

THE MORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL MET ON WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6 AND  
THURSDAY AUGUST 7, 2025 AT 9:00 A.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: KIM MERIDETH, VICKIE KIVETT, TROY SPRINKLE, CHIP KELLER, BRIAN CULP AND JOE CRONE. ALSO PRESENT WERE; LINDA PRUITT, MORGAN COUNTY AUDITOR; DEB VERLEY, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT; AND JOSH MESSMER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR. MELISSA GREENE WAS ABSENT.

PLEDGE  
PRAYER

**Budget Review:**

The following budgets were presented by office holders and elected officials:

• *Plan Commission* – Laura Parker

The budget was not increased much over last year. The office is fully staffed. It was mentioned that the legal services line could be increased in order to pursue legal action for violations.

• *Dispatch* – Chelsi Halstead

The budget is close to the same, there were some increases for some contractual services and they need to update the CAD. The AT&T lease begins when the implementation is finished and they have some extra funding in this line that will be used for a salary that was omitted.

• *Data Administration* – Joel Johnson

A position has been eliminated and this amount has been added to the Gadelnet contract. The contractual services line has increased for new audio/visual systems for the courts and there are several monthly contracts. Brian Culp noted that some of the contracts are based on per person/per month. When the Council considers adding a new position, they consider benefit costs, but these other costs add up quickly.

• *Assessor* – Reva Brummett

The budget has been reduced for postage and printing. There are 42,455 parcels in the county and they contracted with Midwest Presort to mail out the assessments for the parcels. This allowed a reduction of \$25,600 in postage and \$15,000 in printing. The vehicle lease is less because it was estimated for this year. They average 1,100 to 1,200 permits for new construction each year.

• *Auditor* – Linda Pruitt

There will be 27 pays in 2026, although the number of hours worked will be the same. There are two different methods to calculate the rates for this and the Council will need to make a decision. There is a temporary bookkeeper/grant manager position and Ms. Pruitt would like to make this a permanent position. There will be several employees approaching retirement so the PTO buyout has been increased. The part time budget has been increased so the people retiring can help with training.

• *Recorder* – Anna Voyles

The office supplies line was increased as well as the rental for the post office box, and dues and subscriptions. The total for salaries is less because they have one less position. Three of the employees have been with the county for many years and the biggest struggle the offices face is having coverage for the office while employees are using their built-up PTO.

• *Veterans' Service Officer* – Lindsay Smith, Courtney Kemp, Misty Ladish

They are asking to make the administrative assistant a veteran's service officer. This would be a \$18,000 overall budget increase. This employee has become accredited through four different organizations and can now process claims. It is a requirement to obtain annual training and the assistant has attended this training. Having a third VSO in the office would keep claims from getting bogged down. Kim Merideth stated that she was curious as to what the doughnut counties were doing regarding VSOs. Johnson County has one with no assistant, Hendricks County has one with an assistant, Boone shares one and an assistant with Montgomery, Hancock, Monroe, Owen and Putnam have one, Marion has four. Ms. Smith noted that several veterans from surrounding counties have contacted them because they can't get into the surrounding counties. They turn down these claims for the most part, unless there is a pressing circumstance. Tuesdays are more open if someone doesn't have an appointment; Wednesdays, they only process claims; but it is best to make an appointment. Every voicemail message is returned.

