

WARRICK COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM
LIT PUBLIC HEARING
107 W. Locust Street
Boonville, Indiana
July 8, 2021
5:00 PM

The Warrick County Council met in a Public Hearing for LIT in the Warrick County Courthouse, 107 W. Locust Street, Boonville, Indiana.

Attorney Cliff Whitehead and Administrator Krystal Powless were in attendance.

Auditor Debbie Stevens and Secretary Kristine Georges attended and recorded the minutes.

Council President, Greg Richmond, called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Greg Richmond: We'll do Roll Call first.

Krystal Powless: Ron Bacon?

Ron Bacon: Here.

Krystal Powless: David Hachmeister?

David Hachmeister: Here.

Krystal Powless: Ted Metzger?

Ted Metzger: Present.

Krystal Powless: Brad Overton?

Brad Overton: Here.

Krystal Powless: Richard Reid?

Richard Reid: Present.

Krystal Powless: Greg Richmond?

Greg Richmond: Here.

Krystal Powless: Chris Whetstone?

Chris Whetstone: Here.

PUBLIC HEARING ON INCREASING THE LOCAL INCOME TAX FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

Councilman Richmond: Okay, first order of business tonight is the 5:00 (PM) Public Hearing. I'd like to call that meeting to order. And we have a little format we're going to follow, if you don't mind, to keep things moving and organized. First of all, I'll have a little opening and then the Tax Study Committee that was commissioned on September 5, 2019 will have a report. It was of course slowed down by COVID and a lot of this might have moved at a different speed. The Jail Study Committee, if anybody asks, has finished and the cost estimate is anywhere from thirty-five (\$35,000,000.00) to forty million (\$40,000,000.00), when that needs to be done. That's in today's dollars. And then the public comment, I'd like to, once we have the two (2) reports, my opening and the report done, I'd like to limit each to three (3) minutes of talking time. And I'd like to alternate it, some to speak for and someone speak against back and forth and I'll use the sign in sheet here. And it will help us, please, if you state your name and spell your last name because we have verbatim minutes that's reported out and this is all being recorded. And if things get repetitious, like if people are making the same points, we don't need to go over the same points over and over again. I might notate that to you and it could get to the point where if you know what you're going to say is something someone else has said, you can come forward, state your name, spell your last name, say I'm for it and then go sit down or I'm against and go sit down like that. I want to give everyone a chance to state their opinion. And with that, we'll start with my short opening here. I did present to you a little circle, hand drawn, cause I don't know exactly how to compose power point yet. It talks about seventy percent (70%) of your property taxes goes to the School Corporation and then we have a thing called a circuit breaker, five hundred twenty-one thousand nine hundred fifty dollars (\$521,950.00) comes off from the circuit breaker for the property, of our property taxes we collect. That we are assessed that we could collect. There's a difference between assessed value and what we actually get, because the State Legislature passed laws to limit the growth of property taxes and that's not a bad thing. That's okay with me. And in doing that, the State Legislature gave us the tools to help take care of our local needs and that is these local option taxes. The tax phase-in is something, don't think about. Tax phase-in's a good thing because it's what brought Deaconess Gateway here for example. All that has been developed down there. It's paid for sewer systems in Pigeon Township, Elberfeld. We've helped Newburgh and Chandler sewer and water, getting those things, infrastructure that's needed to get any kind of development going and to make progress here in Warrick County. That's the tax increment financing. And then tax-phase-ins, fifty-five million dollars (\$55,000,000.00) of the assessed value is tax phase-ins. I know a lot of people don't like tax phase-in, which means you take farm ground and for ten (10) years, it's phased-in, the taxes are phased-in.

You don't pay any improvement assessment taxes the first year. Then ten percent (10%) of it the second year. Twenty percent (20%) the third year until all ten (10) years. Or if the five (5) year abatement, there's different abatements that we can give them according to their scoring. We have to score them on this. And so, we miss out on that assessment value on our property taxes as well. But, if we didn't do this, the business might not come here too. And that assessed value would remain at a very low rate where we wouldn't have improvements on it. So, there's reasons why we do all these things. Trying to give you a real quick overview, what the County Council does, and all the budgets that go into this. What goes into making your property taxes come out to what they are, and what we have to provide as far as services. The ring that's the outside show the growth quotient. That's the only amount we can grow our property taxes by each year. I had to make the ring bigger than the actual four point three (4.3%), that's what our growth quotient is this year to write the words in there. But, you can see that nearly half of that growth quotient is taken up by other things. And the big inner circle would be the total levy. That's the amount collected. That's not your tax rate. That's the amount collected. Your tax rate actually goes down the more the assessments go up. And so we don't collect that much more money in property taxes because the assessments going up. We do have more property to assess and then again that growth quotient, I was going to bring in a pie pan or cake pan to show you that wall, we can't exceed that wall very much. Our population is growing at tremendous amount, at a very rapid rate. And because of that population growth, our needs are growing. Thirty-two (32) years ago when the first LIT tax was put in, we had a population of thirty-eight thousand (38,000). We're just below seventy thousand (70,000) now. I'm probably taking some of Terry's information here. But, if you open up this other little thing that I gave you, you can see, all our property tax funds are listed on the first page. And they're each, they each have their own levy and County General is the lion's share. If you open up to the next page, it says two (2) at the bottom. The blue part is the property tax levy where most your property taxes go. And then in that levy, you have the County General and then on the next page, County General, the gray part represents the Commissioner's operations and I have a list of all the things that Commissioners do. One (1) of our biggest expenses is health insurance. That keeps climbing every year, enormous amounts. Our Workman's Comp keeps going up. Unemployment keeps going up. Our retirement benefits, all these things keep going up. All these are the things that are under the Commissioners' jurisdiction. Other departments, they're all listed here from the Assessor, Prosecutor, Recorder, Surveyor, all those different departments. That's General Fund. Then the Court operations, all the Courts, anything that has to do with the Courts is listed. That's all a part of General Fund. The Sheriff has a long list also here including the School Resource Officers and all our deputies and then the people that work at the Jail, Central Dispatch. There's a lot of items under the County General Fund that we have to take care of. The next few pages just goes through where I circled the majority of the income for each, Parks and Recreation, Cum Cap, the Health Department, Election, they all have their own revenues, Cum Drain, Cum Bridge. They all get the most of their funds from property taxes. Then on the next is the Highway. Highway is funded by Motor Vehicle Highway distribution. That's gasoline tax, and you can see there was a big bump a couple of years ago when the State Legislature increased the gasoline tax to help us locally. It really did give us a big bump here locally. That was a big help. When you put that with the half of EDIT, the Economic Development taxes in effect right now, we're able to look into the future and bond big road projects like Lincoln Road, the Lincoln Avenue Road Project, the Oak Grove Road Project. They're doing Bell Road now. There's been several of them where you do an eighty/twenty (80%/20%) match. The government, the Federal Government pays eighty percent (80%), we pay twenty percent (20%). We have to obligate that twenty percent (20%). So that's where part of that money goes as well as you're not traveling on gravel roads and chip and seal road like when I was in my twenties and thirties and a teenager. I remember to date my daughter...my wife, I had, I had to go back a gravel road to pick her up and got my car all dusty every time. We don't have much of that anymore. So, there's where your highway funds are going to. And let's see, keep turning a couple pages back. The circuit breaker shows you our losses that we don't get collected because I think that's limited, what, one percent (1%), Ron, is that what circuit breaker is?

Councilman Bacon: I think so.

