

**ALLEN COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**February 16, 2023**  
**8:30 AM**

The Allen County Council met on Thursday, February 16, 2023, at 8:30 am in the Chambers in Citizens Square. The purpose of the meeting was for additional appropriations, transfer of funds in excess of the current budget, grants, and any other business to come before Council.

Attending: Robert A. Armstrong, Tom A. Harris, Josh L. Hale, Paul W. Lagemann, Ken Fries, and Don A. Wyss. Absent: Kyle A. Kerley

Also Attending: Council Attorney Harper, Nick Jordan, Auditor and Jackie Scheuman, Finance and Budget Director.

**Tom Harris:** Order of the Allen County Council meeting for Thursday, February 16th, 2023. If you please arise and will say a pledge of allegiance, followed by a moment of prayer.

**Council:** I pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, invisible with liberty and justice for all.

[silence]

**Tom Harris:** Again, good morning, council. Good to have a full house here this morning. We'll start out with the approval of minutes. Have you had a chance to review minutes from last month? If so-

**Council Member:** Motion to approve.

**Tom Harris:** Got a motion. Is there a second?

**Council Member:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** A second. All in favor of the minutes, say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed. Has passed 7-0. The next step on the agenda is our financial report. Nick Jordan.

**Nick:** Good morning, council. Nick Jordan, Allen County Hunter's office. In your financials you see through the end of January, nothing really exciting or out of the norm at this point in time. The only piece that I would like to point out is if you do look on the miscellaneous revenue on the second page or page 5 of your notebook, you will see interest is well ahead of our estimates. We will quadruple potentially what we've estimated. That all depends on the spend-down of the general fund.

If we were to spend a nice chunk of the general fund sometime sooner than later, obviously that interest revenue will not continue to grow at the same pace. That is something to note because that could be if we still sit with \$30, \$40 million come to the end of the year and the Fed does a couple more bumps in the rate, we could have another \$4 million on top of that \$2 million that we've budgeted.

**Tom Harris:** At this rate, it looks like we'd be at \$5. Almost \$4 or \$5 million, and just an interest.

**Nick:** Yes. Again, we don't know if or when you spend down the general fund balance that is there but that is the key piece aside from the Fed moving rates up and down

**Tom Harris:** Nick, just from a technical standpoint is, we approve some of those funds and those funds go in different directions in the organization but are not spent. The interest is still gaining on those funds even if they're allocated in different directions in the county. Is that correct?

**Nick:** Yes. On page three, your notebook in that county general fund depiction of the financial statement when you see that actual cash balance year to date. As of the end of January, you can see that it was approximately \$51 million. Even if you appropriate money, we've appropriated the budgets to \$128 million. We've appropriated the money but until it's spent, yes, it's sitting there accruing interest, it's getting a return on investment as well as a good chunk of your other special revenue funds.

For example, the ARPA. You can see the financial in here. We could potentially have another couple million to appropriate in the ARPA fund depending on when that money is spent down because that's a bigger chunk than the general fund piece. Even though it's appropriated until it's actually out the door, we're earning interest on it.

**Tom Harris:** Very good. Council, other questions on the financial report?

**Kyle Kerley:** Mr. Jordan, you went to the same meeting that I did down at Indianapolis. If the temporary tax cap bill would get passed, what effect would that have on the county finances? Have you had a chance to look at that yet?

**Nick:** Yes. It's a difficult piece that we can do that bill that you're talking about, 1499. Unless that language gets thrown into other bills. As of right now, it's in House Bill 1499. There's two pieces to it. One piece of it is a backend credit which is up to \$100. On a homestead. If you take your homestead and your tax bill calculation and you arrive at, you still owe \$1,000.

Well, they'll take 100 bucks off of that. If you owe \$50, we're going to wipe your tax bill to zero because you can get up to \$100 credit. That amount using 2022 data because we don't have '23 tax rates, will cost the county approximately \$10 million. Depending on what taxing district you're in, the county portion, Allen County's portion of the tax rate could be 15% in a city because the city or town and the school, they're going to be the largest chunk.

They're almost 70% to 80% of your tax bill. Then the county, then your airport, Citylink, whatever it may be, township, and so forth. The county's piece of that may be \$2 to \$3 million on the \$100 supplemental credit. They're calling it homestead credit. The other piece is that Kyle mentioned the frontend of the bill is your constitutional task cap of 1% on a homestead. They want to lower that to 0.9 or nine-tenths of a percent. It would be phased in and I think it's 0.9, 0.95 and something for over the next four years.

I don't have the computing power.

You have the calc tax bill to do that. That has, according to LSA, Legislative Services Agency, that is potentially another \$10 to \$11 million hits. The total combined could be \$20 million. If the county took 30% of that just as a rough estimate on the high end, we may be \$6

to \$7 million. A lot of the news has been about the schools taking the hit that they're, well, that's because the schools are the largest piece of the tax bill outside of an incorporated area. When you're in the city of Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne and the schools are neck and neck in the chunk of the tax bill. Outside those areas, the school is always going to be, for the most part, the largest part of the tax bill.

The news has been all about the schools but the hit to any taxing unit, it's pro-rata based on your portion of the tax rate. It's not like they just get hits special. Everybody takes a hit on it but I have my own thoughts on that. If that's the reprieve or what the legislature wants to do, then so be it. That potentially could look at \$6 to \$7 million for the worst-case impact '24 because then the circuit breaker cap would go back up closer to one. Our impact lessens as supplemental credit fades out because it's not always a hundred over the next three years. After that, it goes down. Our impact would lessen. The worst part would be in pay '24 as it currently stands.

**Tom Harris:** Other questions. Other questions for the financial report? Hearing none.

**Council Member:** Motion to approve.

**Tom Harris:** And a second?

**Council Member:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** All in favor of the financial report say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed. Fantastic, motion passes 7-0. Thank you. In this morning's meeting, we have total appropriations requested in the general fund of \$557,740 total appropriations requested and other funds are \$43,400,000. At this time, we'll open it to public comment. Is there any comments from the public? No comments.

**Kyle Kerley:** If I may, Mr. President?

**Tom Harris:** Yes.

**Kyle Kerley:** I just want to thank the body's understanding for my absence last month. Thanks for the kind words and support. I also want to thank the [unintelligible 00:08:05] township fire department for the assistance that they aided to my family. Just wanted to put that out there.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you. Thanks. We were going to make it an agenda change this morning. Is Judge Gull here. Oh, I'm sorry. Good grief. There she is. If we want to go ahead and move with Superior Court this morning. Judge, I was looking in the front row and didn't look through the second row. My apologies. Good morning. If you'd like to introduce yourself and your titles, please.

**John:** Good morning, council members. I'm John McGauley. I am the court executive for Allen Superior Court.

**Fran:** Good morning. I'm Fran Gull. I'm in criminal court, Allen Superior Court. I'm the administrative judge. Thank you kindly for advancing us on the schedule. I know you have a

lot of waiting matters that you need to attend to this morning. I'm in a four-day murder trial. It seems like that's all I've been doing lately is murder trial. I very much appreciate you putting us at the top of the agenda so I can get back to the citizens and do the jury trial. I'm a little out of breath because I ran up there. [laughter].

