

## BUDGET HEARINGS OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL

AUGUST 21, 2024

PAGE 358

The Jasper County Council met this date at 8:30 A.M. C.S.T. at 910 S Sparling, Rensselaer, Indiana, with the following members present: Stephen R. Jordan, Gary Fritts, Brian Moore, Jason Arnold, Eric Kidwell and Jacob Misch. Mr. Norwine was absent. Also present were Auditor, Donya G. Jordan, Deputy Auditor, Treasure Gilbert and Deputy Auditor Diana Boersma.

ED CAIN / HIGHWAY: Mr. Cain said the Highway is responsible for 954 miles and the engineer is responsible for 126 bridges. He said they have twenty-nine employees and they do a great job so; any incentive would be greatly appreciated. He said he doubled their sign budget for 2025 to add more stop signs and speed limits are changing.

COMMISSIONER PRESIDENT REIN BONTREGER: Mr. Bontreger said they requested 10% salary increases. Mr. Jordan said the liability insurance and workman's comp has went up; he asked if they should bump up the workman's comp in the budget to \$125,000.00. Mr. Fritts asked if they were ok with the group health insurance. Mr. Bontreger said they've had a good year and they projected that there could be a 7-10% increase next year but, they don't have the actual number yet. The Council did an additional appropriation in the liability insurance line last night so, they decided to change the request to \$275,000.00.

Mr. Bontreger talked about the LIT Economic Development fund. Mr. Arnold talked about the funding for childcare and said he didn't think it was the taxpayer's responsibility. Mr. Bontreger said this is an amenity that brings people to the community. He said they prioritize it because, it is important. Mr. Arnold said he doesn't disagree but, he didn't think it was a taxpayer funded responsibility. Mr. Bontreger said they give them \$150,000.00 and he thinks it is a good investment. The Council and Mr. Bontreger agreed that they would like to hear more information about the day care.

Mr. Arnold said he doesn't see a huge benefit in the Economic Development Organization, whether it be the State or County. He asked what tangible benefits they add to the county. Mr. Bontreger said negotiations with the large investment that comes to the county. He said they rely on them for hundreds of thousands of dollars throughout the year. He said they also help weed out development that isn't necessarily good but, they help them connect to other counties in the region. He mentioned many other things they do behind the scenes. Mr. Arnold said he wasn't directly or completely opposed to the Economic Development Organization but, he thought the money could be spent better elsewhere.

SAM TUCKER / ARCEM SOLUTIONS: Ms. Tucker, with ARCEM Solutions, presented the IT budget. She said some of their accomplishments this year were updating the firewall and network switches, wiring at the new EMS building, they replaced the WIFI on the third floor of the courthouse and they've upgraded more computers to Windows 11. Mr. Jordan said it looked like the only major change in their budget was for the Software, Licensing & Purchasing account. Ms. Tucker said this is for moving to Microsoft 365. She said they also upped the System & Appl Software Maint. Account for the new county website.

VINCE URBANO / SURVEYOR: Mr. Urbano said he asked for 10% salary raises and kept everything else about the same.

KAITLYN BOOMSMA / COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS: Ms. Boomsma said she asked for 10% salary raises. She also said that all but five of her employees have the majority of their salaries paid by their State Grant. She said that what doesn't get paid out of the grant, comes out of County General. She said they were awarded \$479,000.00 from the State.

KRISTEN LOUCK / HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Ms. Louck said she decreased some of her 1159 budget because, the amount in her health fund is going to double for 2025. She said she asked for 10% salary increases but, if they approve 5% then, she will reduce her budget by \$95,000.00. She said she added an Administrator position since she is on borrowed time and will be finishing school this time next year so, they will have to make some decisions on what to do with the Health Department in that regard. She said her position doesn't necessarily have to be a nurse but, she

## BUDGET HEARINGS OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL

AUGUST 21,2024

PAGE 359

KRISTEN LOUCK / HEALTH DEPARTMENT CONTINUED: thinks the position will need to be trained. She also said some of the salaries might look a little bigger than they are used to because, they were paid from several different grants.

