

JENNINGS COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

July 9, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Annex Building

Tina Ellis, Mike Gerth, Dave Woodall, Mandy Creech, Howard Malcomb, and Jerry Lamb were present. Tina opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Howard made a motion to approve the prior meeting minutes, Jerry seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

HR came to council on behalf of the commissioners. In the last meeting the commissioners voted to increase the part time maintenance person from \$16.00 per hour to \$19.00 per hour. He did not get a % increase at the beginning of the year and \$16.00 is what he was hired in last year. He has done a great job and really stepped up. HR is asking for \$12350.00 to be transferred from line item 1000.11005 to 1000.11014. The money has been appropriated and does not require an additional appropriation. Dave said that we would still need to change the salary ordinance to reflect the pay increase. Tina said that the reason why he did not get an increase at the beginning of the year was because he got an increase on 4/28/2023. Dave asked what the reasoning is for a \$3.00 per hour pay increase. HR stated that he has not had a raise since he has been employed with the county, and that he has stepped up in helping the county out. The employee is part time, and he does not have any other county benefits. Gene asked if he would have received the same percentage raise as all the other employees, what that figure would be. Dave said that all part-time employees would be looked at during the budget. Nicci said that the commissioners did not realize that he had not received a pay increase. Dave made a motion to table the discussion and review all part time employees during the budget. Jerry seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Mike said that people hired in mid-year should still also get some sort of raise going forward.

Tara Thormin introduced herself as a member of the Animal Control Board, Administrative Assistant to Mayor Gerkin, and Event Coordinator the City of North Vernon. Tara thanks the board members for the continued support at the Wayside Inn. Tara said that there is a dire need for more resources and funding for the Animal Control facility. The feedback that she has received from the community is for lower adoption fees. When the facility is overwhelmed with animals, the euthanizing process is the only option. The adoption fees cover the necessary spay and neuter of the animals, along with rabies, distemper, and other needed vaccinations. Tara said nothing is free and the cost must come from somewhere, so this must be considered as we grow closer to creating the 2025 budget. How can we lower the adoption fees? Options such as free adoption events in conjunction with free spay, neuter and vaccination clinics to help alleviate the influx of feral or unwanted animals in our community. The board has reached out to Decatur County Animal Shelter to see exactly how their adoption fees are priced, and what clinics or vets that they may partner with. The Decatur County Animal Shelter adoption fees are significantly lower than Jennings County. Tara has not heard back from Decatur County but will continue to reach out to other counties and ask the same questions. The Animal Control board is creating a three-, five-, and 10-year plan involving what is needed in attesting the adoption fees and encourage any input from council. Tara explains that the current condition of the building is horrible for the animals. She encourages everyone to come out and look at the conditions of the shelter. In 2023, 117 animals were adopted from the animal shelter. In 2024 so

far, 132 animals have been adopted. Tara is dedicated to the betterment of this facility! The commissioner suggested covering \$10,000 of adoption fees. This would allow 200 animals to be adopted out. The animals would not be adopted out for free, but the adoption fees would be lowered drastically. The shelter is funded 100% from the county budget. The City of North Vernon has also contributed to the shelter in the past. Tina said that in her opinion, this needs to be tabled until budget time because the county had just paid \$28,000 for repairs at the facility. Dave stated that the repairs had to be done and that there was no way around it. The non-reverting fund should have been started years ago, and the county just recently started the fund. Animal Control lost out on monies that could have been used over the last few years. Dave said that he is okay with the \$10,000 but would like to wait until the budget to see where the county is at.

