

**RE: EOC funding for remainder of 08
Additional Appropriations
Transfer of Funds
Public Defender Board Additional Appropriation
Health Professionals-jail medical
Government Consulting Services
Tax Relief Legislation**

Minutes-Vermillion County Council May 14, 2008

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

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, Lavonna Mattick, Randy Dreher, John Cheesewright, Mike Costello, Mike Reed, Attorney Don Darnell and Auditor Sherrie Koma.

Cheesewright made a motion to approve the minutes of the April meeting, seconded by Dreher. All were in favor.

*No minutes were taken. Copied Clintonian's article, along with Koma's notes.

Clinton Assistant Fire Chief Todd Young and EOC Director Ramon Colombo spoke to the council about funding to keep the EOC open after the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) ends. The program is scheduled to end at the end of September, when neutralization of Nerve Agent VX at the Newport Chemical Depot is complete.

Young and Colombo had presented information to the Vermillion County Commissioners at their meeting last week, explaining the importance of emergency management and the commissioners had voted in favor of maintaining the EOC, subject to funding from the council.

Young gave the same presentation to the council, and also provided some examples of the importance of having an emergency management agency in the county. He mentioned a flood approximately two years ago in which several homes were damaged, and explained that Vermillion County Emergency Management performed damage assessments, which helped residents receive federal aid to repair their homes. Young explained that, without Emergency Management to perform those assessments, residents' insurance rate would increase, because they would have to be handled by the insurance companies.

Young also explained that there is presently state funding available to help pay salaries for two EOC employees, but that the county will lose access to this funding if they allow the EOC to close.

Young said, by keeping it, we keep the state funding. If not, we lose it in the future if we have to bring the EOC back in.

Young cited another example during the winter when a gas leak shut down the heat at the Vermillion Convalescent Center in Clinton. He explained that, due to lack of heat, emergency personnel were faced with the possibility of having to relocate 150 residents of the facility. Young said he does not have the resources to do that but Colombo does.

Yoho said he thought that was a little farfetched. He said what kind of emergency could make you have to move that many people? Young explained that with the heat off due to a gas leak, and temperatures of 5 degrees, the need to move all 150 residents had been a very real possibility, and had it become necessary, would not have been possible without the assistance of Emergency Management.

Colombo told the council that FEMA has agreed to pay the salary for the EOC director through May 2009, and the state has agreed to pay 56 percent of the salary for the office manager. With the remainder of this one salary, plus general operating costs for the EOC, the estimated budget for the fourth quarter of the year would be \$10,524.00. He added that, with only two employees, it would be possible to share the office space with economic development or another county office in order to further reduce those costs.

Colombo said that we have Emergency Management, it doesn't have to be full-time, it can be part-time but we have to have an EOC. It can be located in the attic of a garage somewhere, but we've got to have it.

Young added that Vermillion County currently, as a result of equipment purchased through CSEPP, has the most state-of-the-art EOC in the state of Indiana. He added that many of the grants received by fire departments and other agencies go through the EOC, and without one, it is much less likely that the departments will be able to obtain them.

Young said that without the EOC, you couldn't get grants for fire trucks or gear. He also said that the required equipment for one firefighter costs \$5,000.00 and that Clinton had received a \$100,000 grant last year to purchase new equipment for all of its volunteer firemen. Without the EOC, we wouldn't have been able to get it said Young.

Costello questioned whether the EOC director has to be a full-time position. Colombo said it does not, but it would be foolish not to do so at present. He said you can have a half-time person and pay half salary or you can have a full-time person with the state paying 60 percent.

Dreher commented that the council sat here a few months ago with an airport project that would have been funded through grants and no one would support that. He said he was concerned that the grant money would eventually dry up, leaving the county to cover the costs.

Mattick said that we need to keep this. Colombo explained that Vermillion County is already way ahead of the curve because the state has mandated things like emergency alert sirens, which the county already has in place. Some day,

we're going to have to pay for this stuff ourselves. If we give it away now and have to buy it later, I don't know how we're going to do it. He said that if the state funding does dry up, maintaining the EOC could still be an unfunded mandate but would still be required if the state makes it mandatory. Dreher said he just thinks the grants are doing to dry up.

Colombo added that the lease for the EOC building ends when the CSEPP program ends, but that Mayor Jerry Hawkins had said he would support continuing the lease at \$1 per year. Cheesewright said he would jack the rent up because he is broke. Young said that if he loses the EOC, all he can do with the space right now is close the building and turn down the heat.

Costello said that at budget time, the council will need some firm numbers as to who pays what. Colombo added that, at that time, the council would be able to set the salaries and pay scale for any EOC employees. No action was taken because the request had not been presented on the appropriate paperwork for an additional appropriation. The Commissioners will file an official request for the appropriation for the June meeting.

The council approved several additional appropriations. One request from the cumulative jail fund for \$120,000 was approved, for the purpose of replacing the control panel, which operates most of the systems at Vermillion County Jail. Currently, the fund has \$164,000.00. Another request from cumulative reassessment for \$5,000.00 was approved, for the purpose of funding a contract with IAS to assist with assessment of commercial properties. A request from the cumulative bridge fund in the amount of \$105,667.01 was approved for costs of construction on bridges 35 and 36 near Hillsdale. Highway Superintendent Bill Clark explained that the funds are available, but need to be appropriated before they can be spent.

A request for the non-reverting park fund, which added \$1,000.00 to the amount available for each park, was approved. During discussion, Costello stated he would like to see the park equipment put up at Blanford, as it has been there for two years and residents would like to see it installed. Costello said he felt this should be a priority for the park board, and had suggested tabling the appropriation until it was done

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A transfer of funds in the amount of \$20,00.00 from liability and casualty funds to gasoline and oil was approved due to increasing fuel costs.

Tom Wilson requested an additional appropriation in the amount of \$2,600 to pay \$650 for malpractice insurance for each of the county's four public defenders. The request was tabled because it was not presented in writing and advertised.

Representatives of Health Professionals gave a brief presentation on the services they have provided at Vermillion County Jail, including a breakdown of doctor visits, emergency room visits, prescriptions and other services for the year. The council asked if similar reports could be provided every six months and it was agreed that reports would be provided.

Melissa Ambre of Government Consulting Services, a financial consultant hired to conduct a financial health evaluation for the county, presented the council members with copies of her updated report, which included the recommendations she had presented two months ago. Ambre also gave a roughly 60 minutes presentation the affect of the recent property tax relief legislation on the county's finances.

Costello asked Ambre if she could provide the council with a "top five" list of the most important things the county should consider doing from a financial standpoint, and Ambre said she would do so.

Costello also spoke to the council on behalf of Hawkins, show was unable to attend. Hawkins had asked Costello to express Hawkins' concerns about the tax relief legislation, and the money that municipalities will lose as a result. He asked the council to consider ideas such as local option income taxes to help offset the loss of property tax revenue, which will cut Clinton's budget by an estimated 12 percent. The city does not have the authority to levy such taxes itself. He said they need to keep in mind there's no revenue source to replace that money. He said that adding that many tax units in the county would be hit hard by the new property tax law.

Mattick made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Cheesewright.

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

John Cheesewright

Mike Carty

Lavonna Mattick

Randy Dreher

Mike Reed

Mike Costello

Attest: _____
Sherrie A. Koma, Auditor