

WARREN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
MONDAY JANUARY 7, 2019

The Warren County Commissioners met for their second meeting of the month of January 2019. The Warren County Council was sworn in by Michelle Hetrick, Clerk, for their first meeting of the month of January 2019. Present for the meeting were Commissioners: Thomas Hetrick, Adam Hanthorne, Brian Jordan as well as Council Members: Lee Kay, Sharon Hutchison, John Comer, Matt Commons and County Attorney, Jud Barce. Also, in attendance were John Kuiper, Randy Haddock, Jessie Kerst, Lori Heidenreich, Carolyn Orr Straw, Michelle Hetrick, Rusty Hart.

1. The meeting was called to order by Brian Jordan, Commissioner President and John Comer, Council President.
2. John Comer, Council, led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Brian Jordan presented the KIRPC recommendation for signature as was decided at the previous meeting.
4. New Business:

- a. Tom Hetrick stated his concerns with coordinating functions of the Council and Commissioners. Hetrick stated that his main concern is that county government is setup with branches of government for checks and balances and he feels like the checks and balances have been circumvented. The elected officers who need to run the county need to be back in charge. In the past, the department heads went before the Commissioners for review of their budgets over a 2-3-day period in July and then Council budget hearing was August. Department head budgets were reviewed by the Commissioners before the Council budget hearing and at all times through the year department heads had to get permission from the Commissioners to take requests to the Council however in recent years the Commissioners have been bypassed. He believes that any office holder budget and spending request should go through the Commissioners first before going to the Council. The Commissioners should know what is going on in the county first rather than finding out later. In 2018, the Auditor got an additional pay for her deputies but did not get permission from the Commissioners. Hetrick proposed a County ordinance stating that at least one month before the County Council going over the county budget at their annual hearing, the Commissioners go over proposed budgets with the office holders and it is understood that the Council makes all final budget decisions. Hetrick further believes that by doing this, the Commissioners then can have the checks and balances. The Commissioners need to be in control of all budgets and review all budgets. The Commissioners, in prior years, were asked by the office holders for funds to spend and then the Commissioners would give the request to the Council. Hetrick suggested a partnership rather than bypassing the commissioners. Again, the Commissioners need to review then pass budgets to the Council. Comer stated that during the budget hearing all Commissioners and Council have always been invited and worked together. Comer stated that the Council is not trying to block the Commissioners from the meetings as was discussed in meetings with the Commissioners. Additionally, during budget meetings, it is common knowledge that all are to be at the meeting without a special invitation. Hetrick stated that the Auditor is preparing the budget without much input from the Commissioners. Lee Kay stated that the last 2 years the Council and Commissioners had a notice of a 2-day budget meeting in July to meet with the Department heads. Comer stated that, over the past years, there have been several meetings with Council, Commissioners and the Auditor have met to discuss the budget prior to the budget meetings. Brian Jordan stated that the State has moved the due dates for the budget cycle up approximately 1 month and he feels that it is a waste of office holders time to present their budgets to the Commissioners when the budget binders have all of the information and office holders will meet with both Council and Commissioners at the budget meeting. Rusty Hart stated that he did not present his budget to the Commissioners during his previous 8-year term. Hart does not appreciate the statement that he should have to ask the Commissioners for permission to talk to the Council as that is inappropriate for an elected official as well as there is nothing in statute stating this. It has been a team effort over the past years, which is a good thing, for all office holders. Hart stated that there have been a few items in the past that were big ticket purchases that were taken to the Commissioners and the Commissioners had conflicts with that process. Hetrick stated that when he started years ago, the elected officials had to go to the commissioners to spend funds. Hart does not think there needs to be an ordinance to direct elected officials to have the commissioners review the budget. Hetrick stated that the only issue he has is that the Commissioners need to know what is going on before the budgets go to the Council with meetings, 1 month prior so that all office holders can present their budget to the Commissioners. Hart stated that preparing budgets so much in advance is difficult and then adding another month would cause more difficulty with forecasting the budget. Hetrick is asking for a 2-day meeting with office holders to have their budgets explained to the Commissioners. Jordan stated that he would rather review the budget binder and ask questions of the office holders rather than having a 2-day meeting. Hart stated that the State Board of Accounts informed him that our budget approvals are through the Council only. Comer inquired to clarify Hetrick's request, that the office holders need to come to the Commissioners prior then explain again to the Council in separate meetings. Hetrick stated yes that is his request. Sharon Hutchison stated the office holders having a joint meeting is more efficient and having separate meetings there are items that are missed being discussed. Hetrick stated that the office holders are being paid to be here and should not have an issue with attending a 2-day meeting. Hetrick stated that the first time the Commissioners hear items from the office holders is at the budget meeting. Sharon stated that that is when the Council hear it as well and working together is more efficient. Hetrick stated that he would like to have an opinion of the budget and have a prior meeting so they are up to date. Sharon stated that the budget binders have all information needed and suggested studying the information at home so that all are on the same page rather than an additional meeting. Comer inquired from Jud what can be required. Jud stated that they can both require separate items, but the law states that the budget information is to be delivered to both the Council and Commissioner in June. The Commissioners are to make recommendations, but the Council is the ultimate decision maker of the budgets. Kay stated that we have always done it this way. Hetrick stated that the Commissioners were cut out of the budget meeting and the Auditor asked for a raise that others did not get as she has an inside track being the Secretary. If the Auditor would have proposed this to the Commissioners, they would have not allowed it. Hart stated that the budgets should not be able to be cut by the Commissioners. The budgets should be presented to