Mr. Jordan asked what the request was for in the Capital Projects line and if she had something in mind. Ms. Louck said she doesn't know what to do with it. She said each year they can take 10% of what the State fund is for the county and it can be used for buildings, land or vehicles. She said the \$64,190.00 amount will be added to the \$32,095.00 from this year. She said if its not used, it will roll over and accumulate. She said she did have in mind that if she goes over her remodel budget, they could use this but, she said they won't need to do that.

Ms. Louck said for her 1161 fund, she has to allocate for the whole \$641,000.00 they are getting. She said she has a retirement date for her Environmental Sanitarian so, she is trying to plan for that as well. She said their thought was to move the Food Sanitarian into that position and hire someone for foods. She also said she did the same supplementation as she did last year to stay comparable to nurses.

There was a short break at this time.

CHARLES FLICK / COURTHOUSE: Mr. Flick stepped in for Mr. Carney. He said they are asking for 10% salary increases and keeping everything else the same.

JACOB TAULMAN / PROSECUTOR: Mr. Taulman said he requested \$9,000.00 in his 1409 Federal Forfeiture fund but, there's only \$8,815.00 in there so, he asked to change that. He said they use this to pay for LEADS, which is a tool that their law enforcement officers use. He said for the most part he kept everything the same in his other funds but, he did ask for 10% salary increases. He said he's asking for a 20% for his third deputy, which is a full-time deputy prosecutor. He said he compared her salary to other places and she is making much less than other deputy prosecutors. He said he's also asking for a fourth deputy prosecutor because of their caseload.

MARY SCHEURICH / PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT: Ms. Scheurich said she stayed about the same for non-salaries. She said she requested \$12,000.00 for the inspector but, she said they could take it down to \$8,000.00. She said for most of the salaries she's asking for 10% increases. She said she would like to get the inspector up to \$25.00 an hour from \$23.60. Ms. Scheurich said for her salary she would like to respectfully ask for them to consider a larger raise. She said she's been an appointed department head for over thirty years. She said she's seen a lot of changes the past few decades, which have required more from her. She said she wanted to point out that the difference between her salary and her deputy's salary is \$6,600.00 and she doesn't feel like that is a significant difference with the difference in jobs and responsibilities. She said in addition, there is a \$6,200.00 difference between her and the Elected Officials. She said she is a trusted department head, administrative director, flood plain administrator and census liaison. She said she feels that she is held to the same standards as an Elected Official when it comes to her duties and responsibilities. However, she said she is considered a non-exempt employee therefore, she has to track her time off, which allows her three weeks' vacation and two personal days a year. She requested that her wages be a little more in line with the Elected Officials.

TORI NUEST / ANIMAL CONTROL: Ms. Nuest asked to increase the part-time hourly pay and increase her salary by 10%. Mr. Arnold asked how many animals they average a day. Ms. Nuest said seven dogs and fifteen cats. Mr. Kidwell asked what the max capacity is. Ms. Nuest said nine dogs and ten grown cats or twenty kittens. Mr. Kidwell asked if their new system was working better. Ms. Nuest said it's working great.

**BUDGET HEARINGS OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL**

**AUGUST 21, 2024**

**PAGE 360**

TORI NUEST / ANIMAL CONTROL CONTINUED: Ms. Nuest went over more of their stats:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024 YTD</u>
Calls Per Service	151	185
Bites	51	55
Intakes	251	205
After Hours Call-Outs	24	27
Microchipped	n/a	227

Ms. Nuest said they had a free microchipping clinic where they chipped 60 animals. She said they thought a free service once a month would help get more animals microchipped. She said when animals come in to the Shelter, they leave microchipped. Ms. Nuest said she asked for an extra \$500.00 in their Training line because, she will need to complete euthanasia by injection training and DEA courses in 2025. She said she also asked for increases in uniforms, cleaning supplies and animal rendering/pickup, which she would like to use for microchips. Mr. Misch asked how much the microchips cost them. Ms. Nuest said \$7.75.

