

**Vermillion County Council  
Special Meeting Minutes**

January 27th, 2024

2 P.M.

Commissioner's Courtroom, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Courthouse

- I. Call to Order
- II. Pledge Allegiance to the Flag
- III. Roll Call
  - All Present
- IV. New Business

- a. Economic Development: James read her statement pertaining to the economic development.

James reads her statement on concerns with economic development and adds the time line that has led to the meeting today. She goes to say in summary, “Without the joint resolution for economic development we are left with the confusion and turmoil we attempted to remove from our county. And decisions made this evening would be with the desire to provide blank slate. One that is clear of any past resolutions, ordinances, boards, councils, commissioners, or personal agendas. We want to create a clear and concise path for economic development in our county that is also fiscally responsible to our taxpayers. We are open to working with the county commissioners to re-establish this structure and guidance we thought we once had achieved. It is not our desire to push out county backwards, but to provide a clear path to move forward. In order to promote our county, we much have a strong foundation to support our future”. And quote.

Weir would also like to share some things, wants to address the process of the application for the economic development Director position. Wants to know how the hiring process is conducted, feels there is no organized structure to the interview process. Continues to reads his statement on the matter.

Costello reads his statement on the matter of economic development. Talks about the law and speaks on IC Title 36, a section involves establishing economic development department and commission. And in Section 4, it says a fiscal body which is all these people, referring to County Council; the fiscal body of a unit which is the county if they find it necessary to finance economic development or pollution control facilities under this chapter. The fiscal body may establish a Dept of Economic Development to be controlled by commission. With that code, it gave the council the ability to do this. He has to follow the letter of the law, he continues to say.

James reads a letter submitted by Commissioner Dunavan and Commissioner Hess stating they support economic development in Vermillion County, and County Council zeroing out the budget would send the county the wrong message to anyone looking to invest or build in Vermillion County. The commissioners, in this letter is requesting that the council propose that they table any decisions being made tonight.

Weir asks if there are any questions or concerns on the I-74 project.

Wants to know if there are options over that. James replies to Weir, wants to bring back Lana with BCS Management and is looking to continue with projects she's involved or has been involved in, and signing into a contract with her to follow through with these projects.

Weir has questions for Commissioner Dunavan and requests he approach the pew. Weir wants Dunavan to explain the decision-making process in resending the Coalition at meeting. Commissioner Dunavan replies, the Commissioners had discussed putting it back outside the commissioner's purview and as my discussion with Ashley James today the commissioners still believe that we should not oversee economic development in Vermillion County. Per his conversation with James, they were willing to put together a joint resolution with the Council.

Weir continues to ask Dunavan if he looked for outside council or advice when making this decision for economic development. Dunavan replied, absolutely, for the last two years he has meet people across the state when you go to commissioner's conferences, you talk to people, absolutely.

Weir continues to ask questions to Dunavan, and Dunavan replies that those questions do not pertain to the subject in matter.

Costello would like to ask on the joint resolution, was the repelled or rescinded by the commissioners? Dunavan replies, that what the commissioners want at the end of they day, is economic development to be impartial from the Commissioner's. Want economic development to be separate from the commissioner's and want it by itself, of a board of 5-7 members; to be independent.

Commissioner Dunavan is requesting the County, today tabled the two ordinances that is on the agenda for today and to work together and establish a new board, and a new resolution.

Commissioner Dunavan has question on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, as stated in the letter if the Board of County Council, table the ordinances and would take a step forward with the commissioners and send a message to Vermillion County that we are working together all 9(10) of us to create that new joint resolution and structure that everyone can be a part of.

James states going through with the ordinances today and resending, the remaining structure of what's left; essentially gives them the ability to have a blank slate. We will have to create a new ordinance to set something up by us actually approving the ordinances today; it gives us that blank slate to with one document and not have to go back and piece together form this resolution to the ordinance, to this one and so on.

Summerville states that up until today, commissioners did not show a lot of interest in working together.

James has issues with the budget just sitting there, has had verbal agreements in the past to not spend money and there had been issues.

Wants this is black and white, she does not feel comfortable as the fiscal body leaving that money there and potentially have that risk. This is the reason for the reduction.

Commissioner Dunavan has states the Board of Commissioners would agree to sign any document, the economic development commission have prepared to sign any document stating no money will be spent until council and commissioners have come up with a joint resolution.

James asks the question if Doug Hess was formally hired as the Economic Development Director; Ron Dunavan, President of Economic Development Commission gets up to speak and states that, Yes, Doug Hess was formally hired at the economic development meeting.

