

NOBLE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
Monday August 5, 2024 1:00 PM
NOBLE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT
NOBLE COUNTY NEW ANNEX

PRESENT:

George Bennett
Tom Janes
Trey Forbes Left the meeting early.
Max Franklin
Doug Harp
Mary Wysong

ABSENT:

Brandon Chordas

ALSO PRESENT:

Jackie Knafel, Noble County Coordinator
Dennis Graft, County Attorney
Zack Smith, Highway Engineer
Gary Leatherman, Commissioner President.
Matt Getts, KPC Media

George Bennett, Council President, brought the meeting to order at approximately 1:00 pm

MINUTES

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved as corrected with a motion from Max Franklin and a second from Tom Janes. The motion carried 6-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Jackie Knafel, County Coordinator, had prepared some guidelines and some fact-finding documents for the council to review as far as abatements were concerned. All of the information in the guidelines were items of discussion from past meetings. Discussion about the documents continued. George asked Jackie to contact Ben Castle, County Assessor, to get more information about the agriculture abatement and then incorporate that information in the guidelines. Doug Harp wanted to make sure that these were NOT set rules just guidelines to be more uniform in their decision making. There was discussion about the hourly rates listed as well. Jackie will make the suggested changes and bring this back to the council at their September meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Jackie Knafel, County Coordinator, handed out information about exempt employees. As of January 1, 2025 the minimum salary for an exempt employee will be \$58,656.00. There were a few current employees who are currently exempt and will not be at this salary level even with a 6% increase. It was suggested by the County Attorney that the Council be involved in this decision because there was a need to adjust salaries due to the new regulations. This will then put those employees outside of the matrix system for pay. Doug Harp questioned why it was now a council decision – Attorney Dennis Graft cited the statute that indicated that the fiscal body should be a part of this discussion when it pertains to salaries. The FSLA ruling had been low enough in the past that this had never been an issue – in 2023 it was around \$35,000.00. In 2024 it was \$43,000.00 and now for 2025 has jumped considerably. There were 6 employees affected by this ruling in which even the 6% raise would not get them to the correct amount. The decision had to be made where to raise the salary to the minimum, or to make those employees non-exempt and pay overtime. There was one employee on the list that

was not considered exempt but because of the off – site status of the job and not clocking in and out of the system, was determined to leave at non-exempt and pay accordingly as we had been doing in the past. Jackie did remind the council that all the information they had before them was based on the 6% increase that was suggested for wages and if they decided a lesser percentage that would affect more on the listing. Mary Wysong moved to accept the changes for all of the affected current exempt employees on the list. Doug Harp seconding, clarify that the non-exempt employee on the list was NOT included in her motion. Motion carried 6-0.

HIGHWAY

Zack Smith, Highway Engineer, has the following engineering business to bring before the council:

- Additional for the highway budget – 1176-39700-102 Drainage and other in the amount of \$300,000.00 was approved with a motion from Tom Janes. Max Franklin seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-0.
- Additional for the MVH Restricted – 1173-23201-116 Bituminous Liquid in the amount of \$200,000.00 was also approved with that same motion.
- The 2023 Community Crossing projects were closed out with the 2024 project set to begin early next month
- Zack reported that all of the ongoing LPA project were on schedule and going well.
- Bridge 44 - Zack provided pictures of this project which is a complete reconstruction of the bridge. They are working on piling and all is going well.
- Bridge 136 - this has been one of the projects that has taken a long time in planning. This cost from the 1st cost estimate to the time of actual bidding was some time and the cost in the beginning. Zack was able to secure an additional 3.2 million from the state for this project to allow it to go through. When complete this will have one of the longest spans in Noble County at 120 Ft. Pictures were provided.

COURTHOUSE RENOVATION

Zack Smith, Project Manager, gave the following update on the courthouse renovation:

- Minutes of the July 24 meeting with Weigand and American StructurePoint were provided.
- The renovation updated schedule was provided to the members.
- Zack told the group that work is happening from 3rd down to the 1st floor. Plaster work, door casings etc. are beginning.
- The sidewalk on the North side has always had a drainage issue and that has been fixed.
- Completion date is set for January/February 2025 with an early spring move in planned.
- Zack told the council members that even though there was not a new roof in this project that every effort has been made to address the roof leaks. This should take of all of the leaks at this time, but Zack reiterated that a new roof needs to be planned at some time in the future.

