

Vermillion County Council
Meeting Minutes

October 03, 2022

6:30 P.M.

Commissioner's Court, 2nd Floor Courthouse

- I. **Call to Order.** The Council convened in a regular meeting on October 03, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. in the Commissioner's Courtroom.
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.**
- III. **Roll Call.** Members present were President Ashley James, William Rennels, Rick Weir, Kelly Summerville, William Brent Bush, Martin Brown, Auditor Brenda Furry, Deputy Auditor Annie Wickens, and County Council Attorney, Scott Craig. Randy Dreher was not present
- IV. **Approval of Minutes.** A motion was made to approve the minutes from Budget meetings September 14 & 15, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. and the Regular meeting held on September 15, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. by Weir and seconded by Brown. All in favor, motion carried.
- V. **Notice of Public Hearing** was held for public comment on an amendment to the certified statement of the assessed value of Vermillion County for the 2023 tax year. The proposed amendment would reduce the certified net assessed value for by approximately \$15 million dollars due to a software error that inadvertently resulted in an overstatement of the personal property values for the Dana taxing district. James stated that everyone was invited to the meeting. There was no public comment. Council acknowledged the error. Notice of Public Hearing.
- VI. **Transfer-County General-Circuit Court- 1000-32103-136 Conference & Legal Seminars for \$1500.00 transferred to Exam by Court Appointed Physician 1000-31401-136.** This is for outstanding invoices for the Court Appointed Physicians Exam. This is non-reporting.
- VII. **Additional Appropriations-**

<u>Fund/Dept</u>	<u>Amount Requested</u>	<u>Amount Approved</u>
County General-Circuit Court 1000-31401-136	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00

This request is for additional funding for competency examinations. The Court is required to pay for the examination of defendants who need to be evaluated for competency to stand trial. It requires payment for 2 practitioners per defendant from the Court. Unfortunately, this year we have had a record number of evaluations requested. At this time, we need payment for 3 examinations that have been ordered. Judge Wesch is requesting funds for 5 exams for the remainder of 2022. A motion was made by Brown to approve the additional appropriations in the amount of \$25,000 and was seconded by Rennels. All in favor, motion carried.

- VIII. **Old Business-Budget-Casa Director,** Caitlyn Wells spoke to the Council about the budget due to the fact she was unable to attend the Budget hearings held in September. Wells stated that there are 2 grants that are received for CASA. One is the matching grant and one is the compacity grant. Matching grant is for \$6,725.00 and the Capacity grant is for \$2,883. CASA requested \$33,420 for the 2023 budget and the \$25,000 match from the Commissioners. Wells stated that she works for Vermillion and Parke Counties. Wells explained how Casa works and the cases that they work on. Craig stated that the County will have to put more money into the

