget by \$3,700, to cut \$50,000 from Wards of the Court/Institutions line item in the Commissioners budget, to eliminate the salary increase to the Drainage Board, to decrease the Veteran Service Officer's proposed full-time salary back to part-time but include the 3% increase, and to increase the Weights & Measures Inspector salary by \$2,339 in order to be comparable to other counties. Council decreased the Animal Shelter allocation by \$5,000 within the CEDIT Fund.

In the County Health Fund, Council's consensus was to decrease the Health Officer's proposed salary request of \$18,000 to the 3% increase in 2017 for part-time employees which resulted in a cut of \$5,393.00 in the personnel services category. Council also made cuts in the Supplies and Other Services/Charges categories in the amount of \$8,300 with the expectation that this amount could be funded by grant monies since there are substantial cash balances in those funds. The total decrease in the proposed 2017 County Health Fund budget is \$13,693.00.

Since more expenses needed to be cut or moved to other funds from the tax-rated budgets in order to be under the maximum tax levy, the Council recessed the hearing to be continued on Monday, Sept. 12, 2016 at 5:00 P.M.

Monday, Sept. 12, 2016 Hearing – Vice-Chairman Ruppel called the hearing to order in the absence of Chairman Ridenour who was tardy for the hearing. Councilman Markstahler was absent. The Auditor's office presented the Council with options to lower the maximum tax levy by either cutting or moving expenses from the tax-rated funds to other available funds.

The Council's consensus was to cut or move expenses as follows:

GENERAL FUND: Council moved expenses to other funds

Sheriff Dept: K-9 Program- \$31,000 to be paid from LOIT Public Safety Fund.
 County Assessor: Xsoft Software- \$7,675 to be paid from Reassessment Fund
 Commissioners: CASA Grant match- \$29,500 to be paid from CEDIT Fund
 Commissioners: Liability Insurance - \$285,000 to be paid from CEDIT Fund
 Commissioners: City Ambulance- \$182,850 to be paid from LOIT Public Safety

Commissioners: County Ambulance- \$186,588 to be paid from Riverboat Fund
 Courthouse Complex: Computer Maintenance Contracts- \$331,000 to be paid from the County Special Distribution Fund.

Courthouse Complex: Other Services/Chgs - \$244,100 to be paid from Cum. Capital Development Fund

Probation Dept: Some probation officer salaries - \$105,020.00 to be paid from Adult & Juvenile Administration Fees

CUM. CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND Council decreased the following line item/accounts with the assistance of the Commissioners:

Jail Demolition decreased \$50,000, Bldg. Repairs decreased \$20,000, Jail Complex decreased \$100,000, Courthouse renovations decreased \$23,000, Courthouse sidewalks decreased \$23,000; for a total of \$216,000.

Council directed the Auditor's office to make the changes to the 2017 budgets and the Budget Form 4B/levy and tax rate forms for official approval at the final adoption hearing advertised and scheduled for Monday, September 26, 2016. Vice-Chairman Ruppel adjourned the preliminary budget hearings.

The following individuals also attended the PRELIMINARY 2017 BUDGET HEARINGS:

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

Chief Deputy Auditor Marcie Shepherd, Deputy Auditor B.J. Grube, and present for all or part of the hearings were County Department officials and Philip Dale, Lorissa Sweet, Historical Museum Director Mitch Figert, Wabash Plain Dealer reporter, Mackenzi Klemann and The Paper reporter, Emma Sue Rausch.