

BE IT REMEMBERED THAT THE OHIO COUNTY COUNCIL AND COUNTY COMMISSIONERS met on **Friday, August 15, 2025 at 8:00 am** in the Ohio County Courthouse for the 2025 Budget Hearing for the 2026 Budget. Those in attendance was Council President Don Grace, Vice-President Chaz Cleary; Council Members Debbie Thomason, Yvonne Walton, Chris Flood, Myron Dennis & Stephen Foote; Commissioner Shane Koons; Auditor Kelli S. Vest and 1st Deputy Debbie Combs; Highway Superintendent Michael Kirkpatrick; Judge Aaron Negangard & Probation Officer William Belew; 911 Director & Coordinator Laura Walston; Ohio County Health Dept. Office Manager Penny Koons; Assessor Deedee Brown; Sheriff Tom Baxter; Ohio County Animal Shelter Officer Rhonda Vinup; Shannon Chipman & Jill Richards with Ohio County-Purdue Extension; Treasurer Melinda Smith; Recorder Victoria Monroe; Chief Deputy Prosecutor John Watson; Ryan Johnson with the Heart House; Erin Thomas with Lifetime Resources/Catch-A-Ride; Sarah Brichto with the Child Advocacy Center and Cari Kettman with Safe Passage; **ABSENT: Coroner Cody Miller.**

The meeting was opened with the Pledge to the Flag.

NOW IN THE MATTER OF THE NON-BINDING REVIEW OF THE 2026 CIRCUIT BREAKERS: The Non-Binding unit levies & Circuit Breakers were reviewed by the Council and with no changes have instructed the Ohio County Auditor to send the non-binding reviews out to the Townships of Cass, Rand/Randolph Pike & Union, City of Rising Sun, Rising Sun /Ohio County School Corp., Ohio County Public Library, SE IN Waste Management. **Council Member Chaz Cleary made the motion, Council Member Debbie Thomason, seconded All in favor**

NOW IN THE MATTER OF THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS ON THE 2025 BUDGET: Council President Don Grace opened up the Budget Hearing asking for comments from the audience, none were voiced, and the public hearing was closed. **Council Member Yvonne Walton made the motion, Council Member Debbie Thomason, seconded all in favor.**

NOW IN THE MATTER OF DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUESTS FOR 2026:

COMMISSIONERS: Commissioner Shane Koons spoke on the Commissioner's budget and said that there weren't any major changes from 2025.

HIGHWAY: Highway Superintendent Michael Kirkpatrick spoke on the John Deere 4-Wheel Tractor with Diamond Mower. Quotes: Reynolds Farm Equipment \$197,555.44 & Wright Implements \$197,655.26. Council have recommended to Commissioner's to have this discussion at the next Commissioner's meeting. Special Needs Special Projects Riverboat 1191.39003.000.9603 is where this will be paid from in 2026 with the price of \$197,655.26 & then when Michael sells the Mower Max that money can go back into the Riverboat Special Needs Fund. Michael is asking for \$46,000.00 in the summer laborers' line for 2026, need 4-6 workers for the summer.

PURDUE/EXTENSION OFFICE:

County Extension Educator Jill Richards said that Purdue is asking for a 3% increase of contractual salaries. Jill also said that she put in a 3% raise for their Office Manager. The insurance for the leased laptops is not covered by Purdue now and needs to be covered by the County for replacement. Which is three (3) laptops @ \$210.00 each. Total 128 enrolled in 4-H this year.

CIRCUIT COURT: Judge F. Aaron Negangard spoke on the interlocal for the Drug Testers. This original amount was \$16,718.00 has added \$5,000.00 for a total of \$20,718.00. Jury Systems line is reduced down to \$2,550.00.

PROBATION: Judge F. Aaron Negangard spoke that there were minimal changes in the Probation Fund except a pay increase. A couple of people had left, but were replaced. Allison & Adam Probation Officers, will be in Ohio County for Probation Services.