Casa fund or reduced the amount that the County puts in. Wells states that she thought her fund money rolled over and Craig stated it does but CASA is spending more than what is coming in. Council requested Wells to get them the expenses that she believes they will be using for 2023. Wells stated that she will get the information to the Council for their review so that they can set a budget for the CASA program. Weir questioned if Vermillion and Parke split the funding 50/50 with salary and expenses. Wells stated no that Vermillion County pays \$5000 more. Wells also stated that she gets \$10,000 from Parke and \$20,000 from Vermillion. Wells stated she already has her budget approved at Parke but could see if they would look at doing it different. Parke only contributes for salary no expenses. James requested that Wells give the Council the breakout of all expenses that CASA has and subtract out the Grant money, that way it will give the Council on what they number they need to get to. Weir stated that he had written down that CASA received \$16,000 in grant monies for 2022. Wells stated that she didn't think so. Craig stated that we get grants but we are really not sure when we get the monies or what we are getting. We are budgeting more than what the revenue is so we will need to either increase revenue or decrease the budget. Craig also stated that maybe we haven't received monies or had an issue in previous years and we need to figure that out. Weir stated that he wrote down that we are serving 78 individuals and he was wanting to know what percentage was for Vermillion County. Wells stated they have served 73 children in Vermillion County and have closed 33 cases and right now we are serving 40. Wells also stated that they are serving 48 in Parke County and for the whole year 69 in Parke County. Bush stated it is pretty even. Wells agreed. Weir stated that it would be nice if Parke County covered 50% of the costs with Vermillion County. Wells stated she makes sure she is spending evenly and she is more than welcome to take that to Parke County to see if they will. Wells had a copy of the Grant and gave it to the Auditor, so that everyone can look at the break down of the numbers. Wells states that she has paid the internet out of both Counties to keep it even. The Salary is more in Vermillion because we were serving more in Vermillion per Wells. Wells said that they are getting appointed to informal adjustments and that is something they never done before. Wells states that once DCS starts opening these cases she is afraid that their numbers will sky rocket. Wells explained that they have 10 active volunteers, and 3 that are on leave and 4 staff members. Wells states that her and one other staff member gets paid out of Vermillion County and the other 2 get paid through Parke County. Wells stated that she will email the grant application to the Council for next year when she applies. Wells explained to the Council what the CASA actually does for the County. Rennels asked when the CASA Program actually started in Vermillion County. Wells stated at the end of 2018 beginning of 2019. The Counties merged in 2020. Rennels questioned if the program has grown since then. Wells stated it has, and they do not have a waiting list right now. Wells stated that they were able to get an office and it has been really beneficial. Wells stated this has brought more awareness to the people that we are and willing to help. James questioned where the office was located. Wells stated it is in Clinton in the old Binders office building. Rennels stated that the numbers in the budget are really not big compared to services that the CASA Program provides. Wells stated that DCS is not opening cases right now and she believes its budgeting issues. Council thanks Wells for all the work they do.

BUDGET Discussion continued-James makes sure everyone received an email from Craig on the rates. Everyone received.

James states that if they go with Option 1 the County will generate around \$370,000/\$380,000 additional, and it still reduces the tax rate. Option 2 is the max levy and the tax rate would go up by .52492%. James states that even if we increase it generates around \$130,000 extra which she thinks if you look through the accounts and find where we can cut out in different areas. James states that she knows we are trying not increase the tax rate if at all possible and that for the last 2 years we have decreased it. James says it will take some fine tuning on these other items to figure what we need to do. She also states that these are the County

General accounts. Craig states its actually County General, Health, Cum Bridge & Cum CCD. He states that is what we budget property taxes on. Brown questions if we go with Option 1, will it leave us a little short? James states that both of the Options will leave us short. Craig stated that the last couple years the County tried to reduce the rate and we have successfully done that. Craig explains how it works with tax caps. James stated that in the past we have actually advertised budgets for more than the levy and we don't spend it all and that is what saves us. She also states that there are numbers that we can look and try to reduce the cost. Craig stated we do have cash balances that have sustained us, which is good. Craig just needs a decision for the levy so that they can finalize for the adoption meeting next week. James stated that Option 1 takes it back to 2019 percentage and the max would be the 2021 tax rate. Weir stated its nice to have cash balances, but the public's cash balances are depleting too and we need to do the best we can to keep it flat. Brown agreed with Weir. James states she would hate to see us raise it and if the assessed values go down we will have to raise the rate. James states we need to find areas to cut spending. Weir says the Council needs to go back over the budget and look a little closer and find areas to cut. Craig states that next year when people come in asking for additional appropriations that we try and find other monies that have already been appropriated that we can transfer instead of appropriating more. Craig stated that we have ARP money still and we have good cash balances. Weir states we have bridges to fix and the budget, we have new vehicles, and we don't need new vehicles. Weir states that it's good we have a program where we are replacing them but he believes we can cut vehicles and maybe pick it back up again. Weir states we need to just look over the budgets a little more and cut the vehicles so that we can pay for bridges and culverts that we don't have money for. James stated that the Highway truck is out of the Budget. James stated that years ago they would budget for a \$100,000 every year to keep the trucks updated but for 2020-2021 they inadvertently order 2 trucks and so we didn't budget for a new the next year. Roger Lewis spoke wanting to know what vehicles they were planning to cut. James stated that there were 3 police vehicles that are allotted in there each year, EOC was asking for a truck and Economic Development was asking for a car lease. Weir stated we had a lot of vehicle requests. Lewis stated that police cars you don't want to cut because of the miles that they have to put on them. Lewis states that if you don't keep the police cars updated and someone gets a call for an emergency and it breaks down it will come down on you all and he doesn't want that for you. Brent Bush stated the thought there were 2 pickup trucks in the Highway budget also. James stated yes there was. Rennels stated he thought they had dump trucks that were non-functional and were not functioning at the time. Deputy Wickens stated that yes there were at least 3 that we are paying a lot to maintain them. Auditor Furry explains to Council the budget sheet she handed to them about what was requested and what was advertised. Furry explains where things were cut from the last meeting they had.

