

JENNINGS COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

January 14, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m.

Annex Building

Tina Ellis, Dave Woodall, Gene Rudicel, Jerry Lamb, Mandy Creech, and Dave Cheatham were present. Tina Ellis opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Dave Cheatham followed the Pledge of Allegiance with prayer. Dave W. made a motion to approve the December 20 meeting minutes, Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Avis McGovern, board president of the Jennings County Park Board is asking the council for back pay in the amount of \$1,146.60 for Seth Jones. Seth has been performing the duties of Park Director. The council said that no vote was needed because the funds were available in the parks budget. Avis stated that the Park Director position was offered to Seth in November 2024. Avis stated that Seth uses his own personal vehicle because the parks department only has one vehicle, and they have two locations. Currently Seth is not being reimbursed for the use of his personal vehicle. Tina said that Seth would need to be reimbursed mileage for using his personal vehicle.

Tina stopped the meeting, and Sarah Abel opened the floor for nominations. Dave W. made a motion to reappoint Tina Ellis as council president, Jerry seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Dave W. made a motion to reappoint Mike Gerth as vice president of council, Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

The salary for this position is \$49,321.00 per year. Seth is asking for a salary of \$65,000.00. Avis stated that Seth has nine years with the parks department and there are two grounds to keep now. The council said that elected officials have a salary of \$52,603.00 and that is what they could offer Seth. Avis states that there was an Assistant 4 position that was budgeted for 2025 in the amount of \$30,000.00. She (Avis) explains that they currently do not need an additional person and is asking the council to pull funds from the budgeted funds and split between the park employees and the director. The \$30,000 was not added to the salary ordinance by the Auditors office because the council had agreed that there would be no new positions added for 2025. Tina said that there are two issues on the table. The first is the counteroffer from Seth. The second is to deal with the \$30,000 that was budgeted, and Avis wants to divide that between the other employees. Tina states, Lets deal with the counteroffer from Seth first. Dave W. makes a motion counter offer to offer Seth a salary of \$52,603.00. Gene seconds the motion, passed unanimously. Dave W. made a motion to reimburse Seth mileage and to pay it out of the park's non-reverting fund. Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Jerry says that the only discussion he has is when they voted to buy the other park (ECO), and I voted against it, I said that someday we were going to be paying more money. Dave C. asked Avis how the employees start the day. Avis replies that they start their day at Muscatatuck Park. Mandy states, if we eliminated any open positions for 2025, how does the park have an open position that has \$30,000.00? Tina said that \$3282 will be moved to Seth's pay line if the position is accepted at \$52,603.00. Dave W. says the raises that all employees were given are three percent and an additional \$1000.00. If the council agrees to raises for one person, they will have to consider the other employees. Tina asks Avis if she has plans on hiring another person, and Avis responds yes, I just need to know what numbers they must work with. Mike said that any pay

increases need to be made at budget time. Tina said that the \$30,000 would go back into the county general because it is not included in the salary ordinance.

Tracy Jones with EMS is asking for additional appropriations for her four employees that have passed their exams. Tina states that no additional appropriations can be made until after the Annual Financial Report for 2024 is complete. Tina said that the salaries can be approved but the additional appropriations cannot be completed until March. Gene asks if it would be retroactive and Tina says yes, it would have to be. The increase would be \$5000 plus the three percent. Tina said the pay would start immediately but the appropriations would need to be made by the end of the year. Gene made a motion to approve the request, Mike seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Tracy also says that she came to council last January and was approved to move \$1818.00 into the Chief Paramedics pay line and she is asking to do that again in 2025. Tracy said that John stepped into the position and that is the reason for the additional \$1818.00. Tina said that the council didn't budget for that in 2025, and Tracy says that she believes it was just left off. Tina said she would work with Reedy to get it fixed.

Sherri with the county highway says that she has six employees on the salary ordinance that she thinks needs to be corrected. Tina asks why she believes that they need to be corrected. Sherri said that the newest employee is getting paid \$2,713.00 more than the two that have been in the county. Tina said that all the foremen should be at the same pay rate. Sherri said that this is the first-year budgeting 1173. She said that it was easier to budget everything out of 1176 and move it as needed. Tina replied that they don't want to do that. All foreman totals should be \$1715.23 per pay. Mike made a motion to approve the \$1715.23 per pay for the three foremen, Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Sherri said the pay line 11604 is short by \$38.69 for the year and pay line 11709 is being paid \$7,221.13 too much. Sherri says that all her numbers are coming off the salary ordinance. Sherri said pay line 11801 had no funds budgeted to it. Sherri said that this person has been employed with the county since 2019 and that 11801 is not a new payline. Pay line 11805 was not on the salary ordinance and this person has been employed since June 2024. Tina said that she would work on getting these items corrected.