Costello mentions the 2025 Budget was set with the economic development in mind with the Coalition and once the commissioners rescinded that ordinance that 2025 coalition budget went with it. Therefore, there was not a budget for 2025 to hire anyone.

Commissioner Dunavan also asked for this to be paused is because this will have to be sent to DLGF, they will have to review this for 14 days making their decision on a reduction of whatever that amount of \$330,000, and asks that they don't do that because people at the state will look at us, like what's going on in Vermillion County. Thinks this can be handles internally. James reply's that if it is questioned, there is supporting documentation supporting why it was put in place. James wants to do it right this time.

Weir asks Commissioner Dunavan the question on Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> at the end of the meeting that had to do with CO2, did you receive money for your political campaign from someone associated with the CO2 project. Commissioner Dunavan answers, NO, he has never accepted any funding of any kind. Weir continues to ask; did you receive money from Alan Morrison in the amount of \$250.00 for your campaign. Commissioner Dunavan, again answers, he has not received anything.

Weir wants to continue to ask Mr. Ron Dunavan, is there any other expenses that council does not know about, is there expenses from advertising, is there expenses for a signing bonus or anything like that. Ron Dunavan answers, NO.

b. Resolution 2025-01

Open for comments:

- Commissioner Dunavan approached for comment. Wants to the council either vote down this or table it. Thinks working together is the best way. Wants a joint meeting set with commissioners and council before they leave today.
- Randy Dreher, thought that after the election in November, that the two boards would come together and collaborate and work together for the better of the taxpayers in the county. When the commissions wanted to change the coalition, there was never a special meeting and it was done

the legal way. Costello mentions that all parties were mentioned that was involved in the creation of the coalition. James replies with, correct. She continues to say everything they did was advertised and at public meetings and was open to the public. Dreher asks, as far as the money, they are wanting to zero out, wasn't the economic development established with EDIT tax. James stated that it is down wared to the LIT EDIT. So, it encompasses what was the EDIT. Then Dreher asks, are they going to eliminate Economic Development Council or Economic Development Commission or eliminate that tax on the taxpayer and what's going to be done with the money. James replies with there is still a need to economic development, we just need desire the structure so we can financially be responsible for with the taxpayer's money.

Summerville makes a statement that he's been wanting to get rid of economic development for about 3 years now. Questions what have economic development done in the last 30 years. Few residents from the seats names a few things economic development over the last 30 years, National Gypson, Industrial Park, and Vermillion Rise SPEC building just to name a few.

- Commissioner Dunavan has a few more things to address, addresses his answer to Councilman Summerville. He has served on the economic development council, and speaks on the projects that economic development has done; it has funded multiple parks when they needed equipment, loaned money to multiple small towns when they needed money. So, that's a win but, that is not the only thing they do. Also, does small business loans, and consider that a win, as well.
- Weir adds that he thinks economic development is essential to the county. Creates wealth, creates capital investments, and its creation of business.
- John Michael Major, former Council President. Says, what the council is doing here today is just beyond ridiculous. Getting calls from around the state, asking what is going on is Vermillion County and that is embarrassing. He continues to say, might as well get a sign and say "Vermillion County is Closed". He continues to say, council is saying, "we don't want no money, no business, no jobs" and this is a disaster waiting to happen.

James replies, that council is here today because of what commissioners did at the Jan 02, 2025 meeting and did commissioners get the same speech that council is getting now. Commissioners created this problem.

Major adds that they need to act like adults and work together.

- Jeff Tuner, land owner in Highland township, wants to state agrees with council on today's agenda. Has concerns about redevelopment and the land up north. Land owners are unaware, they're going to take up to 39%. The people that live there don't want that. Erase the EDA money and don't worry about the TIFF, he adds.

- Kevin Harry, he supports what Mr. Turner had to say. Don't know why there has to be so much of the northern part of the county sanctioned off for this development. Another concern is for the south, how much taxes are they going to have to pay. How much of this money is going to leak down to the south part of this county? Appreciates the time to speak.
- Costello adds that Ordinance 2025-01 leaves everything in place. This budget was set up for the coalition and that now the coalition no longer exists. We are not eliminating the budget, we are reducing it. That money/ Fund still stays there.
- Costello motions to pass resolution 2025-01 for the adopted amount of \$38,684.00 from \$330, 270.00 reduced by \$291,586.00.

Furry seconds, all in favor, motion carries

c. Ordinance 2025-02

- Costello adds the ordinance 94-02 in 1994 was created and structured by the following Indiana Code 36-7-12, 1-29. If a county chooses to do economic development or have economic development or structure; does it have to be set up accordingly to Indiana Code 36-7-12 and all it's chapters or is it that you can do it how ever you want? He asks the council attorney.