Sherri with the Highway Department is at the meeting on behalf of the commissioners, requesting salary increases for Brian Ponsler, Tony Gudgel, Sheila Richart, and Sherri Maschino. These pay increases are for position changes that have taken place since Jim retired. Sherri said that Jim retired on December 31, 2023. Tina said that she knew when he was retiring but he told her that he was going to stay on part-time. Jim is currently working part time and is being paid from the part-time line in the highway budget. Tina said she was against budgeting the superintendent line at budget but was told that Jim would still be paid from that line until another superintendent was hired. There are no additional funds being asked for because the funds are in the budget. Sherri is just asking to move the money from one line to another. Sherri has been made interim superintendent. Gene asked if the superintendent position was going to be filled in the future. Sherri is asking for approximately \$19,000.00 to be moved from the superintendent line to the employees listed above. Dave said that these positions are interim positions and that when other people were hired, the employees' pay level would be reduced back down. Sherri said that in her understanding that they did not plan on hiring anyone. Dave said that he thinks they just need a bonus, not an hourly increase. Tina asked why they haven't filled the superintendent position and Sherri said that they have interviewed and have not found the right candidate. Mandy said that she feels that the council needs to be consistent. Tina said that the Auditors' office has been short of help so should we take those funds and give that office a bonus? What about other offices that are short help? Dave said he doesn't disagree. Dave said that the county hired Reedy at a very expensive rate to help the Auditors office. Tina and Mike said that she was just using the Auditors office as an example. Mike said that this department is a huge department and we have known that this position has been open for nine months now. The council understands that the county highway has it in their budget, but so do the other departments. Mike asked if any of the other council members had spoken with the commissioners. Mike said it isn't the council's responsibility, but he thinks they should just eliminate that position and pay the other people more. Dave said that the commissioners will not do that. If the position is eliminated, then they would have to come back to council and ask for additional appropriations. Dave made a motion to table this discussion, Mike seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Kathy Christoff with Centerstone is updating the commissioners of their services offered in Jennings County. There were 947 clients served in 2023, and of that 947, 796 are under 200% poverty level. Centerstone has 31 staff members in Jennings County. Jennings County paid Centerstone \$174,669.00 in tax revenue. Centerstone has used that money to offset the cost for people that come on and have no resources. Jennings County Crisis Diversion Center (Stride) is

in Columbus. It is for adults only and you can stay for up to 23 hours. The center is not a hospital and not a jail. There are staff trained to work with them and help them. When you are having a mental health crisis, you should call 988, not 911. When 911 is called, you will get law enforcement. When 988 is called, you get a mental health provider. Centerstone also has a mobile crisis team. The mobile crisis team see children also. Centerstone is in all the Jennings County Schools and the staff on site is a trained recovery coach.

Tracy with EMS is out of overtime money. Tracy said that she has discovered that in her budget, there is a salary line of \$35,000 that is not being used. It looks as if this was an error, and the budget line was duplicated. She is asking if she can transfer this \$35,000 into her overtime budget line. She will also need an additional appropriation of \$35,000.00. The council thought that by hiring additional people, the overtime budget would decrease. EMS works 24 hour shifts so there will be 8 hours of overtime weekly. Dave made a motion to approve the transfer of \$35,000 into Tracy's overtime budget line and approves the additional appropriation of \$35,000 for the overtime budget line. Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

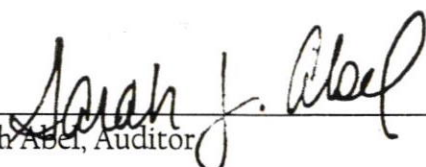
Brian Hatfield, Board President of JNRU comes to council asking about the money to help fund a study on the feasibility of the regional expansion of the sewers at the JNRU service, along with the problem areas in the county. Brian says that they have met with Alex Zimmerman, Erin Houchens, and Jean Lising regarding funding this project. JNRU will pay for ¼ of the study. The city and county TIF have agreed to pay 1/4 of the study. Brian is asking the county to fund the other ¼ of the study. The study will not exceed \$100,000.00. Dave made a motion to pay the ¼, up to \$25000.00 for the study, Mike seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

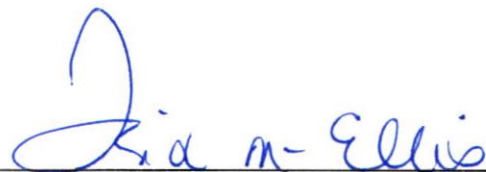
The council discussed renewing the GO bond in 2025. Dave asked if we really need to renew the bond. He asks if the county can operate without the \$1.5 million dollar bond. Gene said that he does not want to raise taxes, he would like to lower them. Reedy recommends that the county does renew the GO bond. There are a lot of unknowns with this, but Mike makes a motion to move forward to renew the GO bond. Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Tina said a discussion would happen in the future on what would be included in that bond.

