

August 10, 2023

**BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL**

**January 9, 2023**

**“Organizational Meeting”**

<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
Greg Patterson	District 1		Present
Leah Beyer	District 2		Present
Mark E. Gorbett	District 3		Present
Jorge R. Morales	District 4		Present
Chris Monroe	- -	Attorney	Present
Pia O’Connor	Auditor	Secretary	Present

The Bartholomew County Council met on January 9, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Governmental Office Building, 440 Third Street, Columbus, Indiana.

Auditor Pia O’Connor called the meeting to order.

Pastor Matt Johnson, of the Sanctuary Church, gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Auditor O’Connor opened the floor for nominations for President. **Mark E. Gorbett**

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**nominated Jorge R. Morales. Greg Patterson seconded the nomination which passed. Mark E. Gorbett motioned to close the nominations. Bill Lentz seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The vote was called for closing the nominations and passed unanimously. The vote for President was called for and passed unanimously.**

**President Morales called for nominations for Pro-Tem. Leah Beyer nominated Mark E. Gorbett as Pro-Tem. Jorge R. Morales seconded the motion which passed . Evelyn Streitmeier Pence motioned to close the nominations. Bill Lentz seconded the motion. The vote was called for and passed unanimously.**

President Morales spoke briefly. He congratulated Commissioner London as the new Chair of the Commissioners. February 6 will be a Work Session. IT Director Scott Mayes will be there to discuss the ways to improve the efficiency of County government through technology. They will also be discussing the

The next item on the agenda was the approval of the meeting minutes for December 14, 2021. **Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence made a motion to approve the minutes with the changes stated by Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence. Mark E. Gorbett seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item on the agenda was a Request of Additional Appropriations for the Supplemental Public Defendere Fund (4901) in the amount of \$7,389.78 as presented by Circuit Court Office Manager Tammy Johannasen. This is money from user fees paid by the defendants. It is not County General money. As this fund builds up, she then comes before Council for appropriations. The funds are used for appeals or any other cases that

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involve a pauper. **Bill Lentz made a motion to approve the Additional Appropriation of \$7,398.78 as presented. Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was a Request for an Additional Appropriation for County General – Circuit Court (1000-36) in the amount of \$24,375.50 as presented by Office Manager Johannasen. She stated that this request was due to an error on her part in December of 2022. Judge Benjamin had requested a part-time Public Defender position after the budget session. It was Granted in December of 2021. When Ms. Johannasen created the 2023 Budget, she had left that line item out. **Mark E. Gorbett motioned to Approve the Additional Appropriation of \$24,375.50 as presented. Matt Miller seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was a Request for Transfer of Funds from River Boat (1191) to Sheriff's Department (1000-05) in the amount of \$127,000 as presented by Captain Brandon Slate. Captain Slate explained that this is for the annual payment for the cameras that were purchased in August of 2020. They had not received an invoice for the first payment. They did receive a new bill in November for 2 years of payments. This would be for the 2022 portion of the payment. Auditor O'Connor stated that this will not be a Transfer, they will pay the \$127,000 amount out of the River Boat (1191) fund. This will be an Appropriation. **Mark E. Gorbett made a motion to approve the Appropriation of \$127,000.00 from River Boat as presented. Greg Patterson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

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Mark E. Gorbett discussed the County employees. They lost 101 employees in 2022 and are already down 32 employees this year as of today. It is not unique to the County; it is a new thing in the current environment. He felt that some were grossly underpaid. They did tackle getting them to mid-point. The Council then went with a 3.5% raise for 2023 while surrounding counties went with 5-7% raises. Retaining quality employees with quality pay was an issue during last year's election. He cannot motion to change the salaries in tonight's meeting, but he would like a consensus of the Council if they would be in favor of doing a 3% increase across the board for all full-time and part-time employees. The Sheriff is down 14 people in the jail and a couple of cooks. Sheriff Myers, when he came into office, requested 15 people to open the other part of the jail. Now, those positions are open. The State Police Superintendent is heavily recruiting Sheriff's Deputies with much better pay. He would like to advertise and vote on this in the February meeting. Jorge R. Morales spoke with EOC and they agreed this would be helpful. Bill Lentz stated this is the taxpayers money but you have to have employees. He knows we have a little nest egg at this time, but nest eggs go away after time. It is tough to deal with people's raises. He felt we did enough last year with the Salary Study and the raises they gave. He would be in favor of better raises this year but not particularly mid-year. He would like to see a tax rate reduction while giving raises. Leah Beyer stated that while the salary study gave some people a bump, not everyone received this. She was shocked that 25% of the employee base turned over. She feels we need to stop the bleeding and also feels that the HR position is a very important piece of this. She would like to