Council Attorney, Scott Craig replies to Costello's question, with the council and commissioners could decide that with a resolution to have a structure for economic development that encompasses whatever they agree upon. There is no one side, there is a lot of ways this can be done. The commission exists because of the law. If council finds that it's necessary to finance certain kinds of public improvements or Pollution Control; it's a financing vehicle to finance certain kinds of improvements.

Costello, if they eliminate 94-02, at some point that will just find themselves creating a new ordinance stating the same thing as the 94-02 ordinance.

James states that the economic development commission does not actually run economic development. Attorney Scott Craig answers, yes, and continues to states that their powers are limited to certain kinds of loans and bonds and financials.

Costello asks, 94-02 being that it's regulated by Indiana Code 36-7-12, 4 specifically gives the fiscal body of a unit the authority to create the ordinance. If we don't do something that looks like 94-02, if we do something different; what controls that one?

Craig replies with, it's a home rule concept.

Costello asks if we don't follow the state code does it effect the council's ability to impose a tax (EDIT)?

Craig answers, it used to be for economic development only, since it has changed and now can be used for any governmental purpose.

- Weir suggest that 94-02 should remain in place.
- Furry thinks we need to start with a clean slate.
- James- When they come to terms with the commissioners, there's going to have to be a new ordinance put into place.
- Summerville motions to approve Ordinance 2025-02  
Bose seconds the motion, all in favor, motion carries.

Weir make a comment, in the interest of moving forward in Vermillion County, he does suggest they get with commissioners as soon as appropriate for advertising and everything else and have this session discussing here and start moving forward.

James agrees with Weir, and asks for the files on the loans from economic development.

Weir suggest that someone appointed to handle those files.

James would like to reinstate the contact with Lana. Would like to entertain a motion to use their current funding in their budget and give their blessing for them to spend their professional service money on that. Use this as a formal approval so it is in the minutes.

- Weir motions as stated to recommend the redevelopment commission use their current budget to rehire Atlanta for economic development purposes as needed.  
Furry seconds, all in favor, motion carries

Weir would like to have a joint meeting with commissioners and will come up with dates with in the first week of February. Will put on calendar when a date and time is established.

#### V. Public Comment

- Commissioner Dunavan- Before the joint meeting is scheduled, wants to start an email chain on ideas for the meeting.  
Speaks about the Text my Gov, how this would benefit the county with the texting option of the public notifications for meetings, and etc.
- Penny Carpenter- Talks about doing this text thing with Red and White, they send you their ad every week. It pops in you text box, you don't have to go looking for it. Thinks it an excellent idea. For example, with the I-74 stuff, we sent out 236 post cards for two different meetings and that was a lot of expenses. Agrees with the idea of the notification texting option that Commissioner Dunavan is offering.
- Luke Martin, concerned citizen- Since council resolved all this today, what happens to the director's position, what happens to the members? Does it all go away, are they no longer involved?  
Council replies, it all goes away. Current members are no longer. Council also suggests if he has any ideas to come to the meetings or email them.  
Martin states lastly, he feels there is too much "family" involved in different aspects of the county and is a conflict.
- Lenard- Several years ago, he was on the board and wants to answer some if the councilman Summerville's questions. There have been many things that economic development has done over the years; it's quiet and they don't always advertise. Continues to speak positively about all the


sitting there today, attend a meeting and suggest they at least attend one every once in a while.  
Castello agrees that it is hard to fill these roles, and in fact her believes the council was approached right before Mr. Hess was hired to increase the salary substantially.  
Because, you couldn't find people of high caliber and the council trying to promote this did agree to that. So, the council on board with trying to help.

VI. Adjourn

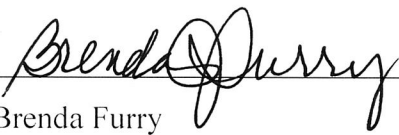
- Weir motions to adjourn the meeting
  - Furry seconds that motion
- All in favor, motion carried.

AYE:

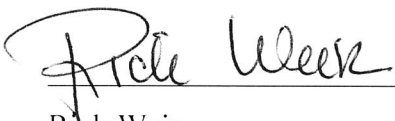
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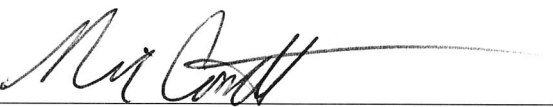
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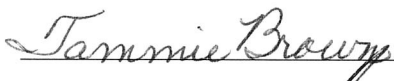
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Rick Weir

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Neil Castello

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Tammie Brown

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Kelly Summerville

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Jeff Bose

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Attest:

Ron Dunavan

Ron Dunavan

2/10/2025

Date