Weir questions what was requested in the General fund was 20% and the Council has cut it down to 14.8%? Furry stated she has more but couldn't change without showing it to the Council. Furry states that there are other areas where we can cut it more. Weir states the entire budget is 22 million which is a 25% increase for 2023, but we asked you to look for cuts and the Auditor cut it to 16 million. Auditor Furry states yes that is correct. Weir states this is still huge. Rennels questions if this is all the pencil changes that were made during the 2 days of hearings? Rennels states that the public officials were in the meetings and concurred with the changes. Furry stated, yes, they were. Rennels states that it still needs to be tightened. Rennels brings up the tax levy, stating that the County tax rate has been dropped in the last couple of years and we have a projection if we drop it or increase it. Rennels wondered if we just left it level at the tax rate and let it fall somewhere in between. Craig stated he would have a hard time dialing in exactly because it has to do with the assessed value. Craig states there are several options here. Craig stated that there are so many things that factor in for taxes and the levy is the only thing the Council controls. Craig stated that the levy is the biggest chunk of revenue for the

County. Craig explained about the taxes that are distributed and how we get our funds in County General. Craig also states that we will not spend our whole budget. James stated that we get reimbursed for different things for grants and other projects. Craig stated that the reimbursements are calculated in the amounts for the budget. Craig states that we are spending more. Craig states we are probably getting more revenue but it's hard to calculate all the factors in the Courthouse. Big picture the other revenues are small. Craig also states that he may not have the revenue calculated exactly because it is hard to do with all of the grants and investments. Craig thinks that in the next couple years for budget hearings we need to have the offices grow it by 3 % and find how to grow the revenue by 5% and bend the curve back the other way. Weir stated that in his job his budget was flat for 10 years and he had to be creative. Weir states we need a realistic budget because if someone requests a 15% wage increase that the Auditor should hand it back to them and tell them that's not realistic. Furry states that that is the Council's job. Weir states we need parameters for next year. Craig stated that he was doing an analysis on Professional Services, and in the General Fund it is around 75% (salaries and benefits). Weir states we have a budget. Craig explains that we won't spend all of the budgeted monies. Bush questions on how much was left in the budget for 2021. Auditor to get those numbers. Report is large and will take a while to run. Craig stated it would be helpful to run a report monthly that showed what has been spent each month and half way through the year on what is left. Showing the Council where we are at each month. James stated that she has spoken to the Auditor about a 5-year average report to see where we are and see where we can be long term for budgets each year. Rennels states that with inflation the curve will get bent a little. Furry states we need a 5-year plan. Craig states that every year we need something but we don't know where it is going to come from. Rennels states that Weir stated that we should give the office holders some guidance on a percentage that they could work with, but what got ended up being a big number which we had to go back and hack, so everybody got to put in their wish list. Rennels stated that if they would have had realistic expectations on how much they need in there, we wouldn't be dealing with this. Weir stated the Council wouldn't have to do this. Rennels stated how do we cut 2 million dollars, or 2.5 million? Weir stated he thinks we need to get the General Fund at 10% on the proposed. Weir states he doesn't have numbers to work with he is just ballparking it and that may not be the right number. Craig states he understands where Weir is coming from but how do you implement it from now to next Wednesday. Craig states this is going to be hard to do. We want to make sure we have enough money to pay what we need to pay. Rennels stated that they had agreed on proposed salaries and he thinks that the numbers that they came up with were very reasonable and that we go lower we could run into some potential problems. Rennels stated it was really small number compared to what the Commissioners had proposed to us. James asked in order to have a work session do we have to advertise? Craig stated yes. James asked 48 hours prior? Furry stated she can let the Newspaper know and we have to post it outside the Courtroom 48 hours prior. Publishing is for Public hearings. Rennels states that here is the hard part for us we have already cut one dump truck that they need. Furry stated we add Jailers and 911. James corrected Furry stating that the 911 comes out of the 911 Fund not County General. Craig stated that 911 is spending more than what it is bringing in though. Rennels asked where the 911 funds come from? Craig explained it comes from the state. James stated that the 911 fund has a very healthy balance because we haven't spent it. Rennels stated that big balance is a target for someone to take a look at. James stated that the dispatchers are 911. Rennels asked if the Council was here tonight to make cuts or discuss? Craig stated that tonight he needs to know what they want to do on the Tax Levy. He needs to have that part done so that he can get the numbers in the system. Craig stated that realistically you have until October 12. Craig stated that the Council can cut budgets after the first of the year. It's just like additional appropriation, it's called a reduction of appropriation. Rennels states as a number point of view on these tax rates, you have to go to the 3rd or 4th decimal to see