**John:** We'll start with our list with item number one, which is probably the simpler of our group today.

This is a 400-series request for the replacement of a fairly important customer service tool that we utilize over at the misdemeanor and traffic court at the Bud Meeks Justice Center. This is our check-in kiosks where citizens can come in and self-serve to get themselves entered into the system that they are there for court, find out about their hearing where it is, and let the staff know that they are there. The system is darn near as old as the building. It has failed, the kiosks that are currently there on the first floor currently don't function. The project is in its essence a replacement of the computers that serve the kiosks, and the server that provides data to the kiosks.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you. You can go ahead and let's just talk through the rest of those and we'll [inaudible 00:10:15].

**John:** The bulk of the rest of this about \$570,000 is a request that we probably had hoped to avoid making for a long time because this is the support staff costs at our Criminal Division services function over on the landing. This function serves pretrial release, at any one time has probably 2,500 clients in its repertoire. Keeps a good number of people out of the jail because of this programming that it provides. This is the function that supports drug court, veterans court, restoration court, and a lot of other really worthwhile programs that do a lot of really great things for citizens that have found themselves in trouble.

For the better part of 20 years, we have been able to support that function out of user fees. During a previous economic down turn years ago, council asked us to utilize what was then a balance far north of a million dollars, probably somewhere around \$1.5 million to support those salaries. We've been doing it ever since.

Due to a number of factors changes in the length of time that people serve sentences on these programs and the COVID pandemic really clobbered our revenue stream. It's taking it down to the point where at the end of last year, we were sitting in a balance of about \$12,000. We had hoped to be able to avoid this. This is something that we take great pride in being able to support this program on the revenue that we're able to generate, we just can't do it anymore. We don't envision the dynamic that allowed that large of a balance to ever occur again because of what I described earlier.

A great deal of this money, to be honest with you, went back into county general in the first place. We paid about \$1,000,008 on lease payments back to the commissioners on the building and then sits at one West superior-- I'm sorry, Your Honor, 101 Columbia. The money has gone into that building to relieve pressure on county general fund and on staff support. That's why we're here today because the programming that the Criminal Division Services offers is of tremendous value to the community. We have exhausted our ability to support that on our own.

**Tom Harris:** Before we open it up for questions for council, I just want to ask, judge, are we required to have these. Is this something that we choose to do in the county to have the drug

court and the various or is this a statute requirement under state law that we have to have these kinds of--

**Fran:** We don't have to. No, absolutely not. The problem-solving courts are an opportunity provided to our citizens to address addiction issues, mental health issues, pretrial services. This is an opportunity for folks to not stay in jail, but then to also be out in the community continuing to work and paying their taxes and their child support and make sure that they attend court and that they don't commit any additional criminal offenses. The alcohol countermeasures program is a statutory program that we choose to participate in again to offer our citizens the opportunity for rehabilitation.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you.

**Paul Lagemann:** Your Honor, could you talk through or John, the number of problem-solving courts that we have compared to other counties within the state and just how that lays out? Could you also give us a sense of when we talk about these diversionary programs that keep folks out of jail, what's the net effect? How many folks are we keeping out of the facility that we have to limit the size of [inaudible 00:14:16]?

**Fran:** We have about nine problem-solving courts here in Allen County. Sermon in Circuit Court, Circuit Court is also supported by our Pretrial Services Agency. The rest of those are in the Allen Superior Court. We have Drug Court, Veteran's Court, Restoration Court, Mental Health Court, the OWI Court, and then Circuit Court has their own Veteran's Court and their OWI Court. These are programs, I think Marion County probably has more just based on their population but we have one of the oldest drug courts and one of the most successful drug courts in the nation.

Again, these are programs that we offer our constituents to address their criminal behavior that's tied to addiction. The addiction we've seen it. You've seen it in your in your constituents and your taxpayers that these are folks that are committing crime to support habits. We are attempting to break that cycle. Pretrial services has, as John's indicated thousands of people under supervision. Those people would, in fact be in the jail but for pretrial services. The folks that are in Drug Court, we've got about 145 people in our Drug Court right now.

Virtually all of those people were in jail, and then we pulled them out of jail to get them into treatment. The alcohol countermeasures program is a misdemeanor program. Most of those people, they do get arrested, they do get through the jail, but they bond out fairly quickly or are released on their own recognizance with again with pretrial services conditions.

**Paul Lagemann:** Do we have these services available within our jail system?

**Fran:** No. I know that the sheriff does have a program. It's called JCAP. I'm not sure what it stands for but they do offer a four-month program of treatment for addiction.

**Paul Lagemann:** Thank you.

**Ken Fries:** Well, Councilman Lagemann took most of my question but, Your Honor, having a history in the criminal justice system and seeing it from where it was at the old jail was built in 1800s moving to the new jail, and we continually for years and years and years just lock people up without the programs. This Drug Court started in when?

**Fran:** 1996.

**Ken Fries:** From that point on, do we know the number of people that it has served. Any idea? Because these people would have been locked up at the jail, in a cage and then after their time was [unintelligible 00:16:46] kicked right back out on the streets, right back to the drug problem.

**Fran:** Yes. We had 1,100 successful graduates, but we've had far more people go through the program that got the services, but for whatever reason, didn't successfully complete the program.

**Ken Fries:** But doesn't mean they got back into drugs, either.

**Fran:** Correct.

**Ken Fries:** They may have been the seed that was planted to keep them out of our criminal justice system.

**Fran:** Absolutely. We see that. We see that now with people that they were offered drug court back in 2018 and they chose not to participate in that program at that time. They got another criminal offence, and they were offered the program and they took it and they tell us, "I should have done this before but I wasn't ready.?"

**Ken Fries:** Thank you.

**Fran:** You're welcome.

**Tom Harris:** [unintelligible 00:17:35]

**Kyle Kerley:** Mr. McGauley, question I have is, obviously, 20 or so years ago, there was a big fund. I don't blame our predecessors for saying, "Hey, let's spend down the fund. The question I really have is, is there an equilibrium? What I don't want to see is five or six years from now, council comes back to you and says, "Oh, my gosh, there's a million dollars in that." Fund again, let's push, let's make you pay for all those fees. I guess what I'm asking is, what is the revenue? Is there an equilibrium where we might say maybe two or three positions could be funded out of the user fees, and the rest need to be funded out of the general fund? Does that make sense?

**John:** It does. I can tell you that one of the ways that will prevent that from happening is to continue to support the operational costs. The pens and pencils and paper cost of CDS out of user fees. I don't have the number readily handy as to what we brought in last year but I can tell you that we ended the year with about \$12,000 in the bank, and at the end of January that had moved up to about \$29,000.

**Fran:** I can give you the income last year was \$837,811. That was the income that we received. That does include grant money.

**Kyle Kerley:** Approximately how much?

**Fran:** We are very aggressive about grant money.

**Kyle Kerley:** Any idea on that approximate grant monies that are received.

**Fran:** A little over \$100,000.

**Kyle Kerley:** Thank you.

**Fran:** For pre-trial. We also received small amounts of grant money for incentives for the drug court program, but our disbursements last year out of that account were \$953,000. We took in, and we have continued to take in far less than what we're spending. I absolutely get your concern.

**Kyle Kerley:** Would you be opposed if we move forward with this number today, that as we get appropriate closer to the budgeting process, and you maybe have a clearer idea of what that revenue is that maybe we relook at this and say, "Maybe we can." I'm talking long term so we don't get into this ebb and flow situation that maybe, "Hey, maybe we can take two or three positions, or even one, and then put the other over the general fund."

I know our auditors worked hard to try to spend some of these extra funds down, and I think over the last few years this council's done a good job of trying to get into this equilibrium where we stop this back and forth. That's just a question I had for you guys is that, are you guys willing to see if we can get a better idea as we come towards the budget to see if there isn't a way to-- we're not back here in five years doing the opposite?

**John:** I can assure you that we won't be. We've watched this dynamic over the last several years and discussed whether we needed to do this as recently as 2019 and 2020 because the numbers were falling. I can tell you that if we did what you're suggesting, we will absolutely be back here in June or July, asking again. It is inevitable. We've tried to avoid this day for as long as we could, because as I've said, we take great pride in being able to support the program as we have, but the day that this request had to be made was inevitable and I can tell you that if we do what you're suggesting, we'll be back in four or five months again.

**Kyle Kerley:** I was suggesting we move forward with the request today. We look at '24, once we see more what those revenues are.

**Fran:** The bulk of the revenue is coming from the alcohol countermeasure program user fee. That's capped by statute at \$400 per offender, and the alcohol countermeasure user fee is assessed on offenders that are convicted of operating while intoxicated. Those numbers have drastically reduced in large part, I think to Uber. Don't drink and drive, all of the-- and the programming that we do in ACP to encourage people to drink responsibly. What's happened is the numbers of OWI offenders has decreased because people aren't drinking and driving. Thank God.

**Council Member:** That's a good thing.

**Fran:** Thank God they have figured out that we don't need to be getting behind the wheel of a car after we've been sitting at a bar for several hours. Those numbers continue to drop and will continue to drop as people continue to behave more responsibly.

**Tom Harris:** Does that change the demand of the positions? In other words, if you've watched that trend continue, do you deal with one less person over next year or two years out?

**Fran:** No. While the numbers have dropped, that has given my staff a little bit of breathing room. Several years ago, everybody was just jam-packed with clients. They are now able to address the client base that they have much more effectively and much more efficiently.

**Tom Harris:** Okay.

**Ken Fries:** Your Honor, what if someone needs this help but can't afford the user fee?

**Fran:** We waive it.

**Ken Fries:** Do they still get in the program?

**Fran:** They get the program.

**Ken Fries:** Okay.

**Fran:** Nothing, we don't prohibit people who cannot pay.

**Ken Fries:** We may still be serving more people and still taking in less money.

**Fran:** Yes, because if they can't, we have a balance, an outstanding balance of fees. Now we do try to collect that, but you know, Councilman [unintelligible 00:23:29]. You can't get blood from a stone, and we have offenders that are poor and we cannot fund programs on the backs of poor people.

**Ken Fries:** If they need the help, they need the help.

**Fran:** They need the help. We don't look at, do you have the money to pay? Then you get the help. If you don't have the money to pay, you don't get the help. That's not how we operate in any of our programs.

**Tom Harris:** One that say first of all, we're fortunate that the interests, I think that the Honor spoke about just a little bit ago was about \$490,000, I think something like that for this first month or two. Which picks up a large piece of that. Just interest alone in this case, is helping out the county a little bit. I want to also say I get the idea of the office computer equipment and thank you for recognizing the technology improvements that keep coming at the court and judicial system that we recognize that technology just keeps coming at us, and we appreciate that. Council, any other questions at this point?

**Paul Lagemann:** Just one Mr. McGauley, you've mentioned the whole grant funding component for some of these programs. Can you talk a little bit about some of the other things that you've funded and not had to come to council for, through grants and being creative?

**John:** I like to say when we talk in-person that we were very good at getting other people to pay for things that we do. For the most recent for example was getting \$200,000 from the state of Indiana to help us pay for interpreter costs. That's direct relief to the 300 series in our budget that otherwise we'd be having to come to you for. We are able on an annual basis through the court improvement program offered by the Indiana Supreme Court to get money to help fund programs in our family relations division in particular, we are able on a fairly regular basis to get our technology needs taken care of through that program.

A few years ago, we were able to get the Supreme Court to pick up the entirety of the technology bill for implementation of our e-filing program. Whenever we can, we go to other people first before we come to you.

**Paul Lagemann:** If you had to just take a wild guess at the amount of grant funding that you provided to the county to offset county general dollars like this in the last year, what would that look like?

**John:** Oh. I'm going to turn around to see if our financial coordinator waiving a number at question.

**Fran:** I would say that word from 500,000.

**John:** That's what I was going to say.

**Fran:** At least 500,000.

**John:** We were both in the same ballpark at least a half million dollars.

**Fran:** We just got a \$100,000 from the state for pretrial services for one of our staff people, so that's a person that is paid completely out of this grant to supervise offenders while they're out of custody in the community.

**John:** I think Judge referred earlier to part of the programming that takes place at Criminal Division Services is the criminal Rule 26 cash bond project that is funded entirely at the moment out of a grant from the state of Indiana.

**Paul Lagemann:** I appreciate that. I wanted to give a sense of it doesn't apply specifically to these positions or necessarily to that piece of equipment, but it's certainly an offset to the county that needed to be recognized, and I appreciate your creativity.

**Fran:** Thank you.

**Ken Fries:** Mr. President, I'd like to make a motion for Superior Court appropriations within a general fund total of \$213,000, 1 through 12.

**Kyle Kerley:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** Motion and a second. Council, any other discussion? Hearing none. All in favor say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed. That does pass 7-0. Thank you very much and good luck today.

**Fran:** Thank you very much. I very much appreciate your willingness to work with us on this. Thank you. Again, thank you for advancing us. I'll get back to my murder trial.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you. All right. Next up we'll move backwards to the commissioners on the agenda, so commissioners in regards to the ARPA Fund 975. Good morning. If you'd like to introduce yourself and your titles, please for the record.

**Therese:** Good morning. Therese Brown, Allen County Commissioner.

**Rich:** Rich Beck County Commissioner.

**Therese:** We're subbing morning for Chris Cloud, who is feeling a little under the weather today, so we said we would be more than happy to take his place today to meet before you today. What you have in front of you is a portion, if you will, of the ARPA funding that was appropriated last year. Some of those dollars have been already allocated and have purchase orders on them because they were appropriated last year. The IT project that cybersecurity, et cetera, you agreed to last year. Those funds are being utilized at this moment as well as \$6.3 million as well as the \$300,000 earnest money for the parcel of land for the jail project.

