

BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL
Special Meeting
July 3, 2017

Name:	Representing:	Title:	Present:
Laura DeDomenic	District 2	President	Present
Bill Lentz	At Large	Pro-Tem	Present
Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence	At Large		Present
Chris Ogle	District 1		Present
Mark Gorbett	District 3		Present
Jorge Morales	District 4		Present
Matt Miller	At Large		Present
Chris Monroe	- -	Attorney	Present
Barb Hackman	Auditor	Secretary	Present

The Bartholomew County Council met on July 3, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. in the County Council Chambers of the Governmental Office Building, 440 Third Street, Columbus, Indiana. The purpose of this meeting was public input regarding a possible Cumulative Capital Development (CCD) Fund tax levy in compliance with Indiana Code (IC) 6-1.1-41.

President Laura DeDomenic called the meeting to order.

Chris Ogle gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Dan Hedden of Umbaugh was present to explain the Cumulative Capital Development Fund. This is a tool that the Council is considering. The first issue is that a couple of years ago the County lost about six-hundred eighty-thousand dollars (\$680,000) when the law was changed. The second issue is that the County has been looking forward as to what the needs will be in this year as well as future years. This meeting is a requirement in the Indiana Statutes so that the public can be heard. The vote for this

Fund will then be held on July 18. There are other options that are being discussed, but this one has to be completed by August the 1st. This ordinance would be phased in over a two (2) year time frame. The first year rate would be 0.0167 or half of the second year maximum of 0.0333. The first year is about what the County lost when the law changed.

President DeDomenic opened the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Russell Poling was the first person in the audience to speak. He is tired of the different governments sticking their hands in his pocket. When he moved here he thought the overwhelming Republican elected officials would be conservative when it comes to spending. The State has raised taxes on the gasoline and vehicles earlier this year. The City just voted to increase their Cumulative tax rate. He is not happy that this meeting was set up tonight, the night before July 4th with the fireworks going on at the airport. Bill Lentz asked him what he thought if the Council left it “tax neutral”; just getting back what we lost. Mr. Poling stated that we need to work with the State to stop the unfunded mandates that are putting the County in this position. He wonders if there is some other place to replace this lost money. He had not heard that the County was considering not doubling the tax in the second year. Mark Gorbett stated that they have looked at this over the last year and a half. Even if this tax is put to the maximum amount in year two (2), it will not meet our needs; not our wants, but our needs. He understands all the tax options that are out there and he doesn’t want to raise every tax. Mr. Poling asked where we had lost the tax. There was discussion of the drug problem and what the impact is to the County. It does not just affect the Sheriff’s Department but

also the Court System. Mr. Poling stated that it is unfair that the County is the last in the line after the State and the City. Matt Miller did appreciate his comment about the State.

Judge Worton was the next person in the audience to speak. He is not here to advocate for or against the tax. He is here to make them aware of a serious issue that the jail has as far as staffing of correctional officers. There was a defense lawyer that was not injured but had a conflict with a criminal defendant. There was not enough jail staff to place a correctional officer outside the room when the attorney met with the defendant. When he (*Judge Worton*) was employed at the City and there was an economic issue, the taxpayers stated that not enough studies had been done to support the needs. The Sheriff had a Six Sigma Project completed that found the jail was understaffed by at least twelve (12) people. The heroin epidemic has changed the game. The jail is serving as our withdrawal clinics. Defendants are spending up to two (2) years in our jail. The defendants are trying to figure out how to get to the DOC where there are services such as working toward a GED and detox programs. The defendants in the County jail just sit. There are no programs or things for them to do. They have started a release program but that then leaves only the high risk defendants in the jail which only worsens the tension between the inmates and the staff. Jorge Morales asked what the inmates are looking at to get to the DOC. Judge Worton stated that they are looking at how much credit time they have. The inmates that have been there realize the DOC offers a lot more services for them as opposed to just sitting around. We have to have enough staff to keep the employees, inmates and visitors safe at the jail. Jorge Morales noted that the CCD would

not be money that could be used for the jail. It is only allowed to be used for buildings and such. The Council has been very frugal. Mark Gorbett totally concurred with the Judge. The CCD Fund will not fix our issues, even if taxed at the maximum amount of \$0.0333. Bill Lentz stated the CCD Fund would help a little bit as you would use the CCD money for the buildings that would free up some money. Jorge Morales stated that it does, but not directly. Judge Worton stated that he grew up here and criminally speaking, the Columbus that he grew up in is not the same Columbus that we are living in now. Matt Miller agrees that Public Safety is our number one priority; would the judges give up the extra staff they were given to add jail staff. Judge Worton stated jail staff is the most important but you are just kicking it down the road. He believes there is fluff in other County departments. Safety is first; we have to have the people there to respond to the calls.

