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Martin

County

THE MARTIN COUNTY COUNCIL

BUDGET WORK SESSION

AUGUST 5, 2024

MINUTES

The Martin County Council convened in work session on Monday, August 5, 2024, in the Commissioners’ Room at the Courthouse located at 129 Main Street, Shoals, Indiana. Council members attending: Jordan Dant, Warren Albright, Keith Gibson, Monty Gregory, Sheri Bowling, and Jim Hamby. Councilman Adam Greene attended via Zoom. Also attending was Auditor Michelle Norris.

President Jordan Dant called the meeting to order at 8:40 am.

The Martin County Council met with all departments throughout the day to discuss proposed budgets for 2025.

**Surveyor**

Surveyor Nathan Hoffman presented his budget to the Council for 2025. Surveyor Hoffman stated he did not add in a raise for himself and the deputy surveyor because usually the Council does a raise percentage for the whole county. Councilwoman Bowling asked why mileage was not budgeted. Surveyor Hoffman stated mileage went to cell phones last year. President Dant stated that was done last year based on what the Surveyor requested.

Councilwoman Bowling stated that half the deputy surveyor’s salary is not in 1224 reassessment and asked the Surveyor if the deputy surveyor is being taken down to part-time or as needed. President Dant stated the Surveyor’s budget has $17,225 budgeted for the deputy. Councilman Albright asked Surveyor Hoffman if he was planning any changes in regard to the deputy surveyor position. Surveyor Hoffman stated not really, his budget was as presented. President Dant stated reassessment funds a portion of the deputy surveyor position. Surveyor Hoffman stated half of the deputy surveyor’s position is paid in his budget for half the year and half from reassessment the other half.

President Dant asked if two people were needed in the Surveyor’s office, to which Surveyor Hoffman stated it helps. Councilwoman Bowling asked if he could get by with only the Surveyor and an as needed person. President Dant stated three months ago Surveyor Hoffman had contacted him and suggested that he did not necessarily need the second position, that one person could do the job. Surveyor Hoffman stated it goes back to safety and public service. Surveyor Hoffman stated he goes out into dense areas such as Lost River and over hill banks while carrying a metal detector, shovel, and GPS unit, it is a safety issue to be alone. If he were to be out in the field and get down, he would not be found in some of the places they have to survey. Councilwoman Bowling asked if that was on a as needed basis. Councilman Gregory asked if the position could be part-time because the Assessor did not put a line item in her budget for the deputy surveyor. Surveyor Hoffman stated they would have to ask the Assessor why the line was not in her budget and stated he could come back during her scheduled time. The Council tabled the Surveyor’s budget until 1:15 pm.

**Highway**

Highway Superintendent Scott Seals and Administrative Assistant Theresa Ray presented the 2025 Highway budgets. Superintendent Seals stated they included a 6% wage increase for all employees except for the mechanic position which was at 7% due to the difficulty of filling the position. Councilwoman Bowling asked what the professional services entailed. Superintendent Seals stated it is the community crossings contractor, ADA compliance contractor, and other needed contractors.

President Dant asked in fund 1173 local match there is $503,000 requested which is a large jump from the 2024 budget, what is driving that increase. Administrative Assistant Ray stated the community crossings grant went up to $1.5 million, which increased the match amount. Superintendent Seals stated he anticipates the Commissioners will want to go for the full grant amount.

Councilman Gregory asked if the GIS software would fall under the Assessor’s GIS software. Superintendent Seals stated he believes that every department must have its own license. Councilman Gregory stated he is surprised the County does not have one license to pay for the whole county; it is the same as office expenses, every department has office expenses in each budget why does the County not budget for it instead of each department budgeting separately. Auditor Norris stated other counties do have a centralized supply.

Councilman Gregory asked Superintendent Seals if he believed the department is going to stay in budget for 2024. Superintendent Seals stated they are still on track to stay in budget; the highest expense they have so far is the rock and they are still within budget. Councilman Gregory stated the fuel budget for 2025 has went up a higher percentage compared to what has been used so far this year. Councilman Gregory stated the fuel budget is lower than 50% for the first half of the year, but additional money has been budgeted for 2025. Administrative Assistant Ray stated the fuel budget was in two different accounts in 2023, but the budgets were combined in 2024 because the State is very particular about how fuel is categorized based on usage type.

**Commissioners**

President Dant stated he is not seeing any proposed cuts in the budgets. Commissioner George stated they try not to cut, they let the Council make the cuts. Councilwoman Bowling asked why the Human Resource Coordinator was budgeted less than last year. Commissioner George stated HR has decreased hours down to 59 hours every two weeks. Councilwoman Bowling asked who the mental health contract is with. Commissioner George stated it was formerly Good Samaritan and is now Family Health Center. Councilman Hamby asked if juveniles in institutions are paid through the Courts. Commissioner George stated it is ordered to be paid through the Courts, but the County must pay it. Councilman Hamby stated the year to date is $34,000 and $77,000 last year, but there is $70,000 budgeted for next year. Auditor Michelle Norris stated there was a lot spent in the first three or four months, but the juvenile facility where County juveniles were being sent was closed in the Spring. The Court has been looking into other options.

President Dant asked what the SIDC request was for. Auditor Norris stated the County pays for SIDC and then also the County pays SIDC for road counts. President Dant stated using the word request makes it seem like a donation and not for services rendered. Councilman Albright stated it is more like a retainer fee for services. Commissioner Roush stated Greg from SIDC runs Westgate meetings and their office is in Martin County. Jenny from SIDC is getting rehab grants for houses in the County. Commissioner Roush stated SIDC oversees the grant for the Shoals Library expansion project and there is a house in Martin County which will be demoed as part of the land bank project.

President Dant stated it looks like the humane society is staying the same. Councilwoman Bowling asked if the humane society is staying open. The Commissioners stated they are closing. Councilwoman Bowling asked why money was being budged for them. Commissioner George stated they hope that someone will step up and will want to run it. Commissioner Roush stated the County is going to have to have something. Councilman Gregory asked if the County is required to have a humane society, to which President Dant stated no, there is not a requirement.