I'm under the impression and understanding that you received an email from Mr. Cloud outlining the information that is on the agenda today of which approximately \$20,752,913 is not being requested today due to the fact that with Congress making a change late in the air and changed that the treasury has yet to change the rules as they're now dubbing it to be ARPA Flex, that there may be some changes to and flexibility with some of these dollars for specifically counties to be able to utilize towards road projects, so until we get that information, we weren't wanting to necessarily secure in the buckets maybe all of these funds so as to have the opportunity possibly to address road funding with those dollars.

That's why you don't see the \$20 million on this particular thing. Anyway, the categories are strikingly the same with infrastructure, broadband being \$4 million. The infrastructure that we set aside for water and sewer infrastructure. That includes the drain that was determined to be potentially in serious need of assistance, and that would be in the sunny meat area. That is the area which would be affected because of the jail construction if that is to actually come to play.

Other surveyor noted things that I know that you all have been made aware of in, again, prior submissions. We also have a placeholder for then the administration. Again, we don't know how much that in and of itself will play out to be. What we do want to do today, because today is the day that we go this evening to the Board of zoning appeals for the parcel at 2911 Meyer Road, we have decided that it might be best for us to withdraw the amount of \$13.4 million, which is the net amount of the \$20 million that was to be set aside for the jail purchase.

An sundry of getting ahead and thinking that it might be best to, A, not have that conversation at this point, and then work with council in the future in the next few weeks, months, whatever it may be, to have a meeting or two or three, whatever it may be, once and if we are able to get the BZA approval and close on the real estate to be able to have Elevatus come in and sit with all of you in whatever form you would like to discuss the current status of the project, which is pretty much what is on the Allen County website under the Board of Commissioners.

Then also have a discussion, again, for those of you specifically that were not on council previously with Baker Tilly to discuss the financing aspects of this project, as it will be very intense and cumbersome for all parties involved. That is what we have before you today. If you have any questions of myself or Commissioner Beck, we are happy to take them.

**Tom Harris:** Just for clarification here, so you're saying the infrastructure of \$29 million and the administrative contractual of a million, so basically \$30 million request today? Is that what I'm hearing?

**Therese:** Yes, sir.

**Tom Harris:** Council.

**Kyle Kerley:** I know that Commissioner Peters has worked more on this topic than I think you guys have, and I'm fully in support of the money for broadband. I know there was a recent announcement from Comcast. Could you guys speak a little bit about what's coming on the broadband side of things? How much is being invested and maybe generalities where that's going to go. We have more defined focus of where this \$4 million's going to go because there's still going to be holes after Comcast does their build-out.

**Therese:** Well, that would go beyond my pay grade is. Your point well taken that Commissioner Peters has been the one who has been spearheading the broadband initiative. I don't know if Commissioner Beck has any--

**Rich:** No. I'm not any more informed than you are on the broadband.

**Therese:** Again, it would be-- in this instance it's a placeholder. I'm not exactly sure. We can obviously have him [crosstalk] to you. It's a lot of things in these days are a lot in a state of flux.

**Kyle Kerley:** It was really good news. I was just hoping--

**Therese:** Yes. That I'm aware of. In the intricacies of it, I'm not aware.

**Rich:** Not aware of the--

**Kyle Kerley:** In rough generalities, Comcast has committed about \$16 million to Allen County to areas that don't have high-speed internet. That's the 10,000-foot view. I was just hoping you guys might have more of the-

**Therese:** I do not.

**Kyle Kerley:** -details. Okay,

**Therese:** A lot of stuff going on

**Tom Harris:** As this process of the ARPA Fund passage and funds are approved and such, might it be possible? I think so that Chris or someone from the commissioners could give us updates in terms of how those funds are being spent or some of the projections as you're bringing things forward. In some cases those are placeholders and maybe coming back just to help us understand where that \$4 million went, as an example.

**Therese:** Absolutely. Specifically when you look at some of these infrastructure, water and sewer projects, they still would need engineering to be done. The ballpark dollar amount is a ballpark number. That to be said, some may obviously go up, some may go down, and so hopefully it nets out to being in the appropriate range to not have any other adjustments being here.

**Tom Harris:** Upon passage today, what happens next then from your perspective?

**Therese:** It will allow us then to start the process with some of these entities to have submission of specifically Woodburn being one of them because I believe they're already in the queue to have a waterline extension and sewer extension in their area. It would allow then for us to be able to finish the financing for them to be able to do that, to work through the issues and concerns with Maysville Regional Sewer District and a sundry of other things. Airport expressway sewer project.

It's extremely important for all of us when it comes to economic development and clearly will allow the surveyor's office to be able to do the things needed to be able to start the process. Whether it's internally, they can still do it without these funds engineering work to a level, but then there's going to be other projects because of the timeline of the expenditure for ARPA to be able to get these things out to an engineering firm to get things done and then be able to bid.

**Tom Harris:** Last month, I think, or previously the comment was said that getting that application process is established and what that looks like, how that works was having to be checked or formalized through the attorney's consultants and such setting this process up. Is that almost there? Is it there? Can we anticipate that in the next month?

**Therese:** I believe it's close. I don't know, Commissioner.

**Rich:** It was an application in the packet that came out to you in this week. The application is in place and the process, Chris is working on getting that up and running.

**Tom Harris:** That could be something that from a community standpoint that's about to come to fruition, the process to request additional funding.

**Therese:** Yes, of course. As in all this, obviously there needs to be the appropriation to be able to allow the application process to work.

**Tom Harris:** I understand. Ken.

**Ken Fries:** The county surveyor gave us a paper this morning that talks about the ARPA projects, and it looks like for the ones that they can do, there's substantial savings for in-house sourcing of these projects. Are you going to have them do everything they can in-house to save whatever money we can? Because it looks like it's a lot of money.

**Therese:** Absolutely. It's the construction as well. Obviously that's going to be the costly portion of this, but yes, absolutely. We look forward to that. Not only as the board of commissioners, but also as the drainage board.

**Ken Fries:** This is a pleasant change from the past.

**Therese:** Yes, it is.

**Ken Fries:** Thank you.

**Therese:** Yes. Very pleased with our surveyor.

**Tom Harris:** Council, other questions? You think council--

**Josh Hale:** Would Chris, just understanding of some of the projects in that email that he sent us, it has various listings of townships and like Zulu Community septic system as an example on that list. Would he be able to give just for understanding from my perspective, just maybe an overview of what these more specifically are if-- Okay.

**Therese:** Oh, absolutely. In some instances these are things that have been discussed or have been articulated to us as a concept. Some are a little bit more farther along for these entities, communities, if you will. Some of them are, it's like, it'd be really great if we could, and then they themselves need to put pen to paper and be able to delineate exactly what it is that they're after.

**Josh Hale:** Really, it's just a matter for me of understanding. Because some of these look like they could be very pivotable, obviously water at Township Park. I have a pretty good idea what that is. That's a big deal. Just an understanding that these could have a huge impact and so it'd be nice just to have a little--

**Rich:** The awareness of these projects has been there for some time. It's just there's never been any money now, but we have ARPA money, it's manner from heaven, so to speak, and now we can address some of these issues that we would never have been able to address.

**Tom Harris:** Could there be other questions?

**Council Member:** Yes.

**Tom Harris:** Go ahead.

**Kyle Kerley:** On the administrative side, I know going back, I've always felt that the number was high. The requests I guess, that are coming in from the townships and other municipalities, are we handling all that administration--

**Therese:** At the moment I'd say yes. Where we are referring certain questions to Baker Tilly for clarity, to make sure that we don't have a misstep, because they're obviously a little bit more well-versed in the subject matter, but no, we're doing as much in-house as we can.

**Kyle Kerley:** Right now Baker Tilly's, I think they've done a good job. I think we've paid a total of maybe \$12,000.

**Therese:** Yes, this number may be, obviously [crosstalk]

**Kyle Kerley:** I know we've met with Baker Tilly a lot.

**Therese:** [laughs] For an a sundry of reasons outside of our [crosstalk]

**Kyle Kerley:** For the bill to only be \$12,000. For me, that's a big leap to get to a million dollars.

**Therese:** Right. Absolutely.

**Rich:** [laughs] Right. Well, the city hired an individual to handle it, so Chris is doing this as a part of his total function. We're trying to get by as inexpensively as we can with this.

**Kyle Kerley:** No, no, no. I understand. I appreciate that. I'm just pointing out that I think it's good that so far our bill is very low compared to that placeholder, and I don't believe that it will ever come close to that placeholder. I just wanted to make that.

**Therese:** I'll just look at it as a little savings bank for that little, whatever that potential overage could be in another bucket.

**Tom Harris:** What made these particular funds unique a bit, is that in any errors that are made, the community could end up spending those funds and then it could come back later to have to repay those funds back to the Feds, if you will. That made this unique, and so the walk through the minefield to make sure that we don't make mistakes going into it is crucial and vital at this point. Council, other questions? Hearing none. You have a motion for either the infrastructure, administrative, contractual, or both together.

**Kyle Kerley:** I'll make a motion. First motion for broadband infrastructure for \$4 million.

**Ken Fries:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** All right. We've got a motion for \$4 million for broadband. Just from a standpoint of clarity, Nick, we can break it out that way. Is that appropriate? As we've got listed on the agenda the infrastructure, administrative, contractual, we can break it down into a finite, smaller pieces, correct?

**Nick:** Yes, you can appropriate how you so choose. The majority of the body so chooses the way it's on the agenda is how it's submitted to myself. If the intent, as we've discussed in multiple meetings before, is to limit it to a specific purpose based on that IC have provided you. That's what we'll follow based on the motion today. Then that's between you and the commissioners, account on commissioners, if there's a disagreement in that regard.

**Tom Harris:** No. Very good. Thank you. We've got a motion for \$4 million for broadband and a second. Any further discussion on that? Hearing none. All in favor say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed? That does pass 7-0 and that leaves other items in infrastructure, including the water and sewer.

**Kyle Kerley:** Next I'll make a motion for \$25 million to include the airport expressway sewer project, the Bullerman drain, the a hundred town septic relief water at Jefferson Township Park, water and sewer projects for the leader, Cedarville Regional water and sewer district, water and sewer projects for the Maysville Regional Water and Sewer District, Edgerton Waterline extension for the City of New Haven. Lift Station replacement, and waterline for Woodburn. The various drainage projects that were submitted by the surveyor's office, the Zulu Community Septic System, and possible expenses for Sunnymede.

**Paul Lagemann:** Well, second.

**Tom Harris:** Just got a motion and second, council. Any other discussion?

**Paul Lagemann:** Just for clarification, Kyle. When you included the ARPA projects as they were submitted to us by the surveyor, can we include that, Nick, as a direct list, as part of this motion? Or do we need to read that out?

**Nick:** No, we will take the document that you were provided, and if a claim comes through that fits in one of those buckets, then we say, "Hey, this was a specific purpose in Kyle's motion that the majority of council approved."

**Paul Lagemann:** Right. Thank you for clarification.

**Tom Harris:** All right. We have a motion on that. We did have a motion and a second on that. That was the other discussion. Very good. All right. Hearing no other discussion at this point. All in favor say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed? That does pass 7-0, \$25 million.

**Kyle Kerley:** Then finally, I will make a motion for upper award administration not to exceed \$1 million.

**Tom Harris:** Got a motion.

**Ken Fries:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** A second. Any other discussion on that item? Hearing none. All in favor say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed? That does pass 7-0. Thank you very much.

**Therese:** Thank you very much.

**Rich:** Thank you. Appreciate. [inaudible 00:44:45] structure was for how much?

**Tom Harris:** Infrastructure was \$25 million with the broadband, totaling 29, with the broadband. All right. Thank you. Next item up is the ACDEM appropriation within general fund, extra deputy hire, I think.

**Nick:** Yes, council, what that's in regards to is you recollect, you gave the 5.5% raise also on part-time employees. ACDEM just needs theirs bumped up so that they have enough funds to pay that part-time employee to reflect that raise.

**Tom Harris:** Just for the public's information ACDEM then would be?

**Nick:** ACDEM, Allen County Department of Environmental Management.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you, Mr. Roger. Council, any questions at this point?

**Kyle Kerley:** No. Motion for \$1,447 for an appropriation within general fund for extra deputy hire for ACDEM.

**Ken Fries:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** A motion and a second. Any discussion? Hearing none. All in favor say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** All opposed? That does pass 7-0. Thank you. Next up. Council, we have a capital item of \$43,920.

**Nick:** Yes, that's a reduction. Last month you approved the surveyor's request for that truck and ancillary items that go along with the truck, and so we reduce your capital, the county council capital line because you've approved the dollar in the surveyor's budget. Next month, I'll have one for the amount you just approved for Superior Court today for that 20 some thousand. That way it's a net zero change and we don't have \$500,000 a rollover from Council Capital as we reduce that each month if you approve capital items.

**Tom Harris:** For newer members, in essence county council holds capital line item so that when these capital requests come forward, we have an opportunity to discuss with department heads and elected officials their capital requests. That way we have a little bit better idea. They have to tell us during the budget process what they anticipate. It's a better idea for us to understand those capital requests. In essence, we're taking that from our fund on county council at this point. With that any questions? Not hearing none, is there a motion for that?