GAL: Guardian Ad Litem is unchanged for 2026

COUNTY 911: 911 Director Laura Walston spoke that the budget was pretty much the same as 2025. Added an Operating Supplies line in Fund 1000 of \$200.00, this helps distribute 911 material at the School Health fair. In the past years, the Generator payment for the Courthouse has been taken from the Fund 1000 Generator/Fuel Line. 911 Director Laura didn't know how to budget for this for 2026, since the Courthouse has a new Generator Company. Fund 1222 was not changed much, did increase the equipment line, because of many failures/breaks that keep happening including server issues. Currently don't have a part-time employee, good to have one just to help fill-in with vacations, all full-time positions are filled at this time. Fund 1235 did increase the holiday line by \$5,000.00, which is used

for overtime, everything else is salaries. Fund 1191 Riverboat, building lease, 911 were asked to add 10% more to the 2025 approved amount, which is \$27,500.00.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Health Department Office Manager Penny Koons talked about no changes in their 1159 Health Fund. Fund 1161 Health First stayed the same with the reduced funding for 2026. Auditor Kelli mentioned that the Fund 1168 Local Health Maint. & Fund 1206 Local Health Trust Account were not budgeted for 2026. Auditor Kelli asked if Council would agree, that Penny could go ahead and expend out of those funds and get those cleared out. The two funds have a total together of \$87,543.71.

RECORDER: Recorder Vickie Monroe asked for a 3% raise in salaries. Added \$100.00 extra for Mileage for Training for Conferences. No other changes.

CLERK: Clerk Kristie Cate spoke that she is asking for a 5% raise for her office. Kristie talked about an Election Equipment change; this conversion estimate is \$10,844.00. Clerk Kristie wants to hire a part-time person to help with the new Jury system and election work throughout the year.

TREASURER: Treasurer Mindy Smith asked for a 5% raise for her office. There were no other changes in her budget.

AUDITOR: Auditor Kelli has asked for a 3% raise for her office. Added a little to Registration fees, as they have gone up. Fund 1217 Recorder Co/Training Fund, Auditor Kelli has budgeted \$2,500.00 in this fund for any training and conferences that may be attended, particularly by the Council & Commissioner's.

ASSESSOR: Assessor Deedee Brown is asking for a 10% raise for her elected position & a \$5,000.00 raise each for her two deputies. Assessor Deedee felt her & deputies in the office are underpaid and explained the duties that her and her deputies do, are more substantial than most offices. Fund 1131 Sales Disclosure fund have no changes. Fund 1224 Reassessment, Deedee is asking for \$8,000.00 in Professional Services for the Engage X-soft Software. Assessor Deedee is asking for 7,000.00 for new office equipment /Furniture in Reassessment.

COUNCIL: There are no changes in the Council Budget.

SHERIFF: Sheriff Tom Baxter has asked for a 3% raise for his department. Sheriff Baxter spoke on the department pension coverage. Pension coverage went up from \$121,000.00 in 2025 to \$161,000.00 for 2026. Sheriff talked on ordering new cars for 2026, talked with Enterprise Fleet Rental about their Fleet cars, lease to own. Can get Chevy Tahoe's & Dodge Durango's. Hiring former Clerk Jamie Stegemiller for organizing the evidence room was a great decision. Her knowledge is invaluable in other areas also. The Sheriff would like to keep Jamie for 2026. Sheriff mentioned talking with Switzerland County Sheriff about the prisoner housing/meals there. Talked on the drone that Ohio County, has along with two licensed operators Chief Kenny Jackson & Deputy Dean Scheffler. Also, 911 EMA trailer, parked out at Bear Branch, the Sheriff's department could get some use from it, if called out using the drone.

ANIMAL CONTROL: Animal Control Rhonda Vinup talked about her budget not much changing. Council wants her to have her tires checked on the Animal Control vehicle.

CORONER: Council Member Chris Flood reached out to Deputy Coroner Kasie about their budget. Coroner vehicle is being driven. Added extra in their budget for the stretcher/cot battery. The one that they have is a cheap one, needs a better battery.

OHIO COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT: Holt Hoffman, President of Ohio County Soil & Water spoke on the continuation for \$10,000.00-matching grant. Talked about planting trees and flowers at Denver Siekman Park. Equipment rental is going well.

PROSECUTOR: Chief Deputy Prosecutor John Watson spoke on behalf of Prosecutor Lynn Deddens for the budget. Nothing had changed for 2025. The Prosecutor is asking for a 3% raise, but didn't budget for it.

