

MINUTES
LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET HEARINGS CONTINUATION
August 26th, 2024

The La Porte County Council Budget Hearings Continuation was held on August 26th, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex, 809 State Street, La Porte, IN 46350.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Council President Randy Novak.

ATTENDANCE

Councilman Cunningham, Councilman Yagelski, Councilman Rosenbaum, Councilman Novak, Councilman Koronka, and Councilman Mollenhauer were all physically present for the meeting. Councilman Kiel appeared electronically via Zoom, circa the timestamp of 12:06.

PRESENTATION

Overtime for the Juvenile Services Center

Mr. Rosenbaum informed the room that the Juvenile Services Center was requesting an increase in their Overtime budget from \$30,000 to \$120,000 for 2025. Mr. Rosenbaum instead proposed that the Council offer the Juvenile Services Center a \$15,000 increase to make the overtime budget for 2025 a total of \$45,000, and if more funding was later required, the Council could be approached at a later date for additional appropriations. He explained that this could be helpful because future appropriations could be taken from accounts other than the General Fund, such as Riverboat or Public Safety LIT. Mr. Cunningham questioned how the cost for an employee with fringe benefits comported to the money being spent on overtime, and argued that the funding should be used to pay for positions that the Juvenile Services Center was expected to hire. Mr. Novak noted that the PERF contribution would be the only benefit cost attached to paying for additional overtime, while Mr. Cunningham additionally asked why the funding for the Juvenile Services Center's vacant positions wasn't being transferred towards their overtime costs if the vacant positions could not be filled. Chief Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves noted that the Juvenile Services Center had come before the Council in the past to request additional appropriations for overtime, however they eventually used money that was budgeted for their unfilled nurse position as a transfer to fulfill that particular request. Mr. Novak confirmed with Ms. Graves that if the nurse position was filled in 2025, that this would no longer be a source of transferable funding to pay for overtime, to which Ms. Graves responded that the nurse position could potentially be filled in 2025.

- i. Motion to reduce the original request for \$120,000 in account 10140 (within account 176) to \$45,000 made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Yagelski asked what the running total was for the amount of funding that had been cut so far in the budgeting process for 2025, which Mr. Koronka reported was \$207,189 in cuts from the General Fund, including the cut to the Juvenile Services Center's overtime request. He noted that when the budgeting process began, the county was about \$1.7 million above the 2024 budget.

At this time, Mr. Kiel appeared electronically via Zoom.

Mr. Kiel voiced concern over using Riverboat or Public Safety LIT funding to continuously pay for the Juvenile Services Center's overtime, as it was only delaying the more pertinent issue of understaffing in the department. Mr. Stabosz informed the Council that if the Highway Department paid for roadwork with Major Moves money, that funding could be freed up in Economic Development LIT, which had more spending flexibility and could buy the Council more time to decide how to permanently address the overtime issue.

Mr. Koronka reported that the General Fund saw overtime requests for the Treasurer, Sheriff, EMS, County Garage, Building Maintenance, and Courthouse Security departments. Mr. Novak noted that E-911 had overtime as well, however it was paid for out of E-911's User Fees account, while Ms. Graves added that E-911 intended to approach the Council for additional appropriation for overtime in the future.

Salary Increase for the Director of Community Corrections

Mr. Rosenbaum explained that Community Corrections had a request to increase the Director's salary to match that of the Juvenile Services Center's Director. When Ms. Graves clarified that this request included an additional request to increase the salary of Community Corrections' Chief Deputy whose salary was 85% of that which the Director received, Mr. Rosenbaum answered that he was only addressing the Director's change of salary at this time.

