

**BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**August 9, 2022**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing:</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Present:</b>
Matt Miller	At Large		Present
Bill Lentz	At Large		Present
Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence	At Large		Present
R. Scott Bonnell	District 1		Present
Greg Duke	District 2		Present
Mark E. Gorbett	District 3		Present
Jorge R. Morales	District 4		Present
Chris Monroe	- -	Attorney	Present
Pia O'Connor	Auditor	Secretary	Via Zoom

The Bartholomew County Council met on August 9, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Governmental Office Building, 440 Third Street, Columbus, Indiana.

President Greg Duke called the meeting to order.

Bill Lentz gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The first item was Discussion and Decision regarding a County-wide Economic Revitalization Area (ERA) Declaratoration as presented by Commissioner Tony London and Commissioner Larry Kleinhenz. Commissioner London explained the problem for County residents with the lack of high-speed internet. Due to COVID, they found that this is a very important factor. People are working from home; students are attending school

virtually. Thousands of homes in the County have no internet or bad internet service. Early on, they formed a Bartholomew County Initiative to solve this problem. They got in touch with Doctor Roberto ? at Purdue. He assisted the County in completing a survey of the residents of the County regarding their service. Some people have had to sell their homes to move to an area that has internet to continue to work. They met with many internet providers to see what could be done. What they were told was that the investment needed based on the houses being wide-spread would not support them spending the money as they would not see a return. Meridiam was the first company wanting to do this County-wide, which has not been done before in Indiana. The Commissioners wanted to go down this road but they wanted to be fair with it. They put together a Request For Proposals for this project. Three bids were returned, one of which was not to specifications. They reviewed the other two bids which were very good. The bid by Meridiam was to cover 80% of the County that would cover over 12,000 homes. They are here tonight to ask that the Council establish an County-wide Economic Revitalization Area (ERA). This is a 3 Brown County and Jackson County both granted a 100% exemption for ever on their personal property. Meridiam is asking for 95% for 20 years. If we don't pass it, we will get no tax money. If we pass it, we will be receiving additional money very quickly. President Duke asked what the source of this money would be. Commissioner London stated they would be paying on 5% of their personal property which he estimated around \$10,000. Matt Miller stated that he figured it around \$6,000. Mark Gorbett stated we would be getting more money than we are now. Commissioner London stated that passing

the ERA does not grant abatements. Companies have to come before the Council to get abatements approved. Jorge Morales stated that we had increased the ERA in the Edinburgh area to match the new TIF EDA. Commissioner London stated that this investment will affect thousands of people. He cannot think of a better way to help the people that call this place home. The task today is to declare the ERA tonight. In the September meeting they would have a public hearing. Matt Miller recommends that they leave the discussion regarding abatement out of this tonight and only deal with the ERA. President Duke and Jorge Morales agree with this. President Duke stated that the most that would happen tonight would be that they approve a motion to have the second meeting. Mark Gorbett asked about offering those in the crowd time to discuss this as there is a crowd here tonight. President Duke opened the meeting up for public comment. John Prohaska wanted to fully encourage the County to do this as he sees it as a critical thing to accomplish. He read 10 years ago that Bartholomew County had the highest density of Engineers living in its borders. High speed internet has become essential for everyone as they are now working or attending school from home. He feels if we want to grow in the future, we need this. This was opened up to anyone to bid on. He feels they have found a good solution to get what we need. This is the first step and he encouraged them to pass this. Nick Williams stated that over the last 2 years, they have families in the Mt. Healthy area that have to drive to stores to get connected to work or do school work. The school itself has had to add a booster to get spotty service. It was put out to bid and AT&T wouldn't even touch it. President Duke asked if he could put together some numbers that