- *Surveyor* – Terry Brock  
Many line items have been cut. Chip Keller asked about ditch maintenance. Mr. Brock stated that there is an assessment that pays for the maintenance. They were able to get a grant that is paying for a new bridge over Sartor Ditch.
- *EMA* – Abby Worth  
They reduced the equipment line for next year; they will be using this for updates to the drone, such as a claw that will allow them to attach a life jacket and fly it out over someone so they have sustainment until first responders can get a boat to them. There were over 30 water rescues over a 48-hour period this past April. Using the drone in these situations allows them to pinpoint a location to get service to the and enhances first responder life safety. There were allocated \$125,000 for tornado sirens this year and they have two 10-stack installations coming up, one in the Lake Melissa area near Eminence and an area between Eminence and Monrovia. The 5-year plan allows for installation of the largest sirens first as there is a 10% cost increase each year for sirens. The budget has been decreased in education and increased in travel and lodging as they are able to attend several free education classes, but there will be a travel and lodging cost. They have reduced several items in order to make a part time employee full time. There are a lot of cuts at the federal level that are trickling down to the state and they in turn are not as supportive on a county level. Cuts to the National Weather Service have increased responsibilities for EMA. There has been a lot of turn over for the part time position and they are losing them to full time positions. They ask this position to be on call 24/7 to active the EOC regardless of holidays, family time or vacation. Part of the salary is returned for salary reimbursement as long as requirements are met. They were barely able to meet the requirement this year for the part time position, which would have eliminated the total grant amount (\$44,827.) This position is currently open as they did not want to fill the position until they knew if it would become full time for next year. The \$2.9 million FEMA reimbursement is what is projected to be brought back into the county later this month from the April 2025 flooding. This represents 200 hours of work for EMA and it will take another 150 to 200 to complete. This does not include the 200 hours spent responding to the flooding. The impact to the EMA budget is \$10,000.
- *Coroner* – Mike Ellis  
The budget is consistent with last year. Uniforms was the only item that increased. They budgeted for a cooler, but it has not been installed. Autopsy costs are down. They field approximately 50 phone calls each day and are on call 24/7.
- *Morgan County LEPC (Emergency Planning & Community Right to Know)* – Erick Kivett  
The budget increased for the annual exercise that LEPC hosts for first responders. Funding comes from IERC (Indiana Emergency Response Committee).
- *Recycling* –Erick Kivett  
The county does not have a facility that can process items for recycling, so the contractual services line item is what makes it run. Currently, there is just the Morgantown site. They have two Tox-Away Days and a contractor that processes the materials for a flat fee. If they have compactors, they could save over \$100,000 a year. The annual lease cost for two compactors is \$120,000. The site will have to be manned and it would be good to have Saturday hours. Brian Culp noted that there will be vacation time or sick days, there is no back up. The facility should be constructed by the end of the year.
- *Sheriff/Jail/Work Release* – Rich Myers, Dave Rogers  
They adjusted the pay matrix and are requesting an additional jail officer; hospital trips are causing mandatory overtime. Comparing facilities of the same size, they run 28% less officers than those facilities do. The Judicial Campus requires two officers on each floor and the two that are on the first floor must operate the security checkpoint.

They travel almost 100,000 miles a year across the US to pick up people on warrants. It takes two officers for each transport and costs staffing, travel and hotel stay. To contract this out, each trip is \$5,000. There are also hospital and doctor appointment transports. So far this year, they have used 3,686 manhours for these transports. They also transport inmates to MAT clinics. There are now several inmates that are in treatment through the clinics and since addiction is a medical condition through Medicaid, it is an ADA violation if the inmates aren't allowed to continue treatment. It takes a minimum of two staff, sometimes four, to transport inmates to the clinic and sometimes they have to sit there for hours while they receive therapy. Mr. Rogers stated that the jail is understaffed.

The Work Release Program brought in \$160,000 the last two years, which goes into the General Fund.

There are several security doors (30) that are rusting out and need to be replaced. Each door runs approximately \$8,000. An additional cost is software for the jail management system through the state that communicates with the court systems. The issue is that they are in year three of a five-year contract with another company and the buyout cost is \$346,000. This is a \$100,000 savings.

The Sheriff budget includes moving an evidence tech position (corporal) to detective (sergeant) which is a \$1,500 difference. This would allow this position to accept caseloads like the other detectives and they would like to add a part time person for this position. This position would not be a merit deputy and it would take some of the workload off. The budget includes an \$80,000 computer that is able to conduct forensic information from electronics and \$300,000 for a secure evidence storage facility. This will be a pole barn type building with three or four bays that will store vehicles and large objects. The last item is a \$78,000 portable incinerator that will be used for drugs, needles, clothing, etc.

There are several items that have been decreased and the overall 2026 budget is less than the current year.