Mr. Cunningham recalled that 85% of department heads' pay was what chief deputies were supposed to receive as a salary, however he had seen this rate vary from 65% to 90% in various positions. Council Attorney Guy DiMartino added that step increases complicated the percentage of some of the deputies' pay. Ms. Graves explained that department heads' chief deputies received 85% of the department heads' pay, however she was not sure if this applied to appointed department heads. Mr. DiMartino argued that chief deputy positions should be making the 85% limited to elected officials only, whereas appointed department heads should

be limited to having assistants or managerial deputies. Mr. Novak clarified that if appointed department heads second-in-command positions were not given an exempt position, such as it was for elected officials' chief deputies, the second-in-command salaries had the potential to surpass that of the department heads that oversaw them, because of overtime. This, in turn, would eventually result in the county requiring an increase in the salary of any department heads affected by this salary difference. Mr. Rosenbaum clarified that the 2024 salary of the Community Corrections Director was \$70,862, and the request was to increase it by \$3,832, making the Director's salary \$74,694 should the request be approved.

- i. Motion to approve the \$3,832 increase to the Community Corrections Director position for a final salary of \$74,694 in 2025 made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. Six members voted in favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Novak, Mr. Koronka, Mr. Mollenhauer, and Mr. Kiel) and one member voted not-in-favor (Mr. Yagelski).

Step Increases for Full Time Employees Who Have Worked 25 Years or More

Mr. Koronka reported that he had reached out to Human Resources Director Monique Thomas in spring of 2024 to get a report on how many county employees had reached their maximum step increases of 25 years, which he in turn reported was 77 employees, with 49 of these employees being 29 years or older when they began working for La Porte County. He noted that this was resulting in a pay disparity for county employees who started working for the county in their 20's. Mr. Yagelski argued that of the surrounding counties, La Porte County had the largest step increases as an upfront benefit to secure long-term employees. Mr. Cunningham added that, with his work in the school district, the cap for step increases maxed out at 17 years. Mr. Kiel additionally added that limited step increases for school districts were intended to push out older employees so the district could hire younger, less experienced employees at a cheaper salary. He questioned if the county should incentivize employees who had already worked past the maximum amount of step increases, while Mr. Novak noted that the experience of employees who worked for La Porte County for an extended period of time should not be overlooked.

Raises for County Employees in 2025

Mr. Rosenbaum noted that he wanted to try and work in an across-the-board 3% salary increase for employees in 2025, as county employees did not receive a general pay raise in 2024. Mr. Kiel inquired when the current net assessed value was due to be submitted, which Mr. Stabosz reported that although the submission deadline was due on August 1st of 2024, La Porte County had been waiting on neutralizations from a financial advisor before the submission could be completed, and he expected the CNAV to be returned to the county by the end of the week. Mr. Novak inquired if the county should expect a reduction from the caps, as was seen in 2024. Mr. Kiel noted that the Department of Local Government Finance provided these estimates, however they required the CNAV numbers to make their calculations.

He added that the 2024 predictions additionally needed to come true for as well. Ms. Graves reported that the gross increase to the budget from 2024 to 2025 was \$1,681,319, however this was spread across multiple funds, and did not take CNAV – or assessed value – into account. Mr. Kiel confirmed with Ms. Graves that the estimated \$1.7 million increase was also in non-levy revenue sources, which Ms. Graves answered that the increase was for the initial maximum levy, and it did not currently account for Cumulative Capital Development, the mental health adjustment, or Development Disabilities, which La Porte County did not do. Mr. Kiel explained that an increase to the levy did not necessarily mean that the increase was automatically going to the General Fund, as at least 5 or 6 other funds were tied to the levy.

Ms. Graves reported that the estimated projection for Public Safety LIT funding was \$8,490,445, while Mr. DiMartino advised that the Council research how much the health insurance was going to cost the county before approving employee raises.

When Mr. Novak inquired what the deadline was to finalize the budget, Ms. Graves informed the room that the budget needed to be advertised by October 12th, followed by a public hearing that would need to take place no later than ten days after said advertisement. She added that after advertisement, the budget could be amended at a lower amount, but it could not be increased after this deadline.

The Council concluded that a follow-up hearing with County Financial Advisor Karl Cender regarding the county's health insurance costs would be scheduled for September 9th, 2024 at 5pm CST.

ADJOURNMENT

- i. Motion to recess made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor; the meeting would be recessed until the meeting on September 9th, 2024.

Examined & Approved by the La Porte County Council this 30th day of September, 2024.



Councilman Earl Cunningham



Councilman Adam Koronka



Councilman Justin Kiel



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor