

PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL MINUTES – AUGUST 12, 2015

The Perry County Council met on the above date at 6:00 p.m. at the Schergens Center as was duly advertised. County Council members in attendance were Steve Goodson, Danny Bolin, Dianne Rudolph, John Taylor, Jim Adams, Jody French and Ron Crawford Sr. A media representative from the *Perry County News* was also present.

Council President, Steve Goodson, opened the meeting and explained that at the June Council meeting 3 members of the Council had been appointed to serve on a committee to study the option of adopting a Public Safety Tax for Perry County. Council members on the committee are; Ron Crawford, Sr., Jody French and Danny Bolin.

Committee member, Jody French, explained that the Public Safety Tax was a tool given to local communities to help relieve the burdens of the Property Tax Caps. The tax can only be used in areas that deal with public safety and can help relieve the circuit breaker issues the county has. She stated that the rate could be set at a quarter of one percent of a person's taxable income. She also stated that the county loses over \$350,000 a year in circuit breaker credits. Jody also explained that the property tax caps and circuit breaker credits have put a hurt on the county, and the county wants to ensure that they continue with the current public safety services.

Jody explained that the funding could be used for the following: support of jail operations; Public Health Initiative Nurse; help prevent county officer turn over and support other safety efforts.

Jody shared with those present a chart showing what a person would pay a year on the safety tax depending on their income level. She also discussed the current income tax rates. It was stated that the committee is researching other property tax relief options at this time.

Committee member Ron Crawford, Sr. stated that at this time nothing had been decided on the tax. Council members are going to wait until after they work the 2016 budgets and then decide if they will adopt the Public Safety Tax and what the tax revenue would be used for. He stated that he doesn't want to raise a tax and has been working with departments and encouraging them to hire part-time people instead of a full time employee if having to replace an employee. Ron also stated that the proposed tax amount could be less than the quarter of one percent.

Council member Jim Adams stated that in recent years the council has been asking departments to cut budgets. That is why recently the committee had met with departments to discuss budgets, and hope the council will not have to make cuts in budget requests.

The meeting was opened at this time for public comments on the Public Safety Tax.

Orville Newell – stated that he hadn't heard anything that he liked. He stated that the property tax caps are there for a reason. Also stated that council members could not identify what they would use the additional money for. He stated that he did not want to pay an additional tax.

Nancy Bland – stated that she lives on a fixed income and has already been taxed enough. She stated that despite the tax-rate caps being set, she has seen an increase in her property taxes over the last several years.

Ken Davenport – questioned what safety tax was being talked about; federal, state, or local tax. He stated that at this time he is against the tax until someone can explain who will manage the funds and outline what the funds will be used for.

Council Member Danny Bolin read a list of what the tax could be used for: police/law enforcement systems; firefighting and fire prevention; emergency ambulances and emergency medical services; probation programs; community corrections; juvenile detention centers and facilities; county jail; communications systems; medical and health care expenses for inmates and pension payments for police officers, firefighters, sheriff and members of the sheriff department. He stated that at this time the council don't know what the tax will be used for, they just know it can be used for a number of things.

Karen Casey - stated that everyone would like to know what this new tax will be used for. She stated that she would like to see specific items and amounts for this new tax. She asked what other options the county has available to use in order to make up for the loss revenue due to the caps.

Council member Jody French explained that at this time the council members are looking into some type of Property Tax Relief to help the county taxpayers.

Council member Ron Crawford, Sr. explained that Tell City, Cannelton and Town of Troy will also receive funding if the tax is adopted. These units will also have to use the money for Public Safety within their communities.

Paul Brockman – stated that circuit breaker credits were put in place from the State for a reason. He stated that each year his property tax goes up and feels that the residents of Perry County are being taxed enough at this time.

Pat Reed – wanted to know how the cities and towns can use their share of the funds as to if they could use it on fire, ambulance or other items.

Council members explained that the cities and towns can use the Public Safety Tax funds for the listed public safety items listed above.

Tom Hauser – stated that he doesn't like to pay taxes just like everyone else, but he would like to know what he is paying for. He stated that if the tax is adopted, he wants to know what the money will be used for.

Stan Goffinet – explained that he is a former County Council member and knows how hard it was to make cuts in county budgets the last several years. He feels there are certain items that could be cut from budgets. He would like to see the taxpayers decide on the tax.

Dan Harding – stated that if a Public Safety Tax is passed it would take money from individual's pockets and not be spent at local stores and restaurants.

Jim Carter – stated that the county needs more sheriff deputies. He stated that he had been working with the county for several years for them to hire a deputy that also could be an animal control officer for the county. He also would like to know what the funds will be used for. Jim stated that the county does need good police and fire protection.

Tom Holmes – stated that we live in a county that is 2/3 National Forest. Property taxes keep going up each year. Most of money collected in the county goes to the school systems.

Kristy Gogel – discussed the EMS services and stated that if funding is used for the EMS it would help persons living in the county have shorter wait times on an ambulance.

Randy Kleaving – explained that the county has a problem with the EMS service because a lot of time we have no coverage in the county due to transfers of patients from the local hospital to other hospitals. He explained that in the 2016 budget request \$149,000 is being asked for to hire another ambulance crew that would work from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. 5 days a week. This crew would help with the transfers and also if needed they could make ambulance runs within the county. He stated that it is not a fix to the problem but it is a start.

Don Swaney – stated he would like for the council to review the 2016 budgets and see if the tax will be needed to cover those expenses. He suggested the County Council have another public meeting to discuss the tax again before they vote on it.

County president, Steve Goodson, thanked everyone for coming to the meeting to voice their opinion on the proposed Public Safety Tax.

The meeting ended at 7:20 p.m.

Minutes approved this 30th day of September, 2015.

Council President

Minutes prepared by:
Connie A. Berger, Chief Deputy Auditor