**Kyle Kerley:** I'll make an appropriation for the reduction within the general fund of \$43,920 for other--

**Tom Harris:** [unintelligible 00:47:10] Seconds. Any other discussion? Hearing none. All in favor say aye.

**Council:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** Oppose? That does pass 7-0. Thank you. Next up let's see. We have Dan Avery from Newark with us this morning, talking about our future, present and future, I think, and a PowerPoint presentation. Dan, welcome and maybe give us your name and title and tell us why you're here this morning, maybe.

**Dan:** Good morning. My name is Dan Avery. I'm the Executive Director of the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council. I wanted to discuss a couple things with you at the request of Councilman Harris. A little bit about NIRC. We are a regional planning organization that serves a four-county region. We're also a metropolitan planning organization that focuses on the urban area of Allen County. [clears throat] Excuse me. We have two major divisions within the department. One is a community development division, and they focus mostly working with our communities, our rural communities. They work on preparing grants and administering grants. Some of the work they've done like the stellar projects in East Allen.

Work with the Office of Community and Rural Affairs, the state office that distributes HUD money. Just recently wrapped up infrastructure project in Monroeville. We work with DNR, getting park grants, currently working on a park master plan with the board township. Then we also have received grants from EPA to improve water quality. Those are some of the recent things in the community development division. Then on the transportation planning side, we have the metropolitan piece, which focuses on the urban area and most of that process is governed by federal rules and regulations through the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and for air quality the USEPA.

Then we also provide rural transportation planning services to the rural portion of Allen County and to our other three counties. I wanted to just mention today that we are in process of updating the transportation plan. I provided you with a brochure from the current plan, the 2040 plan. We're also preparing to event that 2040 plan to keep some projects moving along on the US 30 corridor but we're in the process of updating that to a 2045 transportation plan, which just means that projects that will do the next year, the year after, and looking forward out to the horizon year of 2045, we will have both transit bike-pedestrian and highway projects documented in that plan as to what we intend to improve.

One of our primary jobs is to pull the players together that own and operate the roadways whether it's city of Fort Wayne, New Haven, Allen County, Indiana Department of Transportation, and collectively decide which projects whether it's a trail project or a roadway project get collaboration and agreement on how we're going to move forward and how we're going to invest the federal funds.

A good example is the Maple Crest Road, where it goes, the parts of it are in Allen County. Parts of it are in the city of Fort Wayne, Parts of it are in New Haven. Because we've collectively sat down and decided how that quarter should be in the future, both the Maple Crest corridor and Maple Crest South and Adam Center, we all are moving in the same direction so we end up with a roadway that is well-planned and designed to meet our needs well into the future. As part of the just a general overview of the planning process is we do a lot of data collection. We collect traffic data, we monitor and review all the crash data.

We look at what is failing today, where we haven't concerns whether they're safety or mobility concerns congestion. Then we also meet with and use the comprehensive plan as a guide, but we also meet with developers, we meet with utilities mostly water and sewer. We know where that infrastructure is going to be placed in the future. We have a good understanding of how the community's going to grow, and then we use a traffic forecasting model to assess what those travel demands are going to be at the horizon year of 2045 to ensure that the investments we make today in the infrastructure will serve us into the future. That's an overview of the process. Any questions on that?

**Tom Harris:** You're in a is it the public comment period? Is that underway at this point for particular project or so?

**Dan:** Yes. We're not into the public comment period yet on the plan update. What I've shared with you is a public notice that we're required to take public comment on before we amend our transportation plan and before we amend the transportation improvement program. That public comment period is on the US 30 corridor, and I'll run through a little bit about what we're looking at there. Thank you. There's two studies underway right now by the Indiana Department of Transportation.

I should say the US 30 coalition is an active coalition of representatives from all the counties, from Allen up to Valparaiso, as well as some of the major communities like Columbia City Warsaw. The coalition has been active and encouraging INDOT to take a complete look at the US 30 corridor, and so that's why the PEL Study is underway in the Pale Study is a planning and environmental linkage study. It's a pre-environmental impact study look at what should be done on the Corridor, and primarily taking a lot of input from the public and the folks that use the corridor. That'll be about a two-year process, and it does go from the Ohio line up to State Road 49.

Then there's a second study that's been underway for a while, It started back in 2018 or 2019, and that's on the section at least initially from US, 33 to the Felder Leesburg Road intersection. That was prompted by some safety issues at the US 30 and Kroemer Road intersection. This study was looking at how to improve that section of the corridor and come up by looking at the different intersections. We'll go through some of those improvements.

What is being proposed to eliminate the safety issue at Kroemer Road in US 30, a number of different alternatives were looked at before this one was selected. It's essentially to eliminate any cross traffic at Kroemer Road. It'll be essentially a modified interchange that has a right-in right-out capability and ramps that will essentially access US 30. For instance, if you're northbound on Kroemer in front of going by Sweetwater you will not be able to make a left turn onto US 30.

**Bob Armstrong:** From there you've got to go all the way down to the next interchange, I take it, to come back to Columbia City.

**Dan:** We will get there.

**Tom Harris:** By the way, when you look at these projections and ideas concepts, and such. You're getting input from all those businesses in that area. This is something that in this case, Sweetwater and whoever else is in that corridor?

**Dan:** Yes. In fact, we had a number of meetings with Sweetwater and the property owner on the south side. Of course, the residents to the north also were included at the public meeting that was held at Sweetwater. Actually of the proposals that were offered this is the one that Sweetwater felt was best for them-

**Tom Harris:** Interesting. Okay.

**Dan:** -I did propose a full interchange here. A tight dual roundabout similar to what's up at Union Chapel, except the US 30 would have to go up and over, which would essentially put a wall right in front of Sweetwater's main entrance. They felt that wasn't best for them. It would also take a little bit of their parking and alter their access. This intersection has been modified a little bit, as you can see in this view here, primarily the ramps that will bring the traffic onto US 30 have been extended.

In fact, the one that's to the east will go and continue to the US 33 interchange that is eastbound to the northbound off-ramp. Then in addition to this change, and this Councilman Armstrong gets to your question. There will be improvements to the Kroemer Road, California Road and to Flaugh Road, including two roundabouts, one at the Kroemer in California, and one at the Flaugh and California intersections. This will provide a mechanism to get folks over, and to Flaugh Road-- which will have an interchange built at that location.

Here's another view of those improvements with the roundabouts. Some of the improvements to Kroemer Flaugh and California will be three-lane sections, some will be two-lane. It will also include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Then this is not part of the amendment because we amended the transportation plan a few years ago to include this interchange, but this is what's being proposed and designed for Flaugh Road and US 30. It'll be a diverging diamond type of interchange, similar to what we have at Dupont and I-69. This will be the location where full access will be provided to US 30.

At O'Day Road, what's being proposed and to be amended into the plan is essentially closure of the O'Day Road intersection that provide a bridge over US 30 to allow folks in that area to safely cross the US 30 corridor. Stahlhut Road being proposed to close Stahlhut Road in cul-de-sac on both the north and south side. Then more recently, and these are the projects up to this point that I've discussed are all scheduled for construction and fiscal year 25. Then more recently, the decision to add an interchange at Leesburg and Felger. We don't have a design for that. It's not underway at this point but it is scheduled for fiscal year '28 construction.