Councilman Richmond: And once they reach the one percent (1%), even though you're assessed at a higher rate and the tax would be higher, the cap keeps your taxes from going higher. And then you can see on the last page here, the LIT distribution right now. We split that eight million nine hundred thousand (\$8,900,000.00) fifty-fifty (50%-50%) with Highway and Economic Development. Economic Development has helped bring a lot of development in Warrick County. We are a growing in population faster than anybody else south of Bloomington. And all the development that's occurred in the medical district. And we've had development in Elberfeld. Lots of developments around the County because of Economic Development income taxes brought a lot of good things us. I did want to read one email I got. By the way, just to show you the differences in emails, this is for, a hundred and fifteen (115). And this is against, eleven (11). And I thought that this gentleman really cut to the chase. He says, "Hello, I'm writing you to tell you" – and I asked for his permission by the way – "that I am in support of raising the LIT tax due to the increasing cost for projects that City and County Governments having to take on now days. Local governments are looking at reducing funding for Public Safety to fund other projects. That's completely unacceptable. I've seen first-hand the struggle that our County emergency responders are facing every day. Warrick County desperately needs this tax. Without these it will just be a few of the issues that will become the normal for residents of Warrick County. Number one (1), EMS, increased response times for ambulance. Every second count. Would you want your loved one (1) to need an ambulance if they were having a heart attack only to find out the ambulance that was coming to you was on the other side of the County or even in a neighboring County because the reciprocal agreements. Warrick County still operates off the same number of ambulances as it has for the last twenty (20) years. And look at the massive growth we've received in that time. Volunteer fire department, every year it gets increasingly harder to recruit and retrain volunteer fire fighters. Trainings for these men and women can take up to two (2) years before they can complete their training. By that time, they've already quit. What if no one (1) shows up? You call 911 cause your house is on fire, the fire department is only a couple of blocks away. But, it takes them ten (10) plus minutes to get there. Then you only get one (1) truck with two (2) or three (3) fire fighters. Maybe you get an older truck that's past due replacement and the pump won't work. We're asking more and more from our volunteers than ever before. Especially in the Newburgh area as all of Ohio Township is volunteer as is many of our other Townships. Their call volume has doubled in Ohio Township. Law enforcement, our County and Towns are greatly understaffed, plain and simple. Complaints are always coming in about officers not doing this or that, but when there is only one (1) officer working and they can't be in multiple places at once, it's not uncommon to see a City officer in the County, in the County assisting with priority calls due to not having enough deputies available. Officers having to double duty. Most officers are having to take the initial report and then they have to investigate further while they're having to perform their day to day duties and taking other calls. I hope you look at this as what is best for all of our communities, our Cities and Towns and County. I will be the first to admit I do not like raising taxes. But, when I know that this can potentially save a life, then you can't put a price tag on that. Again, I'm in support of raising the LIT tax and hope you feel the same way and will vote yes." I thought that was a pretty good summary of the positive that's been reflected to me. I heard some calls last night on the police scanner that you

wouldn't believe. You all need to be listening to what our people in uniform are having to take on and do for us. That most of us would run from, they run to. I mean, one (1) of them involved an actual gun, person with a gun that was going to kill somebody. And of course they were running right into it. And I really do have a great appreciation for it and that's what's brought this on. With our current tax structure the way it is, we're just making due with what we've got. And the County Council has been very tight. We have not raised this tax, it's been in effect thirty-two (32) years. That's a good record. We have laid off people in the past to try to meet our budgets. Our county Office Holders and Department Heads are told to freeze their budgets so that, we can't do anything more for their operations. They've got to make due with what they have. So, we're really running a tight ship here and doing the best we can. And some people would say, rob Peter to pay Paul, when you pull out of this, when you pull out of this you're hurting somebody else that's providing services somewhere else. And we're to the point where, in my opinion, that we really do need some help. And the State Legislature gave this opportunity to do this on our own. Home rule. We decide for ourselves what we need. It's not the State mandating and telling us. Speaking of mandates, if we don't do something about our Jail, within five (5) years, we're going to be in the same boat that Gibson County's in, Vanderburgh County's in and they will tell us, folks, you will raise your property taxes. You will build a new jail because the one you've got is obsolete. They can't find parts for some of the things that they need repaired sometimes out there. Thirty-two (32) years old, that thing is too. So, think about these things as we contemplate tonight. Now, I'm sorry if I took some of Terry's items. They were on my mind. I'm just speaking off my cuff, off my mind. Terry, you want to come up and begin your side of it with the Study Committee's Report?

Commissioner Phillippe: Thank you, Mr. Richmond. May I address the classroom?

Councilman Richmond: Do I sound like a teacher still? I'm sorry.

Commissioner Phillippe: Good evening, everyone. My name's Terry Phillippe. I am your appointed Committee Chair for the Public Safety Local Option Income Tax Study. Also a Warrick County Commissioner. I am coming here this evening representing the full support of the Warrick County Commissioners, Law Enforcement, Fire Service, Emergency Services, Emergency Management, all Towns, Townships, and the City of Boonville. We all come to you unanimously in favor of the half percent (0.5%) increase to Public Safety Local Option Income Tax. I'm going to try and shorten this up this evening. This is much of what you guys have heard. It's for the benefit for the crowd here this evening as well. I'm just going to read you bullet points tonight instead of giving you a speech like I did last time. Our first category is growth. Some of this will be redundant, Greg. I apologize. Our population has grown from fifty-two thousand (52,000) in the year 2000 to a projected of seventy thousand (70,000) in 2030. We sit on a growing traffic count on our interstates. We have new infrastructure improvements on Indiana 62 and (IN)-66, Interstate 69, and a new (I)-69 bridge that will bring tens of thousands through Warrick County. So, in addition to population growth that we've seen, we'll see a lot of traffic through here. Of course, our Public Safety addresses all of that. We have a new health trail anchored by three (3) newer hospitals. Economic development and business growth is booming in Warrick County. Building and construction permits have grown from seventeen hundred (1,700) to two thousand sixty-seven (2,067) in just three (3) years. There are more housing starts in Warrick County than Vanderburgh County three (3) years running. Manufacturing remains strong with different sectors building and expanding. But, of course, our first category is growth. We all know Warrick County is growing. That's what's causing this conversation. Greg's already done this, but a simple explanation of property tax caps. I've heard a lot of comments over the last several weeks about you've got more growth, therefore you've got more money. That's just not the case. The more the County grows, the property tax revenues stay the same. With growth, everyone shares the decreases. That's a simple explanation of how it works. We all know that. Essentially, growth has created a burden on Public Safety while property tax caps have robbed revenue from municipalities. But, the legislature has given us the tools to govern. That's the Local Option Income Tax. Warrick County is currently ninety-second (92nd) out of ninety-two (92) counties in the State of Indiana. I know you guys know that. But, again, this is for the benefit of the crowd. We talked a little bit about EDIT tax, Economic Development Income Tax. What we're talking about this evening, Local Option Income Tax, our current Local Option Income Tax is zero point zero (0.0%). Again, Local Option Income Tax is a tool that has been legislated to the County to use for our needs. We have a need. I want to leave all the Public Safety stuff to all the professionals in the room this evening. But, I do have a few shocking facts that I'd like to reiterate, again for the benefit of the crowd. At times, there's one (1) deputy on the road in the entire County covering sixty-seven thousand (67,000) people. That's shocking to me. We're operating with the same number of ambulances that we were operating with twenty-five (25) years ago. At times, we're without an ambulance to respond to a call. And I believe Tony's got some more information on that. The most shocking thing to me is out of sixty-seven thousand (67,000) people, we have fourteen (14) paid fire fighters in Warrick County. The rest of them are volunteers. Blows me away. I know Paul's going to tell a little story here this evening. One (1) of the new things that I've heard in the last couple days is that a lot of these volunteers are guys that are seventy (70) years old. That's who, that's who's responding to fires, walking into fires. Shocking. So, enough of that. Again, guys, we must show the leadership to start saving for a new Jail as Greg said, if we don't plan ahead, it's going to be mandated. We're the third wealthiest per capita County in the State of Indiana. Our citizens deserve better. I think they deserve the best. And I'll just leave it at that. I mean we, we deserve better. They expect proactive leadership. They expect it from me. They expect it from you guys. They expect it from all the guys back here in the room. So, I'm going to close with our ask as I did last time. Our ask this evening is that we ask you to move this thing one (1) step forward tonight. As we all know, this is a step in the process. We're asking you to vote yes tonight to the half percent (0.5%) increase to the Public Safety Local Option Income Tax. Let's move it to the next step. You guys know you have the control. You control the percentage, you control the home rule, you can give it, and you can take it away. Move it to the next step. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you. One (1) further quick comment in between here just a moment. I've had some people tell me it's going to hurt those that, that don't have the high income. If one (1) is on social security, social security disability, welfare, things like that, from what I understand, they don't pay the income tax. So, it wouldn't be affecting the people that don't have the high income as much.

