

?County Council meets for final time in 2008

Written by

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?? The Washington County Council met for the final time this year on Monday, December 1; all members were present. The minutes of previous meetings and all claims were approved unanimously.

Nancy Lambring of the Department of Child Services (DCS) addressed the Council giving an update on expected expenses and revenues for her department through the remainder of 2008. Under the new "circuit breaker" property tax plan, funding for DCS will revert to the State of Indiana as of January 1, 2009. However, DCS expenses and revenues through the end of the current year will not be completely calculated for 60-90 days after the first of the year according to Lambring.

She estimated total expenses for the remainder of 2008 coming due in 2009 are in excess of \$76,000. Furthermore, it is expected that some of that amount will be reimbursed by the state and federal governments.

Lambring was uncertain as to what the reimbursements would be.

The Council heard from several Township Assessors asking to be appointed to the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals as well as Steve Anderson regarding Social Security and Medicare payments for the current Township Assessors. After a lengthy discussion between Council members, Anderson, and Washington County Auditor, Sarah Bachman, a procedure was agreed upon as to how the county would pay its required share of Social Security and Medicare payments for the assessors.

The Council next heard from supporters of Marge Lyles asking once again that she be reinstated as assistant to the Emergency Management Director. Among the comments made during the discussion was one of special interest from Veterans Affairs Officer, Pat Rice. According to Rice, "We now have eight days of coverage in the Veterans Affairs Office (VAO) (Rice for three days and Lyles for five days). We need to keep that same level of coverage."

Rice's comment adds credence to recent concerns about ghost employment issues surrounding the Washington County Emergency Management Office (EMO) and a grant from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security. That grant pays half of Lyles salary in the EMO even though much of her time is spent dealing with VAO issues. If it is determined by investigators, as Rice implies, that Lyles is working a significant amount of time on VAO business while being paid through the EMO then Washington County could be liable for reimbursement of the aforementioned grant money all the way back to January of 2001; that amount could exceed \$100,000.

Council Attorney, Mark Clark, responded to those supporting Lyles, saying that no decision can be made until after the first of the year. However, none of the Council members commented on the subject.

The Council unanimously approved a resolution to support the efforts underway to develop a yet undetermined working agreement between Washington County Memorial Hospital and St. Vincent Hospital of Indianapolis. The two hospitals have agreed to a 180 day affiliation. Much speculation has surrounded that agreement but it is expected that a more clearly defined partnership will be announced after the first of the year.

After making several transfers between funds the Council adjourned until its next regularly scheduled meeting on Monday January 5.