

Ripley County Council Meeting

February 21, 2023

Councilman President, Peg Ehlers, opened the County Council Meeting with the Pledge of the Allegiance.

Roll Call.

Present: Peggy Ehlers, President, Katie Bailey, Ron Decker, David Tebbing, Andrew Decker, Diane Macek, Dawn Jordan 1st Deputy Auditor & John Ertel; Attorney.

Absent: Stan Wiedeman

Motion: Councilman President, Peggy Ehlers, made the motion to approve the January 17, 2023 meeting minutes, Action: Approve, Moved by Dave Tebbing, Seconded by Katie Bailey. All in favor, motion passed.

Transfers 2023				
Court Services	\$74.36	9129.37800.000.0000 Drug Awareness Coalition/RCATS-Contractual Services	9129.25300.000.0000 Drug Awareness Coalition/RCATS-Office Supplies	Reallocate funds to pay for grant expenditures.
Note:	Motion: Councilman R. Decker made the motion to approve the above Transfer, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by Andrew Decker. All in favor, motion passed.			
Auditor	\$823.60	1001.17800.000.0024 County General/Maintenance	1001.17800.000.0013 County General/Maintenance	Due to being paid out of 2 accounts in 2022 & switched to 1 account for 2023.
Note:	Motion: Councilman R. Decker made the motion to approve the above Transfer, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by David Tebbing. All in favor, motion passed.			
Additional Appropriations				
Auditor	\$747,227.66	8950.41002.000.0000 ARPA Coronavirus State		Remainder of appropriation for the 911 Radio Tower Project
Note:	Motion: Councilman R. Decker made the motion to table this additional appropriation until the easement agreement is signed, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by David Tebbing. All in favor, motion passed.			
Auditor	\$295,149.95	8950.41001.000.0000 ARPA Coronavirus State		Remainder of appropriation for the EMS Milan building.

Note:	Motion: Councilman Bailey made the motion to approve the above additional appropriation, Action: Approve, Moved by Katie Bailey, Seconded by Andrew Decker. All in favor, motion passed.		
Auditor	\$1,407,642.47	8950.49000.000.0000 ARPA Coronavirus State	Remainder of appropriations for the all-other projects being done.
Note:	Motion: Councilman R. Decker made the motion to table this additional appropriation until the easement agreement is signed, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by David Tebbing. All in favor, motion passed.		
EMS	\$22.95	8230.12600.000.0000 Covid 19/Community Testing	Appropriate last check for 2022 that was paid out in 2023.
EMS	\$46,722.07	8230.37800.000.0000 Covid 19/Community Testing	Pay EMS out for testing.
EMS	\$300.00	8230.19980.000.0000 Covid 19/Community Testing	Appropriate last check for 2022 that was paid out in 2023.
Note:	Motion: Councilman R. Decker made the motion to approve the above 3 additional appropriations, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by Andrew Decker. All in favor, motion passed.		
Health Department	\$27,000.00	8118.29551.00000.0583 Bioterrorism Grant	Carryover from a fridge-freezer that was never delivered. Funds will be used to purchase portable ventilators to be used in the county.
Note:	Motion: Councilman Tebbing made the motion to approve the above additional appropriation, Action: Approve, Moved by David Tebbing, Seconded by Diane. Andrew Decker asked if they did not need the freezer. Jason Smith responded that there were two freezers purchased, originally, and one of the two were not delivered. It was then decided to purchase the ventilator instead. Jason confirmed that it is an open grant and a ventilator can be purchased with these monies. All in favor, motion passed.		
Parks & Recreation	\$3,218.00	9191.36104.000.0000 Restroom Renovation	Black Memorial Trust Fund. Grant funding will be used for bathroom renovations.

Note:

Motion: Councilman A. Decker made the motion to approve the above additional appropriation, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Andrew Decker, **Seconded by** David Tebbing. All in favor, motion passed.

New Business: Liz Baumgartner, Clerk, approached the Council with a request to sign a Resolution that would allow her to move forward with implementation of Vote Centers within Ripley County for 2024, providing convenience for voters and potential to save the County money. Equipment cost would stay the same but cost in regards to poll workers should go down. Liz stated that this was already brought to the Commissioners and their Resolution was approved and signed. Liz stated that Ripley County currently has 15 voting locations and that she would like to condense it to 8. Liz added that the County is only required to have 3 voting locations, but she doesn't want to take it that far. These voting centers offer open voting with no precinct restrictions.

