

COUNTY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING – MAY 12, 2025

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Pamela Burton.

A. Call the Meeting to Order

1. Roll Call

The following members were present: Jonathan T. Myers, John Mallers, Michele Ann Graves, John Ditmars, and Ron Bates. Melinda Griesemer was present via zoom.

2. Invocation

Mrs. Burton gave the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mrs. Burton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Approval of 5/12/25 Agenda

Mrs. Burton noted the following change to the agenda:

- *item C4 (Local Public Health Services – transfer request) has been pulled from the agenda*

Mr. Ditmars made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Mrs. Graves seconded the motion, which unanimously carried.

5. Public Comments (agenda items only, limited to 5 minutes per person)

There were no public comments.

B. Routine Matters – Consent Agenda

By a single motion, the Board approves the following items, which may include Salary Ordinance Amendments, Additional Appropriations, Reductions, and Transfers. Any items listed on the consent agenda may be removed by a Council member and moved to the regular agenda.

Mrs. Graves made a motion to approve the following requests as presented. Mr. Bates seconded the motion, which unanimously carried.

1. Approval of 4/14/25 Council Minutes

2. Grants Awarded/Non-Governmental (#4300-0124) Sheriff/Jail

(a) AA: 4300.44100.00000.0124	Misc Equipment	\$	4,700.50
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3. CASA User Fee (#4917) CASA

(a) AA: 4917.36102.00000.0361	Contractual Services	\$	3,000.00
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4. Drug Free Johnson County (#1148)

(a) AA: 1148.31005.00000.0331	Treatment/Intervention	\$	8,599.17
(b) AA: 1148.32005.00000.0331	Prevention/Education	\$	32,290.70
(c) AA: 1148.33005.00000.0331	Justice/Law Enforcement	\$	7,726.02
(d) AA: 1148.34005.00000.0331	Administrative	\$	19,885.00
(e) AA: 1148.31000.00000.0331	Professional Services	\$	172.00

C. Salary Ordinance Amendments, Additional Appropriations, Reductions, and Transfers:

1. Innkeepers Tax Collections (#7304) CVT

Ken Kosky, Director of Tourism, was present for this request. He stated he and Mrs. Graves met and had a productive meeting. He then asked if there were any further questions.

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(3a) Reduction: 1197.12005.00000.0409 Sub Insp/Stormwater Spec \$ (31,390.95)

4. Local Public Health Services (#1161) Health

This item was removed from the agenda.

(a) ~~From: 1161.32660.00060.0210 Other County PH Aid \$ (85,000.00)~~
~~To: 1161.32053.00060.0210 Access Comm Health Partner (new) \$ 85,000.00~~

5. Acceptance of the Johnson County Board of Health's proposal to combine the positions of the Johnson County Health Director and the Public Health Preparedness Coordinator with a minimum yearly salary of \$116,344.43.

Dr. Jefferson Qualls, Health Officer, was present to request combining the position of the Health Director and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator (PHEP) with a minimum yearly salary of \$116,344.43. He noted this amount is less than what the person is currently getting paid from each position. He also anticipates in the future, these roles will need to be separated as our County continues to grow in size noting the current population is just over 172,000 and the 11th largest county in the state.

Mr. Myers expressed he was surprised when he learned the same person was doing both positions and getting paid for both. He then stated he would not be in support of the request.

Dr. Qualls remarked he inherited a well-oiled machine. The prior health officer served for over thirty years; he has been in this position for four years, and his biggest issue was COVID (which he stated COVID was over!). Therefore, he is just now really getting into the nuts and bolts of how the Health Department really works. He noted their Director was an Environmental Health Specialist for many years and was a non-exempt employee and also served as their Emergency Preparedness (EP) Coordinator. When she moved from an Environmental Health Specialist to the Director, there was no one suited to be the EP Coordinator at that time, so they opted to keep her in that role because of her valuable experience.

Mrs. Graves commented since Dr. Qualls noted we are one of the largest counties and since WIS is doing the salary study for the Council, they were asked to look at this request. WIS was unable to find another county in Indiana that has these two positions combined. She then stated to be clear, this is a full-time director position and a part-time PHEP position that is being requested to be combined. Mrs. Graves noted when she looked at the former job description for the Director and now looking at the new job description for the combined roles, it is apparent that the job description was written and tailored to the person, and not necessarily to the positions, which leaves her with some concerns. She then asked if you have the same person performing both the roles, how will both roles be performed effectively when no other county is doing it that way.

Dr. Qualls replied they (the Health Board and himself) plan on separating these jobs at some point in the future. Currently they have someone who has been doing this for a long time, well tenured and experienced and is capable of juggling both jobs. But as the demands of each position increase over the next few years, he doesn't see it being plausible or effective, so it is necessary to split these roles.

Mr. Mallers asked if they had an idea of when these positions would be split.

Dr. Qualls replied he was unsure, not wanting to put an exact timeline on it now, but within the next four years and probably sooner.

Mrs. Graves expressed concerns with that date; if it is broken, then it should be fixed now and start cross training within the department, especially if no one else knows the PHEP duties. In her opinion, they should just split this into two positions; this will serve the taxpayers better.

Dr. Qualls replied he intends to agree – the sooner, the better; however, they need to have time to get their ducks in a row and find people with the correct experience to get the jobs done properly.

