

**LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET HEARING
August 13, 2007**

The LaPorte County Council met in budget hearing on August 13, 2007, at 8:00 a.m. in the Assembly Room, main floor, LaPorte County Government Complex, LaPorte, Indiana. President Cooley asked that those present stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Council Members present were Jerry Cooley, Rich Mrozinski, Earl Cunningham, Terry Garner, Mark Ludlow and John Jones. Councilman Mark Yagelski was absent. Also present were Auditor Teresa Shuter and Chief Deputy Auditor, Rita Layton.

PROSECUTOR, BAD CHECK & IV-D (108/137/159)

Prosecutor Rob Beckman and his Administrative Assistant, Bonnie Rutherford, were present to present these budgets.

Mr. Jones reported on behalf of the Personnel Committee regarding a request from the Prosecutor for COMOT V upgrades. He stated that Waggoner, Irwin & Scheele (WIS) has given a negative recommendation. Mrs. Shuter commented that, after talking to WIS, part of the problem with upgrading these ten (10) people is the fact that through the job classification and job review last year all positions are now universal throughout the County based upon the Oliver Point System and if those ten (10) people are upgraded, the point system will be thrown off by which everyone else is evaluated.

Prosecutor Rob Beckman stated that the reason for the request is because they have lost four (4) employees and three (3) have gone to other County jobs where they make more money; he is trying to get an upgrade so people stay and he doesn't know why they are COMOT IV's in the first place with the level of work that they do. Mr. Beckman does not agree with the assessment, wage scale or recommendation of WIS.

Mr. Ludlow asked if there is way County-wide to access law books by internet. Mr. Beckman responded that his office does access by internet. Mr. Beckman stated that if you can get the Judges and Magistrates to cooperate, there could be one group rate.

Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **108, 137 and 159 budgets** the same as last year. The motion carried by voice vote 5 – 0. (Mr. Garner had stepped out during this vote.)

Mr. Beckman reported that the vacant Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Unclassified, 10134 account, will not be vacant in a few months based upon the splitting up of the Courts and the transfer of D Felonies from Judge Baldoni's Court to Circuit Court, and with the increase in Magistrates, he must fill this position. Mr. Beckman reported that he has carried this position empty for nine (9) years and he can no longer do it since he doesn't have enough bodies to plug all of the holes with the additional Court calls.

SOIL & WATER (158)

Sheila Batchelor, Office Manager, presented the budget requests. Regarding the MS4 Coordinator, Mr. Garner asked if we are receiving any money and if the other entities involved are fulfilling their commitment. Ms. Batchelor stated that she doesn't see the MS4

paperwork. After further discussion regarding the MS4 budget, Mr. Ludlow suggested that Rick Brown, MS4 Coordinator, come in to address the Council about this matter. Mrs. Shuter commented that how this program was originally set-up needs to be looked at and the Council could also talk to Ray Hamilton regarding this subject; neither she or Mrs. Layton remember any checks coming in from other entities and if MS4 should be billing them.

Ms. Batchelor reported that she has requested the same amounts as last year with the exception of adding the one line item for office space rental.

Mr. Jones made a motion to table this budget until the Council talks to Rick Brown regarding MS4. Mr. Ludlow seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

PARKS & RECREATION (155)

Tim Morgan and Jean Lawson were in attendance regarding this budget. Mr. Ludlow asked if there are any increases in the budget other than salaries. Mr. Morgan responded that there are small increases here and there but he feels that they are justified; he then explained his requested increases.

Mr. Morgan commented that the 400 account could be cut by \$3,000.00 but they definitely need the increase in electric and propane along with gas and oil. Mr. Jones stated that the Council would like to give raises this year and cuts need to be made where possible.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **155 budget** the same as last year and to use non-reverting monies for the increases and to deny \$3,000.00 requested in the 400 account. Mr. Ludlow commented that the only problem he has is with the lease agreement; the Council approved signing the more expensive lease agreement for the copier and then doesn't fund it. After further discussion regarding the copier costs, Mr. Ludlow seconded. Mr. Ludlow informed Mr. Morgan that he can come back to the Council if needed but there should be ways to cut costs such as cutting the grass less, etc. The motion carried 6 – 0 by voice vote.

