

?County Council hears concerns about 2009 budget

Written by

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On Monday evening, September 29, the Washington County Council held a public hearing on the 2009 budget.

The meeting started off with a discussion between Council member, Mark Manship, and County Auditor, Sarah

Bachman, concerning the nearly \$300,000 cut from the 2008 county budget by the State of Indiana. After thoughtful

exchange, Bachman explained to the Council's satisfaction how the shortfall would be made up.

The Council also heard concerns from Chris Strange of Parks and Recreation. Strange pleaded with the Council

to reconsider the 2009 budget that, according to Strange, shrinks his funding by over 30 percent. After an explanation

by Council members as to rationale for the cut, it was agreed that Strange would appear before the Council on

October 6 with a plan that would remedy the problem.

The only other budget concern brought before the council was one suggesting that all funding (\$75K) be eliminated

for the Washington County Economic Growth Partnership (WCEGP). Various Council members responded by

saying that the WCEGP serves a vital purpose in the community and that it is unreasonable to expect significant

impact on the local economy within the short amount of time that WCEGP Executive Director, Gerald Rose has been

at the helm (since April, 2008). Several members of the Council voiced support for Rose and the efforts of his office

in the last five months.

Rose and WCEGP Board member, Jess Helsel, chose not to respond to the accusations of ineptness, but rather

focused their comments on upcoming training programs for small business owners being sponsored by WCEGP.

Noting a recent announcement that the City of Salem has cut fuel usage by 20 percent, Council member, Mignon

Marshall, recommended that the county explore ways to make similar cuts in fuel consumption. Citing a recent

Indiana State Board of Accounts Audit Report, Marshall suggested a review of the policy for and practice of using

county owned vehicles for personal use.

With no further business to conduct, the Council adjourned for the evening.