where the change is and then when we fly with real numbers that is when it becomes significant. Craig states that you are right Mr. Rennels. Rennels states we are in a tight range (regarding taxes). Craig states we are going down but not by a lot. James questions if we have a work session sometime in the next week do we have to have a minimum number of people to attend. Craig states we need at least a quorum to approve but not for a work session. James would like others to be there to run numbers for us and make changes and send it out to everyone and have everyone review it and then approve it at the October 12th meeting. James believes it's going to take time to get balances and see where we are at. Council to have a work session and work on the numbers. Craig questions again what does the Council want to do with the rate. Council would like to keep it level. Craig states he can try and get it level. Rennels stated he was comfortable with the salaries that the Council came up with at the last meeting. Rennels states that when doing the numbers, it's plus or minus 3% for most, and looking at inflation it looks like it's quite a bit less and he is comfortable with that if we can do it financially. James stated that the Auditor put the numbers in the system for us. The recommendation that came into us across the board is not doable. Weir stated and the 18% one was not either. James makes a work session for October 6, 2022 at 9:00 a.m. if everyone can make it. James asks that the Council look over the items they have discussed and come with ideas for the work session.

- IX. **Public Comment:** Ann Wickens, Chief Deputy Auditors requests that the HSA be paid out all at once or twice a year. At this time the HSA is paid quarterly and it is \$250. It's not enough to pay a bill. James states that it is the Commissioner decision.

Tonya Lewis, Auditor's Property Deputy, asked to speak on the longevity pay that the County employees receive for years of service. Lewis stated that she has spoken with several others about when the longevity pay is actually awarded. She spoke with HR and was told that the Longevity pay is not paid out on the anniversary date. Employees get the longevity pay the following year of their anniversary. Lewis provided a copy of the Amended ordinance to the Council stating it doesn't state that the longevity pay is paid out the following year. Lewis stated that several employee's anniversary date is at the beginning of the year and she feels that this needs to be clarified so that the employees understand how the longevity pay actually works. Council to discuss the longevity pay at the next meeting.

X. **Adjourn**

Motion to Adjourn made by _____ and 2nd by _____. All in favor.
Meeting Adjourned.

Aye

Nay

Ashley James

Not present for this meeting

Randy Dreher

William B Bush

William Brent Bush

Rick Weir

Rick Weir

Martin Brown

Martin Brown

William Rennels

William Rennels

Kelly Summerville

Attest:

Brenda Furry
Brenda Furry, Auditor

Date: 11/14/20