Recess for lunch 12:00 pm

Reconvene 1:30 pm

- *Convention, Visitor & Tourism Commission* – Ann Lankford  
This budget (\$185,000) is funded through the Innkeepers Tax. The \$33.9 million of revenue is a 5.8% increase over previous years. The breakdown is as follows: food and beverage 42%, retail and shopping 27%, transportation 15%, lodging 8%, and entertainment 7%. Funds are used to bring in new visitors.
- *Weights & Measures* – Scotty Manley  
The budget for 2026 has been lowered by \$1,900.
- *EMS* – Brent Worth  
They are requesting three additional paramedics and three EMTs to staff the new stations. They are doing well for equipment at the new locations, but will need additional funds for utilities and internet. They revised the job description for the Director through WIS and will increase the salary over the next two years. The PRN staffing was increased for the mobile integrated health program. This in turn will help reduce 911 calls for falls and wound care. Contractual services has increased for a program called Julota, this is in conjunction with the mobile integrated health. The projected call volume for the Brooklyn area is an increase of 532 calls once the new station is open in that area.
- *Highway* – Eddie Fisher  
The budget is lower this year than it was last year. A lot of the bridge projects have been started and they would like to concentrate on paving projects. There is a project for Lincoln Hill Road and this is in the study phase. Mr. Fisher requested an additional mechanic so department can perform in-house vehicle repairs. They currently do Weights & Measures, Sheriff, Parks, EMS and their own repairs with two mechanics. In the Cumulative Capital Fund, they have requested \$200,000 for road safety improvement (guardrail, striping, etc.).
- *Parks & Recreation* – Kenny Hale  
They are working on the electric connection project for the food court area that was budgeted for this year. Insurance needs increased to \$5,000 and rentals increased by \$300. They would like to purchase an auger and several picnic tables. There are plans to develop an area with picnic tables and a small parking area and they are waiting on FEMA approval. They have requested \$95,000 in Cumulative Capital Development for HVAC improvements to the Delaney House (Waverly) and Wilbur Schoolhouse. Discussion followed regarding the Park Board.
- *Clerk / Election / Records* – Tammy Parker  
The Clerk budget includes \$10,000 for computer equipment but they might be able to replace them this year. They had four rooms of files in the Courthouse and have reduced it to one room in the Administration Building/Judicial Campus.

They increased meals since there is an election in 2026. Custodian fees were also increased from \$20 per machine to \$40 per machine. Microvote would be \$80 for this. The cost for voting machines has been increased because of tariffs and she has requested \$156,52 for the machines.

- *Court Services* – Brian Foley & Miranda Beauchamp  
Sixty percent of the funding (\$1.7 mil) for this budget comes from grants and user fees. The 2026 General Fund request is less than the 2025 request. They have moved a third probation officer into 2100 (Probation User Fee Fund) including benefits. They anticipate that they will be able to move one of them into the ADAPT Fund (2502) next year. They have not filled a position that was vacated in April.

#### **2026 Payroll**

Daree Fry, Morgan County HR Director, and Linda Pruitt stated that there are 27 pays for 2026 and two options to pay it. Dividing annual salaries into 27 pays will affect the biweekly amount for the salaried, exempt and elected officials pay by making it slightly lower for each paycheck; however, the annual amount will stay the same. This occurs every 11 years. Ms. Pruitt checked with other counties and there is one county that takes the 2025 salary, increases it by whatever the pay increase is for 2026 and divides by 26, then adds the extra pay for 27 pays. The State Board of Accounts stated that either method is acceptable.

#### **Adjournment**

Vickie Kivett made a motion to adjourn the meeting. They will reconvene at 9:00 am August 7<sup>th</sup>. Motion seconded by Brian Culp. Motion carried 5-0. (Chip Keller had an appointment and left early.)

#### **Reconvene**

The Morgan County Council reconvened the Budget Review meeting. Members present: Vickie Kivett, Troy Sprinkle, Jason Maxwell, Chip Keller and Brian Culp. Also present were: Linda Pruitt, Morgan County Auditor; Deb Verley, Executive Assistant; and Josh Messmer, County Administrator. Kim Merideth and Melissa Greene were absent.

- *Magistrate*  
Judge Matt Hanson stated that the Magistrate judge resigned and the budget is the same as last year. They will be doing interviews for a replacement as soon as possible.
- *Circuit Court* – Judge Matt Hanson  
The budget is the same except for salaries. There are some glitches with the new building, but it is nice to have an ADA compliant court.
- *Superior III* – Judge Sara Dungan  
The budget is approximately the same except for an allowance to replace computers.
- *Shared Court Services* - Judges Sara Dungan and Dakota VanLeeuwen  
Chip Keller stated that he met with the judges and that one of the biggest changes is for interpreter services. The need for this continues to increase. Another item is psych exams. Judge Dungan stated that they were informed that the state will no longer be funding the “language line” that they use a lot for non-English speaking persons appearing in court. The judges have been scrambling to find funding for this service. Judge VanLeeuwen stated that it is a federal felony for the courts not to provide language access and there is no guarantee on how much funding the county will receive through the grant. The courts have been using the crime litigation fund to supplement public defender requests such as psychological evaluations so this fund has been increased.
- *Superior I* – Judge Dakota VanLeeuwen  
The public defender fund has been increased, not because of an increase in crime, but because of an increase in the level of felonies.
- *Jury Administrator*  
No change in budget.
- *Superior II* – Judge Brian Williams  
No major changes.
- *Purdue Extension*  
Troy Sprinkle stated that they are asked to increase the number of hours for the HHS program assistant. They have requested a new printer in the equipment line.
- *Maintenance*  
The budget has been increased for contractual services, but the total budget is \$7,000 lower overall.

