

LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET HEARINGS
August 22, 2008

The LaPorte County Council met in budget hearing on August 22, 2008, at 8:00 a.m. in the Assembly Room, main floor, LaPorte County Government Complex, LaPorte, Indiana. Council President Mark Yagelski called the budget hearing to order. Council Members present were Jerry Cooley, Rich Mrozinski, Earl Cunningham, Terry Garner, Mark Ludlow and John Jones and Mark Yagelski. Also present were Auditor Teresa Shuter and Chief Deputy Auditor, Rita Layton.

Community Corrections, Work Release, State Grant (179/590/584)

Eric Yandt, Community Corrections Director, reported that the department has twelve (12) county vehicles in use and eleven (11) are take home vehicles. None of the vehicles are marked with anything other than municipal license plates. Mr. Yandt stated that he would prefer not to mark the Field Officers vehicles because of their line of work; there are six (6) Field Officers plus one (1) Field Coordinator.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the **179 budget**, even though there is an increase in fuel costs, at the 2008 level. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

Mr. Yandt stated that the 590 budget is based upon inmate fees. The Department of Corrections approval of the proposed budget precedes that of the Council for the 590 and 584 budgets. Mr. Yandt reported that there was a DOC fiscal audit and there were no issues. Mr. Yandt commented that they still struggle with the collection of fees but they are better than they were and the inmate population is up which helps.

Mr. Yandt commented that more is paid in the Extra Hire (10130) account and there are four (4) vehicles they would like to replace. Mr. Yandt suggested that a non-reverting Capital Projects Fund be established.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to zero out the Overtime (10140) account and to also zero out the Motor Vehicle (41002) account and to approve the 100, 200, 300 and 400 accounts, with the exception of salaries, in the **590 budget** as submitted. Mr. Mrozinski seconded. The motion carried 6 – 1 with Mr. Jones voting “Nay.”

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the **584 budget** for the State Grant as presented and Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

Superior Court No. 2 (150)

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the 150 budget as presented with the exception of salaries. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

Mr. Yagelski thanked Judge King for his years of service to the County.

Superior Court No. 4 (152)

Mr. Mrozinski made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts as presented. Mr., Jones seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

There was some discussion regarding moving all of the Courts to LaPorte. Judge Boklund commented that parking and transportation could be a problem.

Cum. Bridge, Major Bridge, Highway MVH (213/215/204)

MVH Maintenance & Repair, MVH Administration, Hwy LR&S (202/201/207)

Rick McVay, Highway Engineer, reported that there are a lot of big bridge projects planned in 2009. He also stated that we are entering a new federally mandated bridge inspection period of which we will receive 80% reimbursement but the money has to be paid upfront. Mr. McVay commented that the County has gone through the RFP process and the paperwork is before INDOT to be approved.

Bob Young, Highway Superintendent, reported that the salt bids are past due and only one letter has been received from Morton Salt who chose not to bid; Porter County received five (5) letters with no bids. Mr. Young is hearing of this situation from around the State. He feels that the salt companies are controlling the market. Mr. Young will be at a conference of Cities & Towns next week and will find out more.

Mr. Young has talked to some other counties who pay the bridge crew from the Cumulative Bridge Fund which could loosen some money up in the Highway Budget which may be needed to transfer to fuel and salt later on; this is something to think about. Mr. Young stated that culverts can also be purchased from Cumulative Bridge.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the 200 and 300 accounts in the **213 budget** (Cumulative Bridge) as presented with the exception of eliminating Co Rev Retirement Withheld (11017) and approving the amount of \$27,785.00 in Employees Group Health Insurance (11019). Mr. Mrozinski seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the **215 budget** (Major Bridge) as presented and Mr. Ludlow seconded. Mr. Yagelski asked about plans to replace the Franklin Street Bridge at some time. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the **204 budget** (Highway General & Undistributed) as presented with the change of \$500,000.00 approved for Gas, Fuel & Oil (20025). Mr. Garner seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to approve the **202 budget** (Highway Maintenance & Repair) as presented with the exception of approving Paint & Painting (20043), Hardware (20044), and Welding & Fabricating Material (21004) at the 2008 amounts and to delete \$30,000.00 without a line item description. Mr. Ludlow seconded and the motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

Julie Pajor, Administrative Assistant, explained that the increase in Employees Group Health Insurance in the 201 budget is to adjust the appropriation to where it should be based upon the rate since it has been short since 2005.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the **201 budget** (Highway Administration) as presented with the exception of Utility Inspector (31002) to be set at \$21,424.00. Mr., Cunningham seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

Mr. Ludlow made a motion to approve the **207 budget** (LR&S) as presented with the exception of increasing Rental Large Equipment (31005) to \$25,000.00. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

County Vehicles:

Mr. Cunningham asked if the Commissioners had the total list of county-owned vehicles that are insured with Swanson; he stated that they get allegations all of the time about how many vehicles the County has and they would like to be able to say how many vehicles are where.

