

# FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING AT

4:30 PM

MINUTES OF MEETING

Nov 27, 2023

## **CALL TO ORDER**

The Special Meeting of the County Board, was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman J. Larry Miller. This meeting was held in the Franklin County Courthouse, County Board Room 133, 100 Public Square, Benton, Illinois.

## **ROLL CALL**

Secretary, Kevin Wilson, called the roll. Members in attendance were J. Larry Miller, Angela Evans, John Gossett, Neil Hargis, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, Jack Warren and Kevin Weston. Brad Wilson was absent.

Also in attendance were Gayla Prather, County Board Office Manager; Matt Barnett, County Engineer; Abby Dinn, States Attorney; Jim Muir, Circuit Clerk; Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer and other interested parties.

## **PLEDGE**

Chairman J. Larry Miller lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairman J. Larry Miller asked the public if there were comments at this time.

Tom Carter: Probably do not need to come up here again. We are using 1% money that was not on the ballot. So, I am registering my complaint again and again. Anybody want to say anything? And I already talked to Neil again and I want to do some research for him, concerning the meeting minutes on the topic to combine juvenile detention debt and the Campbell debt in 2012. But I still do not understand. You have two different entities being combined, for one debt.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: I would hope you would, if you send it to him, send it to me because I would like to see it, okay? I have no clue. No clue.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Chairman J. Larry Miller informed everyone that the purpose for this meeting is to approve the 2023 - 2024 Budget, the purchase of exterior lighting for the Courthouse, the purchase of Space-Savers for Campbell Building Storage Area, and the contribution to the Take Action Today's request for the Warming Center.

**ANNUAL BUDGET**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the first item on the agenda is the approval of the 2023 - 2024 Budget.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: The only thing that is changed since I sent out Wednesday night, was just the additional contingency.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: I had thought about it over Turkey dinner. I guess my mind and since we had, I was a little bit concerned about the juvenile detention center and the money we may have to spend and I was not sure that we were going to use ARPA money or not. So, I asked Steve Vercellino to add a hundred thousand into the contingency fund, which would come from the general fund reserve to cover that. That of course, the board would have to approve that but I wanted to get that in there to be sure that we were covered. Is that clear? So that is the only change. It is a balanced budget apart from contingency. Would that be correct Steve to say that?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: The fund 01 would have a net balance zero prior to the contingency. But we agreed to have that in there that way legally we should not be spending any more than what is cashed. So just in case we needed contingency, we wanted to have that available and have more strict guidelines on how it is used moving forward.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: And if we did not do that, we would have to have a hearing to change the budget and so that would allow us to operate this year of believe without doing that. And so, unless there are any questions?

John Gossett: I have a question. Steve, how much of an increase it, overall was it like 5% over the last year's budget or do you have any idea what that is?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: I will have to see what is in the packet.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: That's a good question. Should show it is an increase, but the increase will not require us to have the border thing publishing in the paper.

John Gossett: Well, I expect four to 5% increase. That is what I am expecting. If you tell me more than that, I am curious why?

Chairman J. Larry Miller: We are a P-tell county, that complicates things. Well, that is why you will see in the papers that school districts are, they have got the school board thing and they are saying that they are going to levy more in the corporate fund than they have available. And the reason is that if you have more than a 5% increase in your assessed valuation and you do not push up to that, then it is difficult to catch up the next year. Does that make sense John? And sometimes we even, we have had a greater increase in the assessed valuation than 5%, which means you cannot capture all the possibilities that are there because you are limited to 5% more than you did the previous year. If you had a 10% increase in your assessed valuation, you cannot capture all that unless you go to the truth in taxation thing. And quite honestly, we are a little bit behind. We probably should have done that.

Angela Evans: Okay. Can I have a question? So, with that, with capturing that since the previous years we have not had that increase. So, was that money delegated other places?

Chairman J. Larry Miller: No, no, no. I mean.

Neil Hargis: It is just money for the means that did not capture what we could have captured.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Every entity, school districts or whatever we are separate from everybody else. The school districts are separate from others, so they have their own responsibilities. They pass a budget and their budget, if they leave more, they notice up clerk's office, we do not have control over that. Right. So, we were looking just at the Franklin County budget. Okay.

Angela Evans: So, if we levy more, is that going to potentially do a tax increase on the taxpayers?

Chairman J. Larry Miller: No, because I think the rate of increase on EAV for this next year is 2% or something. But we were behind the year before and so we are going to push up to the 5%, 4.99. Try to, it is where we are.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: That was the last time we spoke. That was the intention.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: But it still leaves us behind the eight ball a little bit. We could have gone higher if we want to do the truth in taxation. And so that is just our wheelhouse here on the county board. Now schools are all different and townships and all those do their own thing.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Right, but let us answer your question, as fund 01. The expenses went up about 10% but there are some things like the veteran's assistance that is included in that stuff,

but that is also funded by itself with the additional levy. That is not detailed. There were some additional expenses that came up. The property insurance, long story short, we missed it last year by quite a bit. So, we had to roll that up, probably 150,000 in addition to what we did last year. Of course, the sheriff's office amongst many other departments is going to get some type of raise. So, their department went up quite a bit.