Councilman Gregory asked why there was an increase in cybersecurity. Auditor Norris stated the increase should have been farther down in the budget in MiAssurance. At the beginning of the year the Commissioners expanded users to the help desk contract and increased the expense by $60,000. Commissioner George stated last year there were only thirteen users on the MiAssurance plan. If a computer issue happens employees can call into Matrix for assistance. In January, the contract was expanded where most employees are covered.

Councilman Gregory asked if RTC could bring in high speed internet. Auditor Norris stated that is a whole other issue, which is not even in the budget. Auditor Norris stated the offices need fiber internet, but the cost is twice as much as what is paid now. President Dant asked if RTC was in town yet, Commissioner George stated no.

President Dant stated there is a significant increase in health insurance. Auditor Norris stated she adjusted to that amount after she met with the Commissioners because for the first half of the year the cost was already $356,000. Auditor Norris stated she is going to come to the Council soon to request additional appropriation for 2024 because there is not enough to complete the year. Auditor Norris stated she included a 7% increase for 2025, but the amount of the increase is not known at this time. Auditor Norris stated that since there were over fifty insurance participants, Thompson’s Insurance was able to obtain claims and premium amounts from United Healthcare for the first six months of the year. Auditor Norris stated claims were less than premiums for the first six months. Auditor Norris stated HR Director Amy Rincker is trying to adjust the health insurance renewal date to October instead of December.

Councilman Albright asked if there was an update regarding the opt out; it is very much part of the insurance budget if thirty more people are put on insurance the budget will have to increase. President Dant stated there is $132,000 budgeted in the Commissioners’ budget for opt out. President Dant asked where the issued landed, to which Auditor Norris stated nowhere. Auditor Norris stated the county attorney is still trying to obtain an opinion letter from specialized legal counsel. Auditor Norris stated other counties were asked by email and there are no other counties offering opt out.

President Dant stated the issue is that if an employee has been receiving $4,000 for opt out and if it is taken away and added back into their salary now there is someone making $2 more an hour than someone next to them doing the same job but they took insurance. President Dant asked Auditor Norris to get with the county attorney for an update. Auditor Norris stated they have been asking the attorney for updates every two weeks this year. Commissioner George stated they would talk to the attorney tomorrow night about it. Councilman Albright stated it is a big budget issue if they have to add 30 people back on insurance. Commissioner Roush stated if they must do that the County will not be able to afford the great plan it has now, the insurance budget will have to be cut. Auditor Norris stated a single person plan costs $12,000 and a family plan costs $25,000.

President Dant asked about line building liability and casualty, $128,000 has been spent so far in 2024, $150,000 budgeted for 2024, and $180,000 is being budgeted for next year. Auditor Norris stated the liability insurance is paid once a year and has already been paid. President Dant asked why there is a $30,000 budget increase for next year, if it was to account for rate increases. Auditor Norris responded yes, President Dant stated there are new properties to insure and to leave the budget at $180,000.

President Dant asked about the computer replacement line, there was $120,000 budgeted in 2024 and $120,000 budgeted again for 2025. Commissioner George stated that line accounts for server replacement. Auditor Norris stated the server replacement was supposed to happen this year, but she has been waiting on quotes for months. Auditor Norris stated she was told Windows 10 will be outdated in October of 2025 so it is possible that any computer that is 4-5 years old will have to be replaced. Councilman Albright stated the problem is that an operating system is retired, and all the security patches are not updated. Auditor Norris stated $20,000 is earmarked in the computer replacement line to replace broken and outdated computers, $10,000 has already been used so far in 2024.

Councilwoman Bowling asked what the Felts Orange County fiber line was in the budget for $9,000. Commissioner George stated the line was for the Felts Alarm system in the Courthouse. Auditor Norris stated she will change the line-item name.

President Dant stated the budgets will be taken under advisement, but it is the same story every year. The County bought the properties, which is good, there is an ambulance service that needs to be funded. President Dant stated the LIT rate can be reallocated .20%, by doing that it would create $503,000 in revenue for EMS, but the Town of Shoals would lose $40,000, Crane would lose out on about $9,000, and the City of Loogootee would lose $88,000. President Dant stated he had a conversation with Mayor Brian Ader about this and although they do not like it, President Dant stated it would be the City/Town’s investment in the ambulance department. President Dant stated it is something they are going to have to do. Commissioner Roush stated this was also talked about last year. President Dant stated last year the Council wanted a year to see the actual revenue and expenses, and since they know where those are, they are in a situation where they must do this. Auditor Norris stated FSG recommends reallocating the LIT rates.

Councilman Albright stated the total ambulance budget for 2025 is $1.35 million. Councilman Albright stated he would rather ask the City to write a check than to permanently take the tax away it would leave the tax in place to fund their budgets. President Dant stated then at any time the city or towns could then say they are out, but if the LIT rates were changed it would be guaranteed every year. President Dant stated he does not like it any more than anyone else, but he does not know what else to do, and even that is not enough to move the needle. Councilman Gibson stated the ambulance service may need to be scaled down. Councilman Albright stated he is charged for fire service, what is the difference, to charge city/town or townships for ambulance service. President Dant stated he likes the idea of charging the townships, and Councilman Hamby agreed they should be involved.

President Dant stated he thought that had been tried already, Commissioner George responded not on the ambulance, but on other things trying to get them to help and they could not get them to come to one meeting together. Commissioner George stated he would like to ask FSG if the townships can be charged. President Dant stated he knows that Rutherford writes a decent check to Haysville Fire Department every year, because that is who services the area. President Dant asked why it should be any different for EMS services. Councilman Hamby responded it shouldn’t, it should come out of the townships also.

Councilman Gregory stated there are outstanding collections for the ambulance service and no way to get it right now. Councilwoman Bowling stated the County needs to hire someone who can do that. Councilman Hamby stated he thought the billing contractor was supposed to do collections. Councilman Gregory stated there is $200,000-$300,000 in collections sitting out there since October of 2022, when the service started, and that number keeps growing. Councilman Gregory stated there is interest money the County is losing because we aren’t collecting that revenue and now the County is talking about a bond, and it is eating us alive. Councilman Gregory stated he is all for having an ambulance, but somewhere along the line the billing needs to get in check and the County cannot pay for everyone’s ambulance runs.