PROBATION

Jared Owen, Chief Probation Officer, was present to give the quarterly report to the council about the probation department:

- There are 653 under supervision in the department with 357 pending at this time.
- There are 388 on community corrections, with some kind on monitoring going on such as GPS, Work Release etc.
- The department has 49 juvenile cases with 57 pending cases.
- There are 41 in the problem-solving court and 427 in some type of drug or alcohol related program.
- Jared reported that he is looking for 2 new employees with a current staff of 22 with 2 contract employees.

KENDALLVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Mindy London, Executive Director of the Kendallville Library, was present along with bond counsel from Ice Miller and Lisa Huntington. There were also a number of library employees and board members in attendance. A public hearing was held at the last council meeting for

the upcoming bond. This meeting was held for the resolution issuance of bonds. This is for Technology upgrades, energy efficiency, improved functionality of workspaces and public spaces, current ADA Guidelines and the roof issue. After the recent hail storm, insurance is now involved in the roofing and there will be a new roof on the building in Kendallville. The other upgrades will be done at both the Kendallville Library and the Limberlost Library in Rome City. Doug Harp moved to adopt the resolution not to exceed \$5,575,000.00. Max Franklin seconded. The motion carried 6-0.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Jeff Peters, from Peters, Franklin Ltd, was present to go over the fiscal plan. This is done once a year in the spring to help the council go into budget hearings with a clean understanding of the county's financial situation.

Jeff indicated that the most significant change was the certification of the income taxes. He explained that coming out of the pandemic, the state along with many others were very conservative on the numbers being distributed. And this year with the excess at the state the county got supplemental income distribution in the amount of 1.5 million. Jeff told the group that he has factored this new system for distribution into this plan.

Property taxes are always a topic for discussion at the State level and this year is no exception. Jeff is predicting that if the state makes any changes, it will be with the option of the counties to figure out how to replace the loss of revenue.

Jeff told the council that Noble County is in a good position at this point with our cash balance which is good to sit at 30% - Noble County is at 65 % with a good cash balance of 5 – 6 million dollars.

Jeff reminded the council that all of the projections in the report are assumptions at this point and that once he receives that requested budgeted amounts for 2025, he would be able to advise the council on the situation. Shelley Mawhorter will provide those figures to him.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Zack had contacted Jeff last fall to ask about additional bridge funding. Jeff provided information on a couple of options:

- Option 1 would be a public works tax. This would provide \$2,000,000.00 for a bridge project through an increase in property tax rates. This has to be paid back within 10 years and can be done once every year. Jeff indicated that on the average homesteaded property would raise taxes about \$34.00 a year.
- Option 2 – This would require a raising the local income tax. We could raise this .25 and bring in an additional \$1.8 million. For the average wage of \$63,292.00 that would be another \$158.00 a year coming from the paycheck.
- Jackie asked about a Cum Bridge Fund and Jeff indicated that raising the current CCD to .0333 would only bring in another \$100,000.00 and to do a full blown Cum Bridge fund – that comes with a bridge span requirement which Noble County would not have and would also take away from the General Fund.
- Doug Harp asked if the council should consider saying NO to some of the projects when brought before them. Jeff responded that if the county is getting 80% funding, he would never encourage the county to turn that down.
- The council plans to discuss this further with Zack at the September meeting.

PUBLIC ACCESS FOR MEETINGS

The council had asked Dave Baum to discuss plans to meet the requirements beginning July 1 2025 for public access for commissioner and council meetings, which states that a governing body shall provide on a publicly accessible platform, live transmissions of the governing body's meetings. This would include any other meeting held in the same meeting room as the county commissioners and council.

Dave explained that the easiest and most cost-effective way of doing this would be a connection to You Tube. There would be a cost, but he is suggesting that it would not be excessive.

Dave told the group that we have the capability of audio as well as video and he could not find anything thing in the Indiana Code saying that you need both. We could continue to just do the audio version and live stream that.

He told Council members that DeKalb is currently using this format and that would be a good reference point to see what they are doing.

Although, this can be done at any point, this must be ready by that July 2025 deadline, and Dave will wait for further direction from the Commissioners and the council before proceeding.

SHERIFF

Max Weber, Noble County Sheriff, is in attendance for questions regarding the claims submitted for payment from the CCD fund. The following were approved with a motion from

Tom Janes:	Kendallville Glass	\$1,560.00
	Equiparts	\$ 308.89
	Equiparts	\$ 657.05

These claims totaled \$2525.94 and was seconded by Mary Wysong. Motion carried 6-0.

