

JENNINGS COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

September 10, 2024 @ 6:00 p.m.

Annex Building

Tina Ellis, Mike Gerth, Dave Woodall, Mandy Creech, Gene Rudicel, 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, Mandy seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Jessica Floyd with the library board came to the council meeting last month to ask for a donation to put towards the libraries WOW bus purchase. Council asked if they had been to a commissioner meeting to get there blessing. Jessica did attend a commissioner meeting, and the commissioners suggested a \$20,000.00 donation, contingent on council finding the money. Jerry asked if the bus had already been purchased, and Jessica replied yes. Dave supports the commissioners request for \$20,000.00 and wants to make a motion to move forward and give the library \$20,000.00, but he is not sure where to take the money from. Dave 100% supports the WOW bus, and he says it is great for the kids in the community. Dave made a motion to approve the \$20,000.00 donation and to take the money from the Riverboat fund. Gene seconded the motion, passed on a 6-1 vote. Jerry opposed since they came after the purchase of the WOW bus to request funding.

Next item on the agenda, Tina reads The Notice to Taxpayers (Form 3) which is the online and newspaper advertisement to taxpayers concerning the budget and levies which are to be raised in the ensuing year. The Form 3 notifies the taxpayers of the date, time, and location of the public hearing and adoption meeting for the budget. This form has been filed on Gateway.

Jerry Shepherd went to the commissioner meeting to get their approval for siren updates. With the commissioner's approval, he is now seeking approval from the council. The quote for \$20,117.38 covers the maintenance and batteries for thirteen sirens. The second part of the quote is to connect our sirens to The National Weather Service. The cost for this would be an additional \$5,307.70. If the county is having severe weather, The National Weather Service would automatically set the sirens off. Tina asked Jerry if there was a backup plan just in case the sirens did not go off, to which Jerry responded that dispatch would get notice of a tornado warning, and the sirens would be set off manually. Tina said that she thinks it is a great idea, but she just wanted to be sure there was a safety net. Dave made a motion to approve Jerry's request for \$25,525.00, Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Dave requested that the funds come out of Safety Lit. Jerry discussed the maintenance plan for \$13,000 a year. He does not believe that we need the maintenance plan because the sirens are tested every month.

Brad Bender with the Next Levels Trails Grant comes to council to make sure that the funds the county committed to in 2019 are appropriated. They will be receiving an invoice from O'Mara soon and will need to get it paid. The county park will be sending the \$150,000 that they had committed to the Next Level Trails Grant as soon as an invoice is received. Brad is suggesting that the county do the same as the parks department. Tina asked Brad if the county has an interlocal agreement with the Town of Vernon. Brad responded that he does not believe that we

do. The county attorney will draft an interlocal agreement for the county, which will also include the county park. In conclusion, Brad is asking to draw down the entire \$101,000.00. Gene made a motion to approve the request and appropriate \$101,000.00 from the Riverboat fund for the Next Level Trails Grant and to enter an interlocal agreement with the Town of Vernon. Dave seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Tina will ask the county attorney to prepare the agreement.

Tracy with EMS is asking to transfer \$2000.00 from 1170.30300.302 (phone) to 1170.20103.302 (laundry). Tina said that in her understanding, EMS does not pay a phone bill from the phone account line, so they will look at eliminating that line in next years budget. Dave made a motion to transfer \$2000.00 from the phone account to the laundry account. Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Tina asked Tracy if she budgeted enough for the laundry account for 2025. Tracy has emailed the council members about a new ambulance. Tina said that if the council approves the purchase of a new ambulance, it would be contingent on the commissioner's approval also. The quote for \$225,000.00 is for the truck only. The wrap, power lift, and radio system would be another \$100,000.00 on top of the \$225,000.00. The council approved an ambulance purchase at the end of 2022. EMS is still awaiting this ambulance. Tracy has been told that it would be delivered in March of 2025. The two ambulances that will be replaced, EMS is wanting to keep one for a back up and the other one will go to Animal Control, if approved by commissioners. Jerry asked where the funding would come from for the new ambulance. Tina replied that this new ambulance that Tracy is asking for funding for would come out of Safety Lit. The ambulance that was purchased in 2022 is being paid for out of the ARPA fund. Dave asked council if they wanted to approve the purchase of the truck at \$225,000 and then have Tracy come back for the additional \$100,000.00. Jerry said that he would prefer to approve the whole purchase of \$325,000.00 now instead of Tracy having to come back for additional money later. Gene made a motion to approve up to \$325,000.00 out of Safety Lit to purchase a new ambulance, Howard seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Tina said that she wanted to include in that motion that the approval is contingent on the approval from the commissioners.

Tina needs to discuss the 911 fund but is reluctant because of new information coming in. From what she understands is that 911 is being paid out of two different funds: 1222 and 1153. Too much money has been transferred to county general out of the 1222 fund. Fund 1222 (911) pays county general back for the payroll of the 911 employees. In researching this, it looks as if since 2019 too much money has been transferred out of the 911 fund (1222). There would need to be a transfer from county general to the 911 fund of \$460,000.00 to correct this. According to Reedy, fund 1153 needs to be closed out by the end of the year. Today at 3:30 there was an email from State 911 saying that the 1153 does not need to be closed. Tina said that the 911 fund of 1222 does not have a substantial balance so the county will need to transfer money. Tina is suggesting that we table this until the meeting with Reedy and to see what they suggest. Amy said that there needs to be a transfer to cover his payroll because the bank account is low. Tina said that we can let the fund go into the negative. Mike and others responded no, it's a separate bank account. Britt said that his understanding was the money from the state was in the form of cell phones and landline phones and it came into two different funds, 1153 and 1222. The funding is combined now, and it goes into fund 1222. Britt says that it is not his opinion, nor is it the state 911 board that 1153 must be closed, maybe rename it. Britt said it sounds like semantics to him. He said that if all the funding is put into fund 1222, the county will be picking up the tab for a

