

MIAMI COUNTY COUNCIL
25 NORTH BROADWAY
PERU, INDIANA 46970
August 15, 2023

Councilwoman Chittum – Present
Councilman Fruth – Present
Councilman Donaldson – Present
Councilman Wiles – Present
Councilman Allen – Present
Councilman Sailors –Present
Councilman Nutt-Present

President Chittum called the regular meeting of the Miami County Council to order.

Councilman Wiles led the group in prayer and President Chittum led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Councilman Fruth made a motion to approve the July 18, 2023 minutes.
Councilman Sailors 2nd the motion and it passed 7-0.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION/TRANSFERS

President Chittum read the list of additional appropriations presented to the Council for approval as follows.

County General	\$15,000	Expert Witness Fees
Rainy Day-CH Const	\$8,563	New lighting Circuit Court
Reassessment	\$53,000	X-Soft Contract

President Chittum reviewed the request for \$15,000 from County General for expert witness fees, which would cover expenses for a triple homicide trial October 5-13th. President Chittum explained the expenses cover 3 out of state witness fees, travel, lodging (3 rooms), car rental along with testimony from a forensic pathologist (\$8,500). The witnesses would be traveling from Kansas, Georgia and Louisiana. Councilman Nutt made a motion to approve the request for \$15,000 from County General for expert witness fees. Councilman Allen 2nd the motion and it passed 7-0.

President Chittum reviewed the request for \$8,563 from Rainy Day/Courthouse Construction for new lighting in Circuit Court. President Chittum explained the lighting is to replace the old outdated “ice tray” lights in Circuit Court. The Board of Commissioners are currently in the process of having painting done in the court room and the lighting needed to be updated. Judge Spahr contacted several places for quotes and Kirby Risk was the only one to respond. Kirby Risk

provided feedback on how to place lighting and the amount needed for the size of the courtroom. Judge Spahr will be keeping the antique fixtures that were converted to LED and adding the new, additional lighting. The Board of Commissioner agreed to take the money from the construction/reconstruction portion of Rainy Day since that would be a courtroom left untouched if a remodel project ever happens. Councilman Fruth made a motion to approve the request for \$8,563 from Rainy Day/Courthouse Construction for Circuit Court lighting. Councilman Nutt 2nd the motion and it passed 7-0.

President Chittum reviewed the request for \$53,000 from Reassessment for the X-Soft contract. President Chittum explained the software contract was to switch from the old tax software program to X-Soft. The Council approved at the end of last year to make the change, to take place in March 2023. Karen KLeMaster, Assessor agreed to cover the 5-year annual payment to move from the old tax software program to X-Soft from Reassessment, but was not appropriated in the Reassessment budget for 2023. Auditor Brown noted the 5-year payment was to make the switch in software providers. The Board of Commissioners continue to cover the annual maintenance cost. Councilman Nutt made a motion to approve the request for \$53,000 from Reassessment for the X-Soft contract. Councilman Sailors 2nd the motion and it passed 6-1 (Allen opposed).

ITEMS FOR COUNCIL ACTION

President Chittum presented Amendment #8 to the 2023 Salary Ordinance. The amendment to the 2023 Salary Ordinance incorrectly lists the rate for the for the Sheriff's Deputies and needs to be corrected for audit compliance. Auditor Brown explained the 2023 raises were calculated at the 40-hour rate for Road Officers, but with the implementation of the timekeeping system, it was determined they Road Officers do not work 40 hours per week. The Road Officers have been paid correctly, but the ordinance needed updated.

In addition, a request was made to list the 2nd Courthouse Security Officer in the Salary Ordinance at the part-time hourly equivalent of \$25.66. The Sheriff was having difficulty finding someone to replace Jeff Grant (Courthouse Security). The Sheriff was able to hire someone to fill the position now as full-time, but will more than likely only work partial hours after he is trained due to his other job. The Council would also need to consider allowing the Sheriff to use Jail Deputies (if needed) to fill in for Security on their day off if the Courthouse Security is short at the \$25.66 hourly rate. Any Jail Deputy filling in as Courthouse Security Officer would be paid at the \$25.66 per hour and all hours would go towards total hours worked, which will allow them to accrue Comp Time (Federal Law). Sheriff Hunter explained the courts have mandated that we have security within the Courthouse and this is way to fill the position as best we can with the candidates pool available.

