

BE IT REMEMBERED THE HENRY COUNTY COUNCIL OF HENRY COUNTY, INDIANA, met in a Special Work Session at the Henry County Courthouse Circuit Courtroom, in the City of New Castle, Indiana on July 11, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. with the following members present: Betsy Mills, Harold Griffin Chad Malicoat, Kenon Gray, Peggy Stefandel, Susan Huhn, Kyle Allen, Debra Walker, Henry County Auditor Debbie Walker.

Jason Semler from Baker Tilly presented to the Council an updated draft of the 5 year Comprehensive Plan. He explained the state has certified max levy's this week and it is certified at 5%. In the next couple of weeks the state should give estimates on LIT revenues. Jason presented a schedule to the council a list of General Obligation bonds and their maturity dates. In 2024 both bonds will roll off and property tax rate for bonds will be zero. You will see a 10 to 11 cent rate decrease in 2024. He asked if council would want to keep the tax rate level at 11 cents then they will need to consider bonding this year for projects that need to be done. Kenon Gray said this is something that council is going to need to look at.

Chad Malicoat explained that council is going to have to get very creative and move some of the Sheriff's expenses to the LIT Fund and possibly taking some salaries out of the Jail LIT. Chad expressed his concern about using the cash reserves to pay bills or salaries, if we go into a recession then we will not have to money to fall back on. Betsy Mills is hoping that we will be able to get some of the infrastructure grants.

Kenon Gray asked if there was any solutions to the negatives that we have. Where do the council find the money to give raises that are noteworthy? Kenon stated they talked about longevity as an incentive for employees to stay but doesn't feel it is enough to be an incentive. Chad Malicoat explained that the county use to have excellent benefits and now they don't have those anymore. Employees are not 10-20 percent paid under market value. Betsy Mills stated that it is an impossible situation. Betsy stated that when council meets with department head this next week let them know council has gone over their budgets with a razor and is there anywhere they can cut the fat and can you work with less employees than what you have now, she hopes that department heads will come with solutions and work with council on getting their employees raises. Susan Huhn stated that they are at point they are going to have to make a choice between raising taxes and reducing services and she doesn't want to raise taxes. She is wondering if they didn't offer the same services a slower speed. She would like to know from department heads what would happen if they had one less employee, theoretically if you do a certain job for the county in 2 days would it take 4 or would it be impossible. She would also like to explore job sharing. She would to know if they gave a 15% raise and went from 35 to 40 hours a week if employees would be willing to do this. Harold Griffin stated that he has been on the council for a long time and he hasn't seen any less people from the time he started, he knows that all offices are ran thin now. Chad stated that you can't take employees from the highway, jail or sheriff's department and the Auditor has given up 3 positions and Clerk has given up 2 since they took office. Susan Huhn stated that they are going to end up looking at raising taxes or reducing services. Susan says they are almost going to have to reduce head count if we don't raise taxes. Bobbi Plummer asked how they would cut services and how would it be possible. Susan said that maybe the process would just be slower, Auditor Walker and Assessor Brown stated that they were set by state statute when they had to have stuff done so they could not work at a slower pace. Kenon Gray stated that he has been to a lot of counties that are a lot more automated than Henry County, but Auditor Walker stated we do all the automation that we can, Mr. Gray stated he did not realize that.

Tonya Pelfrey asked why if they are talking about cutting positions and we are having such financial problems, how could they give such a large raise to the Assistant Superintendent at the Highway Department. Councilman Gray stated it was paid out of LOHUT.

Kenon Gray stated that if you give everyone a 4% raise it would take about \$345,000.00, if you add fridge benefits it would cost about \$425,000 which is roughly the same as giving every employee a \$1,500.00.

The Council discussed how to work on the problem and hoping that department heads will work with them in trying to solve this problem.

Kyle Allen stated that there are a lot of hard decision that they are going to have to make. He knows that raising taxes is not what they want and he doesn't want to but that is something that can't be taken off the table.


Kenon Gray asked Commissioners Plummer if they were not going to raise employees insurance, Commissioner Plummer stated that she does not want to raise insurance. If she heard the council correctly they don't want to raise taxes on the taxpayer and she feels that is the same with insurance for the employees.

Kenon Gray asked employees and department heads to get any suggestions to the council.

John Sproles stated that he is hearing that the council does not want to raise taxes and he understands that. But the council keeps saying they will not ask the taxpayer to pay more taxes and won't ask the taxpayer of that yet, but yet you will ask the county employee to work at a \$5,000 - \$8,000 deficit per their household. He would like to see this balanced out from the council.

Shannon Thom stated that heard the council say there was 20 open positions, so the departments are working as hard as they can, as efficiently as they can, to work with fewer people. He also heard that 41 employees are being paid lower than they should be paid. He stated that when employees leave it is not going to be the subpar employees that leave it is going to be the good employees that leave and you are going to be left to run the county with employees that are not the highest performers. He stated that unless you are going to give those offices more to run the office or you are going to have to pay the employees more. And maybe if you pay the more you can keep the higher performing employees. He stated that you could contact the State Technology Department and they will do an assessment of what automation you can put in the county.

Meeting was adjourned.



 Kenon Gray, President

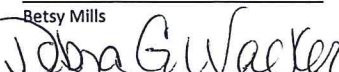


 Susan Huhn




 Peggy Stefandel

 Betsy Mills



 Attested by: Debra G. Walker, Auditor

 Harold Griffin



 Chad Malicoat



 Kyle Allen