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know how much a 3% increase will cost the County. If they give 3% now and then raises in the next budget cycle, what can we do going forward to reduce the budget. Matt Miller stated they did raise some people with the salary study and then gave the 3.5%. Conceptually, if we give raises mid-year, then why do we have a budget session. However, he understands the environment we are currently in. He is not a strong yes or a strong no as of today. Mark E. Gorbett stated that while we did bring some people up to the mid-point and then the raises, but we were grossly behind based on the salary study and then did it to ourselves again when our raise amount was much less than the surrounding counties. His recommendation is for a 3% raise retro active to January 1, 2023. Matt Miller stated that if you continue to throw money at an employee that is unhappy where they are at, they will still leave. There is more to it than just money. Mark E. Gorbett agreed and thinks that the HR position is another part of the solution. He also agrees with Bill Lentz and would love to cut taxes. When he (Mark) started on the Council, they were strapped for money and did implement a new tax. They have been very frugal with that money and that is why they do have a nest egg. But as it has been said, the employees are our biggest asset and we have to do what we can to keep them. Leah Beyer stated that if you do have a low performing employee, then a raise will not help the situation. Evelyn Strietelemeier Pence stated that the job problem is County wide. She does not know what the answer is. She talked to one lady that is going to sell her house because it is getting to expensive to live here. We did the review and we gave raises. She does not think raises are the ticket. They are concerned about inflation and the grocery store, but the restaurants

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are all full. She is not infavor of changing the budget at this time. Greg Patterson went to the offices when he was running. The key component was that it is hard to keep employees at the current pay. He talked to a friend who has a small business. He has raised his employees 3 times in the last year. Jorge R. Morales stated that he has heard at least 4 people that are in favor of another increase. Bill Lentz is all about employees but he would like to tie it to something to help the taxpayer. Mark E. Gorbett stated we need to stay competitive. Matt Miller asked how many people we have lost to the City. Commissioner Kleinhenz asked why the Chief Deputies would not be included in the raises. Mark E. Gorbett stated that they were tied to the Elected Official pay, but he will make sure they are included in his motion next month. Commissioner London stated that the HR position is critical. He tried to walk a new Jail employee through setting up a retirement account. A lot of people do not understand these processes. Having someone to be there for the employees alongside appropriate pay. Sheriff Lane stated that the HR position is critical as they have a lot of young people and they need the extra attention. His biggest responsibility is the Jail and they are down 14 people. They have been robbing from the Courthouse Security staff to meet Jail staffing. He does not want to pull deputies off the road to staff the jail. Some people that have left were tired of the forced, mandatory overtime due to being short staffed which does not give them a work/life balance. They need the time off due to the type of work they do. They were down 11 last week and have lost another 3 just this week. They had 45% turn over in the last couple of years. They have lost 64 civilians in the last 3 years. From July 5, 2022, they had 179 applications.

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They set up about 95% for interviews and only 56 showed up for the interview. Recorder Tami Hines asked if they were talking about phasing out a position as someone leaves or retires. They stated yes. She would encourage them not to do that. It may sound like a good thing, but it is not always a good thing for customer service. Auditor O'Connor stated that the total for a 3% increase is about \$750,000. They have plenty of money in their funds at this time. She feels they short-changed the employees with the raise last year with the amount of the inflation. Bill Lentz asked if that amount included PERF & FICA. Auditor O'Connor stated yes. He had done a little survey in one of the buildings and the major reason at that time was that they wanted to work from home. Some took a little paycut because they liked where they moved to. Mark E. Gorbett recapped that at least 4 members are in favor of a 3% increase. He feels that the Council is dedicated to changing the environment going forward. Jorge R. Morales stated that we need to put on the agenda so that they do advertise the raise amount for February. Then, they can have a vote and determine whether it is approved or not. Going forward we need to work as a cooperation with all so that they can come up with the best solutions.

