

**PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
September 28, 2023**

The Perry County Council met on the above date at 5:00 p.m. as was duly advertised. Council members in attendance were President David Etienne (DE), Keith Huck (KH), Paul Malone (PM), Stan Goffinet (SG), Kelli Harding (Kelli), Earla Williams (EW), and Gale Garner (GG). Sheriff Alan Malone, County Attorney Rod Acchiardo, and Auditor Kristinia Hammack were also present. There was no *News Representative* present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

DE asked for approval of the agenda, with PM responding he had a couple of questions. PM asked Auditor Hammack what business was urgent, as he would like to table non-urgent business and begin where the Council left off last Thursday (9/21/23) with the budget. Hammack responded all items on agenda could wait except for Tara Lucas, Public Health Nurse Supervisor due to approval of the HFI (Healthy First Indiana) Grant is needed.

PM made a motion that all other agenda items being equal except for the Public Comments and Tara Lucas, his motion was to table all minutes and the remainder of the agenda, and finish the budget for 2024 due to all Council members being present, seconded by KH. Motion carried 4-3.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a) Tara Lucas, Public Health Nurse Supervisor, sent an updated email regarding the HFI Budget that had to be submitted on September 25th to the State to all Council members. She submitted another budget and had to get approval for it at this Council meeting. Some numbers were revised due to the numbers given to the Health Department at the budget session. Kelli mentioned they have expanded programs in the revised budget, with Lucas confirming this. The Health Department only received a 5% raise in wages in the budget session due to receiving grant funding. They have now switched some of that around to expand services. The Sanitation portion of the HFI budget will fund five additional hours each week so that compensation time is lowered. Kelli asked with the part-time person that is to be hired, can that person do the work for the extra five hours of the Sanitarian? Lucas responded the part-time employee's purpose is to relieve the Sanitarian to allow that position to get other things done.

KH made a motion to approve the HFI Budget, seconded by PM. Motion carried 7-0.

Rachel Roark made a public comment regarding October 3, 2023 scheduled meeting.

2024 BUDGET

DE asked for discussion on the 2024 budget, and Kelli and Stan stated they did not have their budget information with them. PM stated there are two items to address, PSAP and the radio fund.

Kelli stated she did not know what kind of trick this was, she has no paperwork with her. DE stated the Council has budget meetings and you do not conduct a budget session at a public meeting. Kelli stated there is a scheduled meeting to complete the budget. SG asked for a hand count of who said no to the agenda motion. DE asked all who voted yes to raise their right hand.

Kelli stated the Council is talking about millions of dollars in the county budget and to deal with this appropriately, you do not slide it in on a motion to cancel this entire agenda. PM asked Council Attorney Rod Acchiardo his interpretation, and he responded the Council can conduct themselves in any way they see fit. Kelli stated she will not be participating.

Auditor Hammack stated that at the end of the Thursday (9/21/23) meeting at 6:00 p.m., it was said she would bring the position the county was at in the 2024 Budget regarding the levy funds due to not being able to present that information on Thursday. That information along with information the Council requested was brought to this meeting.

The 2024 Budget was on the agenda for the meeting. When asked why it was included, she stated she was told to bring to the meeting on September 28th as to where the Council was in regards to the Max Levy in the 2024 Budget. DE stated he said not to include the 2024 Budget on the agenda. Hammack stated the agenda was sent to all Council members as has been done for the past nine months.

PM stated when the Council left the budget session on Thursday (9/21), there was only a couple of items to finalize, the PSAP and radio equipment, which he had updated information on the radio equipment.

Discussion on the Hospital/EMS was initiated by Kelli. She met with the hospital as well as DE and KH also met with them. The hospital submitted an email asking the Council members to tour the hospital and have a discussion regarding the needs of the EMS and what is needed to maintain the two trucks on the road.

DE stated in regard to salaries, some are making \$16-\$17/hr. Employees receive 15 paid holidays, retirement benefit of 11.2%, and the insurance premium they pay has not increased in 15 years. The county has absorbed all insurance increases since Obama Care. To give 10% raises, he does not feel the Council is being fiscally responsible. PM stated not to long ago the county employees went a couple of years without a raise. KH pointed out that over a week ago, DE voted in favor of the raise. DE's response was he was trying to eliminate a stalemate.