President Dant stated he would like to see a report showing 12-month period of revenue and collections from when the ambulance started billing. Councilman Hamby stated he would like to know how the materials used on the ambulance are being billed per run. Councilwoman Bowling stated they need to find someone to do the collections for the ambulance. Auditor Norris stated after insurance collections have not been started and are just sitting there. Auditor Norris stated the billing company does not do collections after insurance and to contract with a collections company is 30% of amount collected. Commissioner Roush stated the percentage cost is why it had not been pursued and he thought the Ambulance Director had an assistant who was going to work on collections.

President Dant stated ARPA is about expended and asked if the County was going to get any more. Commissioner George responded no.

**Veterans Service Officer**

Commissioner George stated the Commissioners asked for an increase in the pay for the veterans service officer. Commissioner George stated they would like to keep someone in the position. President Dant asked if the person hired was considered part-time, to which Commissioner George stated that is correct. President Dant asked how many hours the VSO worked per week. Commissioner George stated as needed but no more than 20 hours per week. Taxpayer Mary Smith stated the VSO has posted hours of two days a week in office but meets with veterans outside of those hours as necessary, veterans do not always have issues from 8:00-4:00.

**Probation**

President Dant stated chief probation officer request is $77,000, an increase of 15%, and the other probation officer has an increase of 13%. President Dant asked if the probation officer salaries are set by the State, to which Chief Probation Officer Stephanie Helton stated yes. Auditor Norris stated the amounts in the budget are higher than the amounts set by the State for 2025.

President Dant stated there is added in the probation budget an administrative assistant, another probation officer, and a case manager, which are all new positions that have not been budgeted in years past. CPO Helton stated the administrative assistant has been budgeted in the past, but it should be coming out of the general fund rather than the supplemental adult probation. CPO Helton stated they currently have a case manager, but it is part-time through December and is budgeted out of the general fund. Councilwoman Bowling stated supplemental adult probation also has a case manager for next year and there is one in the general fund. CPO Helton stated in the 2024 budget in the general fund 233.1000.15 case manager the budget is $15,000 and there is a balance of $13,000 left.

Judge Isha Wright-Ryan stated they presented two options in what they thought would be helpful. The administrative assistant has not been paid out of the general fund. Judge Wright-Ryan stated they think the position should be moved to the general fund based on the department budget meeting last year where Councilman Albright and FSG Advisor Greg Guerrettaz agreed the position should be paid from the general fund. Judge Wright-Ryan stated the administrative assistant was approved by the Council through December. The supplemental adult probation fund is funded through fees and if the Council is not going to approve the case manager for next year, their hope is to fund a case manager in the supplemental fund if the County would take over the administrative assistant position in the general fund.

Judge Wright-Ryan stated they don’t want a case manager paid out of the supplemental fund and the general fund, but they thought if the County would take over the administrative assistant position in general but don’t elect to fund the case manager out of the general fund, they would have the supplemental adult probation fund to fund the case manager position. President Dant stated the budget amount for the case manager in the supplemental fund is a smaller amount than that is proposed in the general fund. CPO Helton stated the general fund case manager would be a full-time position. President Dant asked if it comes out of general it would be full-time and if it comes out of the supplemental fund it would be part-time, to which Judge Wright-Ryan stated they could not afford to pay for the benefits out of the supplemental fund so they would have to leave the position as part-time.

Councilman Gregory asked the amount per hour the case manager is currently being paid, to which CPO Helton stated the range is $20-$24 per hour. Councilwoman Bowling asked if it currently is being paid out of general fund, which Councilman Albright stated yes and the reason it is part-time is because that is all they approved. Judge Wright-Ryan stated they had let the Council know when the position was approved that they would be back to ask for another probation officer and/or a case manager. Judge Wright-Ryan stated they need it all and it is an honest request, they need both of those positions, but they desperately need one of them and they cannot keep functioning like they are. Judge Wright-Ryan stated it was amazing they approved the part-time case manager through the end of the year, it has been extremely beneficial, and she is doing a fantastic job.

Councilwoman Bowling asked if they currently have a chief probation officer, a probation officer, a case manager, and an administrative assistant, to which the Judge responded yes. Councilman Gregory asked if their want is to add a probation officer, which the Judge responded yes. Judge Wright-Ryan stated it is her understanding that full-time employees are supposed to be paid out of the general fund because of the insurance.

Judge Wright-Ryan stated an additional employee is needed because the caseloads of the probation officers are above the threshold at 280 and the amount should be between 90-110. Councilman Hamby asked why the case load has gotten so high, and CPO Helton stated the case load has always been high. Councilman Gregory asked if there is a lot of backlog, CPO Helton stated no it has always been high. Judge Wright-Ryan stated the cases are not going down, criminal filings are not going down. President Dant stated criminal filings are up across the entire state. Judge Wright-Ryan stated it is going to be a constant need they will have, and this is a great way to fix it and to maintain a great probation department. Judge Wright-Ryan stated they are asking for both the case manager and PO positions and they understand what they are asking for, so they tried to give alternatives to that for consideration.

Councilman Hamby asked what the cost was for a person to be on probation. Judge Wright-Ryan stated it is $20 monthly for a misdemeanor and $30 monthly for a felony. There is an initial administrative probation user fee of $ 50-$100 depending on misdemeanor or felony. Judge Wright-Ryan stated a pre-trial program was started and in lieu of bond option she will put them on a pre-trial program if they are a suitable candidate and minimal risk, the case manager can supervise those people and a fee is charged. Councilman Gregory asked who sets the fees, to which Judge Wright-Ryan stated they are statute. Judge Wright-Ryan stated if they are on pre-trial, and they have a public defender, they can charge a public defender fee. Councilman Hamby asked where the fees come back to, to which Judge Wright-Ryan stated most go into adult supplemental probation fund.