Ron Speer was the next person in the audience to speak. He is a farmer in Rockcreek Township. He asked how much the tax would be on an acre of land. Bill Lentz stated that on one-thousand (1,000) acres he believes it would be about six-hundred dollars (\$600) or sixty cents (\$0.60) per acre with the maximum amount of the \$0.0333. If it wasn't doubled the second year then it would be about three hundred dollars (\$300) per one-thousand (1,000) acres. Auditor Hackman stated that this tax is based on your assessed value. Mr. Speer stated that per his understanding, an increase of this tax would only get us to break even with what we had lost. Mark Gorbett stated that the County had lost six-hundred eighty-five-thousand dollars (\$685,000). This tax would get us back

where we were but does not pay all the bills. He is not in favor of two tax increases, but the CCD will not meet our needs. Mr. Speer asked if anyone had spoken with Milo Smith or Greg Walker. President DeDomenic stated that they will tell you that they have given the local officials the mechanism to raise funds; raise taxes. There was discussion about the change of holding County Funds by the State from fifty-percent (50%) to fifteen-percent (15%). Mr. Speer doesn't want to see big fancy buildings being built if they get more money. Build what you need. Matt Miller had reached out to a State Representative who denied knowing anything about it. Auditor Hackman stated that it was more of the Department of Local Government Finance (*DLGF*) that had held the money so the State Representatives may not have known. Auditor Hackman explained the changes that had been made by the DLGF during a budget streamlining process.

Don Strietelmeier was the next person in the audience to speak. He asked if this would replace bonds. The Council explained that they could still use bonds. The City properties would also be included in this. Mr. Strietelmeier asked how much property was tax exempt in the County. Auditor Hackman explained how the exempt versus abatements worked. Cummins does not have any exempt, but they do have abatements and have properties located in the TIF's. Mr. Strietelmeier asked how much the Public Safety normally cost us. Mark Gorbett stated that the Sheriff and jail is around six-million dollars (\$6,000,000). Mr. Strietelmeier stated that society has changed and maybe we need to be more firm with the defendants. Mark Gorbett stated that the medical part just keeps increasing. Mr. Strietelmeier believes that the public expects too

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many services. He doesn't like seeing increased taxes, but we have to provide the services and maintain what we have.

Ron Petri was the next person in the audience to speak. He wanted to speak for the people that cannot afford this increase; people on fixed incomes. With the State and City increases and now the County wanting to increase taxes, those on fixed incomes cannot afford this.

Judge Benjamin was the next person in the audience to speak. She wanted to reiterate that the Judges want to stand with the Council. It is a public safety issue. The Council did not ask for this. Employees of the Court, while performing their job duties, need to be safe, even in the jail. The public has the responsibility to see that these people are protected. The departments have cut where they can; we need this to continue safely. They appreciate the members of the Council that have been involved with the Courts. Mark Gorbett stated that this is a hard decision, but how easy of a decision would it be if they had to make it after someone had gotten hurt. Judge Benjamin stated that they have implemented new programs throughout the years to plan for the future. They have written and received grants to aid with funding, but some of those grants are only to start programs and the funding goes away overtime. Matt Miller asked what other Counties are doing regarding overcrowding in the jail. Sheriff Myers stated that all the Counties are in the same predicament. The Legislatures put the burden on the Counties and the County Councils.