PM asked Hammack what was left to do to make the numbers work? She replied that on 9/21, she was told to bring to the Council meeting where the county was in regards to the Max Levy. She provided numbers to the Council for the 9/21 Max Levy standings and the 9/28 Max levy standings. In the 9/21 standing, the General fund was over budget. Reassessment, Cumulative Bridge, and Health were all under budget. For the 9/28 Max Levy standings, wages were kept the same as 2023 with all four categories coming in under budget. Hammack spoke to Baker Tilley and they explained the huge increases that were added to the General Fund was what is throwing the amounts off. In budget, Pauper Attorney was increased from \$50,000 to \$300,000. Care for IN Patients was increased from \$70,000 to \$312,000. In normal practice you set those funds lower, due to having incoming revenue to support that. There is a limit on how much the budget can be raised. If you are going to raise \$50,000 to \$300,00, and \$70,000 to \$312,000, you just used a big part of your budget. With the budget as it is, it is over in General \$227,868.

Regarding the General, estimated income of \$6,486,000 with numbers as of Thursday, 9/21, which include the 5% and 10% wage increase, expenditures would be \$6,477,581, which revenue to expenditures are still under budget of \$8,519. This is not cash balance; it is revenue to expenditures. As it was stated in the Budget Workshop, not including additional appropriations between now and the end of the year, the county is projected to end with a cash balance of almost \$1.5 million. Numbers were also calculated on what she was asked to provide with no raises. If no raises were given, revenue will still be \$6,486,000 and expenditures will be \$6,217,924, leaving under budget \$268,076. Reassessment is under \$5,178, Health is under \$105,259, and Cumulative Bridge is under \$67,464.

LIT estimated income is \$669,552. With the current budget, LIT Public Safety Sheriff, LIT Public Safety Commissioners, and LIT Public Safety Jail, the county is over budget \$7,024.00. If the budget went back to no raises, income is the same and expenditures are below budget \$19,067. Kelli stated this is information she received two hours before the meeting and did not have time to review.

Megan Fritchley made a public comment regarding the county wages.

Kelli stated no one on the Council wanted no raises, raises are ultimately her goal, but she wants to be more efficient with the budget, find inefficiencies in the county, in order to give raises, better ambulance service, and more police.

DE stated that Baker Tilley and at the AIC Conference, they recommend wages are taken back to the base line, then you start on cuts in government services, and once you get through all of these, you can go back and do raises. You don't do raises and then go back and cut government services.

Auditor Hammack made a public statement regarding speaking with other counties at AIC Conference and they are giving an 8-10% wage increase. SG stated COLA increase for SSI is 3.2% this year.

Public Comment from Sheriff Alan Malone regarding the wage increase.

Public comment by Assessor Mendy Lassaline regarding Jailer's wages.

Public comment by Highway Superintendent Steve Howell regarding state wages for truck drivers is higher than county.

PM stated Auditor Hammack works with the numbers more than the Council and what did she recommend? She responded that when she spoke to Baker Tilley, their biggest concern with the budget numbers at the end of Thursday (9/21) was it was over \$227,868. Looking at the budget book, in the General Fund, Care of IN Patients last year was budgeted at \$70,000, and now is \$312,000 in 2024 budget which is a \$242,000 increase. Circuit Court Pauper Attorney increased from \$250,000 to \$300,000, which is an additional \$50,000. This makes a total increase of \$292,000. When the county is only allowed to raise the budget by 4% and it is increased \$292,000 in two areas of that large of an amount, it eats up a lot of the budget.

The Max Levy can only be raised 4% from one year to the next. Looking at the estimated income, based on income which is very conservative, there is only \$8519 left. This is just property tax income and guaranteed money. This is not touching any cash balance, and not taking in consideration the interest being earned on deposits. The County has been smart with their money and getting the best interest rate they can get, and has brought in over \$250,000 in the past eight months. This amount goes in the General Fund.