President Dant asked CPO Helton the plans for the grant funds in fund 1148. CPO Helton stated they recently had a meeting with Community Corrections in preparation for using the grant money in conjunction with Community Corrections and the Sheriff’s Department. CPO Helton stated she has been in communication with the Indiana Criminal Justice Association, who stipulates how the grant money can be used. The chairperson of the ICJA has stepped down and the ICJA is in the process of getting that person reappointed for the County to start utilizing the fund and getting more grant money in the fund. Judge Wright-Ryan stated they hope to be able to spend the grant money during the next budget cycle.

President Dant stated in fund 2100 there are lines that have stayed the same or went up, such as conference probation. In 2023 only $1,000 was spent and so far in 2024 $542 has been spent, why is $5,500 being budgeted for 2025, up $1,500 from last year. CPO Helton stated there is a conference this month that is not reflected in the report and there are three conferences in September and three in October. There is a conference in August which is only for the CPO. CPO Helton stated they will be taking out of travel in the general fund, the same as the dues, there was not enough appropriated in the general fund and the balance had to be taken out of the supplemental fund. CPO Helton stated she did not attend the March conference and neither she nor the other PO attended the June training. President Dant asked when they run out of money in one account line, and it is pencil transferred to another line in light of asking for additional appropriations.

President Dant asked what kind of computer equipment probation is procuring on their own. Judge Wright-Ryan stated the Court has their own server, but the whole thing is a mess. There are charges for malware, Adobe, and general maintenance, computer licensing, Microsoft. President Dant stated regarding Adobe there needs to be just one enterprise account for the County and the individual department accounts need to be consolidated.

Councilwoman Bowling asked what security equipment is in fund 2100. Judge Wright-Ryan stated if they get a new probation officer they will need badging, tasers, and other security equipment.

**Court**

President Dant asked the percentage of the salary increase requests in the Court budgets for 2025. Councilwoman Bowling stated it is a 11-12% increase. Judge Wright-Ryan stated they are one of the lowest paid courts and their people do the same thing every other court does. Judge Wright-Ryan stated she has had a lot of turnover and it has had a lot to do with salaries. Judge Wright-Ryan stated she can train new employees and then they can leave and go to a county over and make double. Judge Wright-Ryan stated she is trying to be consistent with what other courts are paying.

Judge Wright-Ryan stated she is having trouble finding a bailiff with the amount of pay the Council approved for the position, $15 per hour with 28 hours per week. Judge Wright-Ryan stated she is working with the Sheriff to enable a bailiff to carry a sidearm. Judge Wright-Ryan stated she has asked the Commissioners for a free standing, mobile metal detector for the courtroom, which is $17,000. Judge Wright-Ryan stated the bailiff would monitor the metal detector.

**Ambulance**

President Dant stated there were discussions earlier about collections and Ambulance Director Jeramey Osborn had stated the company who does the billables/invoicing will not work on receiving collections. Director Osborn stated the billing company does not do collections and is a separate service. President Dant told Director Osborn they would like a report to show what one year of service looks like from a receivable’s perspective from the ambulance; it would be advantageous to know what June 2023-June 2024 looks like. Councilman Albright stated they would like to see the outstanding accounts receivable also.

President Dant updated Director Osborn of the earlier conversation proposing the reallocation the LIT rate by .20%, which would go directly to EMS. President Dant asked what the total budget for ambulance was for 2025, to which Councilman Albright stated $1.35 million. President Dant asked Director Osborn his thoughts on sustainability. Director Osborn stated the LIT reallocation makes sense, only because if the service is going to continue a long-term basis, long-term solutions are needed. President Dant stated he does not know that just reallocating the .20% covers the gap. Director Osborn stated it may not cover it all, but it will cover a substantial part of it. President Dant stated it is also removing $366,000 from the County’s EDIT fund. Councilman Albright stated the County is already making up that difference now from EDIT.

Director Osborn stated Loogootee does get the vast majority of runs, followed by Shoals, followed by Crane. President Dant stated he does not know if it is a letter that the Attorney drafts and the Council signs, but the Townships need to be contributing, no different than what they contribute to the fire departments.

Councilwoman Bowling stated she believes they need to look at a company doing all the billing and not just part of it. Director Osborn stated he does not know if there are companies who will do both the billing and collections. Councilwoman Bowling asked in the ambulance fund for next year there is $105,000 budgeted for new equipment, what are the plans for new equipment. Director Osborn stated he believes they need a fourth ambulance. Councilwoman Bowling stated they are having a hard time budgeting for what they have, and a fourth ambulance will put more of a strain on the County. Director Osborn stated the thought process is there are twenty police vehicles and three ambulances that cover the County. The ambulances must go outside the County on every run if the patient is transported. If the service starts to do transfers the distance becomes even greater, Indianapolis for example, and they are using old equipment. All those reasons together, four ambulances can be bought for the price of a brand-new ambulance. Director Osborn stated there is not a police officer out there driving a 2008 vehicle.

Director Osborn stated for County coverage and to increase revenue outside the County and using older equipment, it does not make sense not to have at least four ambulances, they are emergency services and must be ready for emergencies. The trucks have been down for maintenance quite a bit. Councilman Gregory asked Director Osborn if he wanted just to have the vehicle, but not necessarily to staff it with additional personnel. Director Osborn stated he is not looking to staff the fourth vehicle, but to have it as a backup vehicle. Director Osborn stated someone can go to the Ford dealership and buy a new pickup truck today, but you cannot buy an ambulance off the lot. Director Osborn stated it takes months to find a used one and if one is ordered, it is 30 months out to get it.

President Dant stated at this point he does not know how much latitude Director Osborn has in solving the problem on his own, other than cleaning up some things operational like collections. President Dant stated it comes down to funding and dollars, they have known this day was going to come and have been talking about it before he was on the Council, and they have not done anything but are now going to have to if they want to continue to operate the ambulance service at the capacity it is currently operating at. Councilman Hamby asked Director Osborn if he is working on any grants for vehicles. Director Osborn stated they just filed for a grant for a loading stretcher. Director Osborn stated he would like to be able to replace equipment through grants and on a rotating basis because he does not want to have to replace everything all at one time. Director Osborn stated he has not found a grant for vehicles.