Christy Powell: We all have a portion of this study to present to you.

Councilman Richmond: Identify please.

Christy Powell: Hi, I'm Christy Powell. I'm the Town Manager for the Town of Newburgh and I'm speaking on behalf of your Warrick County Municipalities that encompass about fifteen thousand (15,000) residents. We are asking the County Council to recognize the need for additional Public Safety funding and respond by enacting a point five percent (0.5%) Public Safety Local Income Tax. As public servants, we take on the responsibility of keeping our citizens safe.

They trust us to do that. They demand and expect it. It is a heavy burden. And when I hear about a distraught mother in the County waiting ninety (90) agonizing minutes for an officer to arrive to help her teenage son who is threatening suicide, I know we can do better. We have to do better. The reality is most people don't give Public Safety a thought until they have to use it. As a representative for Warrick County Municipalities on your committee, I think it's also important that small towns and municipalities...small towns and cities are recognized as part of this County. We are vigilantly preserving, Main Street America, offering the small-town life that our City, Town, and County residents enjoy and identify with. And we're struggling. Two (2) years ago, my Committee laid out our Public Safety needs in a Public Safety Plan. And the reality is it is only getting worse. Flattening revenue due to circuit breaker property tax caps, expansive population growth requiring more reliance on mutual aid, rising Public Safety expenses, increasing hazards, increasing technology. These are all limiting our Public Safety resources and we are forced to choose between which basic services we can provide. And I'm not talking about quality of life. I'm not talking about Economic Development spending. Basic services that our current revenue stream cannot afford. In 2010, I know we've all talked about this, State Legislators enacted the circuit breaker tax caps to stabilize property tax cap...property taxes. At that time, the opposing legislators warned of disastrous effects on property tax reliant units like small cities and towns. School Corporations are also at risk from these property tax caps. The answer was that local Counties could enact specific income taxes to address local needs. You guys know what we need better than the State and should direct funding to those needs. Warrick County's the third wealthiest in the State. It's been the least responsive. The lowest out of ninety-two (92) counties to react to these changes. You have the sole power to enact this mechanism of relief. With the circuit breaker property tax caps in place, increases in housing and population reduces the tax rate. It spreads it out over everybody so your service providers are receiving no additional revenue. However, the calls are tripling. EDIT is part of these LIT tools, and after establishing, the County has seen immense success from the thoughtful planning and the prioritization on Economic Development. We have to serve it now. We have to serve the growth, the people, with critical basic services and we need funding to do it. The providers of these services are asking you to recognize the need that has been created by rapid development. We have been band-aiding it. We have been funding it fully. We have been pulling money from roads, infrastructure, facilities, maintenance, anything we can do to keep it going. And we are losing ground. We're running out of band-aids. Public Safety is underfunded. The product is deteriorating and your citizens have no idea. The problem hasn't and won't go away. Point one percent (0.1%) is a drop in the bucket. It does nothing to move the needle forward, particularly for the small cities and towns that you're concerned about. Point two-five (0.25%) the ask was in 2012, that was a proactive solution. But, it wasn't utilized. Nine (9) years later, the request for point five (0.5%) is reactive and a necessity to ensure the safety of our region. Point five (0.5%) on a person earning fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) is four dollars and eighty cents (\$4.80) a week. It's less than lunch for peace of mind. Point five (0.5%) could build a new Jail. It could put more deputies and ambulances on the road. A portion could be spread out over the fire, the Townships for fire protection. In turn, alleviating the tug on our services, on our budgets, our employees and our volunteers. It takes a special kind of dedicated individual to put on these uniforms and head into work. And they're getting harder to find. They deserve the proper tools to do their jobs safely, serve this community and go home to their families at the end of their shift. And your citizens deserve reasonable response times and relevant lifesaving equipment. The cost of being slow to respond to the need for Public Safety funding shouldn't be measured in dollars. It should be measured in minutes and seconds that can mean the difference between life and death. I am Christy Powell, and I'm asking that you recognize this need in the County. Thank you. Tony O'Neal will talk about EMS.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you, Christy.

Tony O'Neal: My name is Tony O'Neal. I am the manager for Warrick EMS. I've had the privilege of managing the service for the last twelve (12) years. Warrick EMS has provided emergency medical services for Warrick County for several decades. I am in support of increasing fund, funding for Public Health and Safety Fund. Over the last several years, we have seen substantial growth in Warrick County with new residential subdivisions, along with new assisted living facilities, and hospitals. There are now thirteen (13) assisted living/nursing homes in Warrick County, five (5) hospitals, and multiple other medical facilities in Warrick County we respond to. Though we welcome the new growth, it has definitely put a strain on the system. Our public emergency services have not kept pace to the County's economic growth and to the level that fully serves the residents of Warrick County. During my time managing Warrick EMS, we have seen run volume increase from forty-two hundred (4,200) runs to where we just finished our fiscal year, where we finished at seven thousand two hundred and twenty-seven (7,227) runs for 2021. This is a seventy-three percent (73%) increase. Some of our individual stations have even felt a greater impact. The Newburgh Area, a hundred and thirty-two percent (132%) increase in run volume. Medic 3 and Medic 5 area, a hundred and eighty percent (180%) increase in run volume. Along with handling the medical facilities and our normal medical nine-one-one (911) calls, there are multiple times during the week all ambulances are out on emergency runs or they're dual responding to accidents with multiple patients requiring additional resources. We have not increased the number of ambulances for County coverage in over twenty-five (25) years. This has come at a cost. We have seen our response time increase over the last five (5) years. Times where there were no ambulances available, an increase in maintenance costs, and in 2021 we spent roughly seventy-five thousand dollars (\$7,500.00) on ambulance maintenance alone. An average ambulance will last about eight (8) to ten (10) years. Our current fleet, with our current fleet, we should be replacing an ambulance every year to keep our fleet safe and dependable for the residents of the County. We also should be adding another ambulance to ensure we have adequate coverage for the County. The County subsidy for the EMS services this year will be three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00). This alone barely covers the cost of replacing one (1) ambulance and the equipment, yet alone subsidize an EMS service. Additional funding must be considered to maintain adequate coverage, safe reliable ambulances for the residents of Warrick County. I know there's been conversations about the differences between wants and needs of emergency services. I want to share these quick stories again of why I support this. In early May, EMS responded to a mower accident southeast of Boonville. The resident was on a sixty (60) inch, zero (0) turn mower when the back wheels slipped and she plunged twenty (20) feet down an embankment pinned underneath the mower just feet from the water. Because we had deputies, fire, and EMS on scene within minutes with the right resources and tools, this patient was freed from the mower, assessed, and packaged and in route to the trauma center within twenty (20) minutes of arrival. Just a week later, we were dispatched to an accident west of Chandler on (IN)-62. This patient was hit at sixty (60) miles per hour in the driver's door. This patient had severe injuries. Once extricated from the vehicle and in the back of the ambulance, life saving measures had to be taken to save this patient. Both these patients needed emergency services in minutes with no delay. They are alive today due to the quick response of your County services. But what if, what if there were no ambulances available and this had been one (1) of those extended response times? Would the outcome have been different? I would say, yes, on one (1) of these patients. Early last month, we had one (1) ambulance in the county that was covering the whole County. All other ambulances were out on emergency runs. This ambulance was staged near Castle High School. The unit was dispatched to a car accident on I-64 near Selvin. It took twenty-eight (28) minutes to respond to this scene. The

outcome was not favorable for this patient. Trauma patients have what we call a golden hour in the medical field. It's the first hour immediately following a traumatic injury in which getting the patient to a trauma center to prevent irreversible internal damage and optimize a chance of survival is most effective. In a rural county, it's even that much more critical because you're already twenty (20) to thirty (30) minutes away from a trauma center. Minutes count in an emergency and will often determine the outcome. Good or bad. What if this is one (1) of your loved ones or friends? I think we all can agree, we call nine-one-one (911) you would expect a quick response. If the County Council remembers, in our initial presentation in June, we had some real time events going on during that meeting. We had a fatality out here and multiple incidents going on in the County. I left that meeting in June to respond to that fatality. We were out of trucks and the deputies were all tied up. In the last thirty (30) days, that's happened thirty-three (33) more times, in the last thirty (30) days regarding ambulances, being out of them or down to one (1). As leaders and County Officials, we have a responsibility to ensure our residents are protected and safe. We cannot continue to pass the buck when it comes to funding the public service departments. This will only get worse. As the Warrick EMS Manager, I ask the County Council members to please pass the proposed point five percent (0.5%) increase recommendation by the Committee. This Committee as done its homework. We know our departments and the needs to make them successful for this County. It will ensure the Public Emergency Services have the tools and resources it needs to provide the residents of Warrick County now and in the future years to come. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would now like to introduce Steven Byers, Boonville Fire Chief.