- *HR – Daree Fry*

Ms. Fry stated that turnover is 22.8% with 99 employees leaving employment. There are 357 full time employees and 76 part time employees, not counting EMS PRN. There have been several different trainings for employees this year as well as total compensation statements, intranet, online application system, and digital onboarding through EZHire. There were a lot of items in Section 4 of the employee handbook that are being changed, such as PTO buyout (\$49,034.32 in the last 12 months). This amount includes employees that were dismissed with cause. Ms. Fry stated that if an employee is discharged for cause, they should not be paid out PTO.

Earlier this year, several employees earned Critical Incident Stress Management certification. This is the same certification that Sheriff and jail employees receive an annual \$3,000 special duty incentive. Currently, there are 45 employees that receive this incentive that equates to \$115.38 per pay. There are now an additional five employees from dispatch, two from EMA, three from EMS, two from the Health Department, and one from HR that have completed the training. Ms. Fry asked the Council to review this practice and be fair across the board; if an incentive is given to one, it should be given to all. Linda Pruitt noted that the original budget for this incentive was \$45,000, but it is now up to \$135,000 each year.

- *Prosecutor – Steve Sonnega*

They were able to hire back a deputy prosecutor that left and Mr. Sonnega thanked the Council for increasing salaries so they can be competitive. It is important to have experienced prosecutors in the courtroom. Other counties are offering \$84,000 to \$140,000 with one county offering a \$10,000 signing bonus. The Cumulative Capital Fund has been increased for an Axon contract for a five-year term. This company handles body cam footage, dash cams, evidence, photos and data.

- *Health Department – Tricia Runningen*

There are three funds (1159, 1161 and 1138) and two grants that make up their budget. The grants cover two full time positions and the 1161 fund covers five positions; three full time nurses, the Director, and part of the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. Because of state budget cuts, they are losing community partnerships. They will be continuing the 50/50 health educator position with the YMCA as this allows this position without paying all the salary and benefits for this position. The 1159 fund provides for eight positions, supplies, travel, vehicle lease, internet, communication, contractual services, part time, etc.

- *Soil & Water – Lisa MacPhee*

The 2026 budget is basic. They were able to hire a part time educator who is expanding their programs. They have increased supplies, but lowered a few other items to offset this.

- *Title IV-D –*

Troy Sprinkle stated that he met with Title IV-D and there are not any major changes. They removed the part time training and added a server upgrade. They now have two prosecutors, which increased salaries.

- *Commissioner – Josh Messmer*

The Cumulative Capital Fund includes a one-time expense for copiers. The computer and software line has been increased for court licenses and ongoing maintenance and support. The real estate lease will be removed once the purchase of the leased property has been finalized. Fund 1120 is slightly lower than 2025 as the sewer district funding agreement has ended. The General Fund (1000) has increased by 3.5% for health insurance, clinic costs, professional services, New ERA (AV system maintenance for courts) liability/property insurance, utilities and Humane Society Contract.

#### **2026 Salary Increase**

Chip Keller made a motion to increase salaries by 2% for 2026 and to divide this amount by 27 for the 27 pays for the year. Motion seconded by Joe Crone. Motion carried 5-0.

- *Comments*

It was discussed that seven new full-time positions were requested and two or three part time positions were requested for 2026. Hours and staffing for the Recycling Center were discussed.

#### **2026 Council Salary**

Brian Culp made a motion to decline a pay increase for 2026 and challenged the Board of Commissioners to do the same. Motion seconded by Chip Keller. Motion rescinded until the whole Council could attend.

Adjournment

Troy Sprinkle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Brian Culp. Motion carried 5-0.

MORGAN COUNTY COUNCIL

Kim Merideth  
Kim Merideth

Vickie Rivett

Troy Sprinkle

Chip Keller

Melissa Greene  
Melissa Greene

Brian Culp

Joe Crone

ATTEST:

Linda Pruitt  
Linda Pruitt, Morgan Co. Auditor