SUPERIOR COURT NO. 4 (152)

Steve Eyrick, Chief Probation Officer, reported that the only increase from the prior year is the psychological services line item which has been increased by \$1,000.00. There was discussion regarding usage of law books. Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the **152 budget** the same as last year. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

COUNTY HOME (146)

Kay Felton, Director, presented this budget. Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **146 budget** the same as last year. Mr. Ludlow seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

Regarding the Part-Time line item, Ms. Felton reported that she feels that she needs \$14,500.00 but she would try to work with \$12,000.00.

CORONER (107)

Mr. Jones made a motion to hold the **107 budget** the same as last year. Mr. Cunningham seconded and the motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

TREASURER (103)

Ken Layton, Treasurer, reported that he has asked for no increases; therefore, he is requesting the same budget as last year. Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the **103 budget** the same as last year and Mr. Ludlow seconded. The motion carried 6 – 0 by voice vote.

Mr. Cunningham had asked Mr. Layton for information regarding the investments. Mr. Layton reported that as of the end of July \$3.1 million has been earned in interest and this is without tax money. Mr. Layton stated that letters had been sent to the top ten taxpayers of every taxing district trying to get money in to make advances to the schools, libraries, etc. and it has been successful since a lot of the major corporations have complied but there has not been enough money collected to save the schools, etc. from going to lending institutions.

There was a short break.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (140)

Pat Pease, EMS Director, was present regarding the EMS budget.

Mr. Jones provided a report based upon the request for a Transfer Coordinator in order to capture revenue from the transfer business. He stated that there was a 5 – 0 vote by the Personnel Committee to approve this request on that idea that sometimes you have to spend money to make money. Mr. Jones reported that WIS has also recommended approval of this request. Mr. Ludlow asked if it is the County's job to compete. Mrs. Pease responded that she doesn't fees that the County would be competing but just be offering service at a lower rate to the public; she commented that the County has done this since 1975 and we have a one rig transfer. There was further discussion regarding transfer fees and the transfer service in general and the revenue that might be generated.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to table this budget until Wednesday to give time for Mrs. Pease to provide more information and Mr. Cunningham seconded. Motion carried 6 – 0 by voice vote.

EMERGENCY PLANNING (174)

Bill Poag, Director, presented this budget; the main increase is in the 20050 account for operating supplies and the medical exams account will be needed for 2008 since exams are required for volunteers every other year.

Mr. Poag reported that he has added a Radio & Pager line item in the 400 account. Mr. Garner asked if Mr. Poag could come back for this request from CCD. Mr. Ludlow commented that the Council has had departments come back to them in the past for additional appropriation after the first of the year and in a reoccurring account, it actually gives an unrealistic budget.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to revert the numbers back to 2007 in the **174 budget** and to recommend the Director to come see the Council in January for appropriation for medical and additional radio, pager and equipment costs based upon the amount of money returned this year. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

EXTENSION OFFICE (133)

Walt Sell, Director, presented the Extension Office Budget and reported that the total increase over last year is \$6,440.00. Kathy Ulman, Office Manager, was also present. There was discussion concerning raising the user fees for the programs such as Master Gardeners, etc. to help recoup costs and increased sponsorship for 4-H. Mr. Cunningham commented that the Parks Department has also been asked to look at their fees but all people across the County are paying the tax so it can't be increased so much that you run people off. There was also discussion regarding payment of fair premiums to the 4-H members.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve all line items the same as 2007 in the **133 budget** except to approve \$181,575.00 for line item 30147 for Contractual Services for the Purdue educators. Mr. Cunningham seconded and the motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

ASSESSOR/REASSESSMENT (109/247)

Assessor Carol McDaniel and Chief Deputy Assessor, Judy Anderson, were in attendance regarding these budgets.

Mr. Jones commented that Mrs. McDaniel has requested a new employee to be paid from the Reassessment Budget; he reported that the Personnel Committee approved this position on a 4 – 1 vote. Mrs. McDaniel stated that the workload is getting heavy because of State mandates.

Mrs. McDaniel reported that the only increase in the 109 budget was Books for Assessing since the price increased and the increase in dues is because they are based upon her salary. Mr. Ludlow asked if Dues could come from the Reassessment Budget. Mrs. McDaniel responded that she would find out.

Regarding the 247 budget, the employee benefits changed as have Legal Fees. Mrs. McDaniel stated that per the conversation she had with the County Attorney, there has to be an attorney present at all PTABOA hearings. Mr. Ludlow asked which attorney would be used. Mrs. McDaniel responded that she talked to Shaw Friedman and they will use Bill Hedge; once the appeals leave here, she can't use Mr. Hedge's services since he is in the hearings so she has to use a different attorney which is the one from Indianapolis that is already handling the account. There was discussion regarding getting RFP's from attorneys for their services.