lot of his ineligible items because he won't be able to spend that money. Mike is suggesting that we transfer \$100,000 of the \$460,000.00 and then revisit this next month and see if council can get some clarity between Laura (state 911) and Katelyn with Reedy Financial. Tina said that maybe we just need to rename the 1153 fund. Britt said that he doesn't think that it is on the Auditor but his fund 1222 should show a much higher balance. Mike said that the funds ledger shows a much higher balance also. Tina said that they would work with Reedy to get this straightened out. Mike motions that \$100,000.00 is transferred out county general into the fund 1222 to cover bills and payroll until council can get this sorted out. Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Tina said that she thinks she can get clarity from Reedy.

Tina discusses an invoice from All Star Paving that needs to be approved. This invoice total is \$52,000.00 and it is for the new ramp at the Probation office. Tina said that her understanding is that the commissioners approved the work. Dave and Mike asked if there was a quote and if the invoice matched up with the quote. The Auditors office received the invoice for payment. Tina is asking how a contract was signed without an appropriation for the money. Dave said we owe the money, but he wants to know if the invoice matched the quote. Tina said that she would like to have a talk with the commissioners and find out how this breakdown happened. Dave said that he thinks the council should table this until some more investigating is done.

Dan Brookbank was approved to purchase a Pacifica in I prior meeting. Something fell through with the Pacifica, so he ended up purchasing a 2024 Crysler Voyager. The Auditors office wanted to make sure that the council knew of this change. Council originally appropriated a higher amount for the Pacifica than what Dan purchased the Voyager for.

Tina shared with other council members the interest statements on the money market account and the interest baring account.

Mandy shared that she received an email for a property tax credit for 55 and older. She doesn't want this to fall through the cracks. Tina said she needs to gather all the information and discuss it in the October meeting.

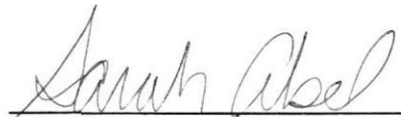
Dave is asking the board to approve a cut off on the council agenda to be on Fridays. He is asking that only the Board President can add someone after this cut off day. Mandy said she appreciated the way the meetings are ran and that they have a good agenda. Dave made a motion to cut the agenda off at 4 pm on the Friday prior to the meeting. The only way someone can be added to the agenda after the cut off is if they call the Board President and the Board President allows for an emergency. Mandy seconded the motion, passed unanimously. The Auditor said that there are times that information comes directly to the council and if someone needs added to the agenda that the Auditor's office needs to be in the know so that they can add them to the agenda. Also, if they have any documentation that needs presented to the council, please send it to the Auditors office also.

Howard said that with it being budget time he wanted to discuss raises. Every year the employee's gets a percentage increase for a raise. He said that if one person is making \$20,000 and the other person makes \$40,000.00, they get half the raise of the other employee. He said that if these same employees go to the store for a gallon of milk or go to get a gallon of gasoline, they pay the same! Howard said that it is hard to get good employees if they are not paid well.

He didn't realize the jailers only make \$18.15 an hour. Tina said that council addressed that with the sheriff and what the council suggested to the sheriff he did not want to do. Council suggested taking all the jailers to a certain amount and he did not want to do that. The sheriff said that is not how he suggests the county spend the money. Council will meet with Reedy and go line by line to finalize the budget. Howard said the county council gets \$100.00 raise, and the county commissioners get around a \$300.00 raise. He said every year the spread between them gets farther and farther apart. Tina said that last year they were letting the department head decide who gets the bigger raise, and that didn't work either, so they are going back to what the state does. County government and state government are similarly run and its usually a 2% across the board increase. Howard said that the county can not even fill jobs because of the pay. He says, are we going to do something about it! Tina said it will be discussed at budget meeting. Howard says, what if you took the amount of money we are going to have for raises and divide it by the number of employees. Just a suggestion, he says to try to get the bottom end up a little. Dave said what Howard is saying is basically what the council is working on. Howard says his concern is that the county will not get the cream of the crop for employees if the county doesn't pay anything. Tina said that she absolutely agrees with Howard.

Sarah asked about the salary survey that Reedy was to complete for budget. Tina said she has not discussed this with Reedy and would talk to them about it in a meeting.

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

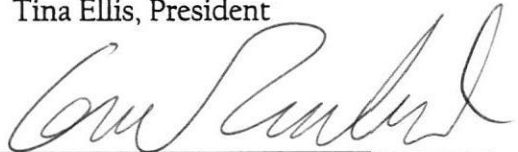


Sarah Abel, Auditor

Tina Ellis, President



Mike Gerth, Vice President

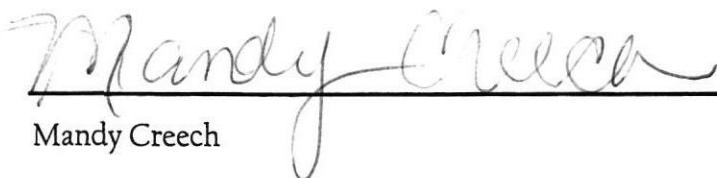


Gene Rudicel



Howard Malcomb

Jerry Lamb



Mandy Creech

Dave Woodall