Steve Byers: Good evening. My name is Steven Byers. I'm Boonville Fire Chief. I've served in that position since 2015 and I currently serve as the Vice President for the Warrick County Fire Chief's Association. I'm here tonight speaking on behalf of all fire departments in Warrick County. We've covered the growth, that's what's putting the strain on our emergency services without additional revenue coming in to help with additional equipment, additional personnel to respond to these calls. The data that we've looked at over the past fifteen (15) years that shows the burden that we're dealing with, fire department dispatches coming through our dispatch center have increased by a hundred and fifty-five percent (155%). The total dispatches coming through for police, fire, and EMS have increased by hundred and ninety-four percent (194%). The overlapping incidents where one (1) department has multiple calls at the same time that completely depletes the resources for that department have increased hundred and ninety-seven percent (197%). Warrick County is the third (3rd) wealthiest county per capita in the State of Indiana. Yet, we're ranked number ninety-two (92), lowest for income tax rate. We're the fastest growing county in Southern Indiana. We are not staying up with the services required to keep the citizens in our County safe. Fire Chiefs, such as myself and all the other fire chiefs in the County are having to make decisions that put our personnel at risk to provide the services that we provide. We're not meeting the NFPA Standards for response and resource deployment. And as a Fire Chief, if something happens, that comes back on me. I'm responsible for that. Legal action could be taken against me. But there's nothing we can do about that. The decreased revenue from the circuit breaker tax caps, for example, Boonville lost one million and fifty-eight thousand two hundred eighty-three dollar (\$1,058,283.00) which is nearly a twenty percent (20%) reduction in their revenue through the property tax caps. Fire Fighters throughout Warrick County, most of whom volunteer, they are working in dangerous environments that require adequate equipment and they're using outdated equipment. They have inadequate resources and an inadequate number of personnel. Out of the nine (9) fire departments in the County, eight (8) of them are volunteer fire departments. So, we're asking these members to volunteer their time, to protect their community while using inadequate equipment and exposing themselves to toxins and carcinogens, that we know for a fact through studies create a cancer rate three (3) times higher than the general public. And these members are doing so every day with pride and integrity because they want to do it. Fire departments should not have to hold fundraisers to purchase critical lifesaving equipment, but they are. We're not asking for a lot. We're asking to be adequately funded to purchase the equipment to keep our personnel safe and protect the community. We do have a couple of wants. We want our members to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently while serving the community and we want our personnel to go home at the end of their shifts to see their family. This Public Safety LIT Committee has reviewed hundreds of pages of data concerning the safety of first responders and the citizens in our community, and the needed resources to effectively fulfill the community's expectations for emergency service response. This committee agrees that the additional funding is needed for public safety and these needs must be met to keep our community safe. The growth of Public Safety is not staying on pace with the growth of the County. We're asking the County Council to listen to the Public Safety professionals in Warrick County and take the initiatives to adequately fund Public Safety. The recommendation of this Committee is to approve the Public Safety Local Income Tax at a rate of point five percent (0.5%), half of one percent (0.5%). This increase would still place Warrick County number ninety (90) for the lowest income tax rate in the State of Indiana. And a vote to approve the Public Safety Local Income Tax at this rate is a vote to adequately fund Public Safety. In closing, to put the cost of this into prospective, someone earning fifty-thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) per year would pay four dollars and eighty-one cents (\$4.81) per week. That's a very minor cost to pay to ensure that when you call nine-one-one (911) emergency, all the resources, adequate personnel, and equipment will arrive quickly and resolve your emergency. I'd like to thank you all for your time and consideration. And I'd like to introduce Ohio Township Trustee, Chad Bennett.

Chad Bennett: Good evening, everyone. My name's Chad Bennett and I'm the Ohio Township Trustee. I've been on the Public Safety LIT Committee for over two (2) years now. We've thoroughly studied whether or not there is a need for an increase funding in Public Safety. I have over twenty-seven (27) years of Public Safety experience both in law enforcement and firefighting here in Warrick County, all of which is volunteer. I'm here this evening to share with the Council that there is a strong need for funding in these Public Safety needs. As Ohio Township Trustee, I represent over forty-three thousand (43,000) people, nearly sixteen thousand (16,000) households, all who have made Warrick County their home. That's almost seventy percent (70%) of our entire County population. As the person tasked by State Statute to provide fire protection to our residents, I ask the Council to vote yes and properly fund Safety in Warrick County at a point five percent (0.5%) increase for Public Safety funding. Because Warrick County is a great place to live and raise a family, our population boom is placing a strain on all levels of the County. This increase is causing emergency response time to increase due to the number of nine-one-one (911) calls. Multiple and simultaneous calls that are happening throughout our County. Our County is outpacing Vanderburgh County in new home starts for the last three (3) years. Commercial development is on the rise and we're taking, we're tasked with providing these services to insure Public Safety needs are being met. Besides maintaining multimillion dollar facilities to house our equipment in, we also have to maintain over one million dollars (\$1,000,000.00) in loose equipment in Ohio Township alone. We maintain over eight million dollars (\$8,000,000.00) for trucks alone for Ohio Township. Firefighting equipment that has a life span, a very short life span, trucks that cost between seven hundred fifty thousand (\$750,000.00) and a million dollars (\$1,000,000.00), twenty (20) years or less lifespan. Air packs that cost over three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00), a ten (10) year life span. Fire-fighting and bunker turn out equipment, five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) per person, ten (10) years or less. All of this is dictated by NFPA standards and mandates that we have no choice, but to replace this equipment, because it is life safety for our volunteer firefighters. That's right,

volunteer firefighters. Every fire department in Warrick County is volunteer with the exception of Boonville. Volunteers are the best asset that we have in the firefighting service. We ask them to run into burning buildings, make personal sacrifices with family and work time. Attend hundreds and hundreds of hours of training and potentially make the ultimate sacrifice in life. All with no pay. The lifespan of a good volunteer firefighter right now is three (3) to five (5) years. Warrick EMS medical dispatches have increased drastically, and the number of call volume for all Warrick County fire departments are responding to has increased over the past three (3) years. This increase is burning the candle at both ends for our volunteers. Ohio Township needs to look at paid firefighters to keep up with the demand in our population growth and the number of emergency service calls that we are making. As the Elected Official that's tasked to protect the largest population in our County, I strongly ask that you vote yes to increase our Public Safety funding to point five percent (0.5%) increase. I also ask that you include all Warrick County Townships that are eligible by State Statute to be part of the maximum fifteen percent (15%) allocation, if they have a firefighting fund. I ask that your resolution be drafted in a way to allow this to be reoccurring automatically for Townships, so that you are not burdened every year with multiple requests presented to your Board. This recurring could be terminated at any time by either the Council or the Township with written notice if either party determines the funds are no longer needed. People are moving to Warrick County and making this a great place to raise a family. This is life and death for our volunteers and the people who call nine-one-one (911). Again, I respectfully ask that you consider our committees unanimous recommendations. At this time, I would like to call Chief Deputy Paul Kruse.