could help with their decision. Courtney Medsker, CEO of Bartholomew County REMC, is in full support of this. They have BCREMC internet plans. They have been in a feasibility study for these specific areas, they could not pull a return even after 20 years. They do not intend to put debt on their energy customers to put in internet. She thinks this is an excellent solution. There are very long spans, very difficult terrain. It will promote our community, not only in Indiana, but throughout the nation. Matt Miller asked how Jackson County REMC was able to provide this. Ms. Medsker stated that we have 3 or 4 corners of the County that need this service. Jackson County has a different set of needs. Their costs have also doubled or tripled what was expected for the project. There is less competitors and more clustering of homes then what we have in this county. President Duke asked how South Central Indiana is able to do this. Ms. Medsker stated that they are trying to do it by not putting the costs on their energy clients. Also, the shift in product also causes a shift in reliability areas. Lyn Fleming stated that her husband is on the Board of Directors of REMC. She stated that they have attended many meetings and trainings regarding this issue. They just stated that they cannot fiscally afford to do this. Mr. Rudd, a member of the Brown County Council. He stated that there are over 30 REMC's across the State and there are some that just cannot afford to take on this issue. They did pass 100% abatement forever. They did not have any funding to assist them. He believes that REMC's doing this is probably more the exception. **Mark E. Gorbett motioned to sign the Declaration of Intent before the Board for Unincorporated Areas of Bartholomew**

**County with a further discussion and vote during the September meeting. Jorge R. Morales seconded the motion which passed 6-0 with Bill Lentz abstaining.**

The next item was a Request of Additional Appropriations for the JDAI Fund (9105) in the amount of \$60,939.38 as presented by Grant Administrator Bobbie Shake. Ms. Shake explained that is the JDAI Grant that was awarded. They have had this grant since 2014. It helps fund the Juvenile Detention Alternates as a means to keep youth out of detention. **Jorge R. Morales made a motion to Approve the Additional Appropriation of \$60,939.38 as presented. Mark E. Gorbett seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was a Request of Additional Appropriations for the LIT Correctional/Jail Fund (1114) in the amount of \$45,000.00 as presented by Jail Commander John Martoccia. Commander Martoccia stated that this is for cleaning of the outside of the Jail, as it is turning black. It only covers the old part of the Jail, not the new. They will power wash and seal it. President Duke asked how it would impact the rest of his budget? He is not certain. Matt Miller stated that in the past, the maintenance of the Jail was in the Commissioners Budget; when did that change? John Martoccia stated that he had no idea but believes it was done about 3 years ago. Auditor Pia O'Connor stated they have been moving Jail costs to the LIT Correctional Fund. Commissioner Lienhoop stated that the Auditor has made an effort to keep all expenses for the Jail out of this LIT fund. That gives us a true amount of what it costs to run the jail. **Matt Miller made a motion to approve**

**the Additional Appropriation of \$45,000.00 as presented. Mark E. Gorbett seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

Treasurer Barb Hackman stated that the LIT Correctional was done during her tenure as Auditor. They put in a separate Public Safety LIT. She stated that previous to this, all Jail expenses were paid for out of County General.

The next item was a Request of Additional Appropriations for the Public Health Preparedness Fund (8891) in the amount of \$25,000 as presented by Grant Administrator Bobbie Shake. She stated this covers the pay and supplies for this position. This is a reoccurring Grant. **Mark E. Gorbett made a motion to approve the Additional Appropriation of \$25,000.00 as presented. R. Scott Bonnell seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was a Request of Additional Appropriations for County General – Prosecutor’s Office (1000-08) in the amount of \$10,000.00 as presented by Chief Deputy Prosecutor Josh Scherschel and Office Manager Debbie Clark. Mr. Scherschel stated that he understood that there was an error in the advertisement so they may be back for more funding later this year. They currently have a murder trial which includes a expert witness which will be at least \$3,000. They also have a chemist from Pennsylvania that they will have to pay for airfare, lodging and his fee while here. There is another case regarding a school bus. They still have \$1,200 in transcriptions that are needed. There are another two cases regarding a neglect case. President Duke asked if \$20,000 is their best estimate. Mr. Scherschel stated that yes and unfortunately they could not anticipate these expenses. Bill