Things will be moving fairly quickly. There'll be public input, public hearings on that interchange. Then looking at Solon Road and Butt Road, likely that Solon will be closed similar to Stahlhut and Butt Road will have a bridge. The intersection will be closed to traffic, but there will be a bridge similar to the O'Day Road that's being proposed right now. Those are the projects that we're amending into the plan and into the capital improvement program. Until we get design work and environmental work done, we can't say exactly what will happen at these locations, but this is what is being proposed.

**Tom Harris:** Well, thank you. Before we get to those questions, I was going to ask just one of the things that's becoming more than obvious is that the growth in this county, a lot of this growth is going to happen outside of, in the case of Fort Wayne, is going to happen out in the rural areas, and that growth continues to happen. We're occasionally actually more frequently ask about things like, oh, what are you doing with Coldwater Road?

Because the growth is just enormous going on, but the public needs to understand that you are looking out far into the future on these growth plans and things like Coldwater Road and US Highway 30 and such are all being looked at in coordination with both state, local governments as well as builders and contractors, developers and such.

**Dan:** Correct.

**Tom Harris:** What's that, Paul and then Ken?

**Paul Lagemann:** On the US 30 project, I know this has been a complicated one. I know that INDOT has not been super excited about the project that they've made that pretty clear. As we've moved through this process, one of the concerns or pieces of feedback that I've received is the ability to move agricultural apparatus back and forth over 3 or over 30. I'm assuming you guys have taken that into consideration and that that's a big part of what you're working on.

**Dan:** Yes. Typically at the public meetings, hopefully, those sentiments are being brought up to ensure INDOT is, I mean, they're pretty good about taking those things into account and making sure that the bridges are wide enough or designed in a way that farm equipment can move across those.

**Paul Lagemann:** Good. The other question I had for you real quick is much of the dollars for the federal transfer dollars that move through for roads, streets improvements, infrastructure improvements, come through your office. Can you give us a sense about what's the volume of those dollars that are essentially federal and state grant funds that move through your office per year?

**Dan:** Well, they come through in various forms. The funds that we receive annually for local federal aid projects in the urban area is between \$13 million and \$15 million a year. Those

are projects or funding like for the Bass Road that we just let the last section of that last Friday. Now Coldwater Road, the city of Fort Wayne has a project on Coldwater Road. That one is not using federal aid. The project that we just finished up on Maple Crest, St. Joe's Center, and Clinton those were all part of the federal aid package.

We're looking at Clinton, North Clinton. We're looking at Ardmore. There's an active project underway by the city to improve Hillegas, north of Bass from a little bit south of state up to Coliseum. Those are some of the things that we've got. Because we also have to include all of the INDOT projects that are in Allen County in the tip, while those aren't really allocated to us I know for example, these US 30 projects that we're talking about today, total about \$116 million.

**Paul Lagemann:** The process essentially flows through your office, right?

**Dan:** Yes. It has to be included in our plan. It has to be included in our transportation improvement program, or the federal funds can't be used on it.

**Paul Lagemann:** Well, we worked together for a long time. I just want to say I appreciate the hard work that you and your office put into all of these projects. I know it's very complicated and anytime anyone asks me about the process for federal aid, I said I want to refer them to you. I often refer them to you as you know because you have been the master of that process. Kudos to you and keep up the good work.

**Tom Harris:** Ken.

**Dan:** Thank you.

**Ken Fries:** Dan, I feel sorry for you in the position you're in because you're dealing with the federal government, state government, city government, county government, and it seems like we can never quite get it right. We're talking about a diverging triangle out there on Flaugh in California at 30. The only reason we have a diverging triangle at Dupont is because we didn't plan for the future. When that interchange was put in at Dupont Road, Dupont, and Tonkel was a two-way stop. It became a four-way stop, became a traffic light, but it never, the interchange never got changed.

To Councilman Harris's point to grow, and we know we're going to grow, why would we start with a diversion triangle when we have the ground available right there now to put in an interchange that can then handle the growth in the future? That's question number one. I've got several. Got me going. This public comment thing, how do we get this to the public so they know they can comment on this stuff? Because this is the first I've seen about this public comment period from February 1st to February 20th.

**Dan:** Well, we publish it on our website. We also have a fairly extensive mailing list, email list that we send out notices to. I think that we send out over 500 emails.

**Ken Fries:** We have news media here with us today, so perhaps they can get some of that out to the public to let them know that we are looking for public comment. This is something that's going to affect all of us for the future. We talked about Coldwater Road, and I know the city's working on the project from DuPont up to Union Chapel. As I recall, but they don't have the funding to do it right.

**Dan:** They've chosen do a three-lane section at this time.

**Ken Fries:** How do we-- I know there was, there was public comments on it. I doubt the public thought three lanes was going to be sufficient. How do we convince them to do it right the first time? We don't have the Hillegas road. We're talking about Hillegas Road from Bass to Coliseum. I remember when we built Hillegas Road is the county saying, "Hey, this is going to be a north-south corridor, so let's build it."

We build it two lanes, hoping to have it be a north-south corridor, and it became a north-south corridor. We're like, "Oh, it needs to be wider." It troubles me that government never really-- I see this plan to 2040, which is great, but it seems like we never really planned for the future. How do we change that diverging triangle out there at Flaugh to make it a regular interchange while we have the space? How do we convince the city of Fort Wayne that no Coldwater Road needs to be four or five lanes instead of three lanes, and that turn lane's not going to help anything?

**Dan:** The best way is through public comment. The city of Fort Wayne held a public information session on the Coldwater Road. I attended that. I don't believe there was a--

**Ken Fries:** Not well attended.

**Dan:** It wasn't-- the attendance wasn't bad, but I don't believe there was an outcry for additional lanes. It's always a balance of how much property do you take and how much damage do you do. Of course, for instance, Flaugh Road it doesn't go further north in Washington Center Road. It's not an extremely long corridor. It runs from Bass Road to Washington Center. We feel the verging diamond is an appropriate way to move traffic. It's one of the most efficient ways to move traffic at a reasonable cost.

**Ken Fries:** At the current level of traffic or for the next 20 years, but not about 30 or 40 years. That's what Trump was looking for.

**Dan:** We look forward, we look at what the future projections are and ensure that it will function well into the future.

**Ken Fries:** Mind you-- I'm not blaming you for any of this. I think it's inherent with governments like, "Oh, let's do it as cheaply as possible, but we should do it right as inexpensively as possible." Instead of just making a three lanes-- Coldwater Road northbound from DuPont Union Chapel, making a third lane there is not going to help with traffic flow at all. If you drive on that and watch for people turning left they're not that many. It's the traffic flow. It's the amount of cars. We've allowed that to develop that area, and you're putting more and more cars in the same little tiny road. The city, after it's done, the city will then say, "Oh my gosh, we should redo it." All right hopefully the news media will get this out to the public. Thank you.