Mr. Garner asked about using the services of Level I and Level II Assessors instead of hiring a new employee. Mrs. McDaniel stated that they are not hooked up to a computer and she doesn't know where she would put them; she has thought this through before she made her final decision.

Mr. Cunningham suggested approving the Reassessment (247) budget contingent upon getting RFP's for attorneys. Mr. Mrozinski seconded that idea. Mr. Ludlow then made a motion on the 109 budget to approve as presented except move the Dues line item to the 247 budget. Mrs. Shuter asked that the Council let her check to see if dues can be paid from the 247 budget before approving this motion.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion regarding Legal Fees that they be contingent upon at least three (3) RFP's. Mr. Ludlow commented that at budget hearings the Legal Fees need to be in or out. Mr. Cunningham withdrew his motion.

Mr. Jones made a motion to approve both budgets as presented. Mr. Ludlow seconded. The motion failed by voice vote 3 – 3 with Mr. Mrozinski, Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Garner opposed.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the **109 budget** as presented and in the **247 budget** to change Legal Fees to \$12,000.00 and Other Charges to \$92,800.00. Mr. Mrozinski seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

PLAN COMMISSION/ZONING BOARD & CONTRACTOR'S LICENSURE FEE FUND (134/135/246)

Ray Hamilton, Building Director, and Cindy Kreske, Secretary, presented these budgets. Council Member Mr. Yagelski arrived at this time.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **134 budget** as presented. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 6 – 0.

Mr. Jones reported that Mr. Hamilton came before the Personnel Committee and requested a reclassification for Diane Richardson from a COMT II to a COMOT III. The vote of the Personnel Committee was two (2) ayes and three (3) nays.

There was discussion regarding building permits, duties of the Inspectors, contractor registrations and getting on-line for registering permits.

Mr. Yagelski made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **135 budget** the same as last year and Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

The MS4 Coordinator position was discussed. Mr. Hamilton explained that the State came down with a federally mandated program and every entity that had 10,000 people per square mile had to have a coordinator. It was decided that one person would be hired for all five (5) entities involved and it was acceptable by Soil & Water to include this position in their budget. Mr. Hamilton further commented that the Commissioners agreed that LaPorte County would hire the person and each entity would pay a percentage of any costs incurred by LaPorte County to LaPorte County. Mr. Jones commented that he thought the County was invoicing the entities and being reimbursed; he further stated that MS4 should have its own budget.

Mrs. Shuter stated that the Council also needs to approve Mr. Hamilton's 246 budget since that is where the 200, 300 and 400 accounts were moved to. Mr. Hamilton has requested a new vehicle for one of the Inspectors. There was discussion regarding mileage and supplying a new vehicle. After further discussion, Mrs. Shuter commented that the Council could still come back and readdress any line item until the final adoption on September 17th.

Mr. Yagelski made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts as presented in the **246 budget** and Mr. Mrozinski seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

There was a break for lunch.

ANIMAL SHELTER (156)

Jane Bernard, Animal Shelter Director, presented this budget. Mr. Mrozinski made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **156 budget** as submitted and Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

BOARD OF EDUCATION (139)

Norm Kleist, Superintendent, reported that there are no increases in the 200 and 300 accounts in this budget. Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the **139 budget** as submitted and Mr. Mrozinski and Mr. Ludlow seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

E-911 (177/598)

Brent Soller, Director, and Beth West, Assistant Director, were present to address their budget requests. Mr. Soller reported that there are no increases in the 200 and 300 accounts in the 177 budget. Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts as submitted in the **177 budget**. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

There was discussion regarding what is going to happen when the Michigan City dispatchers come over to the 911 Center after which Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts as submitted in the **598 budget**. Mr. Ludlow seconded and the motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

Mr. Jones commented on a proposed IT (Information Technology) position that hasn't come before the Personnel Committee yet. Mr. Jones stated that the Sheriff will be coming before the Council later to present two requests. The Sheriff is requesting to upgrade the secretary plus they currently have \$37,000.00 in a line item for an IT person; at one time they had two brothers in IT whose positions were Unclassified so they do not receive longevity. Mr. Jones stated that Jim Sosinski is asking for \$45,000.00 instead of \$37,000.00 because they don't think they can get a real good person for \$37,000.00. Mr. Jones commented that this person would not only run the computers but the doors are also run by computer, etc.

