

## Council to consider EDIT increase

### Sheriff to replace deputy and jailer by split vote

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

It was decided at the last county council meeting the preferred method to control county spending at this point in the process of budget reductions is to reduce personnel expenses through workforce numbers by attrition. However, Carroll County Sheriff Tony Burns will be allowed to replace recently departed personnel. In a four-to-three vote at their Tuesday morning meeting, council members allowed Burns to fill two positions recently vacated. A deputy and a jailer both left the department after the 2008 budget reductions.

Burns explained merit deputies are now used for transporting inmates. Civilian jailers did the work in the past. He said given the length of time

the merit officers have served, they tend to get three to four weeks of vacation each, which is a burden for other staff.

"Compensatory time is a never ending cycle," Burns explained. "I'll never get caught up."

"We have to keep the communication channel between the council and the sheriffs department open," he added.

Burns also said he has developed an inmate work program but due to few number of jailers, he is unable to implement it.

"We're just treading water," Burns said. "We're surviving."

Burns said the sheriffs department constitutes the biggest liability in county government. He said it cannot be adequately compared to any other department when making personnel

and spending decisions.

The three council finance committee members voted against refilling the positions. Ron Slavens cautioned that the council still must reduce 2008 appropriations. He said it did not make sense to bring a deputy on board only to tell him in the near future the county could no longer afford the position. He said council members should remember the county started the year with a \$300,000 deficit from which they have yet to recover. He questioned whether there was revenue enough to support the position.

"Budget does matter," Slavens said. "We can't say that we can make it work."

Steve Ashby concurred with Slavens. He said the 2008 budget had to be reduced by at least another \$29,000. He reminded other council

members that the county is not allowed by the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance to approve additional appropriations. He said he needed to know what the cost of employing a deputy was before making an informed decision.

"We've borrowed at least \$1 million so far this year," Ashby said. "Some of it has to be paid back by the end of the year."

"I want to have a better handle on where we stand with that," he added. "I don't know how we can do this," Ann Brown said.

"Are we going to be making more cuts today then?" questioned Slavens after the vote to replace the two positions. He suggested the council look at a personnel reduction in the auditor's office as an example for consideration.

Although Brown said she thought the topic should be discussed at the meeting, council members decided to hold a special meeting Thursday at 2 p.m. to explore further 2008 budget reductions.

#### EDIT

The council will begin the process to increase the Economic Development Income Tax rate from .10 to .25 by advertising the increase for discussion at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Concerns were raised by council members about how past EDIT funding was used. It was noted spending EDIT money for highway department equipment, although not a waste of money, was not the best use for the funding.

"Tourism is not going to save Car-

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## Two more donation ordinances established

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

Following the lead of Carroll Manor that received permission for private citizens to donate money to the county for use only at that facility, two ordinances were adopted for the Carroll County Sheriffs Department to allow similar donations for two programs. The approval was given by the commissioners at their Monday night meeting.

County leaders adopted Ordinances 2008-07 and 08 that established a voluntary donation fund for the water emergency team and canine programs.

Commissioners attorney Barry Emerson said both ordinances would have to be approved by county council. He further advised there was a desire on the part of the sheriff to segregate funds to encourage donations.

Emerson noted that the council would be responsible to appropriate the money from the special fund.

#### Highway department

Superintendent Ron Francis reported a reimbursement claim to FEMA for county highway flood damage-related costs for approximately \$138,000 would be reimbursed at 75 percent.

Commissioners endorsed a letter to the Indiana Department of Transportation to amend the Carrollton Bridge project contract to include inspection services. Francis explained the project took more than six months longer than the length of the contract to complete.

He said the contract cost was \$13,588.61, however change orders which lowered the overall cost during construction amounted to nearly that amount. He said the Carrollton Bridge fund contained enough money to pay for whatever was owed.

Francis said he now attends monthly progress meetings for the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District. He said he also received location maps depicting work areas.

"The lines of communication have opened," he said.

#### Yeoman Community Center

Commissioners approved and signed all formal documents, including the granting agreement, release of funds and certification, environmental review record and the administrative services agreement for \$18,500.

#### EMS

A contract for billing services with TG Higgins Billing Services in Maine was endorsed. The firm will provide services for eight percent of the monies received by billing current and past customers. Emergency Medical Services Director Mike Durr said projected income from billing for 2008 was between \$420,000 and \$450,000.