Paul Kruse: Good evening. Paul Kruse, Chief Deputy Sheriff. Sheriff Wilder's on vacation tonight so I'll be standing in taking his place. So, first of all, I just ask that you consider his comments from the last meeting. He didn't prepare a speech. I read a transcript of what he said. I don't think it's necessary to repeat every word that he said. I do want to echo what Chad just said though, that this is the best place in the County to be living and raising a family right now, living in. The events that have gone on the last couple of years have really driven that home for me. I'm so glad to work in this County with the men and women of all these different disciplines in emergency services. We have something just really special to be proud of here. That said, there's a gap between the public's perception of what we offer and what we are actually offering. So often, people think that we're everywhere all the time, and unfortunately that's not the case. I wish we could offer that and be covering these different areas of the County more. As a resident of the northern end of the County, though, I know oftentimes there's not a deputy north of (IN) 62 to answer a call. And if there is, living over in Elberfeld, I know that sometimes it's going to take twenty-five (25) minutes or so cause he may be in Tennyson when somebody calls for the police. Several of our residents sometimes will call me directly at home to try to get a quicker response time and that's not something we need. All that considered through, I'd hold our agency up against anybody. I'm so proud of our agency and the things that we do, hardworking people that we work with and all the agencies we work with. Like I said, over the last two (2) years, especially the increase in danger has gone up. And we need help. Our request though is not just for additional deputies. These uniforms that we wear and you see and the marked police cars that are moving around the County, that's the face of the department. But, what you don't often see in the unsung heroes is people that hold us all up and support all the rest of those actions. The nine-one-one (911) dispatchers, our secretaries, the Jail staff, the cooks even. Without any one of those positions, our whole operation comes to a grinding halt. We've gotten by for a long time. And we've done a darn good job of it. We're very efficient. Sheriff Wilder and previous administrations, we've all worked very hard to make an efficient operation and we really have, I believe, done well. As you know, you all are very fiscally conservative. And I applaud that and that's important, but we also have a responsibility to our taxpayers and the public that visit our County and live in our County. Our nine-one-one (911) dispatchers are the very first responders to almost any emergency. They take that first call. The panicking mother or someone that's just witnessed a shooting or a wreck or a house on fire, they answer the phone. They're specially trained. This is not just someone we just picked off the street and set them in a chair and said here, answer the phone. We spend months training them. We give them protocols. We've increased their technology. We've helped them out to be better dispatchers to help you when you call nine-one-one (911). Oftentimes though, we have two (2) dispatchers working to cover this entire County. They have four (4) nine-one-one (911) lines that ring into our center, four (4) non-emergency lines that run into our center, four (4) more administrative lines that ring into our center after 4:00 in the afternoon, and at least four (4) radio channels that they're monitoring at all times. If you'll permit me at the end of my presentation, I'd like to play for you just a short clip to show you what the experience when that's happening and the service or lack thereof that those callers are getting when they make that call. We've had the same number of dispatchers for fifteen (15) years. Our call volume, incoming calls just to the center between 2004 and 2019 increased a hundred and thirty-six percent (136%). They can't spend the time with the callers that they need sometimes. As Mr. Richmond already indicated in his opening remarks, there's a need for a new Jail. The study has been done. The recommendation has been made. But, on top of that, again, we take support staff to run that facility. Not just, again, it's not just the people in uniform that are bringing the people to Jail. They have to have the ones there to maintain that Jail and to keep it running. We had a staffing study done in 2019. It indicated then that we were understaffed in our current facility. If we have more law enforcement officers, more people are going to Jail. You can count on it, because we're going to be able to be more proactive. We're going to be able to seek these things out just in addition to the increase in activity that we're already seeing. We see what's happening in Evansville every day and so far we've been lucky to hold that line at I-69 for the most part. But, we need help to hold that line and that's going to come over here if we don't. All these things I've talked about are supported by technology that makes our jobs so much easier, so much more efficient. But, it costs. We've got one (1) IT person right now that takes care of eighty (80) computers that our office runs, but also supports the computer aided dispatch, the mobile units and the ambulances and all the other County police cars. She's stretched thin and needs help. We have people, of course that adds equipment costs. We will need that too. Mental health has been another issue that's been in the news. It's been locally. And we see it, we see it every day. Christy commented on the suicidal teenager, every single day we're seeing multiple of these calls. Not just teenagers, but pre-teens who are suicidal all the way to, to folks who, frankly, drawing social security. So, both ends of the life spectrum basically, suicidal. We're calling the law enforcement to deal with that and we are ill equipped. We are training on it. We try to train on it and we want to do more. But, we're strapped. We don't have the manpower to train constantly on that and to train adequately on that. We're called almost daily to administer Narcan for an opioid overdose. We're adding things to police officers and deputy sheriff's plates every year that wasn't happening nineteen (19) years ago when I started. We have crises intervention team members. We have crises negotiators. Used to be known as hostage negotiators, but we've found over the last several years that that's usually someone, an individual crisis. Not necessarily someone holding a hostage. We have our peer support team to support our officers, our dispatchers and our jailors when they experience a traumatic incident, such as a child that's died or a shooting or something that they've gone through to keep them healthy and going. But, we need help on a mental health front as well. We can offer jail programs to try to prevent some of the, the recurring visitors that we have in our jail. We ask our deputies and we ask the officers to make split-second decisions every day. But, they're getting worn out. Our dispatchers are getting worn out. They take stressful calls one (1) after another, after another. I had a dispatcher yesterday morning tell me that a while back she had had three (3) fatalities in one (1) rotation, a four (4) day

rotation she works. She worked three (3) fatality phone calls. And to take those phone calls takes a toll on those people and it burns them out. And we need more help. Bottom line is we have an excellent staff, dedicated, hardworking, professionals. But, we need help to continue to provide those services that our County deserves. We don't come to you asking for frivolous items. As I said earlier, we work diligently to be good stewards of taxpayers' money. We operate in the most efficient manner that we can. We respectfully ask you tonight to pass the Local Option Income Tax for Public Safety as it's presented before you tonight. Terry added something to my agenda I wasn't planning on talking about in this presentation. But, I went on a fire run Monday morning. I've been a volunteer over at Elberfeld since I was fifteen (15) years old. Twenty-five (25) years I've been doing that. And some of the guys, I know several of the firemen in the room tonight. And Monday morning a car fire run came out. Five (5) of us responded. I was one (1), the one (1) person under seventy (70) years old that responded. We need help. And every, you know, in all areas. If it would please you, I will play a portion of that audio and if you'd rather I not, and we wait, you can hear it some other time. You're welcome to come out any time. I'd love to host you and show you around. But, that's our ask tonight. That you please move this forward.

Councilman Richmond: I think it'd be appropriate for everybody to hear. I appreciate the big crowd being here. We don't usually have this. At our last meeting when we had the first presentation, some of us that were here the last meeting, a little of this is repetitious. But, I thought it'd be good, the whole crowd that's here tonight, we sure do appreciate you being here and taking part in this. But, it would be good for them to hear what goes on, what actually goes on.

Paul Kruse: I will keep this brief. This is an eight (8) minute clip. I'll just play a short portion of it.

Dispatcher: 911, what is your emergency?

Several speaking at once.

Caller: Hi, (inaudible) Indiana.

Paul Kruse: Sorry, I'm going to interrupt this for just a second to let you know, this is everything that's going on on our recorded line. This is the phones and the radios all playing at once as it occurred at that time. Two (2) operators working at that time.

Dispatcher: Okay, how can I help you?

Dispatch: Officers, there's a massive vehicle fire just east of Park Place.

Caller: There is a car that's on fire.

Dispatch: (Inaudible) fire department (inaudible).

Unidentified man: It's right by Park Place.

Dispatch: 911.

Caller: There was a wreck, Warrick County (inaudible)...

Second caller: We need an ambulance. There (inaudible)...

Several speaking at once.

Caller: We need help.

Second caller: (inaudible) driving past the office. I don't know if they were asleep. I don't know. They drove right into a building. They went through the wall.

Dispatcher: Ma'am, hello. Okay.

Several talking at once.

Second caller: (Inaudible) I'm running.

Dispatcher: Okay, stay on the phone with me.

Another caller: I don't know. (Inaudible).

Several talking.

Dispatcher: I'm going to put you on hold. Hang on.

Dispatch: (Inaudible) we'll get them on their way.

Caller: Thank you.

Dispatch: Uh huh, bye-bye.

Dispatcher: Warrick County (inaudible) I have an accident with unknown injuries at Canterbury Heights

Apartments, 7177 (inaudible) Avenue. (Inaudible) drove into the building at Canterbury.

Third Caller: Yes, I'm (inaudible) restaurant on the (inaudible) vehicle went over the curb (inaudible) looks like he's asleep or what. I'm not sure. He's a passenger. But there's no driver.

