

# Benton County Council

## February 23rd, 2023

The Benton County Council met at 8:30 a.m. at the Benton County Courthouse. Those in attendance were Council members: Jim Schoen, Angie Glotzbach, Mike Conner, Brent Cox, Jack Duncan, Jackie Steinmetz and Auditor, Audrey Freeland

Others in attendance were – Gail Lange and Angie Taylor

### **Business:**

The meeting minutes from January 26, 2023, meeting was approved as presented with a motion by Councilwoman, Angie Glotzbach, second by Councilman, Jack Duncan and motion carried.

Auditor Freeland spoke to the board about the BP Community Investment and that they have requested an executive session which is set to be held on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. She continued by saying that they are still planning on paying the 2.1-million-dollar check to the county as a county investment payment. Those funds once received will be released to the affected taxing districts. The DLGF and the SBOA will be directing the county on how those funds are to be released. Councilman Conner asked for clarification on it. It will be a onetime payment but that will not correct the AV, correct? Auditor Freeland said that is correct, and while the county is glad, they are willing to make this payment it does not fix the problem. Councilwoman Steinmetz asked exactly what was happening. Auditor Freeland provided a brief rundown of the situation; when the company came into the county, they were awarded an abatement for specific time. Once the abatement was done they sold the company, then when the new company filed their federal return the assessed values showed a significant decrease. The county receives those values from the DLGF, and they are entered into the taxing software as a utility assessment. There have been a few meetings that included Senator Niemeyer, Sharron Negele, Superintendent of the BC school corporation, BP and various county department heads, Council members and Commissioners. While the process on how they filed is legal it is the taxpayers of Benton County that will suffer and what has spurred this investment payment on. Auditor Freeland said that she will work with the DLGF and SBOA on how to release the funds once they are received. Councilman Conner said; so there is no precedence on this process then since Benton County is the first to deal with it, that is correct. Auditor Freeland said that she would keep the board updated on the process and procedures.

Councilman Schoen asked if the assessed values would be back in place since that is what the county wants/needs. Auditor Freeland said that the desired outcome, but the bill recently died. Councilman Duncan asked if this was just a onetime fix. Auditor Freeland said that there was discussion about another payment for 2024 but nothing has been made official. The decrease in assess value is for the Fowler Ridge 1 & 3 wind which as the group discussed will set the precedence which others will follow added Councilman Cox. Councilman Schoen added that he feels he was told by Commissioner Berry that there has been verbiage added or changed to keep this situation from happening with any new agreements with the county. Councilman Conner asked the Commissioners had any discussions on what they are going to do with the money once received. Auditor Freeland said that the funds we will receive was part of the budget process for 2023, and then the affected taxing districts will receive their portion of those funds through some process which she will be working with the DLGF and SBOA on how to handle that. Councilman Schoen added that since those funds were “budgeted” we will still be short in those max levy funds. That is correct and hopefully when we receive direction on how to process those payments and how are those funds to be placed into the max levy funds or can they said Auditor Freeland. She said that she has been told they will assist us throughout the process once we get to that point.

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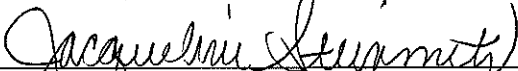
The group asked to be kept in the loop because it will affect the 2024 budget process.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:47 a.m. with a motion by Councilwoman, Angie Glotzbach, second by Councilman, Jack Duncan, motion carried.

  
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President, James "Jim" Schoen

  
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Councilman, Mike Conner

  
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Councilman, John "Jack" Duncan

  
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Councilwoman, Jacqueline "Jackie" Steinmetz

Attest:   
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Audrey Freeland, County Auditor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice President, Brent Cox

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilwoman, Angie Glotzbach

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilwoman, Katrina "Trina" Schutter