President Dant asked Director Osborn to get the Council the year snapshot from June 2023-June 2024, where they are at regarding collections, and his ideas or thoughts on how they can start to receive those outstanding invoices for collections. Director Osborn stated the County needs to decide on a collection agency. Councilman Gregory asked Director Osborn to look into it and use his resources to find out who is out there and recommend an agency.

**Recorder**

President Dant asked the percentage requested in the budget for the salary, Councilwoman Bowling responded a little more than 5%. President Dant stated for the most part everything is increased just a bit. President Dant asked that for which the line software update was used. Recorder Sheri Crandall responded that is for the CSI program, which all their documents run through, CSI has already informed her the increase will be between $13,000-$14,000. President Dant asked if it was for the Recorder’s office exclusively, to which Recorder Crandall responded yes.

**Treasurer**

Councilwoman Bowling asked Treasurer Rhonda Sanders about the line equipment and repairs, it was nothing for the last three years, but it is going to $7,000 for 2025. Treasurer Sanders stated she needs a new copier and one benefit besides the new copier would be the maintenance agreement rate per one hundred pages printed will go down from $1.15 per page to $.10. Treasurer Sanders stated she will be able to get rid of two other printers which will save on the maintenance agreement.

Treasurer Sanders stated she did increase postage because of the increase by USPS and she did increase travel because of having to travel back and forth to the bank and for conferences.

President Dant asked where they were at with reinvestment of County funds. Treasurer Sanders stated there are funds invested with German American Bank. There is money invested in a market smart account for redevelopment and she just cashed in a CD and has started another CD for a year. President Dant asked the rate on the CD just obtained, to which Treasurer Sanders responded 4.8%. Councilman Albright asked about the bulk of the money which is not invested. Treasurer Sanders stated she is still trying to figure out how much money is available to invest. Councilman Gregory asked if some of the money can be pulled out in 24 hours, to which Treasurer Sanders responded yes. Councilman Gregory stated some in each bucket could go to that type of account.

Treasurer Sanders stated she goes to Treasurer’s conference tomorrow and would like to talk to bigger counties who invest to see what she is able to do and ease her mind. President Dant stated the County’s budgets are extremely tight and extremely strapped and when there is money sitting there that could be earning additional interest, to create money for down the road that goes back into savings. President Dant asked how much was currently tied up in CDs and investments. Treasurer Sanders responded $2 million, and one CD will come due at the end of August and will be reinvested. President Dant stated they will be making $27,000 on a nine-month CD. Councilman Gregory stated the deputy treasurer’s salary request for next year is $33,000. Treasurer Sanders stated the next CD will be a twelve-month CD because the interest rate is better. President Dant stated he would like to maximize the dollars which are just sitting there.

Councilman Albright asked how much money is just sitting in the bank. Treasurer Sanders stated there is $15 million across all funds. Councilman Albright stated from his understanding most of that could be used to draw more interest, to which Treasurer Sanders agreed. Councilwoman Bowling asked if there was a penalty to withdraw the funds from the smart market account to which Treasurer Sanders responded fund can be drawn out up to six times per month with no fees. President Dant stated the County is missing out of hundreds of thousands of dollars of interest revenue. President Dant asked Treasurer Sanders to gather more information and then the Council and Commissioners will get with her in the coming weeks to assist her in how to better invest the County’s money.

**Extension**

Neely Richer, Lisa Wilson, and Krista Sims presented Extension’s budget for 2025 (Extension Director Dena Held was unavailable due to travel for 4-H). Each person spoke to the importance of Extension in Martin County and what it means to them. Ms. Richer stated there are over two hundred kids in Martin County who participate in 4-H. Ms. Richer stated Extension is asking for $99,150 to fund an additional extension educator, but it is understood there are funding limitations. Ms. Richer stated last year the County gave $22,890 and this year Extension needs $23,580. Ms. Richer petitioned the Council for somewhere between $23,580 and $53,808.

President Dant asked for clarification in what the different levels were for the educator line item, $23,890 is what is required, $53,808 would give room to bring back the project leadership program and possibly hire a part-time educator, and $99,150 would give room for a secondary educator and would be ideal to meet goals for the program. President Dant asked if the Alliance is working on a similar leadership program. Lisa Wilson stated the Extension is partnering with the Alliance; Purdue Extension has the full program for community leadership that adds in another educational piece that the Alliance is also doing and would provide partnership and support with the Alliance in that program.

**EMA**

President Dant stated little is changing in the EMA budget. There have been slight increases in vehicle maintenance and repairs fuel. Councilman Gregory asked if utilities budgeted for EMA covers the EMS also, to which EMA Director Monty Wolf stated yes it does. EMA Deputy Director Andy Ringwald stated the electric and natural gas have not largely changed since the ambulance service moved in.

Councilwoman Bowling stated uniforms have not been budgeted up until this year, to which Deputy Director Ringwald stated the three directors should have a shirt with a Martin County EMA emblem. Cory Brassine bought his own shirt this year and they thought rather than having him buy his own they should include that in the budget. Deputy Director Ringwald stated the more they attend State meetings it would be good to have official uniforms.

Councilman Hamby asked if EMA was only buying one set of fire gear a year to which Director Wolf stated they have not bought that many, probably three in the past couple of years. Director Wolf stated like other departments they have a lot of outdated stuff, but they are still using it. Director Wolf stated if new OSHA rules come into effect and fire gear requirements will be tightened up to which Councilman Hamby stated it is coming January 1st. Director Wolf stated OSHA is considering adopting national fire standards, which has been talked about for years.

