

RE: Highway Budgets

Minutes-Vermillion County Commissioners & Council Joint Meeting 4-1-08

The Vermillion County Commissioners& Council met in the Commissioners Courtroom, Courthouse, Newport, Indiana.

President, Tim Wilson called the meeting to order and led in the Pledge to the Flag.

Roll call was taken: Commissioners present were President Tim Wilson, Harry Crossley and Kim Hawkins. Also present were Attorney Jon Spurr, Auditor Sherrie Koma and First Deputy Amy Tolbert. Councilmen present were President John Yoho, John Cheesewright, Mike Reed, Mike Costello, Randy Dreher, Mike Carty, and Attorney Don Darnell. Lavonna Mattick was absent.

Wilson stated that the Financial Advisor, Melissa Ambre projected a shortfall in the Highways budget when she gave her report at the March meeting. He said they called this special meeting with the Council so they can discuss and get ideas of how to rectify the upcoming shortfall. Wilson said one option might be using 12% of Economic Developments budget. Highway Supervisor, Bill Clark, did some cost comparison with the budget now and the budget 5 years ago. He mentioned that the cost of things such and oil and gas are constantly going up. He said right now, with normal operations, they are looking at a \$134,000.00 deficit. Wilson opened the floor for suggestions to a solution. Crossley said to use cheaper oil and Clark said they are already doing that. Yoho stated that we are limited on what we can do and probably will need to enact a tax. Costello said maybe have to look at the personnel. If someone retires, look at not replacing them. Clark said they only employee 20 highway workers between the three garages. Crossley said they have already made cuts and help is spread thin as it is now. Costello questioned what percent of the budget is based on personnel. He also spoke about increases in group insurance and that fact that it will always increase. Wilson again mentioned Economic Development and using 12% of their budget.

Crossley then spoke about the CSEPP office and sirens. He said the state (SEMA) is making it mandatory that we keep the sirens and the upkeep will be the county's responsibility. Crossley said we should have taken the maximum wheel tax, we took the minimum. Cheesewright asked if we owned the EOC building. Spurr said they lease it for a \$1.00 a year until the VX is gone, and then it goes back to Clinton City. Several people disagreed, saying that they thought the county owned the building and Clinton City owned the land. Spurr said he would look into it. Cheesewright questioned who would pay the Utility bill, when CSEPP is gone. Wilson said they would have to get people in there, rent the space

to cover the expenses. Dreher suggested that after the state quits funding the CSEPP program and the county has to pay a director, that going in with other counties, such as Parke and having one director for several counties. Crossley said the sirens are all solar powered so upkeep should be minimal. Hawkins said the sirens will be outdated in a few years and the money is going to dry up. Can we afford to keep three county highway garages going? He said he just wasn't sure. Costello suggested paying the Highway's insurance. He said they did it at one point and now that money is cutting into their operating expenses. Hawkins also added that having CSEPP share a director with other counties is a very good idea. Cheesewright asked if it was mandatory that we keep an Emergency Management Director and Wilson said yes, but that person can be part time. Cheesewright said it's a waste of money, that we have a good 911 system and Sheriff's Department and Highway Department. They use to take care of it, why can't they still.

Dreher asked if the Highway needed equipment, repairs, roads fixed? He said maybe they could fund some repairs for the highway. There were some questions as to whether the garages shared equipment and Clark said yes, but that gets difficult at times. Dreher suggested utilizing community service people to help and clean up the roads. Dreher asked if they were to pick up the insurance, would that help? Wilson said yes, but it will hurt the general fund. Dreher asked if the Health Department's new office could house Economic Development and Wilson said he thought it could, thought there would be plenty of room. Bill Bybee said the Clinton Township Assessor is housed in the old Universal Fire Station and there is room there for other offices. Hawkins asked if the general fund could pay the Highway's insurance and Costello said they could probably do \$800,000.00 but not a million. Costello suggests have the insurance self-funded. Crossley asked if we could write a plan and get 12% of Economic Developments money. Spurr said the council would have to approve it but Costello thinks it is the Commissioners who make the plan. Carty said that 10% of the Economic Development would be about \$20,000.00 a year. He suggested raising the EDIT tax. You would have to act on it this year to get it for next year. Costello said there is no tax benefit, merely a tax shift. Clark said there is less than \$70,000.00 left for 200 miles of roads. Wilson said he spoke with Pierre Fox, the insurance provider and they are looking at higher deductibles this year and having the employees more and the county pays less. Crossley said if there is no money for supplies, why do we need help and why do we need help if we can't buy supplies. It's a catch 22. Clark said they have roughly 160 miles of road in the North end of the county, 111 miles in the middle, and 190 in the south. Someone suggested combining the middle and North garages into one. Crossley said that we have a long county and it sometimes snows in one spot and not another. He said you might save money on utilities but your going to spend that and more in gas driving up and down the county. Wilson said a good example is the Parke and Fountain county line, they are the very last to get plowed because they are the furthest away, that is what would happen if we combined garages. Hawkins said that we are going to have to do something. Costello wanted to state that the Highway workers do a very good job plowing the roads in the winter.

Cheesewright said we might have to do like Illinois does and have the State take care of equipment and one man with a truck and grater to do all the county roads. Reed said they need a master plan of what needs done. Hawkins said he would really like to keep all employees. Wilson said he wanted to thank everyone for their time and input and would like to have several follow up meetings to discuss the matter further.

Wilson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Crossley

Adjourn

Read in full and approved by the Vermillion County Commissioners & Council on the 5th day of May 2008.

Tim Wilson

Harry Crossley

Kim Hawkins

John Yoho

Mike Carty

Lavonna Mattick

Randy Dreher

John Cheesewright

Mike Costello

Mike Reed

Attest: _____
Sherrie A. Koma, Auditor