John Gossett: The other items 2% higher than last year?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Fund 01, if you are just talking the expenses, expenses seven to about 9.7 percent.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: We also had our health insurance a quarter million dollars. I think that we need to start looking at other possibilities.

John Gossett: One final question I will put, at one point we were talking that we might be dollars down from last year in collections, actual dollars. Is that true? Is that not.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Do not think that is as far as tax collections where I think what went in the year pretty good overall.

John Gossett: Yeah. But I mean this coming year, I am back up this last year. You are saying we ended up with more money than we did the year before or we ended up with the same amount or we?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Compared to what we have budgeted, including what we have collected so far this year plus the part of the taxes that were in this budget year, but were from the prior year. Those combined, I think we exceeded what we expected on the budget revenue side.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: And we also, sometimes you have, you have unexpected expenses but sometimes you have unexpected income. We have \$150,000 that came into the general fund from help me because I cannot remember what it was, Steve?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Was this the tribal government thing that was ARPA related. So, we have got the 5.5 million or so left of ARPA funds but then slightly related to ARPA, but there is 150,000 that we did not expect to be kind of related to area. That is in there too. That I think has less restrictions on it. That is still sitting there as of right now.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: And we did not budget for that. Did not know that. But it came nonetheless. One of the things I thought, talked to Steve about the idea of taking that hundred and fifty thousand we did not know we were going to get and apply it to the loan against the Campbell building that we owe with Southern Illinois Bank. We all know that we owe some money to, we inherited that. I forget how much is it? Is it 300,000?

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: It might be 300 or just under 364, or something like that. Anyway. One hundred fifty, you go a long way towards that. But, with what the budget is, that might have to be next October, November decision. Like how see where we are at that point.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: I appreciate the questions John, but I think we have budgeted in possible increases with negotiating on labor contracts. Do not want to state that real loud. But you have to kind of look at that, okay.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: Some of that stuff's built in the detention center. Good news is this year they give us the budget. I think that is more reasonable. The bad means that it showed a significant negative balance. So that is also

reflected basically us covering the fringes where our prior, at least on paper, we were showing we were covering the fringes or they were covering the fringes. Some years they were, some years they were not as far of actual cash-flow. So, since I know there is no way that is going to happen this year based on the numbers they gave, I pulled those numbers from fund 62 and rolled them into what the county is going to be responsible for is one of the things. We are going to try to be a little bit more stringent on budget this year and not have negative cash flow areas when possible. So again, that is an additional amount that it was in the budget last year in a way. But it just shifted to fund 01. So that is what, there is a lot of things like that and some of these expenses that have come up and then last year or two we have had some very strong revenue as far as the income tax, sales tax, things like that. Also, with the safety act now in effect there is some concerns there as far as revenue that will be generated there too. So, some of these numbers that maybe we were able to hit on revenue side, we've kind of pushed it down a little bit too compared to previous years.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: We looked seriously at expenses to make sure that we were trying to hit the mark, not be too high, too low, try to hit the mark. And, with income also that we are trying to do that. But we have improved our situation in the last two years. I do not know where we are going to be at this year. We are a few days from the end of the year here, but we have improved our lot by, we have somewhere around, I will be careful with this when I say this 2.5 million in free cash in the general fund over all the things in the liabilities, we have there in that fund. And that is a tremendous improvement, from what it was. And ideally, I think Ray, you were there that Rhett said that this is good that we need six months' worth of cash. That is something worth shooting somewhere like four and a half million dollars that we need in reserve. That is a goal that we want to be looking

at. I think that is a good thing today.

Steve Vercellino, County Treasurer: It is not this year fix, it is going to be over time, but just something to kind of have a goal towards.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: And I think that sometimes it is easy for us to think, golly we are just not getting anywhere. But we have come a long way in this county and we are doing a lot of good things and you got to keep your eye on the ball and think about the good things. I know there are challenges out there and we all agree or disagree about some of these things, but I think we are doing some good things here in the county I am proud of and I think you all can be proud of it also. Alright, is there a motion to approve the budget or any other questions? Is there a motion to approve the 2023-24 budget?

Ray Minor made a motion to approve the 2023 - 2024 Budget as presented. John Gossett seconded the motion as presented. On roll call vote, all voted yes.

Said Annual Budget Ordinance is made a part of these minutes as Ordinance No. 2023-02.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Is there any discussion on the motion? I will say that in this year we are going to look at a whole lot different when we, if there is any department before they can overspend. It has got to come before this board. It has got to be approved by this board that is different than we have done in the past. Alright.

**EXTERIOR LIGHTING  
FOR COURTHOUSE -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval to purchase Exterior Lighting for the Courthouse using the 1% funding.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: We have a proposal here and I want any of you want to look at it, these lights will go around the top edge of the courthouse. They have the possibility of being



different colors, but we want set a policy that they only to be white.