Pertaining to the Highway vehicles, Mr. Young stated that all of the take home vehicles are marked; the Highway has gone from fifteen (15) take home vehicles to eight (8). Mr. Cunningham asked how the Highway was able to do that. Mr. Young answered that every one of the foremen were taking their vehicles home and were “on call” but right now he takes his vehicle home, Rick McVay, Engineer, takes his home along with Bryan Batchelor, Assistant Superintendent, and they have taken the responsibility of being “on call” since they are salaried and there is no overtime. There were two (2) dump trucks going home but now there is one and the other driver takes a pickup home rather than a dump truck; one driver lives by Stillwell, the other lives by Michigan City and Mr. Young lives in LaCrosse which provides good coverage of the County. To cut further could set the County up for a possible lawsuit.

Mrs. Huston commented that the Highway has been very cooperative and the four-day work week has been good and has saved money for the County.

There was a review of the list of vehicles by department. Mr. Cunningham commented that he is at the point where he doesn't mind a vehicle being used to conduct work but the employee shouldn't be paid to drive to and from work.

Mrs. Huston stated that when the Coroner got the vehicle from EMS, it was to be parked so that all of the Coroner's Deputies could use the vehicle; if it had been parked all of these years it wouldn't have 169,000 miles on it. Mrs. Huston commented that if the vehicle is taken away from the Coroner it puts the responsibility on EMS to pick up the bodies; she stated that to pick up the bodies isn't a problem but if they have to go to South Bend and Fort Wayne as John Sullivan has said for autopsies then there is a problem. Mrs. Huston will look for a used panel van for the Coroner's Office to be put in the Commissioners' budget.

Mr. Yagelski commented that it seems that anyone who services the vehicles seems to say that there are too many miles on them to service them any longer.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he knows that cars have to be replaced and he doesn't have a problem with a revolving schedule but the County needs to start thinking in terms of not buying new vehicles but buying cars that are two (2) years old from a lease-back for half the price; an extra \$1,000.00 could be paid for a warranty extension to give the same warranty as a new vehicle.

Regarding take home vehicles, Mr. Yagelski stated that it is either a case where the employee is “on call” or the vehicle is a supplemental part of the employee's pay. Mrs. Huston stated that at the encouragement of the Council, she started with the Plan Commission regarding take home vehicles; she stated that Ray Hamilton, Building Commissioner, commented that they wanted to

be treated fairly and if their vehicles were taken away, others should be taken away too. Mr. Hamilton did say that sometimes there is a cement pour early in the morning, and the Inspectors go directly to the site from home. Mrs. Huston commented that she isn't quite sure why Tim Morgan, Park Superintendent, needs to take his vehicle home. Mr. Hager stated that the Commissioners are taking a closer look at take home vehicles.

Mr. Mrozinski stated that everyone that has come before the Council has asked for an increase in the Gas, Fuel & Oil account; he commented that maybe they should stop driving so much and where are they driving anyway. Mr. Yagelski stated that the Council is just trying to "pull in the reins."

County Work Hours:

Regarding a four-day workweek, Mrs. Huston stated that if she can move the Auditor's Office, Treasurer's Office and the Surveyor's Office out of the Courthouse to the Hiler Building then that building can actually close down. Mr. Garner questioned service to the public if this is put into place. Mr. Cunningham stated that the daily work hours would be extended.

Assessor's Office Employees:

Joyce Leon, Human Resource Director, commented that all positions in the Assessor's Office were re-evaluated due to the transfer of duties per HB 1001. Karen Hamilton, Sales Disclosure Deputy at a COMOT V, is actually now a Residential Information Deputy which is a COMOT IV which is over a \$3,000.00 decrease in salary. Mrs. Leon stated that she is trying to get the people lined up in the positions they have been evaluated in and adjust the salaries accordingly; she sent the breakdown to the Council in July of what the differences are.

Mr. Ludlow stated that five (5) positions were transferred to the Assessor's Office and those people came in with salaries; it was fully realized that the Assessor's Office would have to be reorganized since those people weren't coming to the Assessor's Office with the same duties. Mr. Ludlow commented that he believes that Mrs. Leon identified the job descriptions and COMOT levels at a proper level but what he has a problem with is that these people lost their jobs through no fault of their own and they were either going to be laid off or they were going to be offered employment; since they were coming to the Assessor's Office doing just about the same thing they would maintain their salaries at least through the end of the year.