**Tom Harris:** Yes. That is one of the and I thought from a council perspective, it's important for us to understand obviously what NIRCC does and all the challenges that they face. Ken and I have had this discussion before. It's that situation where a government says, we need the revenues to be able to pay for certain parts of the infrastructure, but we need tax base to be able to pay for it. We have to allow the tax base to exist first. Then we will have the funds to improve their infrastructure. It's needed to be the other way around yet that's the animal that I think we live with from that standpoint. Council on other questions for Dan and Dan wants to say thank you for being here today.

**Don Wyss:** Thank you. Dan, this is more just a clarification. I thought you mentioned that NIRCC served four counties?

**Dan:** Yes.

**Don Wyss:** I only saw looks at Allen, Whitley, and Huntington on the form. What am I missing?

**Dan:** The transportation plan for the metropolitan area. It does not go into DeKalb County or into Wells or Adams counties. It only covers the urbanized area and what we anticipate the urbanized area to be at the horizon year of the plan. The urban area or the metropolitan planning area extends a little bit into Whitley County, although we don't other than the provision of the transportation plan that's all we do in Whitley County.

It includes just a little corner of Huntington County where the US 24 quarter goes into Huntington County. Again as a regional planning organization, they're served by Region 3A, which is based out of Kendallville. That's why the Metropolitan Plan focuses primarily on the urban area. Then we do rural planning in DeKalb, Auburn, Garrett, and also down in Bluffton and Decatur, those areas.

**Don Wyss:** Okay. When you say four counties, NIRCC serves four counties, what Four counties?

**Dan:** It's Adams, Allen, DeKalb, and Wells.

**Don Wyss:** Okay. Thank you.

**Tom Harris:** Very good. Council any other questions? We could probably spend the entire morning with you, but it's fascinating that the responsibilities and the challenges that you have to project the future in the county. Thank you for taking time this morning. Great for us to understand a little bit about the challenges coming at the county as we continue to grow. Dan, thank you very much.

**Dan:** Yes, thank you.

**Tom Harris:** All right, Council next up on the agenda, I think we have board appointments. We have an opening for the board of zoning appeal. We have had the submission of a gentleman by the name of Dan Gabbard. Gabbard?

**Paul Lagemann:** Gabbard.

**Tom Harris:** Okay. Very good. Is there any is there a nomination for Dan Gabbard at this point?

**Kyle Kerley:** I'll nominate Dan Gabbard.

**Tom Harris:** Is there a second?

**Paul Lagemann:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** Any other nominations at this time? Hearing none on favor of Dan Gabbard to fill the board of zoning appeals appointment say aye.

**Council Members:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you. Those opposed? All right that does pass 7-0. Thank you very much. All right. Next up we were going to have the discussion of the comp and findings and where we're at. Enormous amount of work and discussion and communication has happened in the last couple of weeks and months over this project.

It's been going on for a little while. We're nearing the completion of that, and we found that there were still some questions in some areas. We feel that the postponement for 30 days will help answer questions and concerns that employees and department heads and elected officials may have. That has been postponed through the March meeting at this point. With that, I'll open it for any upcoming meetings or liaison reports. Any liaison reports, any upcoming meetings. All right hearing none--

**Kyle Kerley:** If Health Department hasn't reached out to you individually yet it probably will be once they figure out what form SB4 and SB1 will be advancing. SB1 is the mental health bill. SB4 is the Governor's Commission on Public Health.

**Tom Harris:** I have spoken to Mindy a little bit about that in that we'll wait until we get to the maybe third reading or final piece, seeing where that's at from the state, and maybe having her speak as we had Dan this morning. We may have board of health here updating us on that. Very good. Hearing no other reports. Yes, Dan.

**Josh Hale:** Just a quick question. This may be something that should come from the commissioners and this may be a question, this may be overstepping a little bit, but from the folks that I had spoke to, would it be possible if the HR department could say, "Hey, we've spoke with department and go through and list them and maybe." I don't know, I guess I would say something like, these were the three top concerns they had and these were maybe three answers. I'm just thinking of something on one page. It could be distributed to Council, because the one thing that I got from the folks that I spoke to, they didn't feel like they were heard by the-- when they tried to reach out to HR, and then they didn't even feel like their concerns were addressed.

Again, I think this may be more of a commissioner thing than a council, but when the folks had reached out to me, that was the one common theme was, well, we've talked to HR, but I didn't feel like my question was answered. Maybe over the next 30 days the HR department could divide and conquer, maybe set aside two or three days a week. Again, make it simple as you get, what's your top three questions? We're going to try to address them, and then they could present that. I think it's simple thing to us, or again, if asked, come through the commissioner, that's just a suggestion.

**Tom Harris:** No, Joshua or Josh that is-- You're right on and that is happening as we speak. That process started about a week to 10 days ago, and that information was being sent out to department heads and elected officials. They felt that, "Oh my goodness this is a little shocking to us." We didn't know all the details. We've got lots of questions. HR immediately started to do one of the requests that we had for HR is to say, "Why don't we keep track of any hiccups, any concerns that we might have? Let's get that down and be able to track that a little bit."

They are doing that presently, and we were almost-- They were getting toward the end of that list, but we thought, let's not rush that. Let's slow that down a little bit to allow everybody to

get to your point, to get their voices heard, and understand that process a little bit more. That's why we've extended it 30 more days at this point. Great point.

**Josh Hale:** I just think it would be helpful for us as counsels. I could say, "Hey," Nancy for instance, and HR said she's already spoken to you. Is that not the case? Rather than I felt a little bit this week as if we were somewhat of a middle person, and it's definitely not the position I think we want to be in.

**Tom Harris:** No, it's good and it's moving and as we speak, and I want to say thank you for the patience of elected officials and department heads and the employees of the county that this is a long process. We want to make sure we get off to a good start. We're improving that communication as we sent here today. We'll see how that plays out in the next 30 days.

**Josh Hale:** Thank you.

**Tom Harris:** If no other comments, if you would like to make a motion?

**Paul Lagemann:** Yes. I would like to move--

**Tom Harris:** For approval of, I don't know second reading.

**Paul Lagemann:** I got it.

**Tom Harris:** Thank you so much.

**Paul Lagemann:** I would like to move the approval to waive the second reading on any matter approved today for which it may be deemed necessary for the county council meeting of February 16th, 2023.

**Tom Harris:** A motion is there a second?

**Council Member:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** All in favor to say, aye.

**Council Members:** Aye.

**Tom Harris:** That does pass 7-0. The next county council regular meeting will be held at 8:30 on Thursday, March 16th, 2023 in the chambers room of citizen square. Is there a motion for adjourn?

**Josh Hale:** Motion to adjourn.

**Council Member:** Second.

**Tom Harris:** A second. All in favor say aye.

**Council Members:** Aye, 7-0.

**Tom Harris:** We are adjourned. Thank you.