John Gossett: Sir, I want to make a policy they can only be white. Not that they I do not want. Do not want to buy a light that can be changed.. the color. Can we do that?

Chairman J. Larry Miller: That is not this proposal John. But Gayla, you indicated that they said they could not do that.

Gayla Prather, County Board Office Manager: To do that, they would be regular Christmas lights and we must pay every year we put them up. These are ours in this proposal.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Be a \$5,000 a year investment to put a month for that. Just to be quite honest. You wonder if somebody is in the background. Alright. I know this is not easy for all of you, but is there a motion to purchase these lights? And we are using 1% funds to do that because it is part of this building, this building and completion of it.

Jack Warren made a motion to purchase Exterior Lighting for the Courthouse. Ray Minor seconded the motion.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion on the motion? If not, we are ready to vote. The voting was as follows: Angela Evans, John Gossett, Neil Hargis and Curtis Overton voted No. Ray Minor, Jack Warren and Kevin Weston voted Yes.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Is it a tie vote at this point?

Kevin Wilson: You have not voted, Mr. Miller.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: I am going to vote, yes.

Kevin Wilson: It is a split vote. Four to four.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Did not pass then, did it?

**SPACE-SAVERS FOR  
CAMPBELL BUILDING  
STORAGE AREA -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval to purchase the Space Savers for the Campbell Building Storage area and presented a diagram of the shelving units. Again, part of the effort to get things in order in these buildings because of the construction of the new courthouse. And is there a motion to approve that? The dollar amount was what? I forget 57,000 that would be used out the 1% funds. Is there a motion to approve that?

Ray Minor made a motion to approve the purchase the Space Savers for the Campbell Building Storage area. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, the following was as follows.

Kevin Wilson: Angela Evans and Kevin Weston voted No. John Gossett, Neil Hargis, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, Jack Warren, and Chairman J. Larry Miller voted Yes. The vote was 6 yes and 2 no.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Motion is carried.

Said diagram is made a part of these minutes.

**TAKE ACTION TODAY'S  
REQUEST FOR  
CONTRIBUTION TO  
WARMING CENTER -  
APPROVAL**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is the approval of Take Action Today's requesting a contribution to the Warming Center. You are well informed about this issue. This is on next item on the agenda. Is there a motion from anyone to deal with this?

Angela Evans: Can I speak for a second? Sure. Paul is looking towards getting with the mayor and asking them what the city would contribute towards the warming center too. If we did decide on anything, then that way you would know about how much you would have to work with.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Well, this is a little bit out of the order. We do not have a motion on the floor, but we are friends here, aren't we? Okay. And I threw out the idea of allocating \$10,000 out of the ARPA and requiring that be matched dollar for dollar. Any other municipality trying to put the arm on them to give some money and we would not be the only ones doing it so they could get up to \$20,000 with our \$10,000 contribution. And other groups helping like municipalities not just charitable group like churches or whatever? That is a possibility of a motion.

Neil Hargis: Is this part of the application that they filled out for the ARPA funds or is this a separate situation?

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Did they fill out, so what was the request on that one? Was it 30,000?

Neil Hargis: I think it was little bit more than that. I cannot remember off top my head.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: If, in my view, if you pass the motion to give anything that application process and because that process.....

Neil Hargis: My issue with it is, you have got 16 other people whose turned in those things and now we are jumping into the front of the line and we have not really, the committees never really met to even discuss this one or any of the other one. I do not think it is fair to jump them in front of the line of the other 16 people, in my opinion.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: I do not necessarily disagree with you Neil. But the only difference is here. This is, I do not think we have any other applications that are like this at all. And their needs are going to be upon us here in the next two or three months. After that, they are probably not

going to need anything.

Neil Hargis: I know it is time sensitive.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: But that is fine. That is fine. Is there a motion to deal with this?

Angela Evans: I will motion to deal with them.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Well, what is your motion?

Angela Evans made a motion to be able to match up to \$10,000 with the other municipalities. Curtis Overton seconded the motion. On roll call vote, the following was as follows.

Chairman J. Larry Miller: Do you understand the motion, sir? It will be matched dollar for dollar. Are there any discussions? We are ready to vote.

Kevin Wilson: Angela Evans, John Gossett, Ray Minor, Curtis Overton, Jack Warren, Kevin Weston and Chairman J. Larry Miller all voted yes. Neil Hargis voted no. Motion passed 7 yes's and 1 no.

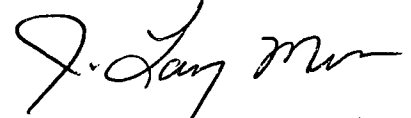
**CLOSED SESSION**

Chairman J. Larry Miller stated that the next item on the agenda is a closed session and he informed the County Board that no closed session is needed at this time.

**RETURN TO OPEN  
SESSION**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman J. Larry Miller asked the Board if there were any questions. Curtis Overton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Angela Evans seconded the motion. There being no further business Chairman J. Larry Miller declared the meeting adjourned.



J. Larry Miller  
Franklin County Board Chairman



Kevin Wilson  
County Clerk and Recorder