Auditor Hammack spoke about money requested from the private sector. This was advertised in the paper for three weeks and was on the Perry County website. Any phone calls asking about funding, they were asked to send an email to request it. She feels it is not proper to send emails to the private sector organizations to ask the county for money. In the prior budget session, the Council decided to give Animal Welfare \$5000. Ride Solutions also did not request money. She feels if you give money to one, you should give it to both entities who received it last year, or else remove the \$5000 from Animal Welfare. PM stated that Animal Welfare can always come back to the Council and ask for money, as can Ride Solutions. Kelli made a clarification that the Animal Welfare Board is a governmental entity, not private sector.

DE stated the Pauper Attorney amount of \$300,000 might actually be that amount. PM asked what the actual Pauper Attorney expenses are? Auditor Hammack stated we have spent all the appropriated of \$250,000, plus needed an additional appropriation of \$115,000. PM stated he would like to cut Pauper Attorney back to \$150,000.

PM stated the two large items left from last Thursday's meeting (9/21) was PSAP and radios. Steve Hauser provided information on this. He stated that during the budget sessions, he did not have the accurate figures, \$250,000 was an estimate. He has spoken to Motorola, which is the most expensive piece of equipment available, but used this as a starting point due to currently having Motorola.

The current equipment is reaching its lifespan as far as updates and service. It is functioning very well at this time. The problem being faced is the firmware upgrade. It is needed in 2024 and it is questionable if current equipment will accept the upgrade. Hauser requested a quote from Motorola to completely replace the dispatch equipment, the radio equipment. He originally stated it would cost \$250,00, which was figured without replacing any backroom transmitters. After talking with Motorola, they feel if we do this upgrade, the transmitters should match the equipment for the future. Motorola included replacing the twelve transmitters. Their estimate was \$597,419. They offer several different options for payment plans. If we were to accept a five-year plan, the payments would be approximately \$136,767.85 with a down payment of \$59,741.90. Hauser feels we should look at other options. There is a lot of new technology and feels the county needs to slow down and keep focused in 2024. This will give him time to look at grants that might be available. He stated that possibly 911 Funding might be able to assist with this. 911 Funding can not and will not be used for console furniture, but it is an authorized expense for radio equipment for dispatch.

PM asked if Hauser had any idea what the amount for this would be on an annual basis? Steve responded currently there is approximately \$106,000 they have in reserve, meaning it is not appropriated. It is one big fund. He further stated we have not received the 911 90/10 Equipment funding for this year. He spoke to the State today and they should have these figures available in late October or the first part of November. We do not know what that amount is until the State actually sends it. Their commitment would likely stay around \$100,000 in case there is an unexpected emergency purchase. If we receive the 911 90/10 money this year, part of it can be used on the radio equipment.

PM asked about a loan the county had for the 911 equipment. Hauser called German American Bank and this loan will be paid off in December 2023. This is a 10-year lease, the county never owned the equipment. This paid for the lease of this service from AT&T. That payment has been \$85,248 each year for the ten-year period. Hauser put in the 2024 budget the same amount for next year thinking the county would be renewing the contract with AT&T and would have a similar amount to pay each year. He contacted AT&T and the county's amount is going to be lower. In 2024, AT&T will no longer do a ten-year lease agreement; they will only do a five-year lease due to technology and equipment becomes obsolete so quickly.

AT&T quoted \$4,470/month, we are currently paying \$7,104/month. There will be extra money left in the Lease of Equipment budget line item.

There is still a deficit in Dispatch Services of approximately \$73,000. After Tell City refigured and reduced the Assistant Chief's wages from 75% to 50%, that reduced the County deficit to \$50,391. The Council can move part of the \$85,248 from the Dispatch budget to Dispatch Services to cover the entire amount. Moving these items does not change the \$283,000 for Statewide 911, it just moves the amount in another line item.

AT&T is requesting a new agreement signed in December or January 2024. The first payment with the new agreement will not be due until June 1, 2024.

Auditor Hammack stated the anticipated income for 2024 is \$322,000 and only budgeting \$283,000, so there is a reserve if something comes up. PM stated that PSAP does not need to be cut as it is absorbed. Hauser verified this.

Steve Hauser assured the Council that with his resignation of 911 Director as of December 31, 2023, he will be available to help as long as needed.

PM asked Hammack how much is still needed to be cut? She stated within the Levy funds, it is only over budget \$57,195. Baker Tilley recommended to just look at the General Fund as far as where it is at and minimize that funding. The county can do additional appropriations after the fact. Hammack suggested reducing the General by \$227,868. We are told we have the revenue to support the budget, however we are not able to increase the budget that much from one year to the next. The county has to wait until they are submitted to AFR and all numbers are final. We will not know the exact funding until December or possibly January 17th, and will have to refigure all the numbers.