Steve Pennycuff with Vernon Township Fire Department is asking for additional appropriations of \$2000.00. A fire truck caught fire, and insurance withheld the deductible from the insurance check, so they are \$2000.00 short on the repairs to the truck. No motion was made.

Sheriff Freeman tells the council that he comes to them to get some stuff off his chest. Freeman says that not seeing the budget before it was approved was a failure. There were three mistakes that could have been rectified had he seen the budget before it was approved. He also had questions that didn't get answered because there was only one budget meeting. Kenny explains that Thomas Mellencamp was overpaid on his OPO (Operation Pull Over) pay by almost \$4000.00. OPO is state money in which the deputies receive double time pay when they work OPO hours. Kenny says that this is going to create a problem with the reporting of the OPO wages and on Thomas' W2 because this happened in 2024. Kenny moves on to say that two employees that no longer work in the jail were paid in December. Kenny explains that he doesn't understand how two people that were not on his payroll voucher got paid. Kenny says that 41 paychecks were incorrect. Kenny is asking that the council vote on using the payroll voucher. He states that he signs and approves that sheet, so therefore that is what his employees should be paid. Kenny says that communication is key and there is no communication. Kenny says that

some of the mistakes are minor, up to \$.06 off, but why is it off if we are using the figures on the salary ordinance? Kenny moves on to talk about meeting minutes. He believes that the county is not doing them correctly. He said that he used to get a draft copy emailed to him. Kenny moves on to changes in salary for promotions. Kyle Lee was promoted to Sergeant and will receive a pay increase. He said that the money is in his budget for this. Kenny said that he paid for bread last year and spent \$10,000.00. He did not purchase the bread with his normal vendor because the price was high. The \$10,000.00 was spent out of the commissary fund and he would like to be reimbursed. Kenny said that SBOA says that you can reimburse the commissary account, it is just not the best practice to do so. Kenny will send the bill to Tina and the council will vote on it next month.

The Auditor explains that when her office noticed the error in paying the two employees that are no longer employed, she contacted the bank and had it reversed. Dave asked the auditor if it is easier to use the paper voucher. Sarah explains that the two employees that were paid were not marked inactive in the system, therefore they automatically rolled over into the payroll cycle. Dave said that he would make a motion to use the payroll voucher, and the Auditor explained that we already use the voucher. The payroll voucher is a State Board of Accounts form that is already used. Dave W. mentions purchasing a new payroll system. Jerry said that he would like to see payroll outsourced although if a new payroll system works correctly, he would be okay with that. Dave C. asks some questions about the payroll voucher form. Tina tells Kenny that she appreciates all his input, concerns and comments, and that she will work with the Auditors office and see what can be done.

Kenny said that the Sheriff's office received new radios and would like to supply the coroner with the old radios. The council said that they do not have a problem with the sheriff giving the radio to the coroner.

Tina Brison (Treasurer) gives the monthly report for the trust account. Tina E. explains to Dave C. that the county had two interest-bearing accounts and that in the last meeting the council asked the treasurer to combine those accounts because the interest was better with Trust Indiana. The amount in the trust currently is \$2,218,600.00. The account was opened in August 2024 and received \$21,951.87 in interest for 2024.

Andy Judd with the Probation Department tells the council that he has secured two grants. The first is a planning grant and it is for \$20,000.00. The purpose for this grant is to hire an employee to do research for us to become a JDAI county. When you become a JDAI county in the State of Indiana you qualify for \$192,5000 paid over the course of four years. The second grant is for \$93,000.00, in which some will go back into probation user fees and approximately \$10,000 will be used for drug testing in our community. Andy said that he will come back with a formal plan.

Judge Bright discusses her pretrial coordinator position with the council. The Pre-Trial Coordinator employee has elected to take the county benefits. Judge Bright explains that this position is covered by a grant, and if for some reason the grant goes away, then the position will be dissolved. Currently, this employee is being paid as a vendor (1099). Ellie explains that there will be zero expense to the county for this position. The council explains to Ellie that they currently are not supporting any new positions, and insurance is the biggest factor in the situation. Tina explains that the county insurance is \$3 million and that is for 160 employees.

After several discussions, Tina asks if there is a motion to add this person as an employee or continue to pay as 1099. Jerry made a motion not to hire the Pre-Trial Coordinator as a county employee, Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Gene said the only reason he seconds the motion is that he wants to stay consistent county wide with the hiring freeze. Ellie asks the council if they know how long the hiring freeze will last. Probation is looking to create a new position, so that will be a no also, Ellie states. Ellie asks the council if the county is not in support of grant funding. She explains that it takes a lot of time and effort into applying for these grants.