#### Deer Creek Park

Chief Mike Floyd of the Eel River Indian Tribe appeared to clarify how to confirm a reservation to use the park for a tribal function June 28. He said the tribe wanted to charge a ticket price to attend an additional event, however park board members were unclear if that could happen.

Emerson advised if tickets were issued for the special event it would be acceptable for the tribe to charge.

Floyd advised commissioners the park board was meeting Monday night at 6 p.m., the same time as commissioners. He said he was confused about which meeting he should attend to address the issue.

#### Other business

Delphi Rotary Club will have a sign on the courthouse lawn June 20 to July 5. Delphi Fire Auxiliary will have a sign on the lawn June 16 to June 28. Delphi VFW will use the lawn for a sign June 28 to July 6.

A usage request by the historical society to use the courthouse Sept. 14 or Sept. 21 for an antique road show was tabled. No custodian signed the form in agreement to provide custodial services for the event.

Jim Hardison was reappointed for a two-year term on the Regional IV Workforce board of directors.

Commissioners will meet July 1 at 1 p.m. to discuss 2008 Economic Development Income Tax allocation and to develop 2009 budget requests.

The next regular meeting will be July 7 at 9 a.m.

## Wildcat Creek is flowing again



A log jam on Wildcat Creek at the north edge of Burlington is finally getting the attention it deserves. Town officials have been working for several months trying to find a way to remove the debris. Their concern was potential damage to the town's sewage treatment plant due to the backed up creek. A month ago Stacy Flick from the Indiana Department of Transportation's LaPorte District was given orders to take care of the problem. He said it took a few weeks to get the proper permits and to bid the project out before starting Monday. Shepherd's Excavating of Winamac was awarded the bid. Typically, INDOT is only concerned with property in and around the bridge, said Flick, who is the project supervisor. This problem is down from the bridge, however it has the potential of affecting the bridge if it is not removed. INDOT is "doing it to be a good neighbor," Flick said. "We hope to have this done this week. The water has already dropped quite a bit." Comet photo

## Overlooked funding source at sheriffs department pays off

### Jailers find cash for county

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

Carroll County Sheriff Tony Burns, who took office Jan. 1, 2007, is still learning some of the intricacies of running a jail in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. A lesson learned last fall is now paying off for the county.

Burns said months ago he asked jailers a question about why the Indiana Department of Correction (DOC) would pay to house a DOC transition prisoner. Burns explained that a transition prisoner is one who has been released from prison into the community to finish serving a sentence to become ready to leave DOC altogether. Burns



said the county jail is not considered official DOC housing.

He asked jail commander Lori Sustarsic to learn the DOC rules about reimbursement for the service. Sustarsic discovered that the county could have claimed payment for former prisoners and did not. She said the last claim presented to DOC from Carroll County was in 2001.

DOC allowed the sheriffs

department to claim for reimbursement from 2002 to present. Burns directed jailers Sustarsic and Jon Randle to re-search the records of each prisoner during the stated time frame and make the appropriate claim.

Sustarsic said the project took two to three months to gather the data from at least 500 files. The goal was to begin the claims by the end of

2007 and that goal was met.

Jail staff submitted 2007 claims first and then began submission of claims year-by-year until finished. DOC reviews each claim, makes corrections and then issues a check for an amount determined to be correct. The amount reimbursed to the county, which was for 2007, was \$32,550 after claims received totaled \$29,330. Reimbursement for 2002 was \$21,000 although claims totaled \$22,085. DOC reimbursed \$14,805 for 2003 so far, but is reviewing claims for that year that total \$24,850.

However, the outstanding claims yet to be paid could be

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## Farmers should report flood damage immediately

#### Comet staff report

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security announced through the office of local Emergency Management Agency Director Dave McDowell farmers affected by flooding and other natural disasters which occurred across

the state in the last couple of weeks should report livestock, crop and/or equipment losses to the local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office as quickly as possible.

Gov. Mitch Daniels asked the USDA to request expedited assistance for farmers. Quick reporting by

farmers will support the governor's request.

To find contact information for your county FSA office, visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/in](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/in) or call (317) 290-3030.

Farmers should contact the Indiana Board of Animal Health for issues related to livestock and

poultry at [www.in.gov/boah](http://www.in.gov/boah) or (317) 227-0300.

If farmers have manure, pesticides or other farm chemicals which spilled due to flooding, they should contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management Spill Hotline at (317) 233-7745 or (888) 233-7745.

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