Motion: Councilman President, Peggy Ehlers made the motion to sign the Resolution for Voting Centers, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** Diane Macek, **Seconded by** Katie Bailey. All in favor, motion passed.

Old Business: Leah Hildebrand, 911 Director, approached the Council with a request for an emergency appropriation for \$27,380.00. This amount covers the remaining of the 2023 calendar year and includes the county portion of benefits. Leah stated that she reviewed the 911 Budget, as instructed, to see where cuts can be made. Leah stated that there really aren't any areas where she can make cuts, that she doesn't pad her budget/ask for more than what is necessary. Leah shared that one item that was eliminated from her budget was a portion of the electric bill paid to the Sheriff Department due to their offices being located within a Sheriff Department's facility. This is no longer an issue. Another budgeted item was for new dispatcher chairs in the amount of \$1,600, but Leah obtained a donation from the Milan Legion and a grant through the Rising Sun Regional Foundation to cover the full amount for the special Ergonomic chairs. Leah shared that they have budgeted \$5,000 to replace their carpet and \$3,000 for computer replacement/upgrade. Leah is concerned how much longer their current computers will last and would prefer not to cut that. Leah also added that 911 funds are the same and can only be used for certain things. Leah offered to provide this list, if needed.

Leah stated that she has lost trainers, staff are getting tired and can't take time off. The extreme has come. There is tiredness and the potential for mistakes is great, so she is asking for an emergency appropriation. Leah fears that she will lose more staff if she cannot pay them more.

Andrew Decker asked John Ertel for clarification of the email that John sent to Council regarding emergency appropriations. John explained that he feels it may be an avenue that can be used for this situation but there would need to be underlying facts to support that it is an emergency.

Andrew asked Leah who the agencies are that she is losing staff to. Leah answered, the Batesville Police Department and Indiana State Police. Ron Decker stated that the County cannot compete with either of those. Andrew asked how do we know that more money will guarantee staff will stay. Leah responded that there is no guarantee. A 911 staff member from the public audience stated that they would be more inclined to stay if paid more.

Council discussed whether a motion was needed at this moment in time. John Ertel reminded Council that an appropriation would need to be advertised prior to Council consideration and approval.

Ron Decker stated that if they approve this appropriation request, at this time, every other department will be coming before the Council asking for more money for their staff. Council must do what is best for the County.

Sheriff Bradley approached the Council stating that he too was asked to look over his budget and to make cuts where possible. Sheriff Bradley stated that there are not a lot of places where he can make cuts. Cuts have been made along the way. Sheriff Bradley shared that there will be ~\$15,000 decreased in longevity due to him becoming Sheriff and a couple officers retiring. Sheriff Bradley stated that 1.7 million dollars in Commissary (nontaxpayer money), that has been obtained through inmate money, has been used to operate/help support the Sheriff's Department. If they didn't have that money, they would have to come to the Council requesting more money to cover regular expenses. Sheriff Bradley stated that the Sheriff's Department has put a quarter of a million back into the County General Fund from the Department of Corrections for the housing of inmates. Sheriff Bradley doesn't know where else they can make cuts.

Sheriff Bradley asked the Council how much money the County gets in Property taxes to be used for the County. He has compared income tax percentages among counties. Ripley County had an increase where are these monies going? He has seen where other counties are giving monies to a Public Safety Distribution. Sheriff Bradley wanted to know why there is a zero for Ripley County for the Public Safety Distribution. Peggy Ehlers explained that Ripley County is one of 22 other counties in the State of Indiana that does not have a Public Safety Tax, that is why there is no monies going to the Public Safety Distribution. Ron Decker explained that tax monies are distributed among the County's towns, township, libraries, etc. Ripley County has a squad where there are other counties that do not have this expense, this is something to remember.

Sheriff Bradley shared with Council that he heard that Jean Leising is trying to triple the Health Care Budget. He was wondering if this budget can take over the funding of the EMS Department and that those monies can be freed up to use for other Ripley County Departments.

John Ertel pulled an article online and shared with Council regarding the possible increase in Health Care budget. The article did include EMS services.

Sheriff Bradley asked how much money does the County have invested. He recalled hearing Lisa Vestal, Treasurer, asking for the Commissioners' approval to invest monies in a CD. Peggy Ehlers directed Sheriff Bradley to ask the Commissioners about investments. John Ertel stated a reminder that monies are set aside for building repairs and maintenance. These are expenses that don't go away, and we want to be prepared for.