Several talking at once.

Dispatcher: (Inaudible) stand by. (Inaudible) fire.

Several talking at once.

Paul Kruse: In the interest of time, I'll stop it there. But, what you heard there was several 911 calls. You heard a 911 caller get put on hold. You heard fire traffic being told to standby because we can't talk to you right now cause we've got too much going on right now. We're overwhelmed. We need help. We ask for your support for this. I know this is an uncomfortable topic for all of you. But, I hope that you find also that it is worthwhile and needed. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: That's the end of the Committee's Report. We'll take all the time we need to do this. Let's see, okay, I have one (1) no, looks like. One (1) didn't say which. And the rest are pro. So, I'll start with the pro and then I'll ask the no to come up and then let the others also come up and speak. And I know that in the report you heard this evening, you might have heard some repetition. I might allow a little bit of it. But, I want everybody to have a chance to speak and let us know what your opinions are. First I'll ask, is Brandy Bruce here? B-r-u-c-e.

Brandy Bruce: Good evening. My name is Brandy Bruce and I was born and raised in Boonville. I teach 1st grade at Chandler Elementary and I live and raise my family in Skelton Township area. I'm here to show my support for the point five percent (0.5%) Public Safety Tax. Living in the Tennyson area, our emergency services are certainly lacking. The presence of law enforcement in our area is few and far between unless they are responding to a call. The response time for law enforcement and ambulance services is very concerning. The closest ambulance station is Boonville or Lynnville if there's units available to respond. At any given time, the average number of deputies on the road is four (4). Our County is busting at the seams and our population is growing and it's time for you to help make the changes to meet the growing needs in our community. For example, if I have an emergency, I have children at home

and I need help and the north unit is in Elberfeld, the response time with lights and sirens would be twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) minutes. A social media post was made that the average response time of twenty (20) minutes in our county is a reasonable response time. I ask you this, if this was your loved one not breathing or bleeding out, and you're waiting for emergency services to arrive, are you okay sitting and waiting for twenty (20) minutes? I'm sure most people in this room know, once the person goes without oxygen for four (4) to six (6) minutes, irreversible brain damage begins. A twenty (20) minute response time is not reasonable and it's not acceptable and it should scare all of us. I'm asking you to do the right thing for the citizens of Warrick County and for the first responders of Warrick County. Help the citizens to be safe, but help our responders to work safely and to come home to their families. Vote, a vote to pass the Public Safety Tax through to the next round is a small fraction of money to pay each year in order to have peace of mind that our emergency services are better equipped and properly staffed. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you, Brandy. Next, Bob Alexander.

Bob Alexander: He called on me because I put no LIT. Doesn't mean I don't love each and every one (1) of you first responders. I am the father of a volunteer fire department family in Elkhart County, Indiana. And I'm very proud of my whole family there. So, I believe you all deserve a hand and we all love you each and every one (1). The things I would like to bring up through are pretty simple. Number one (1), there are a couple things that did get misstated tonight that I think need to be clarified. We won't be number ninety (90) if we enact this tax tonight. We will be number eighty-three (83).

Councilman Richmond: Eighty-six (86) is what I have.

Bob Alexander: I've got eighty-three (83). You've got to count the ones that are the same as us. We will also have the highest tax in this area besides Vanderburgh County. Okay? Couple of other things to keep in mind, I've heard it said among many of the people tonight about the four dollars and fifty some cents (\$4.50) for the average person. And I understand that. That's great. But now, you're sitting here saying we've got the highest per capita. Let's me, let me put this into real terms for you all, this tax to me is four (4) Ruth Chris steaks a week, okay, for me and my family. Okay? I'm one (1) of the fortunate ones. But, unfortunately in our County, we have a hell of a lot of people that two (2) happy meals if mom and dad are both working don't get it. I come from Warrick County, born and raised here and I left in 1991 because my career took me other places. And I lived in Elkhart County and Johnson County and in Morgan County and Vanderburgh County for a short time. These four (4) counties all had a higher tax. Tax means nothing to me. But, I need to look each one (1) of you in the eye tonight and ask you, what's going on? When I sit there and hear a report from our County Council President stating that Warrick County's in the best financial shape it's ever been. Warrick County's in excellent condition. We've got fourteen percent (14%) of our budget, which the State asks for, between ten (10%) and twenty percent (20%), fourteen percent (14%) of our budget right now is sitting in the Rainy Day Fund. We just got an additional release of LIT money from the State of Indiana, seven hundred thousand dollars (\$700,000.00) that I believe two (2) months ago you all appropriated into the Rainy Day Fund. Why aren't these people getting the help they deserve without this tax increase? That's what I'd like to know. Okay? I keep hearing the Happy Meal, and I came back to the City of Boonville in 2016. Since I came back to the City of Boonville, we've seen our average water bill go up dramatically. We've seen a wheel tax that is supposed to be used for sidewalks, which is questionable whether me get them here, we have seen a wheel tax that is supposed to be used for sidewalks, which is questionable whether that's even legal. And we also got a new Park Board tax in the City of Boonville to help pay for the greenways out on Highway 261. Okay? If you all go and look and see how much a person in Boonville is spending on taxes and then what somebody is paying in Ohio Township. It's vulgar. All this growth is not happening County-wide. Tennyson has all but gone in the toilet. A once proud town is almost gone. Selvin is almost gone. Folsomville is almost gone. All this growth taking place in Ohio Township where by the way they just finished dedicating a brand new fire station right after Boonville dedicated a brand new fire station. That tells me that we're not sitting on the edge of our seats for the Public Safety. Okay? We've got issues that these people need funding. Every one (1) of these people in this room need funding. And this Council's dropped the ball. Now, you can state this tax in. But, Greg, you said it was an eight million dollar (\$8,000,000.00) tax or what, that's the County's portion of your current tax. The total tax is somewhere north of twelve million dollars (\$12,000,000.00). Where's your plan?

Councilman Richmond: Right here. You want me to get it out and give it to you?

Bob Alexander: Well, it'd be nice.

Councilman Richmond: Okay.

Bob Alexander: Where's the plan? How are you going to divvy the money up? Because the way it's divvied up right now with EDIT funds, how long were you going to keep this quiet? When was the public going to see your plan? And the reason I ask that is because right now there's not a single township that gets money from our Economic Development Income Tax. It goes to the County and it goes the Municipalities.

Councilman Richmond: Could I stop you there? In this, in this income tax that we're proposing....?

Bob Alexander: I'm saying the current.

Councilman Richmond: Excuse me, in this income tax we're proposing, the Townships are going to get a portion for the Public Safety. And I also want to refute something you said our County budget before we go further. We are required by the State to keep a certain amount of funding in a savings account for emergencies.

Bob Alexander: It is recommend to have 'x' amount of dollars in the Rainy Day account.

Councilman Richmond: And we're doing that. And we're doing that. We're doing what we're supposed to be do. Now, you...

Bob Alexander: Ten (10%) to twenty percent (20%).

Councilman Richmond: Hold, I'm done. I mean, I'm not done. Let me speak for a minute.

Bob Alexander: Well, I'm not done and you interrupted me, Greg.

Councilman Richmond: Yes. And I had the right to because I'm the President of the Council. Just let me, you refute some things that this Council's doing that you claim is wrong plus you criticizing Boonville and this is not about Boonville. This is about the County. Bob, I would like to say that we're doing what you would do with your own personal budget. If you don't keep an emergency account somewhere and you have something bad come along, you don't have money for it, then you have problems. State wants us to do the same thing.

Bob Alexander: You're at fourteen percent (14%), Greg. The State asks you to be between ten (10%) and twenty (20%).

Councilman Richmond: Continue, continue.

Bob Alexander: The State asks you to be between ten (10%) and twenty (20%).

Councilman Richmond: Your three (3) minutes is gone, would you please...

Bob Alexander: I know, because you interrupted me.

Unknown: No.

Councilman Richmond: I believe you were talking for ten (10) minutes before I interrupted you.

Bob Alexander: All I'm saying, all I'm saying is these people need the money. There's no doubt in my mind.

Councilman Richmond: So, we should take everything down to zero (0), have nothing left like we did about ten (10) or fifteen (15) years ago when we had, we got sued. We had no cash balance left hardly at all. That's what we should do?

