

WABASH COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

The Wabash County Council met in session on Tuesday, May 29, 2018, instead of Monday because of the Memorial Day holiday in the Commissioner’s Meeting Room of the Wabash County Courthouse. Due to the absence of Chairman Randy Curless, Vice-Chairman Kyle Bowman called the meeting to order at 5:00 P.M. Five Council members were present: Bowman, Matthew Mize, Barbara Pearson, Matt Dillon, and Philip Dale. Council member Lorissa Sweet was also absent. Councilman Bowman led in a word of prayer and led in the Pledge of Allegiance. The proceedings of the meeting were recorded by the County Auditor’s office.

Vice-Chairman Bowman requested that those present silence their cell phones and stated that all public comments regarding agenda and non-agenda items are permitted and encouraged.

The first order of business was to review the minutes of the April 23, 2018 Council meeting. Dillon made a motion to approve the minutes. Dale seconded the motion and it passed by a 5-0 vote.

The next order of business was to address the additional appropriations requests. Present for the request was Mike Howard, County Planning Director. Chief Probation Officer Sara Lochner had originally requested additional appropriations for the Adult Probation Users Fees Fund but withdrew the request before the Council meeting.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS
ORDINANCE #2018-85-03

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, 2018 the following additional sums of money are hereby appropriated 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				
	Requested	Appropriated	AYE	NAY
Planning Dept. - Legal Services #1000-30100.000.0022	\$3,535.00	\$3,500.00	5	0

Explanation from Mike Howard, Planning Director: The request is for the cost of legal services in order to critically analyze the legality of the proposed new Wabash County Zoning Ordinance Draft #6 (343 page document) which was approved for legal review by the Wabash County Advisory Plan Commission Board on April 5, 2018. Howard explained that this fee is in addition to the attorney’s monthly retainer fee. Council member Mize asked about using the county attorney’s services for a possible cost savings. Howard stated that the legal services of this particular attorney are being used because of his years of expertise in the planning and zoning laws and because of ongoing consultation with him throughout the process. Howard stated, for the benefit of new Council members, that at the

origination of the rewriting of the zoning ordinance, the county saved \$70,000 in consulting costs because the draft ordinance was completed by Mr. Howard himself with advice from the Planning Commission Board.

Dillon made a motion to approve the request. Mize seconded the motion and it passed by a 5-0 vote.

For the next order of business, Commissioner Eppley was present to explain the proposed purchase of a building in order to relocate the County Health Department from their current location in Memorial Hall and in addition, to house the County Coroner's office and a county morgue. Eppley explained that the project had been considered for some time because of the need for space by the Probation Department since adding four new probation officers. He stated that Probation needs to be housed in the Court building because security is a priority and that it was determined that the Health Department and Coroner would need 4,400 square feet of space. He reported that many options and properties had been considered including space in the hospital, residential properties, strip mall property and new construction. He stated that this particular proposal was to purchase the Family Physicians building located at 1025 Manchester Avenue Wabash, IN which includes 6,500 square feet on one floor and a basement that could accommodate a county morgue for a total purchase price of \$350,000. In addition to the purchase price, the remodeling costs would be \$75.00-95.00 per sq. ft. He estimated remodeling costs at approximately \$421,000 including architectural consulting and furniture costs. Eppley stated that part of the building is large enough to be used for an addiction treatment center and that there is a treatment organization that could possibly be interested in the space. Eppley explained that Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) funds could be used to pay for the project with a reimbursement of the costs from the Cum. Capital Development Fund over a period of time. He stated that other government municipalities do not contribute to the County's EDIT fund but the municipalities do contribute through taxation to the CCD Fund.

Council member Mize asked if the Health Department's current seven full-time employees and three part-time employees need this much space when the department's current square footage is 2,100 square feet. Dr. David Roe, Health Department Officer responded by saying that the current square footage is very inadequate and that the Coroner and a county morgue would be included in this proposed purchase. Mize asked about new construction and Commissioner Eppley responded by stating that this had been considered, but the cost of new construction is \$150.00 per sq. ft. and would not include any extra space for an addiction treatment center. Eppley stated that costs for a new jail were quoted at \$28 million, but the funding for an addiction treatment center would go a long way toward addressing the opioid crisis which is greatly contributing to the jail overcrowding problem. Council member Pearson stated that she called several County Commissioners to see how many counties had morgues and not one county provided space and maintained a county morgue.

Wabash County residents Cheryl Ulshafer and Lisa Shanabarger were present and objected to the building purchase being proposed by the Commissioners. Ulshafer expressed negative comments about the proposal because, in her opinion, there would continue to be “unnecessary” autopsies as a result of having a county morgue. She stated that a blood test could determine the cause of death in most cases. She stated that an addiction treatment center should be available to people with addiction problems before they get in trouble with the law. She stated that the public had not been asked for any input about a building purchase. Shanabarger asked why so much time has elapsed since considering a county morgue when the county has known for some time that the hospital would not have a morgue. She expressed negative comments about the addiction treatment organization that had expressed interest in the building space, stating that the treatment by this organization is just “substituting one drug for another drug and endangering addicts’ lives”. Council member Dillon also expressed concern regarding the treatment used by this organization if it uses a substance that he had some knowledge of while working with another community organization to help addicts. Council member Mize stated that based upon the information that had been given, he could not vote for this proposal because the costs are too high, and as a result of Council’s questions and public input, he suggested that more study and analysis needs to be done. Council member Pearson made a motion to table the decision about the purchase for one month in order to get more information. Mize seconded the motion and it passed by a 5-0 vote. Council member Dillon made a motion to form a committee consisting of Commissioner Eppley and Council members Mize, Pearson and Sweet to investigate the facts further and present other options at next month’s Council meeting. Dale seconded the motion and it passed by a 5-0 vote.

In the next order of business, Sheriff Bob Land was present to again request the hiring of four deputies yet this year and as soon as possible because of the ongoing population of 100 plus inmates in the jail facility and the continuing need to transport and house inmates in other facilities. Commissioner Eppley stated that the Wage and Personnel Committee is scheduling a meeting very soon in order to give a recommendation to Council regarding the request.

In other business, Auditor Shepherd reported that House Enrolled Act 1263, effective March 21, 2018 provides that a county may adopt an ordinance within the local income tax expenditure rate to impose a tax rate to fund a correctional facility and/or rehabilitation facility but the tax rate may not be in effect for more than 20 years.

Shepherd stated that the upcoming County Council Conference will be held on Saturday, June 30th in Shelbyville, IN and that Council members need to contact her soon so hotel rooms could be reserved.

She also reported that a supplemental distribution of Local Income Taxes (LIT) was received today in the amount of \$35,028.46. The county received this distribution because of an excess balance above 15% in the county's trust account.

Council reviewed:

April 2018 Auditor & Treasurer Financial Reports

April 2018 Wabash County Solid Waste Mgmt. District Income & Expense Statement

With no other business to come before the Council, Vice-Chairman Bowman adjourned the meeting. The next scheduled meeting of the Wabash County Council is Monday, June 25, 2018.

The following individuals also attended the May 29th Council meeting:

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

County Commissioners Barry Eppley, Brian Hauptert, and Scott Givens, County Sheriff Bob Land, Deputy Sheriff Ryan Baker, County Coroner Suzie Lewis, County Health Officer David Roe, EMA Director & Health Board President Keith Walters, County Treasurer LuAnn Layman, County Coordinator Jim Dils, Louella Krom, Bonnie Corn, Cheryl Ulshafer, Lisa Shanabarger and "The Paper" reporter, Josh Sigler.