Councilman Fruth made a motion to approve Amendment #8 to the 2023 Salary Ordinance to update the Road Officer rates and add the part-time hourly equivalent of \$25.66. Councilman Allen 2nd the motion and it passed 7-0.

REQUEST FOR AUDIENCE

None

COUNCIL DISCUSSION & COMMITTEE UPDATE

Councilman Fruth explained the Plan Commission recently approved rate changes in the office, to eliminate redundancy within the fee schedule. The changes will go to the Board of Commissioners and then back to the Plan Commission.

President Chittum explained the members of the Broadband Committee and noted the Council does not have a part in the decisions related to county broadband. President Chittum asked Councilman Brad Fruth to provide an update on the status of the broadband project. Councilman Fruth explained RFP's were submitted by 3 different companies, with money for the project coming for ARPA funds. The Broadband Committee voted to accept a primary vendor and Attorney Steve Downs is preparing a contract for the project, which will go before the Board of Commissioners for final approval. Councilman Fruth stated 2 main criteria were used in making the decision on who to award the first phase of the project; the number of homes served and the private investment. Councilman Fruth went on to state Jim Tidd, MCEDA Director would be working with the companies who responded to the RFP and noted just because the other 2 companies were not awarded the funding from this phase, that additional funding is coming from the BEED grant, but will take time to come through the federal government. Councilman Nutt is not happy with Comcast being awarded the project and would rather have Miami-Cass REMC to keep the project local. Councilman Fruth stated the Board of Commissioner commissioned the study and have allocated the funding for broadband and the Council has no decision in who the Board of Commissioners decide to award the contract to.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matt Mavrick, Miami-Cass REMC/Broadway Broadband noted he received an email from Jim Tidd on Friday explaining they were not awarded the project. Mr. Mavrick stated Miami-Cass REMC has a presence, supports, invests and passionate about serving Miami County. Mr. Mavrick noted when preparing the RFP, Miami-Cass REMC looked at future projects, not just what is happening right now. Mr. Mavrick feels a partnership with the county is important and not sure the county will see the same kind of relationship with Comcast. Miami-Cass REMC is currently applying for grant funding to hopefully secure broadband projects in the future for Miami County. Mr. Mavrick noted there are no hard feelings for not receiving the bid, however, it does cut deep to know a local provider did not receive the award. Councilman Nutt noted he recently attended Denver Days and Miami-Cass REMC had a booth at the event, but did not see

Comcast in attendance. Councilman Nutt spoke to several people who all agreed they were not happy with Comcast receiving the award. Councilman Sailors feels the county needs to look at these projects and determine what is best for the community.

Elaine Anderson also visited Denver Days and learned there Comcast was awarded the bid for the broadband project. Ms. Anderson was a Comcast for many years when she lived in Indianapolis and questioned whether the Broadband Committee reviewed the rates with Comcast. Currently, Miami-Cass REMC offers broadband for \$58.00 per month, with no additional fees. Ms. Anderson explained Comcast charges for everything and raises the rates every 3 months and why she canceled her service. Ms. Anderson noted Miami-Cass REMC is here to stay and serve the community. Ms. Anderson is also puzzled how an employee from Maconaquah School Corporation was chosen to serve on the committee. Further, Ms. Anderson questions why Jim Tidd sent the letters to the providers and why he is allocating money for the county. Councilman Fruth explained the funding was already approved by the Council and reiterated the contract would come back to the Board of Commissioners for final approval. Ms. Anderson also questioned the cost for services with Comcast quoted in their bid. Councilman Fruth did not want to comment as he could not remember the exact amounts and did not want to provide inaccurate information.

Councilman Sailors agrees with Ms. Anderson that Comcast is notorious for regularly increasing their rates.

Mr. Mavrick noted when preparing the bid, he requested data from Farm Bureau through Jim Tidd and never received it, even though the RFP stated it would be available.

Stacey Mize stated she no longer uses Comcast because they raise the rates, lower service and then lie about it. Although she does not have a vote in the process, she does feel Comcast will probably offer the worst service in Miami County.

Councilman Sailors made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Nutt 2nd the motion and it passed 7-0.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Brown
Miami County Auditor