Sheriff Matt Myers was the next person in the audience to speak. He wanted to thank the Council for the work they have done regarding the issues. The Council didn't create the issues but they have been very involved in trying to fix the issues. He agrees with the gentleman earlier that the public expects more services without increases in taxes. This has been a very conservative Council but we are at a critical point. He has Correction Officers entering cells with many angry inmates, but they are going in alone due to staffing. His department will continue to do what is needed, but eventually someone is going to get hurt. He commended Mark Gorbett for holding the line for eight (8) years but they can't hold the line anymore. Bill Lentz made the comment that the Sheriff's Department does a great job. They did give the Sheriff's Department more money last year. When does it stop? Sheriff Myers stated that he understands that they can't write blank checks; they have to live within their means. He cannot choose which calls to take or which prisoners to house. He could take Deputies off the street and put them in the jail as his Constitutional Responsibility is the jail. That, however, would then hurt the response to the public calls. Mark Gorbett stated that the Sheriff could use a substation in Taylorsville due to the crime in that area of the County. Sheriff Myers stated that when you are using overtime to keep the operation running, that is not the right answer. The jail's medical costs are projected to go up by thirty-nine-percent (39%) next year which is completely out of his control. Matt Miller asked if the staffing was more important than the body cameras. Sheriff Myers stated that he needs people and the body cameras will have to wait. He understands that they can't hire the twelve (12)

people the study shows he needs. Mark Gorbett stated that is correct but they need to plan for the twelve (12). Sheriff Myers stated that they will work with whatever the Council comes up with. They need manpower on the street and in the jail. President DeDomenic stated that Sheriff Myers has worked with Dana Vogt and Six Sigma in identifying the needs. A consultant stated they needed eleven (11) people and Mr. Vogt was able to do some work and get it down to seven (7). Sheriff Myers stated they are working with ASAP, a drug program within the community, to fight the drug issues. The seven staff member increase does not include any help with the ASAP plans. Council Attorney Monroe stated that Six Sigma is free. Bill Lentz stated that the Council thought this program would find inefficiencies and help fix things so that we could avoid more staff but what it found was that the jail needed eleven (11) more people even after some tweaking of duties.

Commissioner Larry Kleinhenz was the next person in the audience to speak. He understands how painful it is to sit and make this decision. He stated that the enactment of the TIF laws have led to where we are today. He believes that without the TIF's the County would be receiving an additional one-million dollars (\$1,000,000) to three-million dollars (\$3,000,000) in revenues. He does not like TIF but would vote for it if he had to in order to bring the investment into the County. Because of that, however, it will be a long time before the County sees any of those increased revenues. The new road funding created by the State was a blessing. The only vote he has ever had on a tax was in 1993 on the Solid Waste tax and he voted against it. However, if the earlier

Commissioners had not put the Cumulative Bridge tax in place, then they would be asking for another two-million dollars (\$2,000,000) each year for the maintenance of the bridges. They need more money for maintenance of their facilities.

Ron Speer asked how much money was in the Rainy Day Fund. It is around three-million two-hundred-thousand dollars (\$3,200,000). Nine-million dollars was mentioned as having been in the Rainy Day Fund at one time. It was determined that was the overall money on hand at one point in time several years ago.

Russell Poling wanted to thank the Council for the good discussion. When he stated that he doesn't want his taxes to increase, he is not okay with someone getting hurt at the jail. He is fine paying his fair share. Just spend it wisely; he doesn't want anyone to get hurt and if the Sheriff needs staff, then that needs to be the priority. Our people are important. Jorge Morales asked if this discussion had helped him understand the predicament the County is in. He stated yes, he sees the big picture better. Jorge Morales stated that a CCD would free up other County General money to be used elsewhere. However, that increase will not fix the problem. Mr. Poling knows that amount alone will not fix the Sheriff's problems. Bill Lentz stated he would give out his cell phone number and would love to hear more from him. Chris Ogle stated that he appreciated him coming and taking part in this. He doesn't want to be here tonight either. He believes that we have cut the fluff out of the budget over the past years. We are at a point that without further funding, we have to eliminate services which mean we have to

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eliminate people. Mr. Poling stated that he understands that cutting services means we are cutting items the community needs.

President DeDomenic wanted to thank everyone for attending. The next meeting will be July 18 at which time a vote will be taken.

Mark Gorbett made a motion to table the Consideration of changes to the Local Income Tax (*LIT*) Revenue until the July 18 meeting when better numbers should be available. Matt Miller seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Chris Ogle made a motion to adjourn. Jorge Morales seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL

By: _____
Laura DeDomenic, President

By: _____
Bill Lentz, Pro-Tem

By: _____
Chris Ogle, Member

By: _____
Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence, Member

By: _____
Jorge Morales, Member

By: _____
Mark Gorbett, Member

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By: _____
Matt Miller, Member

ATTEST: _____
Barbara J. Hackman, Auditor
Bartholomew County