Bob Alexander: No. I just wonder, you asked me a question. What would I do with my investment money, Greg?

Councilman Richmond: Spend it all down?

Bob Alexander: No, let me ask you, what would you do with your investment money? Would you look around this room on this Council and trust them with your retirement fund?

Councilman Richmond: Yes.

Bob Alexander: Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Okay, sorry about that but I just wanted to get it straight far as defending our Council, what we've done. Sarah Seaton. Is Sarah here? Jeff Baker.

Jeff Baker: Good evening. My name is Jeff Baker and I'm a lifelong resident of Warrick County. And I appreciate the responsibility you have in protecting Warrick County and make a place where people can afford to live. But, you all know that government doesn't work without revenue and the revenue comes from the people. I'm a tax preparer. I do taxes. And I'm a farmer and I own farmland. Property taxes are drawn from people who own property. A lot of time those people don't have income, they have property. Income taxes come from people who make income. And I think it's fair for the people who earn a good wage and put us in that high position to share their part of the burden of our County. A lot of the level of income they get is because we have a County without outstanding first responders and fire protection. We have City and County Police Officials who work together to give us protection. But, we, if we're going to grow, we have to provide the services that those people earn. And the cost of that should be shared evenly and disbursed over all of our County. And so I believe an income tax is a fair way to share that because property taxes are already being paid by people many times on very limited incomes. And there are caps which keeps us all from getting our share of the property tax revenue and the County and School, different budgets. So, I support this increase. I believe it is not a burden upon the taxpayers of Warrick County. I believe it is an investment in Warrick County that will attract more people, expand the tax property base, keep our property tax low, bring more people and make more income to share the burden. And so I hope you will seriously consider this. And I know it's hard to sell on the other side of the counter and say I'm going to raise taxes. Nobody wants that. But, everybody wants protection. Everybody, when the house, when your house is on fire, as somebody said, everybody wants somebody to be there. And that responsibility falls to you. And I respect that as an awesome responsibility. But, I will tell you this. If you support this tax, I will support the fact that you supported this. And I think the majority of Warrick County will support that also. Thank you for your time and thank you for your consideration.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you, Jeff. State Representative Cindy Ledbetter.

Cindy Ledbetter: Yes. I am State Representative Cindy Ledbetter. I'm also a resident of Warrick County. I live in Newburgh, Indiana. I know that the Council's going to vote to increase this tax. The tax is going to happen. Okay? And I know we've got people in this room that don't want it to happen, but the majority do and we know that it's going to happen. What I'm here for this evening is to request that the Council commit to finance a community swimming pool for Newburgh. This new tax revenue will be going to Public Safety which will free up funds that can benefit our community and improve our quality of life. Municipal pools have benefits on the community's physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Community pools even work to increase public safety as swimming lessons can save lives from people drowning. The Town of Newburgh had to close it's pool over two (2) years ago due to disrepair having only thirteen hundred (1,300) residents, Newburgh cannot afford to bring a swimming pool to our community. The Council voted a few years ago to keep eighty (80) acres plus of property at Friedman Park allowing the opportunity to develop that area to have a community pool. Boonville has a pool. Evansville has several pools. Rockport has a pool. As a resident of Newburgh and as a voice for our community, I'm here to ask you the Council, are you willing with this tax increase that we know is going to pass, to commit to bringing a community swimming pool to Newburgh.

Councilman Richmond: I can't answer that question for you. But, I would make a suggestion that if the approach to the Economic Development Council, Advisory Council. Because, to me, that's in the concept of, I think Parks is quality of life and quality of life is Economic Development. And...

Cindy Ledbetter: But, the money that is currently paying for Public Safety is going to be coming from a Public Safety Fund. So, we're going to have more funds available.

Councilman Richmond: Strictly, strictly there.

Cindy Ledbetter: Yes, and so we've had all this sadness shared tonight about how, you know, we need more help in our County. And I understand that. I work in mental health. I get that. But, we also would like some enjoyment in our community. Our families need that quality of life and I'm respectfully asking that the Council help us build a pool in Newburgh.

Councilman Richmond: Actually, that would be in Boon Township, Friedman Park.

Cindy Ledbetter: Right, well, it's 47630. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Okay. Everybody else is for. I'll let you come up and say a word if you want to. Daryl Saltzman? He was here.

Daryl Saltzman: I'd like to thank the Council for the opportunity to speak today. Daryl Saltzman, Boonville City Police Chief. I've been with the Boonville Police Department for thirty-four (34) years and I've had the honor of being the chief for sixteen (16) years. And Mr. Richmond, you were an awesome teacher, as I did have you in elementary. So, you've done a good job. But, the reason I'm here is as you can guess, I'm here to support the, the point five percent (0.5%) tax. As I said, the years that I've been on, in law enforcement, all these communities are facing the same problem that Sheriff Wilder, Chief Deputy Kruse spoke about and I want to speak on behalf of Chandler Police Department, Newburgh Police Department, and Elberfeld Town Marshals. Because we are all facing that same problem. Our officers are increasing numbers of calls, the severity of those calls as EMS is talking about, Chief Deputy Kruse. We're going to suicidal subjects, barricaded subjects, on a regular basis. Our officers all work four (4) and two (2) schedules. It's almost every day now that at least one (1) of our agencies if not two (2) or three (3) are responding to those types of calls. Those officers are having to spend more time at those calls to try and solve that problem in a peaceful manner. When I started at the police department thirty-four (34) years ago, that wasn't the way it was done. In the last twenty (20) years, there's been a very strong effort and, to change law enforcement and we're trying to get people the help that they need and we, as Chief Deputy Kruse said, trying to get our officers trained to be able to provide that help, that help. And we have to be able to provide that help for our officers. The number of officers that we are seeing that are taking medical leave because of stress related illnesses, workman's comp. They are responding call to call. They don't have time to perform a good thorough community policing that is beneficial county-wide. If the County is busy, Boonville Officers go out and assist. Newburgh, County, Newburgh, Chandler, Elberfeld, we all work together to try to provide a service and we are at the end of our ropes. Our equipment is depleting. Our equipment is becoming more technical and we do not have the funds to provide that. Body cameras, officers have to have body cameras. Every officer has a computer in their cars. Our computers if we're lucky are lasting five (5) years because of the constant vibrations by being in the patrol cars. Our radios are a shelf life of maybe ten (10) years. Our fire arms if we're lucky, we're able to replace those in ten (10) years. So, again, not only this going to increase our community as a better, safer community, it's going to provide each community with a better safer department. Whether it's a police, fire or EMS, because we do have to provide mental help for those. Our families, you know, not really talked about the suffering that our families have to deal with, with us leaving every day. And it's there. And you can see the fire department's talked about the volunteers, the lack of volunteer we're getting. We're getting that same problem with applicants for law enforcement. I believe the Sheriff's Department just had a hire process. If I remember correctly, they had thirty-four (34), and Chief Deputy Kruse would be able to correct me. I believe they had thirty-four (34) applications turned in. They had, I believe, twenty-eight (28) show up for testing. And after the testing, I think they had around twenty-four (24) pass the physical and written testing. Boonville Police Department, we done the same type of testing two (2) years ago. We had twenty-eight (28) applications submitted. We had twenty-four (24) show up. And we were down to eighteen (18) by the end of the testing. And then trying to get good quality employees out of that is getting very difficult. They have to pass a psychological test once we get them hired. The number of applicants that we are losing during that process is increasing. In the last five (5) years, Boonville Police Department alone has lost four (4) applicants because they did not pass the psychological test. We need help to be able to provide our officers with the help that they need to perform their duties and to continue to get quality applicants so every agency has that. I wanted to keep it short. I thank you for your time and please consider passing this.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you. Ron Tubbs? Another fellow teacher.

