

**RE: Airport Authority  
Transfer of Funds/Additional Appropriations  
Victims Assistance Grant  
2008 appointments  
2008 meeting times  
Watershed Grant  
Countywide sewer district  
ISU interns  
Tax & Capital Projects review board**

**Minutes-Vermillion County Council December 12, 2007**

The Vermillion County Council met in the Commissioners Courtroom, Courthouse, Newport, Indiana.

\*The meeting did not record due to a malfunctioning tape. The minutes below are from the Daily Clintonian and notes from Auditor Koma.

Council President John Yoho called the meeting to order and led in the Pledge to the Flag.

Roll call was taken: Present were John Yoho, Fred Daniels, Lavonna Mattick, Randy Dreher, John Cheesewright, Mike Costello, Jerry Hawkins, Attorney Don Darnell, and Auditor Sherrie Koma. A motion was made to approve the November meeting minutes and seconded.

Discussion of the creation of an Airport Authority to pursue federal grants and operate the Clinton Airport, currently owned by White Construction, Inc., as a public airport, came to an end Wednesday evening when no Vermillion County Council member was willing to second a motion that would have brought the matter to a vote.

Discussion of the airport has been ongoing since August, when White Construction offered to donate the existing airport property to the county, allowing it to be publicly owned and operated, and become eligible for federal aviation grants that would allow for expansion.

Vermillion County Economic Development Director Ed Cole reiterated that he was in support of forming the authority. "We're trying to invest in ourselves, improve infrastructure and opportunities to attract business," Cole said. "We see the airport as another tool to do this." He also provided information that indicated the airport had averages in excess of 8,000 takeoffs and landing annually. Many, he said, were by Indiana State University students. Cole referred to an old saying- "you can't get there from here," and stated that "not having an airport makes that very true." He reminded the council that no tax money is being requested, just the forming of an airport authority, and told them that they would have veto power over any tax money going toward the airport in the future.

On Aug. 7, the Vermillion County Commissioners voted in favor of a resolution expressing their support for creation of the airport authority.

Jack West questioned previous statements that the county would be responsible for mowing, snow removal, insurance and salaries at the airport, compared to more recent statements that those things could be funded by grant money. Cole said he believed the available grant money would be able to fund the operation of the airport, with no tax money needed.

West then questioned the 2 ½ percent match that would be needed for any federal grants received, and Ken Ross of NGC Corporation, a consulting firm that has been working with the Economic Development Council on the airport project, explained that the value of the land donated by the Whites could provide the matching funds for initial grants, and unused money from grants received could be used as matching funds for future grants.

Ross stated that the idea of funding the airport with no tax levy is "still the proposal on the table and still our goal."

Councilman John Cheesewright cited a portion of a state statute regarding airport authorities, which says the authority has the right to impose a tax rate.

Ross responded that he sent the entire statute regarding the authority to council members rather than pull out selected paragraphs, and that the code actually says that the fiscal body (the county council) may review and modify the budget and tax levy for the airport authority, meaning there would only be a tax levy if the budget was in excess of the funds available, and that no tax levy could be imposed without the council's approval.

Council's Attorney Don Darnell countered that "implicit in the law is the right for every department to have a fair budget to do what it's got to do," meaning that the council could not "just zero out" the airport budget if not enough money is available, but would have to provide funding.

Cheesewright stated that the authority also has the right to incur debt and impose taxes to repay it. Ross replied that no one can incur debt without having the means to pay it back, and that it would have to be provided for in the budget in order for money to be borrowed.

"It would be like a member of the board borrowing money without the permission of the council," Darnell said.

Councilman Jerry Hawkins asked if the airport authority could ever be dissolved, and no one was able to provide a clear answer regarding that.

"Once it's established, we'll probably have taxation from now on," stated Councilman John Yoho. Darnell replied that there would not be taxation if enough grant money was received to pay for the airport's operation.

Hawkins stated he had not heard many people come before the council and object to the idea of the airport authority. West responded that was because everyone who objected was sent away from the November meeting.

Hawkins stated that "people who are elected to these jobs need to listen to what's going on, think it through and make decision in the best interest of the people who elected them, regardless of their own personal thoughts."

"The best comment I heard was that we need to give this an up or down vote, but not pretend it will not take public support. When you do think in the public interest, it takes public support," Hawkins said.

Hawkins added that a lot of the objection to the airport is based on "the fear that a bunch of things are going to happen that people don't want," but that "people aren't saying that. All they're saying is they don't want taxes raised to support the airport." Hawkins stated that residents currently pay a penny in economic development tax, and that an additional quarter of a penny of EDIT tax would pay for the airport, and another quarter of a penny would run the EOC. "That's half a penny to do both," Hawkins said.

