

February 18, 2020

The Ellettsville, Indiana, Town Council met for a work session at 6:30 p.m., on Tuesday, February 18, 2019, at the Ellettsville Town Hall Meeting Room located at 1150 W. Guy McCown Drive.

Members present were Dan Swafford, President; William Ellis, Trevor Sager and Pamela Samples. Mike Cornman, Kevin Tolloty, Michael Farmer, Town Manager; and Sandra Hash, Clerk-Treasurer were also present.

Mike Cornman, Fire Chief made a presentation showing the need for additional Firefighters. Currently there are 5 Firefighters on duty each day (24/7): 3 at the Ellettsville Station (Station 7) and 2 at the Curry Pike Station (Station 8). There is also a Fire Chief, a Deputy Chief and an Administrative Assistant who work 40 hours a week at station 7. To meet the everyday needs of the Town and the Township they need 14 additional Firefighters and a Training Officer. The increase would provide 9 Firefighters on duty each day (24/7): 6 at Station 7 and 3 at Station 8, a Fire Chief, 2 Deputy Chiefs, a Training Officer and the Administrative Assistant.

The current budget for the Fire Department is \$1,382,131.00. The Town pays \$734,725 (49%) and Richland Township contributes \$647,406 (47%) which includes \$102,000 for equipment. The Town also has a Cumulative Building and Equipment Fund which allows \$65,000 for Fire Department equipment and seed money for grants. One Fireman is paid from the Local Income Tax Public Safety Fund in the amount of \$71,197. This raises the total Fire Department budget to \$1,453,328 and increases the amount the Town is paying to \$805,922.

To provide the requested changes the Fire budget would need to be increased by \$867,860 to \$1,207,869 depending on the level of health insurance needed.

Mike brought this information to the Council so they would know the needs of the Department. He explained that both the Town and the Township have reached the maximum levy limit. A few ways to establish a new levy limit would be for the Town and Richland Township to merge into a territory or the Town could relinquish the Fire Department to the Township. The Town could also join a Fire District. A Fire Territory would be a mutual agreement between the Township and the Town. A Fire District would remove the Fire Department from the Town and move it to the District. The County Commissioners would oversee the budget and the Fire Department. The Town would not have a Fire Department and the funds the Town provided for fire protection would be moved from the Town's distributions to the Fire District. This would include property taxes, Local Income Taxes and Local Income Taxes Public Safety.

House Bill 1065 provides for local income tax board vote restructuring. It also includes language that would allow a township that has experienced a 6% increase in growth to reestablish their fire protection rate increasing it up to but not more than 10 cents.

Mike also expressed concern about losing our experienced Firefighters to other department that have been able to offer higher wages.

The presentation created an informative question and answer session. Discussing Ellettsville tax rates, the effect the Richland Bean Blossom School Corporation has on the rates, the fact that Richland and Ellettsville are hitting the circuit breaker and how the Fire District is expanding throughout Monroe County.

Mike Farmer, Town Manager asked the Council's interest in future annexations. This also created a long discussion. The proposed increase in income tax presented by the Mayor Hamilton, Bloomington, also sparked several comments. William Ellis stated the need for commercial growth to help support the needs of the Town and Fire Department.

Mike Farmer along with Kevin Tolloty have been looking at the possibilities for future voluntary annexations. He would also like to increase the Park system and the aesthetics in the Town. This can only be accomplished with the support and direction of the Council. William expressed concern with improving the appearance of existing commercial properties. He also stated Parks do not create revenue.

Mike Farmer discussed a recent grant application for trails. The matching for the grant would be in labor and equipment. Pamela Samples stated the Fire Department should take precedence over park and trails development.

William Ellis requested examples from other cities and towns that have had success with trails, parks and annexation.

Dan Swafford would like to see the current businesses and signage better maintained.

Mike Farmer shared the experience of working with Indiana Department of Transportation, Senator Vi Simpson and Duke Energy to bury the electrical service along State Road 46 when the road was reconstructed through Ellettsville. This greatly improved the aesthetics of the town.

Kevin Tolloty stated currently there are no guidelines on parking lots and painting lines on the lots. In the past the atmosphere was to not add additional regulations on business.


Sandra Hash would like to know the financial impact additional annexation would bring. Would it be positive or would it simply broaden our borders for future annexation. We definitely need to know what effect it would have on the fire rate for the township if agricultural property does not have municipal tax on it. Would it still pay the township's fire rate? Kevin Tolloty clarified the structures would pay the municipal tax and the agricultural property should remain unchanged. Kevin Tolloty added with the additional assessed value it would lower the circuit breaker impact.

The direction of annexation is also a factor to consider. Mike Farmer posed the question of Ellettsville receiving a portion of the food and beverage tax. William Ellis replied it has to be used for tourism.

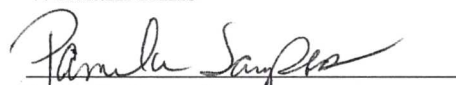
Dan Swafford would like to see the holes in Ellettsville be annexed. Mike Farmer replied that is more difficult to do. Dan suggested a couple of Council members work together with Mike and Kevin on the annexation issues.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.


Dan Swafford, President


William Ellis


Pamela Samples


Scott Oldham, Vice-President


Trevor Sager


Sandra C. Hash, Clerk-Treasurer, IAMC, CMC