Ron Tubbs: Thank you. My name is Ron Tubbs. I came into Boonville in 1965. I've been here a long time, coached. But, I'm vehemently in for, for this tax because we live on the other side of the railroad tracks as I call it by Walmart, by Aigner's started a new subdivision. We have fifteen (15) new homes that have been there, been built in the, the last three (3) years and they've got five (5) lots sold. So, in the next, by the end of this year, we're at least going to have at least twenty (20) new homes that need protection, fire protection, police protection. I've seen the police drive through, believe, one (1) time. And I'm, we need your help. I know Mr. Overton, he and his daughter been out running on the road out there. And they can tell that the road's not in the best of shape. I know there's going to be a lot of money spent out there, but we just need your help and I'm, I'm for this and I thank you very much. I appreciate your time and that's all I've got to say. It's been a long day and everything's being repeated.

Councilman Richmond: Mayor Wyatt? Would you like to speak?

Charlie Wyatt: Briefly. I'm going to try to honor your wishes, Mr. Richmond. First of all I want to thank the Council for considering this Public Safety Tax. I know that it's something you don't take lightly. I know there's been a lot of talk, you know, amongst many, many people and I think I remember six (6) years ago when we met over at the school administration I think when Baker Tilly had presented something to us. So, this has been a long time coming. And I salute you for taking this cause up. I know that the Committee that has put together, I think, a wonderful presentation and information for you. And I know that each and every one (1) of you is reviewed it very carefully and again, I am in favor of the Public Safety Tax and I ask that you please pass that. Thank you very much.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you. Jay Davis?

Jay Davis: Yes, my name's Jay Davis, resident of Warrick County now for forty-two (42) years. Some you acknowledged my message that I sent. But, today was a prime example of a need. How many of you heard the emergency sirens go off for severe weather? How many are in Anderson Township? Can anybody tell me and tell me where they're located? One (1) for the entire Township. Two hundred twenty-one (221) square miles. There's one (1) siren located at the fire house. Emergency Management has been approached by the Trustee and myself about improvement for the safety of our people. We don't have the funds. Is that what you really think? Really and truly? No funds available for Emergency Management to provide a service. Sheriff's Department, we had a very severe accident just east of the fire station just a few months ago. We responded. Yankeetown responded. I'm also the Chief at Yankeetown. We responded. Also, Luce Township responded because it was right after, barely inside Warrick County. We work together. We got the patient out, got him extricated. Got him in an ambulance. Unfortunately, he passed away. But, while we were there, Luce Township got a call. They had an accident on (Hwy) 66 at the end of the four (4) lane, east end of the four (4) lane. I looked at the Chief and said, you want help? Yes, let's go boys. Let's go. We finished cleaning up, we helped them get their gear up. We got our gear up and we responded. That's the way we all are in Warrick County. We have mutual aid agreements. All of us do. We have move up (inaudible) and we keep, if I have a second alarm, third alarm, even a fourth alarm. Yankeetown's known for their tanker move up. We have two (2) trucks, three thousand (3,000) gallon water each. Where have we been? Degonia Springs, Elberfeld, wherever we're needed. But, it's getting old. I'm getting old. I'm almost that seventy (70) group. Okay? But, am I going to quit? No, I'm not going to quit. I'm there to support my community. And I hope all of you look at this LIT tax and support it. It's needed. I worked for the Federal government for thirty-five (35) years. And my action was not to be Emergency Management, but to be proactive. You've got to be proactive. This county is growing in leaps and bounds. Like I put in my notes that Mr. Metzger read, when I moved here, Green River Road. That was it. Nothing. Nothing. Look at us now. Yes, Ohio Township's growing cause that's where the growth is coming from out of Evansville. But, please, for the sake of this County, not just Ohio Township, Anderson Township, none of that. Support the County. We've given excess surplus equipment to some of our neighboring fire departments. They don't have the funds. They don't have the funds. It was a joke last night at the Chief's meeting. Guys, ladies and gentlemen, please, we need this increase. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you, Jay. Shari Sherman from the Chamber.

Shari Sherman: Good evening. My name is Shari Sherman. I'm the Executive Director of the Warrick County Chamber of Commerce and I think you have in your packets the Resolution that the Council, that the Chamber passed in 2019 to, in support of the Resolution for the Public Safety Income Tax. Our business in Warrick County need and support our fire, our police, our emergency responders. And they also expect that those services are there when they need it. It is an added benefit when we're talking to new businesses coming in. They want to know about things like this. We respectfully ask that you support the resource, or support this tax and that, and speaking as an individual, I personally would be happy to pay the additional half percent (0.5%) to know that it's going to help those that need it. Because when I need the services and I have needed the services at time, I want somebody there immediately and as quickly as possible. So, we do ask that you continue on this path and that you support this. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you. And the last one (1) on the list is Mike Perry.

Mike Perry: Good evening. Michael Perry, P-e-r-r-y, your Warrick County Prosecutor. I've been Warrick County Prosecutor for seven (7) years now. Had the privilege of representing this County in, as the top law enforcement agent in the County. And I've seen the effects of growth. I've seen the numbers go up in our office. I've seen the law enforcement needs first-hand as they send requests to my office to help them fund things that they don't have in their budgets. Paying for body cams for Newburgh, training for officers. You know, living in a County like this is not a right, it's a privilege. And we have a privilege of having the law enforcement and the safety members that we have that emergency medical train... technicians, the fire department. I'd have to disagree with Ms. Powell. Our services aren't deteriorating, but they're being stretched. And right now we're making due. And this County and these citizens in this County deserve better than making due. And I think that in order to maintain the quality of life that we have in this County, to maintain the expectations that people have that are moving here in droves for a better place for their families, for their children, that we owe it to the citizens of this County to pass this tax. And I, I don't think it's a choice as much as it's a duty and an obligation for us to meet the expectations of the citizens of our County. So, I'm pleading on behalf of my family, of all these families that are represented here today. Of the brave men and women that go out every morning or evening not knowing whether they're going to come back or not to protect us, to protect our families. Pass this tax. You know, I never realized that, again I did not grow up here and I moved here, and I did not realize how big Warrick County was until I ran for a County office. And I certainly didn't realize how big it was until I assisted my wife in an election one (1) time and she had me go around to the various precincts to collect absentee ballots and I got back and I looked at my odometer and I had driven two hundred (200) miles. Two hundred (200) miles, and I never left the County. And we have times when the deputies are two (2) or three (3) on a shift because of either injury or vacation or whatever to take care of all of us. So, again, I'm urging this Council to pass this tax. We need to quit slapping band-aids on the problems. We need to be proactive and I think the citizens of this County deserve the type of services that they've come to expect. Thank you.

Councilman Richmond: Thank you. That is all that's on the sign-up sheet and I did extend the time cause I wanted to make sure we gave everybody time to speak. And I'm very, I apologize, I'm very sorry those of you had to stand. We've never had a crowd this big before for a Council Meeting in all of my years of memory and I appreciate the effort and time you've taken to come out to this meeting. I apologize for losing my temper a little bit a while ago. But, I will defend this Council. It's been very frugal and they've done a very good job down through the years. Being good stewards of your money, we did have a time when we got down to practically nothing due to a couple of lawsuits. Not that we caused. It was an overassessment. We had to come up with the money immediately. We had to spend down all of our savings those, that year. Otherwise, we would have had to come to you all for, for more property taxes. There's an emergency thing you can do, that you can pass to raise the taxes for such an event like that. But, we have not had to do that because the Council does maintain a little bit of savings to cover the emergencies. So, again that you all for coming. And this will not, if it does pass tonight, there's still going to be another hearing in August, at our August meeting. Not really a public hearing, but another, it will come up again for a vote, the Second Reading is how it works. So, I appreciate again everybody being here. I appreciate everybody that's in the public service. I listen all the time on a radio that was provided to me by the County so I can kind of stay abreast of everything that's going on. And I have a great appreciation for all that's being done. You wouldn't believe some of the stories I hear. Thank you very much and I'll ask for a motion to adjourn the Public Hearing.


Brad Overton: Motion to adjourn.


Rick Reid: Second.

Councilman Richmond: Motion by Brad. Second by Rick. All those in favor? This part's adjourned. (Motion carried 7-0).


ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 6:31 PM.


WARRICK COUNTY COUNCIL


 Greg Richmond, President



 Ron Bacon


 Ted Metzger


 Chris Whetstone


 Brad Overton, Vice President

- 4 Not Present -


 David Hachmeister


 Richard Reid

ATTEST:


 Deborah K. Stevens, Auditor
 Warrick County, IN

Minutes transcribed by Kristine Georges

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