Mr. Jones stated that Mr. Soller is getting to the point where he needs someone with IT knowledge. Therefore, the thought is to raise the E-911 Surcharge to the maximum amount allowable in order to take care of the Michigan City dispatchers and to bring more of the 911 employees under the Surcharge Budget.

Mr. Jones reported that he has been meeting in a sub-committee regarding the merger of Michigan City dispatchers and the County. Mr. Ludlow asked who approve the merger. Mr. Jones answered that no one has and the merger has been unofficial for a couple of years now. Mr. Ludlow stated that there should be a long term commitment from Michigan City that they will stay here. Mr. Jones commented that there is speculated law that there will only be able to be one PSAP Center; in retrospect, if we do not go to one PSAP Center, Michigan City could take their portion of the surcharge which would leave the County with a very small budget. Mr. Ludlow stated that the County is building a new 911 Center on the assumption that Michigan City is coming, right. There was further discussion regarding this

possible merger. Mr. Jones mentioned that the first thing that needs to be done is to amend the E-911 Ordinance.

COOLSPRING TOWNSHIP (129)

Pam Kieft, Coolspring Township Assessor, presented the 129 budget.

Mr. Jones reported that Mrs. Kieft has asked for a new employee to work on commercial/industrial; he stated that Coolspring Township currently has 10,000 parcels with two (2) deputies whereas Michigan Township has 17,000 parcels with six (6) deputies.

There was discussion regarding expected appeals. Mrs. Kieft reported that she has one hundred (100) commercial appeals so far because Nexus put them in the incorrect neighborhood and she had to correct them. Residential-wise she has a low track record of having appeals in this area.

Mrs. Kieft reported that she couldn't come in last year and the Council lowered some small accounts; she explained why Utilities, Rent, Mileage and Postage need to be raised. Mrs. Kieft commented that Repairs & Maintenance was lowered to \$50.00 and she has requested that this line item go back up to \$300.00; she has been bringing in her own vacuum cleaner. She also stated that in Operating Supplies she went from \$150.00 to \$50.00 and this isn't enough to purchase toilet paper, paper towels and cleaning supplies. Other miscellaneous items were discussed.

Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **129 budget** as submitted. Mr. Ludlow seconded and the motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

SUPERIOR COURT NO. 3/LADS CLERK (151/242)

Judge Paul Baldoni Cathy Butiste, Court Administrator, presented these budgets. Sharing the usage of law books was discussed. Judge Baldoni commented that there is one payment now for all five (5) Courts; this was done years ago under the Circuit Court. Mr. Ludlow asked what the \$3,500.00 is for in the budget under that line item. Judge Baldoni responded that this request is for actual books and opinions that come out of the Indiana Supreme Court of Appeals.

Judge Baldoni reported that there are no increases in his budget requests, other than the 5% for salary increases, from last year. Mr. Jones made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts as submitted in the **151 budget**. Mr. Ludlow seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

The cost of remodeling in the Court's Probation Office was discussed. Judge Baldoni commented that the cost was \$13,000.00. Mr. Mrozinski asked if Judge Baldoni didn't think it was necessary to check with the Commissioners on this project. Judge Baldoni responded that he did and the Commissioners approved it. Mr. Mrozinski stated that the Commissioners have said that they didn't know anything about this project until they walked upstairs and saw it being done. Judge Baldoni stated that Superior 3 went to Commissioner President, Mrs. Huston, regarding security concerns in the Probation Office; the Commissioners contacted the contractor and they did the work. Judge Baldoni commented that they would not have come to the Council but they would go to the Commissioners because they have the

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obligation of taking care of these things and the Commissioners would come to the Council. Judge Baldoni had heard about this issue at the end of the project when Probation received a bill; he then contacted the Commissioners since it is not in his budget.

Mr. Yagelski made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **242 budget** as submitted. Mr. Ludlow seconded and the motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

CENTER TOWNSHIP ASSESSOR (128)

Mike Schultz, Center Township Assessor, presented this budget. There was discussion regarding assessments in Center Township, the appeals process and the possibility of combining Center, Coolspring and Michigan Townships in one central building.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the 200, 300 and 400 accounts in the **128 budget** as submitted.

COUNTY COUNCIL (144)

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **144 budget** as submitted. Mr. Mrozinski seconded and the motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

This budget hearing was adjourned.