The next item was the 2023 Contract for Attorney Services for the Council with Chris Monroe. It is a 3% increase as was approved for 2023. **Greg Patterson motioned to Approve the Contract for Legal Services as presented. Mark E. Gorbett seconded the motion which passed unanimously.** The amount was \$15,836 for the year.

The next item was the 2023 Council Appointments. Phyllis Apple is willing to serve again. Brian Weber is on the Park Board and has been a good contributor as well as

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James Mahoney. Barb Dunlap is on the PTABOA and she has done well. **Bill Lentz motioned to Approve Phyllis Apple to ABC Board, Brian Weber & James Mahoney to the Parks Board and Barbara Dunlap to the PTBOA. Mark E. Gorbett seconded the motion which passed unanimously.**

The next item was the 2023 Council Member Board, Commissions & Committees. There is a page that lists the members, which boards they serve on and, where possible, the day and time that the meetings are held. He is asking that they look at these and see what would fit best for everyone. They will make the decisions in the February meeting. Mark E. Gorbett stated that there are 22 Board, Commissions & Committees. He asks that the President reach out to the Council members to seek their input.

The next item was the 2023 Agreement for Services with the Greater Economic Development Board. Matt Miller stated that there is a fee to be on this board. The Commissioners pay for a seat for both the Commissioners and the Council out of the CREDIT Fund which is a total of \$15,000. This board helps bring businesses to the County. Leah Beyer motioned to Approve the 2023 Agreement as presented. Mark E. Gorbett seconded the motion. Commissioner Kleinhenz stated that the \$15,000 may seem like a lot of money, but if this board did not exist, then the City & County Government would have to employ staff to do this. It has always shocked him that the businesses pay to have a seat on this board as they compete with each other for the employees. Jorge R. Morales stated that the Bartholomew County Redevelopment Commission has been greatly helped by the Greater Economic Development Board. They met today and have elected officers.



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The vote was called for and passed unanimously. There is also a position on the EDC Board. Mark E. Gorbett motioned to place Leah Beyer as the replacement for Greg Duke on the EDC. Matt Miller seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The next items on the agenda were updates by the Council members regarding Boards and Commissions will be assigned in February. Matt Miller stated that he had met with a potential business and that business did agree to build in Bartholomew County. It is still confidential with 80 to 100 jobs. It is quite exciting. There is also a potential buyer for the Force Construction shell building.

President Morales asked if there was anything else that needed to be on the Work Session Agenda. IT will be on the agenda about moving forward with technology. Commissioner London wants to make certain that Director Mayes is not making decisions for other departments. Jorge R. Morales stated that Dalene Pattingill will also be presenting regarding the HR position. Mark E. Gorbett stated that the work sessions need to have the department heads in to explain and educate the Council regarding their needs. Not every Council member needs to be at the work sessions, but it is an educational meeting to make better informed decisions. Greg Patterson has a conflict on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February. There was discussion and it was decided to leave the work session on the 6<sup>th</sup>, but to hold it during the day at 3:00 p.m. Any member or official is encouraged to bring ideas for the agenda for the work session. Evelyn Streitelemeier Pence stated that a 5-year plan would be a good thing to look towards. Jorge R. Morales stated that is a good item for the work sessions.

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Commissioner London stated that the Commissioners want to show that they are all in this together and they want to work together in a spirit of collaboration and professionalism.

Sandra Bush, in the audience, spoke regarding animal welfare. She collaborates with a group called Change for Bartholomew County. They are having a meeting on Monday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at 450 N Brewery regarding changes to the Animal Control Ordinances. Jorge R. Morales stated that the Council is just the funding mechanism.

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

**BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL**

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

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mark E. Gorbett, Pro-Tem

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Miller, Member

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

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Leah Beyer, Member

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

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By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Patterson, Member

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