

Council Meeting
July 21, 2009 – 5:00 pm

The meeting was called to order by President Spaetti. Councilmen Spaetti, Ebert, Winsett, Kress, Waninger, Kroeger, Bunner, and Attorney Wetherill were present.

Public Hearing – Rock Creek Shavings

Attorney Lueken, representing Rock Creek Shavings, stated that all required notifications and publications were made with regard to the public hearing for Rock Creek Shavings to receive tax abatement. The requested length of time for the abatement is six years for real property and five years for personal property. Spaetti asked for public comment. None was had. Winsett stated that anytime the council can help local small business expand and make investments, it should. Bunner stated that even though he felt the length of time for the abatement was longer than necessary, since there were no objections presented, he would support it. Ebert made a motion to approve Resolution 2009-07, Confirming the Designation of a Portion of Spencer County, Indiana as an Economic Revitalization Area and Approving Abatement for Rock Creek Shavings, LLC. Kroeger seconded. All in favor.

Minutes

06/16/2009 minutes; After two changes, Bunner made a motion to approve the minutes. Kress seconded. All in favor.

Victim's Advocate Position

Prosecutor Dan Wilkinson spoke to the council about the Victim's Advocate Position. Wilkinson explained that in the past it was agreed that the county would not allow the person filling the position to sign up for health insurance because it was a grant position. The prior Victim's Advocate did not need to take the county insurance because her husband worked for the county highway department. Wilkinson said since he is interviewing to fill the position with a new person, he would like to have the flexibility of offering health insurance. Spaetti asked if Wilkinson would be willing to pay the administrative costs of offering health insurance from the Pre-trial Diversion budget. Wilkinson said if it was necessary, he would be willing. Wilkinson further stated that insurance may not be an issue, because the person he is offering the job to, will not currently need health insurance.

Discussion was had on the need for the Victim's Advocate position. Judge Jon Dartt stated that most of the duties of the Advocate are required by law.

Additional Appropriations

County General

Circuit Court / Pauper Attorney – Judge Dartt requested an additional for Pauper Attorney in the amount of \$18,668. The requested amount is the amount which came from the state through the 40% reimbursement. Kress made a motion to approve. Ebert seconded. All in favor. Discussion was had on juvenile detention.

Commissioner / Repeater Utility Bills – Commissioner Rininger requested an additional of \$2,000 for repeater utility bills. He explained that the bills are higher than the prior year due to the repeater in St. Meinrad being moved to it own building. Kroeger made a motion to approve. Winsett seconded. All in favor.

Sheriff Jail / Medical, Hospital & Dental – Sheriff Lindsey requested an additional of \$30,000 to cover inmate medical expenses. Discussion was had on the various medical concerns in the jail and how they are handled. Lindsey stated that the average inmate population has increased. He further stated that he is trying to get reimbursements from inmate health insurance policies when available. Ebert made a motion to approve. Bunner seconded. All in favor.

Coroner / Autopsy Expenses – Coroner Barry Schulte did not attend meeting and did not call prior to the start of the meeting. Kroeger made a motion to table the request. Ebert seconded. All in favor.

COIT

Luce Township Regional Sewer District – LTRSD sent the signed acknowledgement from Freedom Bank as requested at the prior council meeting. Discussion was had on the interest rate. LTRSD requested the \$75,000 per the vote by the council at the June 16 meeting. Kress made a motion to approve the additional. Kroeger seconded. The motion passed with a vote of six to one, with Winsett opposing.

Riverboat

Litigation / 231 Adult Plaza – Commissioner Attorney Lueken discussed the request of \$20,000 and the status of the litigation with the 231 Adult Plaza. Ebert made a motion to approve. Kroeger seconded. All in favor.

Rainy Day Fund

Lights on CR / Rainbow Plaza – Don Schulte requested \$8,573 for lights to be installed along the county road (Plaza Drive) through Rainbow Plaza.