Max has submitted the semi-annual commissary report for the department for council review.

Max told the council that he has used this to buy the van and also for the K-9 dog as well as training for the department.

The jail has 211 inmates at this morning's count with 34 DOC inmates and 14 Federal inmates.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Melayna Gingerich, Health 1st Coordinator, along with Tina Lough and Carrie Ryan from the Health Department were present to discuss the hiring of a full time Vector Control employee.

Also present were members from state who deal with vector control and lead assessment areas.

Melayna explained that this position would have responsibilities in vector control, pool inspections, and also take on lead assessment in homes. With a couple of these areas being seasonal, it was decided to combine these areas and also have this position back up the current food environmentalist and septic environmentalist.

VECTOR CONTROL

The group explained that the biggest goal is public health. The gentleman from the state indicated that in the last 18 years of testing throughout the state, Noble County has always had some positive West Nile testing. He explained that the mosquitoes do not travel but infected birds do and that makes it a county – wide problem. To have local control and suppressed that problem before it became wide- spread would be huge. The county would be able to map water pooling and control this with ditch treatments.

POOL INSPECTIONS

Tina Lough told the group that there are 4 public pools and 2 splash pads currently that need oversight for compliance

LEAD ASSESSMENT

Carrie and Melayna explained that they have tried to reach to other counties and even private companies to aid in these assessments. Other counties have indicated that they do not have the time to take on additional county work and private companies – at least the one in Fort Wayne – is not HUD certified and therefore if there are problems identified in the home and the homeowners needs HUD assistance to correct the issue, a second HUD certified inspection would need to be done. Mary Wysong asked about identifying lead exposure. Carrie Ryan told the council that every child is tested at 9-12 months and again at 18-24 months. If the testing is high a lead assessment of the home may be required. The gentleman from the state indicated that there are several visits to the home required for this process, so some time would spend in this area. When asked about how many cases were involved the group indicated between 8 and 12 cases.

Shelley Mawhorter was in attendance and told the group that she wanted to remind all that a full-time employee comes with additional cost with such as health insurance.

Doug Harp indicated that he would not feel comfortable voting for this position without more information as to whether this person would be busy all of the time with much of this work being seasonal.

The council is asking for more detailed information from the health department before approving this position. Melayna will provide that information prior to budget hearings. She did inform the council that this position was put into the new Health 1st Indiana 2025 budget.

Council member Trey Forbes had to leave the meeting for another appointment.

TRANSFERS

The health department is requesting a transfer in the Crisis Coag Grant fund:

From: 9195-24100-939 Instructional materials \$9,000.00
To: 9195-13400-939 Unemployment \$9,000.00

Motion to approve the transfer came from Tom Janes with a second coming from Max Franklin. Motion carried 5-0

TRANSFERS

Superior Court I is also requesting a transfer:

From: 1000-14712-038 Guardian Ad Litem \$3,000.00
To: 1000-14703-038 Special Appointments \$3,000.00

Motion to approve this transfer came from Doug Harp. Mary Wysong seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

ADDITIONALS

Court Services Pretrial Grant

8160-12600-764 FICA \$2,497.38
8160-18100-764 PERF \$3,655.23
8160-13700-764 Part time/Overtime \$32,636.00
8160-24604-764 Incentives \$6,851.00
160-39103-764 Education & training \$4,000.00

Motion to approve the above additional came from Tom Janes. Doug Harp seconded. The motion carries 5-0.

Circuit Court

1000-14703-037 Special Appts \$10,000.00


The was approved with a motion from Mary Wysong and a second from Max Franklin. Motion carried 5-0

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business before the Noble County Council, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:10 pm until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the council being September 3, 2024


Dated this 3 day of Sept, 2024


Trey Forbes

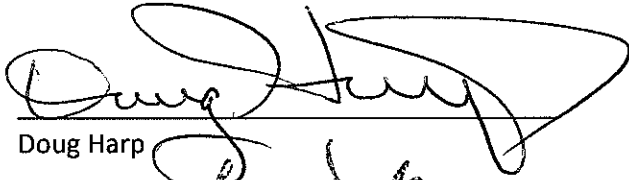

Max Franklin


Mary Wysong

ABSTAIN - NOT IN ATTENDANCE At Aug meeting
Brandon Chordas



Tom Janes


George Bennett



Doug Harp

ATTEST:



Michelle Mawhorter, Noble County Auditor