Mr. Fritts asked how many employees are paid out of the Part-Time Animal Control line. Ms. Nuest said three employees, which are allowed 1,560 hours per year. She said the two part-time animal control officers don't get any incentives for being on-call so, she thought paying them \$20.00 an hour was incentive enough. Mr. Jordan asked her about the other Part-Time line request for \$8,000.00. Ms. Nuest said they pay the weekend kennel attendant out of this line. Mr. Fritts asked if the animal food was coming from donations. Ms. Nuest said they get food donations and they have a food bank for those in the community that can't afford food.

DAWN HOFFMAN / ASSESSOR: Ms. Hoffman said most of her expenses come out of her Reassessment fund. She said they don't ask for much extra nor does she get a phone stipend like others do. She said she would like to ask for increases in salaries. She said she requires her deputies have to have at least a level two certification. She said her one level two employee currently gets \$500.00 and she would like to change that to \$1,000.00. She also said her two level three employees get \$1,500.00 and she would like to change that to \$2,500.00. She said her salary is the only one that comes out of County General. She said she isn't sure why everyone's base has always been the same but, she would like to change her level pay from \$2,500.00 to \$5,000.00. She said this would account for what is required of her compared to the other Elected Officials.

CARMEN FORTNEY / PEYTON NEWMAN / PURDUE EXTENSION: Ms. Newman was present and Ms. Fortney joined via Zoom. Ms. Fortney said they didn't make a lot of changes in their budget this year. She said the only increases they asked for was the 10% for county employees and 3% for Purdue.

The Council took a lunch break at this time.

MARK JORDAN / SOIL & WATER: Mr. Jordan said they had no change and they have two employees at the standard deputy's salary. He asked that the Watershed Specialist get paid more.

TREASURER: Ms. McEwan was not present but, she sent a letter stating that she asked for 10% salary increases and kept everything else the same.

TIM FLINN / VETERANS: Mr. Flinn said most of his stuff stayed the same and he asked for the typical pay increase but, he wanted to talk about his salary. He said he noticed that a new employee makes almost \$2,000.00 more than he does and he's been here for about six years. He said as a non-elected department head, he looked at the other non-elected department heads' base salaries. He said he also took into consideration the certifications he has to have. He said he did a 10% raise on top of the other's base. He said he looked at the eleven full-time VSOs in the region and he falls in number seven in pay. He said those above him don't have as many veterans in their county. Mr. Fritts asked how many veterans they have in Jasper County. Mr. Flinn said a little over 2,000. Mr. Fritts asked outside of working on benefits, what kind of services they provide. Mr. Flinn said

## BUDGET HEARINGS OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL

AUGUST 21, 2024

PAGE 361

TIM FLINN / VETERANS CONTINUED: they transport veterans to any appointments and they help them fill out all the forms they need to apply for certain things. Auditor Jordan added that they help veterans with their property deductions paperwork.

KIM GROW / RECORDER: Ms. Gilbert said that Ms. Grow said she asked for an increase in her Perpetuation fund for rebinding books. Ms. Gilbert put Ms. Grow on speaker phone and she said she asked for an increase in Laredo Fees because, she heard those were going up. She also said she asked for 10% salary increases.

SARA DEYOUNG / CONVENTION, VISITOR & TOURISM: Ms. DeYoung said there was an increase in the Capital Projects line because, there's two potential projects next year. She said Wheatfield Township would like to do a fire station and a splash pad. She said Remington is also wanting a new playground. Mr. Jordan said that Mr. Bontreger indicated that the pilot payments could possibly be used for the splash pad. Ms. DeYoung said that is for the County to decide but, the water is currently on the north side of the road and it would have to go under SR 10 to get to the property the Township owns. Ms. Boersma said its going to be 1.4 million for the splash pad and 1.2 million for the fire station.