is something that isn't needed. Kay asked if it is possible to have the Office Holders meet with Commissioners the first day of budget meetings and the Council following 2 days. Hetrick stated that streamlining the budget is not always good. Comer stated that there has never been anyone that has tried to block the Commissioners from the budget process. Hetrick stated that he does not blame the Council for anything, but to do the Commissioner job well they need to meet with the office holders concerning their budgets. Comer stated that the budgets requests are not changed as much anymore, but the large purchases do go through the commissioners. Comer asked for a strategic spending plan from the Highway Department. Jordan stated that he respects Tom's opinion, but he likes doing it as a group with the Council and Commissioners. Hetrick stated that he likes it separate due to Commissioners do not have a head start to answer questions. Michelle Hetrick, Clerk, stated that in 2006 the Commissioners met with the office holders then the recommended budget went to the council. Hart stated that the issue is not with answering questions, but the Commissioners should not be able to cut the budgets. Adam Hanthorne stated that hearing the office holder presentations together is good, as there is not a final decision made at that time. The Highway having a separate meeting with the Commissioners is good, but meeting together with the Council would be better. Hart stated that large purchases are always taken to the Commissioners prior to the Council, but as a general rule the office holders should not have to go to the Commissioners in order to get permission to meet with the Council. If that is the case, we cannot effectively do our jobs as elected officials. Hanthorne stated that he likes to be involved with the office holders and their budgets. Comer stated that having a copy of the budget a month in advance is a positive in order to be prepared for the budget meetings and if there are questions concerning the budget the questions are asked of the office holders. Hetrick questioned, are you aware that there is a Commissioner's budget that was not prepared by the Commissioners. Jordan stated that he did review the Commissioner's budget. The Commissioners budget has never been prepared by the Commissioners but reviewed in the budget binder. Hetrick stated that he did not have input on the Commissioner's budget. Comer stated that it was not anyone's intent because it was presented in the budget binders for the budget meeting so that changes could be made. Hetrick stated then why can't the Commissioners review it for 2 days with the office holders as there is no reason for the Commissioners to exist then and just let the Auditor prepare it and send to the Council. Sharon Hutchison stated that the checks and balances are in place with both Council and Commissioners included in the budget meeting. Jud Barce, County Attorney, stated that this is outside of the statute and will need to be decided by the Council and Commissioners. If you prefer to meet with them rather than read about it then you can change it. Barce further stated that it does not look like anyone is trying to limit the Commissioners from the budget, but it is not required to meet with the Commissioners prior to the Council with all office holders. Comer stated that the budget meeting working together is a good thing. Hart stated that scheduling 2 days of budget meetings so that the Commissioners can cut budgets prior to council is not good. Hanthorne questioned if this proposed ordinance is to be informed or to be presented to the Commissioners prior to budget meetings. Hetrick stated that 15 years ago all office holders met with the Commissioner so that recommendations can be made to the Council. Jordan stated that he does not see an issue with group work on the budget. Hetrick stated he is trying to set up so that the Commissioners are not stripped of their power and authority. As office holders are being paid by the County, they can attend a 2-day budget meeting with the Commissioners a month prior to the Budget Meeting. Hutchison stated that the office holders have citizens that they are to serve. Hetrick stated how many deputies do they have and what if they are out smoking or running errands. Hart stated that the trouble is that it ends up in confrontation as they are trying to justify to the Commissioners and when it comes down to the budget, it the council's decision. The problem is that the Commissioners want the office holders to come in so they can vote on something that is not the Commissioner's decision. Kay suggested a compromise and work together. Hetrick stated that, in years prior, the Commissioner's job is to review what is going on in the County prior to the council and without the 2-day budget meeting, then we are stripping the Commissioners of their duties. Hetrick wanted this to be an executive meeting not open to the public as these are sensitive items to be discussed. He wants the authority that the Commissioners had in the past. Brian stated that he feels like the Commissioners have the authority as in the past years. Hetrick stated that the Auditor compiled the budget presented it to the Council and the Commissioners were taken out of the budget process by the Auditor. Hetrick said he has been here for 20 years and the Commissioners are being relegated to nothing.

5. Elected Official/Department Head comments: Lee Kay inquired about having an access point added to the County website for Gateway.
6. Public Comment: Carolyn Orr Straw, Steuben Township Trustee presented information concerning Trustee and township level government. Straw presented a summary of township countywide expenditures that she presented for all to review. All information is from Gateway so that all can get access to the information.

Next Commissioner meeting will be January 14, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. and Council Meeting January 28, 2019 at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business Adam Hanthorne made a motion to adjourn the Commissioner Meeting with a second from Tom Hetrick, all voted in favor.

There being no further business Lee Kay made a motion to adjourn the Council Meeting with a second from Sharon Hutchison, all voted in favor.

ATTEST:


Robin Weston-Hubner, Auditor


W. Brian Jordan, President


Adam Hanthorne, Vice President


Tom Hetrick