

**TIPPECANOE COUNTY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
DECEMBER 16, 2003**

The Tippecanoe County Council held a Special Meeting at 11:30 A.M. in the Tippecanoe Room in the County Office Building. Council members present were: President Connie Basham, Vice President Ronald L. Fruitt, David S. Byers, Jeffrey A. Kemper, and Betty J. Michael. Others present were: Auditor Robert A. Plantenga, Attorney David W. Luhman, and Secretary Pauline E. Rohr. (Councilmembers Jeffrey Kessler and Kathy Vernon were absent.)

Also present were State Representatives Sue Scholer, Sheila Klinker, and Tim Brown.

President Basham called the meeting to order.

Gas Tax

President Basham: Work on giving the County the ability to impose a Local Option Motor Fuel Tax which would benefit the County because of the daily influx of workers. She thinks this would be more acceptable than a Wheel Tax.

Rep. Scholer: Tippecanoe County won't get this tax because the State has to enlarge the pot for all. The proposed Gas Tax bill, starting at 7¢, is essentially the same as last year's. Rep. Klinker said if the County passes the Wheel Tax, the State gives built-in incentives to the County. Rep. Scholer said they are trying to get 2¢ of the Gas Tax to counties first because they need it most.

Councilmember Michael: Are there restrictions for use of a Food and Beverage Tax? Rep. Scholer said it can be used for anything, but there have to be specific projects.

School Remonstrance

A change in the law decreased the number of signatures required for a school remonstrance from 250 to 100. The change also prohibits gaining signatures on petitions in the jurisdiction seeking the bond unless there is equal access for both sides.

Auditor Plantenga said it is the job of the Auditor's Office to distribute petitions and remonstrance forms and then check them for validity. For the current Tippecanoe School Corporation remonstrance, the Auditor's Office distributed 1,250 forms containing 25 signature lines. Since it takes approximately 30 minutes to check the validity of 25 signatures, he said it doesn't take long to deplete part-time and overtime budgets. Auditor Plantenga said this is the Auditor's job, but he thinks the County is doing the business of the school corporation and would like some reimbursement. Attorney Luhman said there are also costs for his service since he is asked on a regular basis to rule on an issue such as the validity of a signature. Rep. Klinker agreed there should be some reimbursement.

Reassessment

Rep. Scholer said the State needs time to make educated changes to reassessment. She said no one knows if the reassessment process accomplished what the court said had to be done. Rep. Klinker said, according to Department of Local Government Finance Commissioner Beth Hinkle, the DLGF is going to conduct equalization studies in Tippecanoe and Fayette counties because there seem to be discrepancies.

Councilmember Fruitt asked why it took so long to implement reassessment. Rep. Scholer responded it was because there were philosophical differences between the administration and the legislature in writing the manual.

Rep. Brown encouraged the County Council to keep talking about a Local Option Gas Tax because he thinks the Reassessment issue raises questions regarding how local government and schools are funded. He is curious how much money a Local Option Gas Tax will raise compared to a Wheel Tax.

→ Rep. Scholer left the meeting.

State Budget Cuts

Councilmember Byers asked if the State is willing to make budget cuts as the County had to do. Rep. Klinker reported State Budget Director Marilyn Schultz told her 7% cuts will be made to all agencies. Rep. Brown said 7% cuts across the board is irresponsible (i.e. law enforcement). Rep. Klinker said former Governor O'Bannon committed to no cuts to education. Councilmember Byers questioned the continued quest for more funding by the State Universities such as Purdue. Rep. Klinker said she believes Purdue and Indiana Universities are the key to Indiana's economic development. Councilmember Byers agreed but said they need to scrutinize their budgets.

Unfunded Mandates

President Basham said unfunded mandates by the State damage local government's ability to stay within their budgets (i.e. Probation Officers' salaries). Rep. Brown said sometimes the legislators don't vote logically.

Juvenile Detention

President Basham said the juvenile judge has no control over how long a juvenile is incarcerated at the Department of Corrections although the County pays the bills. Attorney Luhman thought there should be a State funding mechanism to pay for juvenile justice. Because we pay for juvenile detention from the General Fund, he said we need help with our court costs. Rep. Klinker offered to work on that.


County Government Reorganization


Rep. Klinker said the reorganization of county government is being discussed at the State level (i.e. combine Assessors to one per county, combine offices of Auditor and Treasurer).

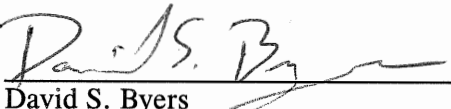
RECESSED


The Special Meeting recessed at 1:35 P.M.

TIPPECANOE COUNTY COUNCIL

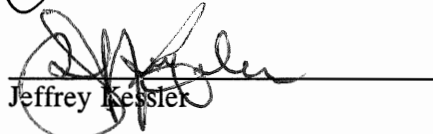

 Connie Basham, President

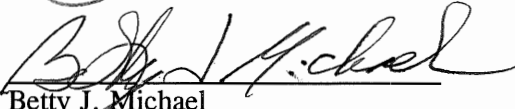

 Ronald L. Fruitt, Vice President

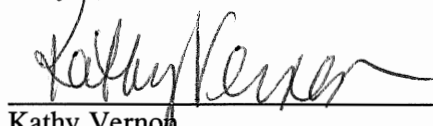

 David S. Byers

Attest: 
 Robert A. Plantenga, Auditor


 Jeffrey A. Kemper


 Jeffrey Kessler


 Betty J. Michael


 Kathy Vernon