Mrs. Leon reported that Kelly Kieft did not come to the Assessor's Office but transferred to another position and Amy Reily didn't come to the Assessor's Office. Katrina Culp didn't come over since she didn't return from her leave. Diane Danielson transferred from Center Township and Donna Melson transferred from Coolspring Township which accounts for the five (5) positions. Mr. Ludlow asked what the three (3) new people were hired at. Mrs. Leon responded that one (1) was hired for PTABOA and two (2) were hired for Real Estate; Mrs. McDaniel reorganized the office and came up with different responsibilities for the positions. Regarding the reduction in Mrs. Hamilton's salary, Mrs. Leon stated that her recommendation is to freeze the salary but Mrs. McDaniel's is o.k. with cutting it due to the decrease in responsibilities.

Mr. Ludlow stated that everything presented is pretty well "cut and dried" and the only position to consider is Karen Hamilton's.

Mr. Ludlow asked if all of the specific duties make it harder to cross-train employees so that if someone is gone someone else can do their job. Mrs. Leon doesn't believe so since there are quite a few people in the different units. Mr. Ludlow asked why there are two (2) PTABOA Secretaries; Mrs. Leon responded that she was told that two (2) positions were needed based upon the workload.

Mrs. Huston stated that she met with Mike Schultz and Pam Kieft, the Hearing Officers, and what came out of that meeting was that the PTABOA Secretaries could be put in with the Hearing Officers and they could have a room behind the Assessor's Office, which she feels would be beneficial, but Mrs. McDaniel doesn't like that idea. Mrs. Huston commented that the Hearing Officers can take care of assessment issues that wouldn't have to go before the PTABOA if the taxpayer agrees with the outcome.

There was discussion about the number of employees in the Assessor's Office. Mr. Yagelski stated that Mrs. McDaniel was told she could bring five (5) people over; if some of those people didn't come over there was an agreement that those people would not be included but if all five (5) came over she could have those people but the position would be eliminated as they leave the job or retire.

Mr. Cunningham made a motion to accept the recommendations of Mrs. McDaniel and Mrs. Leon on the right-hand side of the handout regarding pay classifications with one pay cut which is to change Karen Hamilton from a COMOT V to a COMOT IV. Mr. Garner seconded. Mr. Ludlow asked Mrs. Leon if those listed have the qualifications for the job. Mrs. Leon answered that they do.

Mrs. Shuter stated that this will be a change in the budget since most of the employees were submitted as COMOT III's. Mr. Jones commented that the Council has put a freeze on pay before when there has been reorganization of an entire department. Mr. Ludlow asked if the two (2) PTABOA Secretaries will be paid through Reassessment; Mrs. Shuter commented that this is where they should be paid from.

Mr. Cunningham amended his motion to include that the two (2) PTABOA Secretaries be budgeted in Reassessment. Mr. Garner seconded.

Mr. Cunningham moved to **withdraw** his motion. Mr. Garner seconded. Mr. Cunningham then **made a motion** to set the classification for the Assessor's Office sheet on the right-hand side irrespective of where they are paid from. Mr. Garner seconded. The motion carried 5 – 2 by voice vote with Mr. Ludlow and Mr. Jones voting "Nay." Mr. Ludlow and Mr. Jones stated that they agree with the theory but the salary shouldn't be reduced.

Mr. Cunningham, since this budget won't take affect until January 1st. asked Mrs. Leon to get with Mrs. McDaniel to see if the employees should be paid from Reassessment or the General Fund. Mrs. Shuter stated that there is a PTABOA Secretary and two (2) others that are paid from Reassessment and now the recommendation is to add another PTABOA Secretary.

Mr. Jones asked Mike Schultz how many of the positions should be paid from Reassessment. Mr. Schultz replied that the PTABOA Secretary and her assistant should be. Mrs. Shuter suggested that the two (2) PTABOA Secretaries be kept in the Reassessment budget and the

others moved to the 109 budget in the County General Fund; a couple of people aren't really performing reassessment duties.

Mr. Ludlow commented that no matter what Mrs. McDaniel wants, this is financial decision which the Council should make. Mr. Ludlow **made a motion** that the only people paid out of Reassessment in the Assessor's Office is the two (2) PTABOA Secretaries and everyone else goes into the General Fund. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried 7 – 0 by voice vote.

Budget Overview:

Mrs. Shuter reported that the budget for the General Fund came in at \$38,534,620.00 and a little over \$2 million has been cut from the General Fund leaving it at about \$36.4 million, \$500,000.00 has been cut from Reassessment, \$2,000.00 has been cut out of Cemetery and \$5,000.00 out of 911. Mrs. Shuter reminded the Council that the \$38.5 million that came in included 5% in raises. The Council approved County General Budgets for 2008 came in at \$35,678,059.00.

Mr. Yagelski doesn't think this is the day to talk about raises and the Council should wait as it puts a bind on the other entities. Mr. Mrozinski **made a motion** that there be no raises at the present time. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried by voice vote 7 – 0.

The budget hearing was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE
LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL

DATE: _____

ATTEST: _____

Auditor

LAPORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