Sheriff Bradley shared that they have 2 upcoming retiring officers that longevity will no longer need to be paid but that they will be drawing from the retirement fund. He would like to look at making some changes with this. Current vesting is 8 years but thinking it should be moved to 10. Depending on how this plays out, it has potential of bankrupting this fund. Sheriff Bradley would also like to look into doing something with the age in which Sheriffs can retire and draw from the retirement fund. Ripley County's current retirement age for the Sheriff is 50. This is a common retirement age for Sheriffs among other Indiana counties, Batesville's is 52. Sheriff Bradley would like to think there is possible changes that can be made to this. Any of these changes would only be moving forward with new hires not effecting current staff.

Chief Lee Davidson approached the Council sharing with them that we have been making 4 attempts in serving of papers to individuals within the community. They have consulted with the Judges and Clerk's office and now will only be making 2 attempts. This should, in theory, cut these expenses in half. A dollar amount, in savings, is unknown at this time, as the need varies. Davidson stated that they are only required to make one attempt, confirmed by Attorney, John Ertel, but since we have been making 4, we would like to see how 2 attempts goes first.

Sheriff Bradley mentioned that jail staff weren't included in his original request for a pay increase and that he is looking into this now. He has obtained a matrix that is used by another Sheriff departments that he may be able to use to help with this.

Sheriff Bradley asked the progress made regarding raises. Council stated, nothing to report, at this time.

Per David Tebbings' suggestion, Motion: Councilman President, Peggy Ehlers made the motion to eliminate the Finance and Raise Committees, **Action:** Approve, **Moved by** David Tebbing, **Seconded by** Andrew Decker. **Discussion:** David stated that he feels that Council can be more productive and move things along faster if all Council members can meet in its entirety. They are just unable to approve any changes/make any decisions until a scheduled Council meeting. All in favor, motion passed.

Council discussed Andrew Decker serving on the Economic Development Committee. Andrew stated that he is willing but not both Economic and SEI Regional Planning. Peggy Ehlers asked Diane Macek if she would be willing to serve on the SEI Regional Planning Committee. Diane said yes.

Motion: Councilman President Peggy Ehlers made the motion for the Council members to serve as follows:

Economic Development – Andrew Decker

Technology Committee - Katie Bailey

SEI Regional Planning Committee – Diane Macek

Solid Waste District - David Tebbing

Grants Committee - Stan Wiedeman

Action: Approve, **Moved by** Ron Decker, **Seconded by** Andrew Decker. All in favor, motion passed.

Motion: Councilman President Peggy Ehlers, per the request from the City of Batesville to accept Amy Strater, based on the recommendation of the Mayor, to the Economic Development Committee of Ripley County, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by David Tebbing. All in favor, motion passed.

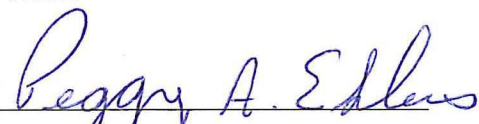
Motion: Councilman President Peggy Ehlers made the motion to adjourn, Action: Approve, Moved by Ron Decker, Seconded by David Tebbing. All in favor, motion passed.

Committee Reports:

- Economic Development - Gary Norman - none
- Technology Committee - Katie Bailey - none
- SEI Regional Planning Committee - Andrew Decker - none
- Solid Waste District - David Tebbing - none
- Grants Committee - Stan Wiedeman - none


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“NAY”



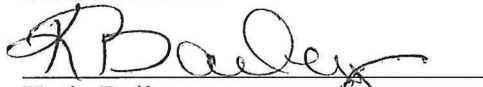
 Peggy Ehlers, Council President

 Peggy Ehlers, Council President



 Stan Wiedeman

 Stan Wiedeman



 Katie Bailey

 Katie Bailey




 Andrew Decker

 Andrew Decker



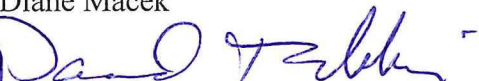
 Ron Decker, President Pro Tem

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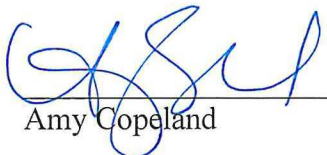
 Diane Macek

 Diane Macek



 David Tebbing

 David Tebbing



 Amy Copeland Auditor, Ripley County

ATTEST:

 Amy Copeland