**Prosecutor**

Prosecutor Aureola Vincz, IV-D Deputy Trish McKibben, and IV-D Prosecutor Mike Fritch informed the Council of the IV-D reimbursement the prosecutor’s office has brought back into the County. Prosecutor Vincz stated part of the IV-D reimbursement is sent by the State to the County general fund. Since 2019, $446,523 has been remitted back into County general, with every year bringing in more than the previous year. Prosecutor Vincz stated reimbursement is based on performance measurements, the better they do the better the reimbursement. Prosecutor Vincz stated the child support bureau is incredibly impressed with their IV-D department, and she wanted to bring IV-D Deputy McKibben and Prosecutor Fritch to give them praise in front of the Council.

Prosecutor Vincz stated the reimbursement averages $7,000-$10,000 per month based on the month prior. Prosecutor Vincz stated when she came into office in 2019, the State let her go back three years to collect additional revenue and she was able to collect $35,000.

Prosecutor Vincz stated as far as the budget, she has not made any changes. Prosecutor Vincz stated the claims clerk has been budgeted differently for 2025 due to reimbursement, instead of paying the claims clerk out of the incentive fund it was found out at training that if the claims clerk is paid out of a different prosecutor office fund, which is not County general, the County could receive additional reimbursement from the State. Prosecutor Vincz stated in a couple of years they will have to switch back over to the incentive fund (8897) to let the County User (2500) fund build back up.

President Dant asked Prosecutor Vincz to elaborate on the bonus added in the prosecutor general fund. Prosecutor Vincz stated usually when they ask for the yearly stipend it gets so close to the end of the year it makes it difficult on the Auditor’s office, so she thought if they left it in the line item to start with it does not put the pressure to get the salary and wage ordinance done before the end of the year. Auditor Norris stated the Prosecutor’s office sent her an email regarding fund 2500, County User, to add $2,000 to bonus-stipend.

Prosecutor Vincz stated she does not believe she will have any additional appropriations unless it is in witness fees and depositions. Those lines were low last year but they were able to pencil transfer to cover the year. Prosecutor Vincz stated it has been an increase of three times the amount for a couple of months, but they have not had any requests for another month.

**Clerk**

Clerk Julie Fithian stated her budgets stayed the same except for the salaries, which she requested 5%. Clerk Fithian stated there is not an election next year so the election budget will have very few expenses, and she put the bare minimum in the budget. Councilwoman Bowling asked if an election clerk is needed if there is not going to be an election. Clerk Fithian responded there is a full-time election clerk who still must process voting records and other responsibilities, her job does not end just because there is not an election. The election clerk also works in other areas of the Clerk’s office, everyone in the office has been cross trained for all areas.

Councilwoman Bowling asked what it would cost the County if they were to go to paper ballots and do a hand count. Clerk Fithian stated she would love it if the County were to go to paper ballots, which is the only way to have a fair and free election. Clerk Fithian stated it would save a lot of money because the only expenses would be personnel and the cost of paper and ink. Councilman Hamby stated the staff costs would be higher on election night. President Dant stated from a technology perspective it seems like we would be going backwards. Clerk Fithian stated technology is not the answer to everything. President Dant stated the results would not be out until the next morning. Clerk Fithian stated Martin County is small enough that it would only take a few extra hours at the end of the day.

Clerk Fithian stated she applied for a grant from the State which would pay for enough election envelopes to last several years. Clerk Fithian stated she is also purchasing additional electronic poll books if her office receives the grant.

**Assessor**

Assessor Carolyn McGuire presented her budgets for the 2025 year. President Dant asked if the salary requests were 5% to which Assessor McGuire stated it is 5% for her salary and $1 per hour increase for the deputies. President Dant stated there are not a lot of other changes in the Assessor budget. President Dant stated the travel line has been increased, Assessor McGuire stated she did not have enough funds, she had to transfer.

In the reassessment fund, President Dant asked why professional services has been doubled for 2025. Assessor McGuire stated she has already run out of money in 2024 because it was cut drastically last year. Assessor McGuire stated the data collector charges $72,250 each year and in escrow the retainer amount is $42,370. President Dant asked what the computer update for INCAMA is, Assessor McGuire responded that is for the property tax software for her office.

President Dant informed Assessor McGuire that the Council had requested the Surveyor come back while she was here so they could discuss the deputy surveyor position. President Dant stated there was zero budgeted for the deputy surveyor in the reassessment budget, so that raised questions. President Dant asked Assessor McGuire if it was her intent not to fund that position. Assessor McGuire stated when she turned her budget request in, she was under the impression the Surveyor had requested he not have a deputy, so that is why it is not in her budget. President Dant stated it was based on a conversation that he and the Surveyor had, and it was discussed this morning it could be an as needed basis.

Councilman Gregory stated the deputy surveyor does the updating of the mapping, Surveyor Hoffman stated he and the deputy both do the mapping. Councilman Gregory stated it was his thought that by the Assessor giving that salary money for the deputy, it was saying that is part of the help needed in the Assessor’s office to keep the map current. Councilman Gregory stated some counties have mapping to a dedicated person. Surveyor Hoffman stated that is correct, both Lawrence and Orange Counties have a dedicated mapping person, and they are not associated with the Surveyor’s office. Surveyor Hoffman stated it is not on the Assessor’s office to fund a mapping position, technically it is an Auditor’s office function. Councilman Gregory stated the County was getting a benefit because the Surveyor’s office was able to do the mapping. Surveyor Hoffman stated the deputy surveyor also does the parcel splits; they translate deeds and other things that the Assessor’s or Auditor’s office cannot do. Surveyor Hoffman stated the County has the benefit of having two licensed surveyors on staff.

Surveyor Hoffman stated he could do the mapping, but the workload has increased and there is so much going on right now. Surveyor Hoffman stated he receives requests from the County Attorney, and they did the culvert project for the Highway. President Dant asked the Surveyor what happened to the conversation they had months back when he said the deputy was not needed. Surveyor Hoffman stated they got busy, what they are doing with the Highway and the County in general it is necessitated.