"I'm excited about this," Hawkins continued. "I don't know if it'll be a great deal, but if we vote no, it never comes up before this council again...ever. I don't care if the Red Baron uses it and that's all it is, we tried it. I don't think this council would let the authority get out of control with spending. If we vote no, it's not an issue, but we'll never know what could be."

Yoho attempted to stop discussion, saying only 10 minutes had been allowed.

"I've heard people talk about dogs and junk cars for two or three hours," Hawkins replied.

"This has gone on since August," Yoho countered. "We need to get it over with."

"We don't have to stop talking tonight, do we?" Hawkins asked, to which Yoho replied, "Yes, we do."

An unidentified resident added that, once the airport is operational, it will generate income of its own, which would help keep tax money from being needed.

Hawkins moved to form the airport authority, but the motion died for lack of a second.

Following the discussion, Yoho had to leave the council meeting due to a medical issue. Councilman Mike Costello presided over the rest of the meeting.

In other business, several transfer of funds were approved by the council.

Sheriff Bob Spence presented an additional appropriation request totaling \$33,200, which included \$2,300 for garage repair, \$2,500 for jail maintenance,

\$1,600 for prisoner meals, \$23,2500 for gas and oil and \$3,300 for sheriff car accessories. Spence explained that he was trying not to have any expenses carry over into 2008, and start the New Year clean and clear. After some discussion, all of the request was approved except for the \$2,500.00 for jail maintenance, which Spence was asked to see about taking from the money left over from the refinancing of jail bonds.

Prosecutor Nina Alexander presented budgets for the last half of 2007 and the first half of 2008 for the victims' assistance grant, which runs from July through June. For 2007, the budget totaled \$8,560 and for 2008 it increased to \$9,240. The council approved the budgets.

The council made its appointments for 2008, reappointing Darnell as its attorney. John Cheesewright will replace Jerry Hawkins on the Vermillion County Economic Development Council, and Lary Langley was reappointed to the Area Plan Commission.

Richard Zumwalt and John Haga were reappointed to the park board, Lavonna Mattick remained on the E-911 board, Cynthia Myers was reappointed to the Alcoholic Beverage Board and Harry Rieches was reappointed to the West Central Indiana Economic Development District.

Meeting times for 2008 were announced. Meetings will continue to be held at 7 p.m. on the second Monday of the month. It was mentioned that Yoho had wanted to discuss the possibility of holding council meetings during the day, but the other council members stated they felt this would prevent residents from being able to attend it. It was decided not to change the meeting times.

Soil and Water Conservation District Board Member Les Zimmerman reported that the district had received an \$182,000 watershed grant for the Little Vermillion River. Board members will meet with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management in January to sign the contract for the three-year grant.

Zimmerman also reported on the status of the proposed countywide sewer district, stating he had originally intended to present a request this month for an EDIT tax increase to fund the district.

Zimmerman stated that he did not make the request partly, "because you don't sound like you're in the mood to do something exciting," and partly because he wanted to wait until the financial consultant recently hired by the county completes his study before making the request.

Zimmerman also said there is a regional sewer district in the county, referring to Crown Hill Sewer District, and that he had learned that Crown Hill could expand its boundaries to include the entire county, a possibility he wants to discuss with them and explore further before asking for funding.

Zimmerman added that, eventually, IDEM will be requiring the county to address the issue of sanitary systems, and also that, presently "we can't build in Newport or Dana" because of the lack of a sanitary system.

"We want to be in charge, and not have the state call the shots." Zimmerman said.

Costello reported that Indiana State University was looking at the possibility of having two or three interns work in the courthouse.

Hawkins presented the council with copies of an ordinance recently passed in Hamilton County, and encouraged the council to consider passing a similar ordinance in the near future. He explained that House Bill 1478, recently passed by the state, provides for the establishment of a nine-member, appointed, Tax and Capital Projects Review Board, which would have the authority to review, revise and reduce the budget, tax rate and tax levy of any county, city, town, school, library or other taxing entity in the state, unless the county passes an ordinance limiting the authority of the board.

The ordinance would limit the authority of the board only to reviewing capital projects in excess of \$7 million, and must be passed before July 2008 in order to prevent the board from having authority over the county's budgets and taxes.

"I don't know of nay council that wants to see this happen," said Hawkins. The council asked Darnell to work on similar ordinance for the county.

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded.

Read in full and approved by the Vermillion County Council on 14th day of January 2008.

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John Yoho

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Fred Daniels

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Lavonna Mattick

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Randy Dreher

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John Cheesewright

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Mike Costello

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Jerry Hawkins

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
          Sherrie A. Koma, Auditor