NV Redevelopment started the process to allow the new whiskey barrel storage as a new TIF area. Mike said that there is a meeting scheduled on August 18th to discuss this further.

Tina said Reedy would set up a date soon for department head meetings for budget. Tina also received an update from the Treasurer on the money market and CD accounts. There has been \$700 received in interest on the CD account and \$5020.90 received on the money market account. Tina will be moving \$440,000 more into these accounts.

Gene made a motion to adjourn, Dave seconded the motion, passed unanimously.


Sarah Abel, Auditor


Tina Ellis, President



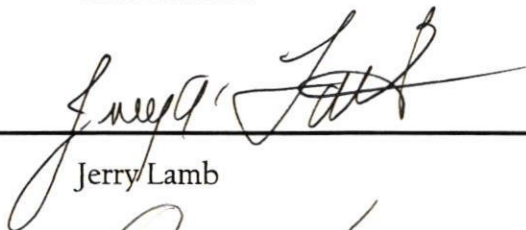
Mike Gerth, Vice President



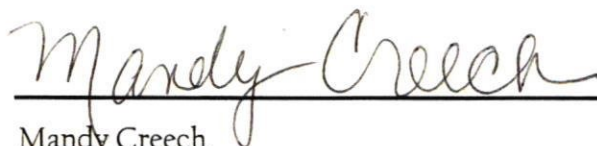
Gene Rudicel



Howard Malcomb



Jerry Lamb



Mandy Creech

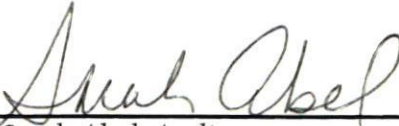


Dave Woodall

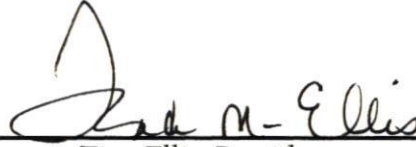
Jennings County Council Meeting
August 8, 202, at 9: a.m.
Government Annex / Commissioner's Room

Council members Tina Ellis, Gene Rudicel, Dave Woodall, Mike Gerth, Jerry Lamb, Howard Malcomb, and Mandy Creech were present.

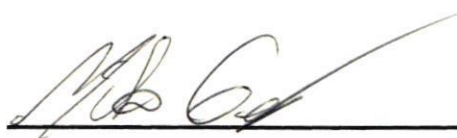
Reedy Financial Group was also present at this meeting. Reedy discussed the counties financial plan and the 2025 Budget. October 8, 2025 will be the tentative date for the 2025 Budget adoption.



Sarah Abel, Auditor

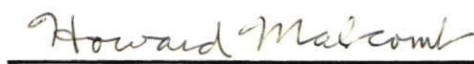


Tina Ellis, President

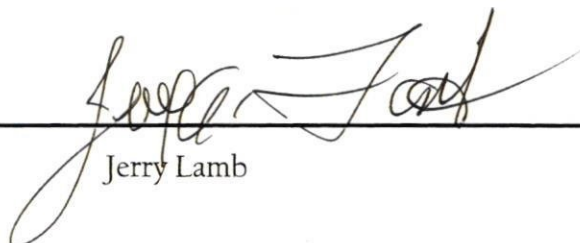


Mike Gerth, Vice President

Gene Rudicel



Howard Malcomb



Jerry Lamb



Mandy Creech

Dave Woodall