PM stated if Pauper Attorney is taken to \$150,000 and Care for IN Patients to \$212,000, we will cut \$250,000, and the amount needed to cut is \$230,000. Hammack asked about the \$5000 for Animal Welfare, and he responded take it out.

PM made a motion to reduce Animal Welfare of \$5000 out of budget, seconded by KH. Motion did not pass 3-4.

PM made a motion to reduce Pauper Attorney to \$150,000, seconded by KH. Motion passed 4-3.

PM made a motion to cut Care of IN Patients by \$100,000, making it \$212,000, seconded by KH. Motion carried 4-3.

Hammack stated the budget is now under the Max Levy.

DE stated that Health now needed to be looked at. Kelli asked if anyone wanted to look at the hospital and issues with ambulances and outdated equipment? She stated she met with the hospital and they have very outdated cardiac monitors that are at the end of their life expectancy. PM asked what was the amount of money the hospital is talking about? Kelli replied she did not have those figures with her. She stated they originally asked for \$200,000 for monitors and video laryngoscopes. She further stated there is a lease

program for a new ambulance due to some ambulances have serious issues. The hospital asked for \$400,000 and we offered \$215,000.

With the changes made, the budget is under the Max Levy \$22,132.

DE stated the Health Department wages should be treated like everyone else.

Tara Lucas made a public statement regarding Health Department wages presented at the budget session.

A 10% raise in the Health budget resulted in a \$251,738 budget amount, which was an additional \$14,454. Hammack stated the budget is \$7,678 under the Max Levy.

KH made a motion to approve the health budget to bring wages to 10%, seconded by EW. Motion passed 5-2.

PM made a motion to accept the Statewide 911 changes within their budget, seconded by KH. Motion carried 6-1

DE began discussion regarding the hospital. EW stated they definitely need cardiac monitors. Hammack mentioned the County does have Tribal Funds that are to be used for the community. We received \$98,000 last year that has not been touched, and we are supposed to get the exact same amount this year. The hospital requested \$400,000 for the Ambulance Service, and \$275,000 was approved. They requested \$460,000 for equipment which included a new ambulance. Kelli stated there needs to be an amount yearly put aside for the hospital so there is not such a large amount asked for all at once.

Public Safety is over budget \$7,024. Funds can be moved from Public Safety to General. DE suggested reducing the Ambulance Lease of \$10,000 in Public Safety to \$3000 and increase in General \$7000.

PM made a motion to reduce the Ambulance Lease in Public Safety from \$10,000 to \$3000, seconded by KH. Motion carried 4-3.

KH made a motion to add line item 44600 Ambulance Lease in the Commissioners budget in General in the amount of \$7000, seconded by PM. Motion carried 4-3.

DE asked where the numbers now stand, with Hammack responding the budget is under the Max Levy \$678.

Hammack summarized the budget. The max levy is where it should be. In expenditures, even if the county has to spend the amounts originally budgeted for Pauper Attorney and Care for IN Patients, and even though the budget was decreased, there is \$8519 left with revenue to expenditures. Wages for Health was increased \$14,554 and \$7000 was added to the budget for Ambulance Lease. In regards to revenue to expenditures in a worse-case scenario with \$300,000 in Pauper Attorney and have to spend \$312,000 for Care for IN Patients, the county would only be over budget \$12,935. This would be due to being limited on how much you can increase the budget.

PM made a motion to adopt the Budget for 2024, seconded by KH. Motion carried 4-3.

The Final Budget Hearing will be October 12th at 5:00 p.m. at the Annex Building, and the budget is not final until October 12th. It must be submitted to Gateway by the end of October.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m. CST.

PM made a motion to adjourn, seconded by EW. Motion carried 7-0.

The next meeting of the County Council will be October 19, 2023 at the Annex Building as the Auditor and her First Deputy will be at an Auditor's Conference on October 26th.

Minutes approved this 19^h day of October, 2023.

President, Perry County Council

*Minutes prepared by:
Kristinia L. Hammack, Perry County Auditor*