Tina moves on to the board appointments for 2025:

911 Board – Jerry Lamb

Alcohol Board – Jeremy Oaks

Animal Control – Daniel Smith will replace Dave Woodall

Area Plan – Dave Woodall

Park Board – Avis McGovern and Kristen Wiley

EDC – Mike Gerth and Tina Ellis

EMA – Gene Rudicel

Library – James Pittman

SIRPC – Dave Cheatham

Rescue 20 – Jerry Shepherd

Solid Waste – Mike Gerth

TIF – Dave Woodall, Tina Ellis, Mike Gerth

Tri County Water Board – Mandy Creech

Tourism – Tina Ellis

Vernon Water Board – Dan Wright

Amend.

Tina said that there will not be a county liaison to the county department heads this year. Dave made a motion to approve of not having liaisons this year, Mandy seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Mike made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 30 meeting, Dave seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Dave made a motion to appropriate the Cumulative Courthouse Fund, The Riverboat Fund, The Rainy-Day Fund, and the Safety LIT Fund. Dave also adds that the spending authority for any of these funds will come before the council. Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Dave Cheatham thinks that the council may need to meet more than one time a month.

Dave Woodall mentioned that the APC Director is not an elected position but, in his opinion, it should pay \$50,138.00, the same salary as an elected official. Jerry said that he is not in favor of that for 2025. Jerry says that this is the first meeting of the year, and he is sick of hearing about more money already. Mike said that this is the hardest part, and the most time consuming. Tina says that she doesn't like making all these changes after the budget has been approved. The council says Marie is worth every penny but does not want to make changes right now.

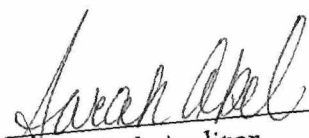
Kenny has asked the council to appropriate his non-reverting funds. Dave C. made a motion to approve the funds as read, Mike seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

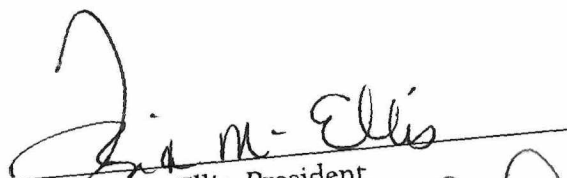
Mike made a motion to pay an invoice for Barnes & Thornburg in the amount of \$24,931.30. Mandy seconded the motion, passed unanimously. This invoice will be paid out of the general fund.

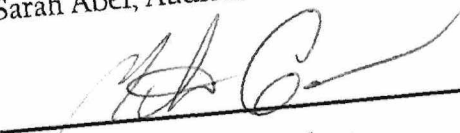
Tina asked the county attorney to change the verbiage on the salary ordinance. The ordinance will need to be revised so no action taken in tonight's meeting.

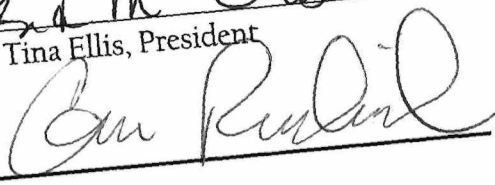
Dave C. discusses the counties retirement fund. He will have discussions with Alex on this.

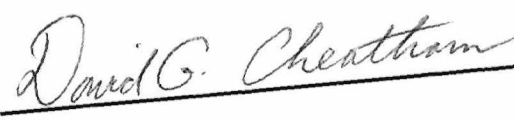
Dave C. made a motion to adjourn, Gene seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

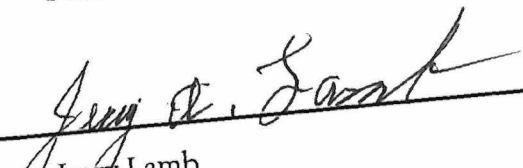

Sarah Abel, Auditor

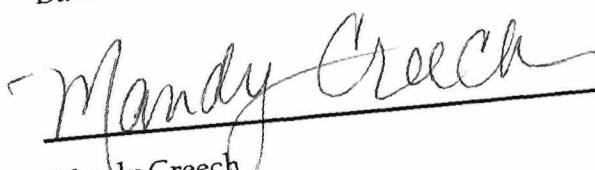

Tina Ellis, President

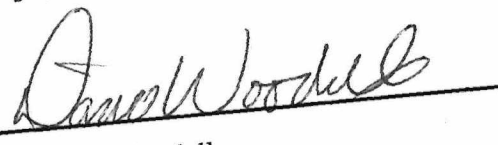

Mike Gerth, Vice President


Gene Rudicel


Dave Cheatham


Jerry Lamb


Mandy Creech


Dave Woodall