Manager of the Comfort Inn, Danielle Dolan, discussed three reasons why she would like to see the lights installed along the road: (1) Safety. She stated that in the evening the curves in the road make it very dangerous to drive. (2) Bridgewater Group's (owners of the Comfort Inn) economic contribution to Spencer County. Dolan stated that Comfort Inn paid \$185,594.71 in payroll for 2008 and \$94,798.83 in payroll for the first half of 2009. Currently 20 out of 20 employees working at the Comfort Inn are Spencer County residents and 34 out of 41 in 2008 were Spencer County residents. The county received \$25,690.51 in Innkeepers Tax in 2008 from the Comfort Inn and \$16,017.16 in the first half of 2009. In addition the hotel has paid \$34,924.48 and \$35,951.46 in property taxes for 2008 and 2009. (3) Economic Development and Growth. Dolan stated that lights will help encourage other entities to locate in Rainbow Plaza, further increasing the tax base for the county.

Susan Arnold, an investor in the Bridgewater Group, stated that last year 21,000 hotel rooms were used by people coming into the county. She also discussed that many of those visitors were driving into and out of the hotel at night and she was concerned for their safety on Plaza Drive.

Schulte stated that this project is about Economic Development and safety. Schulte stated that Rainbow Plaza is the only commercial project of its kind in the county. It has transformed a land into a high tax area with commercial investment and jobs created.

Kress stated that last time this was discussed he did not realize Plaza Drive was a county road. Schulte stated that it was built to county specifications and was turned over to the county.

Ebert stated that he is happy that the hotel is a good project, but there are several businesses in the county on county roads. He stated the council is going to have to install lights for all of the businesses around the county. Schulte stated that the other business are on existing roads, nothing was developed. Rainbow Plaza built the road and created additional commercial property. Bunner stated that it should be handled on a case by case basis.

Ebert asked if any council members were investors in Bridgewater or Rainbow Plaza. None are.

Bunner stated that if an abatement would have been requested, it would have cost the county much more than \$8,573. Winsett stated that anytime county residents are willing to make an investment in the county, the council should encourage it. Ebert stated that lights are not the same as abatement.

LEDC Director Tom Utter stated that the development took land which was relatively valueless and turned it into a high tax area.

Spaetti stated that the county has invested in sewer lines and water lines. This will help an area that may attract another business which will be paying property taxes.

Ebert stated he is a supporter of the project as a whole but if they needed lights they should have made them part of the plan from the beginning. Schulte stated that the investors can only invest so much. Ebert asked the commissioners present how they feel about the project. Gogel stated that he voted against it last time as a council member and he still voted against it as a commissioner. Rininger stated that he voted to support the project because of the number of employees, the amount of wages paid, and the amount of tax revenue. He said \$8,573 is a small investment compared to the scope of the project.

Wetherill stated that he is not concerned about setting a precedent because of the uniqueness of the project.

Bunner made a motion to approve the request for \$8,573. Winsett seconded. The motion passed with a vote of six to one, with Ebert opposing.

Courthouse Maintenance Supervisor

The commissioners requested the salary ordinance be amended to set the rate of pay for the Courthouse Maintenance Supervisor the same as the Jail Maintenance Supervisor, a rate of \$20 per hour for 15 hours per week. After a brief discussion, Wanager made a motion to approve the amended salary ordinance. Bunner seconded. The motion passed with a vote of six to one, with Winsett opposing. Winsett stated the change should be done with the new budget.

Luce Township Regional Sewer District

LTRSD Board Secretary Matt Steinkamp reported that a district secretary has been hired. He also addressed the signed acknowledgment from Freedom Bank. He clarified that the interest rate did not increase; it stayed the same. He further stated that a committee has been formed to speak with a representative from the State Revolving Fund about the district receiving stimulus funds. Three council members are invited to attend.

Board Member Nora Yeager discussed her efforts on obtaining easements.

Family and Children's Fund Balance

Shelton explained that the state legislature has voted to allow counties to move the unused balance of the Family and Children's Fund from Excess Levy to Rainy Day. The unused balance was \$56,494.42. After a brief discussion the council decided it could better direct the use of the money if it was transferred to Rainy Day. Kroeger made a motion to transfer the money. Kress seconded. All in favor.

LOIT Tax

Shelton stated the county is again being asked by the state if a LOIT tax is going to be imposed. Shelton was asked to prepare a letter stating the county will not adopt a LOIT tax and it will be discussed at the next meeting.

Bunner made a motion to adjourn. Kress seconded. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 pm.

County Council,

President

Attest:

Cindy Shelton, Auditor

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