Councilman Gregory stated he feels like the GIS mapping needs to be taken out of the Surveyor’s office and should be its own office. Councilman Gregory stated the Surveyor needs an assistant to hold the flag and for safety reasons. Councilman Gregory stated the assistant to the Surveyor could be paid $10-$12 per hour for example and the GIS mapping person could be a part-time person for the County. Councilman Gregory stated he does not believe Martin County is a big enough County to have a full-time deputy surveyor in 2025. Surveyor Hoffman stated Daviess and Lawrance both have two full-time people, and the GIS system will soon be changed.

Assessor McGuire stated the deputy surveyor does more than just the mapping, the Surveyors look at every deed. Councilman Gregory stated that position that needs to be done separately and that part needs to be taken out of the Surveyor’s office. Councilman Gregory stated he feels the County is growing quick enough and it is going to change enough that it needs to be its own position.

Councilman Albright stated he thought the County wanted more cross training and cross workers instead of somebody just wearing a hat that says mapping, so now when the Surveyor needs help, he could say that is not his job.

Surveyor Hoffman stated it will get hairy, they have already started the 231-corridor survey, and it is coming and will be chaos. Surveyor Hoffman stated he does not want to lose him, but he does not know where to slot him unless we make a position. Surveyor Hoffman stated he could take a high school kid out there and find corner stones and rebar, but the current deputy surveyor is also able to read deeds and go through the property tax cards and goes into the courthouse to assist with questions on deeds. Surveyor Hoffman stated they both also go through the parcel id cards and fix mapping issues. Surveyor Hoffman stated the 231-corridor will be a nightmare, there are already farmers around who will buy a farm and chop it up, it becomes extremely hard for the Auditor’s office to interpret the transfer and mapping without help from both in the Surveyor’s office.

Surveyor Hoffman stated by having two surveyors able to review the deeds and it keeps errors from happening on property transfers. Auditor Norris stated both surveyors are in her office every day and it would be devastating if they did not have help with the deeds and transfers.

Assessor McGuire stated the process is working now, why should it be changed. Assessor McGuire stated the Assessor and Auditor’s offices need help reading the deeds. Surveyor Hoffman stated there will be a deed come in which will be very long and complicated and there are several “except therefrom” exceptions which must be hand drawn and it is a pain. President Dant stated what Councilman Gregory is suggesting is adding a position, to which Councilman Gregory responded yes, but he also sees that our County is going to grow.

Councilman Albright asked Assessor McGuire if the reassessment budget can take the additional $15,000 for the deputy surveyor’s salary. Assessor McGuire stated she wants the same service from the Surveyor and Deputy Surveyor that we receive right now. Assessor McGuire agreed to add $15,000 back into the reassessment budget for the deputy surveyor’s salary.

**Sheriff**

Councilwoman Bowling asked Sheriff Greene how many total employees the department has. Sheriff Greene stated there are about thirty employees and there are openings in all areas of the department. Councilman Hamby asked if the animal control officer is in the Sheriff’s budget for 2025, to which Sheriff Greene responded no.

President Dant asked what the wage request is for the department, Sheriff Greene responded 7%. President Dant stated police pension has jumped. Sheriff Greene stated the more that is paid the more liability there will be. Sheriff Greene stated it may have been briefly talked about last year, but he had expected the pension to increase by $20,000-$30,000 this year with the 20% pay raises. Sheriff Greene stated he had concerns last year about getting any extra money the County can in the police pension. Sheriff Greene stated he has someone who can come present to the Council, the police pension the County is paying interest because it is not completely funded, it is the same as having a loan or a bond. The County is paying around $40,000 a year in interest on the pension policy.

Councilman Hamby asked what was being bought in the uniforms budget line item was for in the general fund sheriff budget, for $7,500. Sheriff Greene stated that is all the uniform expenses, new uniforms, and replacements. President Dant stated it looks like gas and oil needs to increase and training needs to increase. Councilman Albright stated they should leave it and increase it if needed next year.

Councilwoman Bowling asked about the patrol vehicle budget amount for $65,000, how many vehicles are purchased for that amount. Sheriff Greene stated four vehicles on trade in, the department just received four new RAM 1500s and got rid of four F150s. Councilwoman Bowling asked how many miles are on the trade in vehicles, Sheriff Greene responded 80-90 thousand. Usually, they are not that high of mileage, but it has been difficult to get government priced new vehicles. Sheriff Greene stated the dealership has been honoring the trade in price given months before the vehicle can be traded. Councilwoman Bowling asked the year of the oldest vehicle in the fleet. Sheriff Greene stated there is a 2009 Explorer and a 2014 Impala, which are spare vehicles, the oldest full-time vehicle on the road right now is a 2020.

Councilman Albright stated that jail meals have been decreased for 2025. Sheriff Greene stated he dropped the budget for jail meals quite a bit again, a lot of the money which has been spent so far in 2024 was encumbered from last year’s bills. Sheriff Greene stated they encumbered $38,600 from last year. Councilwoman Bowling asked if out of county inmates were still being held at the jail. Sheriff Greene stated they were, but he has never recommended to the Council to count on a dollar of that income for the next year’s budget. Sheriff Greene stated one ruling from the State House could change the way the inmates are held and who stays in jail. President Dant stated he does not think that risk is on the Sheriff, it is a decision the Council must make if they want to include it in the budget.

Sheriff Greene stated in the general fund jail budget, there is $7,500 for jail treatment coordinator that no longer needs to be in that budget. Community Corrections received a grant from DOC for jail treatment.

**Health Department**

President Dant stated there is a county health officer increase of $900. County Health Nurse, Julia Albright, stated she allowed for a 5% increase. President Dant asked Nurse Albright what contractual services were done out of the Health Department. Nurse Albright stated that is for Hoosier Uplands to provide services for the Health Department.

Nurse Albright stated fund 1161 is money from the Indiana Department of Health, Martin County is receiving $808.70 more than what she budgeted but if they need it later, she will come back to the Council.

**Recycling Center**

Recycling Center Director Janell Freeman presented the Martin County Solid Waste’s budget for 2025. Councilman Gregory asked how the sales and cardboard and plastic were going. Director Freeman stated a lot better, there is someone from IDEM coming on Thursday to possibility pay off the $130,000 note they have, but it will not be decided until October. Director Freeman stated it is a 50% match grant and she has reached out to the Martin Community Foundation for the other half.

