

Vermillion County Council Special Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2018

6:30 p.m.

Commissioner's Courtroom, 2nd Floor, Courthouse

- I. **Call to Order.** The Vermillion County Council convened in a special meeting on January 16, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.
- II. **Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.**
- III. **Roll Call.** Members present were Brent Bush, Ashley James, Randy Dreher, Jim McLain, President Michael Carty, Jill Wesch, Bob Spence, Auditor Amy Tolbert, First Deputy Auditor Stephanie Simpson, and council attorney Donald Bonomo.
- IV. **LIT (Local Income Tax) Budget.** Carty stated the primary purpose for tonight's meeting is continuation of discussion of the Local Income Tax budget. Carty said he's still not sure about the process, but his understanding is that their needs to be an application for the funds to be spent. He said he's worried about the unintended consequences, he's not sure if the volunteers on the fire departments are going to be upset if some get paid and some do not get paid. He said the requests are valid, he's just unsure of a lot of different things. Carty opened it up for discussion.

Dreher said the requests are all valid but felt they should do it gradually, maybe one man per fire department five days a week but not three. He said the fire departments do a great job but wonders if we can afford to pay three people, he can see one but not three. Dreher said we are stewards of this money; we need to hold some of it back and possibly spend it later on down the road on things that need to be done. He said maybe put more people on the fire department once they see how it works out. Dreher suggested a committee to see how best to spend the money.

Spence said he agreed that a committee would be a good idea. He said the township trustees should get policies and procedures in place. He also said he would like to know how much tax money they are receiving and how it is being spent. He said that information would help the council make proper decisions. James said she thought they had to submit an application for public safety money. Bonomo said townships can apply for the funds, but the time for that is past, and if the council wants to give them part of the county's money they can do so. The council examined a sample application from Monroe County. Emergency Management Director Mark O'Heir noted that if the money is given to the fire departments, they can do what they want, but if it is given to the trustees, they are audited by the state. Neil Costello said that if the fire departments misuse the money, they would not get it the next year. Clinton Township Trustee Vicki Ellis said that Black Diamond Fire Department is funded through her, and she already pays three people, so it would mess up my budget if money is given to the fire department directly. Ellis also said that departments can't operate on volunteers because most have full time jobs, and paying them keeps them on station which means quicker response times. O'Heir said that the proposal would free up the money Ellis is currently using to pay firefighters for equipment or other purposes.

James asked if the departments needed to be manned 24 hours or just during the day. She said it would be nice to cover it all, but she was not sure they could afford to do so. She also asked if it would be better to give all departments the same amount, or base it on individual needs.

Bush, who also serves as Dana's Fire Chief, said the idea as a firefighter was to get paid personnel for quicker response, as the firefighters can treat a patient until an ambulance arrives. Dreher asked if all fire departments were first responders, and O'Heir said St. Bernice and Hillsdale were the only ones that were not. Bush added that

many firefighters work outside of town so there is no one in town to respond. Dreher asked Bush about getting by with someone during the daytime hours, and Bush said that would be a step in the right direction and would be a great help. Costello said that help in the daytime is difficult to find. He said Fairview usually has one person in Clinton, and they have gotten by but he said they've been lucky.

Carty said he would like to see individual applications and allow everyone to put in their individual request. O'Heir asked if they would have to reapply each year, and people could lose their jobs if it wasn't approved. Carty said yes, it is an annual process, because the tax could be lowered. Carty suggested that Dreher, Spence and O'Heir be appointed to a committee. O'Heir suggested the trustees and fire chiefs be included, and Carty said that was too many people. He suggested Bush be added to the committee.

The Council discussed courthouse security and Sheriff Mike Phelps said a new camera system is a must as the current system is horrible. He also said if there is no one there to man the door, there is no need for metal detectors, and that right now, three deputies for security is working, and that they are only working during courthouse hours. Spence asked what would be the minimum that would be needed, and Phelps said \$75,000 to employ two. He said that a camera system would have yearly fees of around \$2,500.

Dreher said he would rather have more deputies on the street and just a camera and one officer in the courthouse. He said he felt more officers were needed on the road. Phelps said by law he has to make sure the court is secure. Dreher said other counties only have cameras not security officers. Phelps said Sullivan County is the only one. James suggested budgeting for a full-time person this year, and the camera system. She said next year, the money that was used this year for the camera system could be used for an additional part-time officer. The council asked Auditor Amy Tolbert to prepare additional appropriations for \$58,000 for security officers and \$47,000 for the camera system. They also asked her to prepare an additional appropriation to pay for an additional probation officer.

The council also discussed additional deputies. Phelps said \$18,000 of the money requested for that purpose would be a one-time expense for equipment. They also discussed hiring a secretary for the sheriff's department and Dreher said he would like to see that happen during budget hearings. Phelps said that he did, but the council turned it down. Carty asked the committee to establish a process for these requests. Matching money for the Community Crossings grant was briefly discussed, but it was agreed to table it, since the council had not had time to look at the proposal provided by Commissioner Tim Yocum.

- V. **Redevelopment Commission Appointments.** The council also discussed appointments to a potential Redevelopment Commission, although Carty stated that the commissioners have not established one yet. It was stated that Dylan Riggen, John Moore, Ashley James, Leonard Helt and R.J. Dunavan have all expressed interest in being on the Redevelopment Commission. Carty suggested finding out who the commissioners plan to appoint.

Having no further business to come before the Council, the motion was made to adjourn by Dreher, seconded Spence. All in favor, motion carried.

AYE

NAY

Michael Carty, President

Randy Dreher, Vice President

William Brent Bush

Ashley James

James McLain

Jill Wesch

Robert Spence

ATTEST:

Amy Tolbert, Auditor