Mr. Ditmars commented that if the current Director can do both positions cost effectively, regardless of if other counties are doing this – that is irrelevant of today's issue. This has been an accepted past practice, which they are now addressing. He feels like if there is a plan in place, and succession is important to develop someone inside the Health Department to take this role on or at least develop separation in the job description, then they are in the process of addressing the problem long term, while having a short-term solution in place.

Brief discussion was held regarding the duties of the employees at the Health Department and how these jobs are affected by the growth of the County.

Mrs. Graves asked what we are missing by having these two positions combined instead of separate, since we are one of the larger counties.

Dr. Qualls answered he doesn't think any of the services to the taxpayers are suffering; however, the Director is spread thin and the other employees suffer leadership.

Mr. Myers inquired if it is the Council's role to combine positions.

Tiffany Costley, County Attorney, was present and stated the Council's role is only to set the salary for positions. If the request is to set a salary for combined positions, then they have the authority to do so. The Board of Health and the Health Officer have the ability to combine the positions. She also briefly referenced the findings from WIS regarding the job description, noting it seems to be more tailored to the person than the actual positions. She then stated this item could be tabled for further discussion.

Mr. Myers commented this is the quandary that they have – they are responsible for "positions", yet here we are talking about a "person" (who is wonderful and has performed very well).

Mr. Bates said he feels like everyone is aware this change needs to be done; but he is unsure if it needs to be done at this moment in time.

Ms. Griesemer stated the time is now, not later. We don't want to get ourselves caught in a situation where the plan was discussed but never implemented. She feels like they need to address it now and move forward.

Mr. Mallers reiterated since it is the Board of Health's purview to combine positions, and the Director has been doing both jobs for at least seven years with no complaints, then they need to address the here and now – which is the request before the Council. They can fix the here and now, then give them the opportunity to address the issue long term.

Mrs. Burton expressed she has given a lot of thought to this. As the Council, they have no control over whether or not the positions are combined. They can voice their opinions and recommendations to the Health Board. Personally, she is not prepared to change any salary or make any changes financially. The situation has been worked out by both legal and payroll to make it acceptable. She would prefer all changes be discussed at budget time.

Brief discussion was held again regarding the request before them today and whether or not it should be tabled until budget time.

Mrs. Graves made a motion to approve the request to combine the positions of the Health Director and PHEP Coordinator with an annual salary of \$88,593 (which is the current 2025 budgeted salary for the Director of Health

[note: wants to confirm this is the correct salary amount]) effective 7/1/25. Ms. Griesemer seconded the motion, which carried 4 to 3, with a roll call vote; Mr. Ditmars, Mrs. Burton, and Mr. Mallers all voted nay.

Further discussion was had regarding the outcome of the vote.

Mr. Mallers then made a motion to reconsider the previous vote. Mr. Ditmars seconded the motion, which failed 3 to 4, with a roll call vote; Mr. Bates, Mrs. Graves, Ms. Griesemer, and Mr. Myers all voted nay.

D. Other Business

1. Public Presentation of Johnson County Health Department 2024 Annual Report

Betsy Swearingen, Director of Health, was present to give a brief overview of their 2024 annual report (given to the Council members earlier), noting they are a very diverse Health Department offering so many different services, such as: Communicable Disease Control, Environmental Health Department, Emergency Preparedness, Food Safety, Health Education, Vital Records, and several Immunization Programs. They also partner with Marion County for Vector Control, have received a Breast Cancer Grant to help pay for women to get mammograms, and have a fairly new Asthma Program and run a pretty vibrant Indoor Air Quality Program.

Mrs. Burton thanked Mrs. Swearingen for her information.

2. Johnson County Public Library – Brief JCPL Update

Lisa Litner, Director, was present to give a brief update of the JCPL. She first explained the initial presentation was going to involve the improvement plans of the White River Township branch; however, with the recent changes in the state legislation, they are putting this project on pause. Next, she reviewed a short power point, highlighting many of the services provided and used at the JCPL locations, as well as how the JCPL is funded and how the legislative changes will impact the libraries.

The Council members thanked Mrs. Litner for her update and presentation.

3. Approval of Council Ordinance 2025-05: Amending 2025 Salary Ordinance (Feb 2025-April 2025 approvals)

Mr. Mallers made a motion to approve the request as presented. Mr. Bates seconded the motion, which unanimously carried.

E. Old & New Business

1. Outside Legal Counsel – Update

Mrs. Burton stated they had an executive meeting prior to this meeting where they interviewed two out of the three applicants she had narrowed down. Unfortunately, one of the applicants had an emergency and was unable to attend the interview. The applicant's information has been shared with all of the Council members so they can reach out to them at some point. They will be voting on this at their meeting next month.

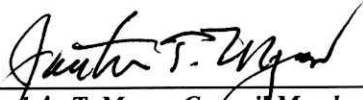
F. Adjournment – Next regular meeting June 9, 2025

There being no further business, Mr. Bates moved to adjourn. Mrs. Graves seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

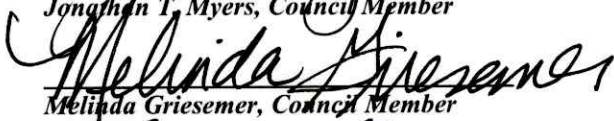
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Pamela Burton, Council President


Michele Ann Graves, Council Vice-President



Jonathan T. Myers, Council Member



Melinda Griesemer, Council Member



John Mellers, Council Member



John Dittmars, Council Member



Ron Bates, Council Member

Attest



Elizabeth A. Alvey, Johnson County Auditor