SHARON COLEE / COMMUNITY SERVICES: Ms. Colee said they are asking for a \$5,000.00 increase. She said they cut as many expenses as they could this year.

LOU NAGEL / FAIR BOARD: Mr. Nagel said they have requested \$104,000.00 total. He said they made it through their 100<sup>th</sup> year and everything went well. He said they have some capital improvements they are working on; the dairy barn and poultry/rabbit barn. He said in the future, the new show arena project will be a major expense. He also said they will need to add fair coverage for EMS, Fire, Sheriff and Highway for \$5,000.00 each. He said before, they would make a donation to the fire station and sheriff deputies. He said they are hoping to get a grant to help with the new show arena. He said its estimated to cost 3-3.5 million dollars but realistically, it will probably be around 4.8 million.

KARA FISHBURN / CLERK: Ms. Fishburn said she asked for 10% salary increases and kept everything else the same. She said for the Registration of Voters budget and Election Board budget, they will be much lower since there isn't an election next year. She said they still have to budget for a possible special election just in case.

There was a short break at this time.

JUDGE BAILEY / SUPERIOR COURT: Judge Bailey said he asked for 10% salary increases. He said he's asking for an increase in Lawbooks but, he talked with Judge Potter about taking one of the courts' and putting them under the Public Defender budget so they can get reimbursed from the State. He said they get the Lawbooks so other people can reference them if they don't have the resources. He said there's six books they get every year that he references. He said he's also asking for increases in some other lines as well. He explained how some of the increases are due to the increase of cases they will have when the new judge comes in next year.

Judge Bailey said he is asking for a jury management software that will basically robocall jurors for them and the jurors will be able to submit their questionnaires through this software. He said this will cover both courts. He said this software will save them a lot of time with jury trials.

Judge Bailey said they have asked for an increase for translators/interpreters because, the cost for them have went up and there is more of a demand. He said they've done additional appropriations for them because, he had used up his budget by March. Mr. Fritts said considering the additional they've done this year his 2025 budget request really isn't too much more.

JUDGE POTTER / CIRCUIT COURT: Judge Potter said that the probation officers' salaries are set by the State. He said he mostly left the 2025 budget the same as last years. He also explained how the translator/interpreter costs have went up. He said last year they gave him money to build an evidence cage in the attic but, he hasn't built it yet so, he is going to leave it up to the new judge

**BUDGET HEARINGS OF THE JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL**

**AUGUST 21,2024**

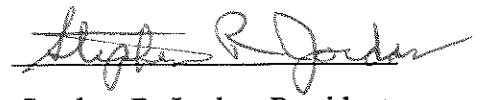
**PAGE 362**

JUDGE POTTER / CIRCUIT COURT CONTINUED: because, he's not sure if that's where they would want it. He also said he would like to give the CASA Director a raise because, she is not making the average salary in the state. He said she has been Director of the Year twice in the state and other counties would love to have her.

PUBLIC DEFENDERS: The Council discussed the proposed budget for the new Public Defenders Office.

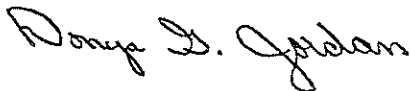
The Council discussed changing some of the LIT rates, which they will decide on at a later date. Mr. Fritts said they have a lot to think about over the weekend. The Council talked about how many additional appropriations they did this year and how they need to take that into consideration for next year.

There being no further business, Mr. Fritts made a motion to continue this meeting until Monday, August 26,2024 at 8:30 A.M. to discuss budget cuts, Mr. Moore seconded and the motion carried.



Stephen R, Jordan, President

ATTEST:



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Donya Jordan, Auditor of Jasper County