Director Freeman stated they are now charging for paper pickups and have raised the surcharge for cardboard pickups from $10 to $25 so now they are generating a minimum of $22,300 each quarter. Councilman Gregory asked what the price of cardboard is. Director Freeman stated it is about $150 per ton and was about $70 when she started last year, with the price as low as $40 after Covid. Director Freeman stated plastic has gone from $.05 per pound to $.17, paper is about $160 per ton, clothes were $7,500 per semi and are now between $9,000-$10,000. Director Freeman is watching staffing and trying to cut corners where they can and has been having the truck drivers do vehicle maintenance when possible.

Councilman Albright asked how many employees were at the recycling center. Director Freeman responded there are thirteen counting herself; one is four hours a week at Shoals, five full-time people, and one person who works four days and week, and the rest are three days a week. Councilman Gregory asked if Community Corrections still works at the recycling center. Community Corrections Director Danielle Murphy stated she sends as many community service people over as possible.

Auditor Michelle Norris asked if Solid Waste is still planning to participate in the County’s health insurance policy for next year. Director Freeman stated for now they will, three employees currently take health insurance. President Dant asked how the reimbursement was working. Auditor Norris stated with the sale of the recycling center building in Shoals, the bill was paid up through August. Director Freeman stated when they receive the fuel surcharge quarterly, she would like to pay the health insurance three months at a time.

**Community Corrections**

Community Corrections Director Danielle Murphy presented Community Corrections budgets to the Council. Councilman Gregory asked the percentage of raises in the budgets to which Director Murphy stated 5%. Director Murphy stated fund 1127, CTP fund, is not a grant fund, it is a revenue fund. Director Murphy stated CTP (community transition program) user fees are collected and these funds are used to pay for equipment lease for people in the program versus project income.

Director Murphy stated the budget the Council sees for project income is the same budget which was submitted with the State grant, and this is what the State has approved so far. Director Murphy stated their salaries are split between two funds project income and then a grant fund. Director Murphy stated they use grant money first and use project income last, project income rolls over from year to year and the grant they must send unused money back to the State at the end of the year.

Councilwoman Bowling asked how many employees there were in Community Corrections. Director Murphy stated there are four full-time employees, which includes herself and two part-time and two open part-time positions, which they hope to fill in 2025. Councilwoman Bowling asked how many people are on a case load. Director Murphy stated they are averaging between 32-33 and right now they are at 29 which does not include community service. The average for community service is between 75-85.

Councilwoman Bowling asked Director Murphy if all her funds were grant based. Director Murphy stated the project income fund is being built back up and there is nearly $300,000 in that fund. Director Murphy stated they only use project income if they must have it. Director Murphy stated the Commissioners agreed to pay for health insurance for community corrections employees in 2025 to be able to increase salaries based on the percentage the Council approves. Councilman Albright asked if the insurance is currently paid out of the community corrections funds. Director Murphy replied yes insurance is taken out of the grant fund in 2024 but next year it will switch to the Commissioner budget. Director Murphy stated salaries are increased every year but for the last two years the grants have not seen an increase from the State.

**Innkeepers**

Martin County Tourism Board President, Michelle Grace, andTreasurer Pamela Loughmiller came before the Council to present their budget. Councilman Gregory asked if the Tourism Board considered billboards. Ms. Grace stated they have checked into it, but they determined there are more cost-effective ways to use the budget. Councilman Gregory asked if the Airbnb generates innkeeper’s tax. Ms. Loughmiller stated Airbnb or VRBO do contribute to the innkeeper’s tax and the innkeeper’s tax is their only source of funding. President Dant asked who generates innkeeper’s tax. Ms. Grace stated it is any overnight accommodation less than 30 days in the County and the tax is 5% over the overnight cost.

**Martin County Alliance**

Martin County Alliance Executive Director Jessica Potts presented the budget for 2025. Director Potts stated Alliance membership has increased from forty-one last year to fifty-eight this year. Director Potts updated the Council on their accomplishments throughout the last year. President Dant asked if the budget has changed from the 2024 budget. Director Potts stated it is the exact same budget, they are not asking for any more for 2025. Councilman Albright stated the County contributes $120,000 to the Alliance and the Redevelopment Commission contributes $40,000.

**Soil and Water**

Soil and Water Coordinator Brenda Norris presented the 2025 budget to the Council. President Dant asked what the part-time technician does. Ms. Norris stated that Martin County Soil and Water Conservation District in the past has partnered with other counties on grants to support an invasive species specialist. Starting this year MSWCD is the lead county for the Clean Water Indiana Grant which is a three-year grant that started January of 2024. Each of the three counties, Martin, Daviess, and Orange contribute a cash match towards the salary.

**Coroner**

Coroner Cathy Evans presented the 2025 coroner budget. President Dant stated in 2024 the transport fees were budgeted at $4,000 and for 2025 it is being dropped to $2,000; he asked Coroner Evans if that was based on actual spending. Coroner Evans stated the only time they would need to use transport fees was if the Martin County EMS could not provide transport. Councilman asked Coroner Evans what percent raise is requested for 2025 to which she responded 10% for the next coroner.

**Auditor**

Auditor Norris stated she has requested a 5% increase in salaries next year and clerical assistant budget was increased. Auditor Norris stated the clerical assistant makes $15 per hour now but she does the same work as everyone else in the office. Auditor Norris stated postage went up due to the USPS increasing its rates and she will have to come to the Council this year for an additional appropriation because her office has been mailing out the paystubs every other week.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:07 pm with a motion made by Councilman Gibson and seconded by Councilman Gregory, all were in favor and the motion passed. The next regular Council meeting and public hearing for budgets will be held Monday, September 9, 2024, at 6:00 pm.

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Jordan Dant Adam Greene

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Warren D. Albright J. Keith Gibson

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Sheri Bowling Jim Hamby

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Monty Gregory

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michelle Norris, Martin County Auditor