Lentz clarified that this funding would be for the expert witness and such. Mr. Scherschel stated that that was correct. **Mark E. Gorbett made a motion to approve the Additional Appropriation of \$10,000.00 as presented. Bill Lentz seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was a Request of Additional Appropriations for Adult Protective Services (8900) in the amount of \$9,000.00 as presented by Chief Deputy Prosecutor Josh Scherschel and Office Manager Debbie Clark. The Director stated they cover this county as well as 4 other counties. They have received \$8,000 from Jackson County and \$1,000 from Brown County. This money has been sent to County General and this will be an Additional. Auditor O'Connor stated that it is an Additional when moving from one fund to another. Matt Miller asked about other counties that are not providing funding. The Director stated that Decatur County works very well with them but their economic stability has not been able to set aside money. Matt Miller asked who sets the territory that they are responsible for. The Director stated that the State sets the territory and provides funding. These 2 counties donate to cover anything that might come up. They would use this money if their case load increased drastically or they had a conference that they did not have enough funding for. Bill Lentz asked why we are the hub. The Director stated that if the incoming Prosecutor does not want to continue being the hub, they could ask the State and the other Counties to step up. Jorge R. Morales asked if they could ask the State to take away that responsibility. **Mark E. Gorbett made a motion to approve the Additional Appropriation of \$9,000.00 as presented. Bill Lentz seconded the motion which**

**passed unanimously.** President Duke stated that he wanted it stated that they appreciate Jackson and Brown County for stepping up.

The next item was a Request of Additional Appropriations for a Duke Energy Grant (8935) in the amount of \$3,200.00 as presented by EMA Director Shannan Cooke. Director Cooke stated that this is the first time they have received this grant. She applied for it through encouragement of Chip Orben of Duke. This will go towards Public Outreach. **Jorge R. Morales made a motion to approve the Additional Appropriation of \$3,200.00 as presented. R. Scott Bonnell seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was the Review of the 2023 Estimated Property Tax Limits as presented by Chris West, Real Estate Administrator in the Auditor's Office. Administrator West stated that he had used the 2021pay2022 Property Tax Levies and applied a 5% increase based on the Growth Quotient provided by Auditor O'Connor and the State. The results were as follows:

<b>County Fund</b>	<b>2022 Levy</b>	<b>2023 GQ</b>	<b>2023 Levy</b>	<b>Difference</b>
General	16,334,139	0.05	17,150,846	816,707
Election	105,000	0.05	110,250	5,250
Reassessment	210,000	0.05	220,500	10,500
Debt	2,000,000	0.05	2,100,000	100,000
Cum Bridge	1,745,277	0.05	1,832,541	87,264
Health	1,890,000	0.05	1,984,500	94,500
<b>Totals</b>	<b>22,284,416</b>		<b>23,398,637</b>	<b>1,114,221</b>



**Matt Miller motioned to table the Minutes until someone had reviewed them. Bill Lentz seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

Under Miscellaneous – Mark Gorbett asked, since he and Matt Miller both have a conflict on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of September, that they reschedule to the next meeting to the first Tuesday of September. He feels that meeting will have a lot on the table with the First Reading of the 2023 Budget and the Tax Abatement issue. Auditor O'Connor stated she would not be available on 9-6 nor 9-20. President Duke asked for any motion concerning rescheduling the September budget meeting. **Jorge R Morales motioned to move it to Monday, September 12, 2022. Matt Miller seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

President Duke apologized to Evelyn & the Parks Department for not making their scheduled tour of the parks. Jorge R. Morales stated the County Plan Commission will be having a meeting regarding Solar Farms within Bartholomew County. Mark Gorbett brought up the ASAP and Community Corrections Advisory Board regarding staffing. There was also discussion regarding the Opioid Settlement. Auditor O'Connor stated that the budget packets would be available for pickup this Friday by noon. Matt Miller stated that Georg Utz has invited them to put "eyes" on what was done with the last abatement.

There being no further business to come before the Council, **Bill Lentz made a motion to adjourn. Matt Miller seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

**BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL**

September 22, 2022

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Duke, President

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Miller, Pro-Tem

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
R. Scott Bonnell, Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence, Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jorge R. Morales, Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Lentz, Member

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark E. Gorbett, Member

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Pia O'Connor, Auditor  
Bartholomew County