

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING FOR PUBLIC HEARING OF THE  
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JASPER, INDIANA  
AUGUST 7, 2023**

A special meeting of the Common Council of the City of Jasper, Indiana, was held on Thursday, August 7, 2023, in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 610 Main Street, Jasper, Indiana.

**Call to Order.** Presiding Officer Mayor Dean Vonderheide called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

**Roll Call.** Clerk-Treasurer Kiersten Knies called the roll.

	<u>In Person</u>	<u>Video</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Mayor Dean Vonderheide	X		
Council members:			
John Schroeder	X		
Chad Lueken	X		
David Hurst	X		
Paul Lorey	X		
Kevin Manley	X		
Nancy Eckerle	X		
Philip Mundy	X		
City Attorney Renee Kabrick	X		
Clerk-Treasurer Kiersten Knies	X		

Knies announced that in order to have a quorum for the meeting, a majority of the council members must be in attendance. All seven council members were in attendance at the beginning of the meeting, which is a majority; therefore, there was a quorum for the meeting.

**Moment of Personal Reflection.** Mayor Vonderheide asked that all present take a moment for personal reflection.

**Pledge of Allegiance.** Mayor Vonderheide invited all those present to join him in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-15**

**AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING A 1% MUNICIPAL FOOD AND BEVERAGE TAX**

City Attorney Renee Kabrick explained the process surrounding the legislation that led to Ordinance No. 2023-15 being brought to the Common Council. Atty Kabrick advised that in accordance with the Indiana Code the public must be granted the opportunity to provide input to the Common Council regarding their opinion on the adoption of a 1% Food and Beverage Tax. She further advised that funds collected by this Food and Beverage Tax are only intended to be used toward an indoor regional wellness center which includes gymnasium spaces, some community space, meeting rooms, community kitchen, indoor walking track, a wellness center with fitness equipment, child watch, studios for exercise classes, and an indoor aquatic center. Ordinance No. 2023-15 has come before the common council on two occasions and has passed on both of those occasions. It has been amended from the first reading to the second and that amendment provided for very specific language that allows it to only be used for this single project and nothing else. At the August meeting, Ordinance No. 2023-15 will be offered for third and final reading. The floor was then opened to comments from the public.

Two Jasper residents appeared to voice their opinions surrounding the adoption of a 1% Food and Beverage Tax by the City of Jasper. Adrian Engelberth of the fourth precinct stated that he believes that there is only so much money to be spent and questioned the Common Council as to whether a Regional Wellness Center is the best use of \$35,000,000.00. He reported he believes in economic development, has run for office, been involved in efforts to grow Dubois County, and studied data surrounding the growth of the area. As a result, he believes that the number one way for an area to have continued growth is to increase the percentage of GDP spent on schools. He believes that Dubois County is growing old and that in ten to twenty years, the community will experience a workforce reduction. He further noted that the general public is confused by the project and thinks the tax is being used for the remodeling Jasper’s outdoor pool and asked the council to consider pushing back the implementation of the Food and Beverage Tax until the residents had a better understanding of the project. He stated he is opposed to the tax because he does not have a clear picture of what it is for. He claimed that originally the Common Council indicated they would not adopt the tax until the referendum had passed and now, they are doing the

opposite. Engelberth also indicated that he thinks that the YMCA should have a bigger stake in the project. He would like to see them contribute 50% of the project. He does not believe that the taxpayers should be charged a membership fee to attend a building that was paid for by the members' tax dollars. He further believes that the City of Jasper has plenty of infrastructure that needs work and emphasized that maybe that would be a better use of funds.

Mayor Vonderheide addressed several of Engelbreth's concerns stating that the YMCA is initiating the fundraising and their goal is to raise over \$15,000,000.00 towards the facility. He indicated it's not free for the YMCA, it's a partnership and they are part of the solution. Mayor Vonderheide further agreed that education is the best place to spend money. He noted that the city does have plans for infrastructure. He believes that there is an educational component to economic development and that it involves quality of life.

Council member Paul Lorey additionally commented that 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Newton is part of the State Highway and that it is a month and half away from being paved.

Vincent Granacher, a resident of Council Member Kevin Manley's district had several questions for the Common Council. He questioned what other components in addition to the Food and Beverage Tax would pay for the Regional Wellness Center. He further questioned what alternative plans were in place should the referendum not pass in the fall. He questioned the Common Council as to what the definition of minimal would be in regard to the effect the project would have on property taxes. He asked the council if they understood the demographics of the users, if tax dollars would be used to fund the project but taxpayers would not be able to afford to attend the services offered. Granacher raised the question that if this is a Regional Wellness Center why regional taxes aren't being used to fund the project. He further wondered if the referendum doesn't pass would the Food and Beverage Tax be rescinded. He further questioned if the current pool would close and if not whether or not the city needed two pools. He further wondered if the Food and Beverage Tax does not pass does the Regional Wellness Center project go away. And finally, he wondered what the impact would be on other area fitness facilities.

Atty Kabrick noted that there are other funds available that would go towards the payment of the bond such as Tax Increment Financing, EDIT funds, HELP grant funds and other funds that have been earmarked over the last year. Mayor Vonderheide noted that the plan has always been to build something and that if the referendum were to fail the project would be scaled back. He further noted that if the Food and Beverage Tax were not passed, the city would continue to look for other ways to fund the project. Council member Kevin Manley indicated that there will be a referendum next fall for the entire project and if the community doesn't want it the Council won't push forward. Council member Lorey pointed out that we won't know the final impact to the taxpayer until we move forward. Mayor Vonderheide said the plan all along has been to have enough financial stack to be able to do to move forward with the entire project and if the city falls short and the referendum doesn't pass then the city will build what the city can afford. Mayor Vonderheide noted that the two pools are of different scope and fulfill different needs. He further noted that facilities like the YMCA and private fitness gyms have coexisted in other communities. He believes private gyms serve a niche and this serves a different demographic. Mayor Vonderheide further noted that after the facility is paid for the Food and Beverage Tax would end. Council member Chad Lueken noted that he has always been in favor of what the city can do without impacting property taxes and that he hopes that the effect is zero but that he hasn't seen that yet.

Granacher agreed with the importance of improving quality of life but noted that the city has infrastructure that needs replaced as well as a fire truck and voiced concern that the Regional Wellness Center comes before those needs.

Seeing no one else available for public hearing, a motion was made by Council member Paul Lorey and seconded by Nancy Eckerle to close the public hearing. Motion carried 7-0.

**Adjournment.** There being no further business to come before the board, a motion was made by Council member Kevin Manley and seconded by Council member Chad Lueken to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 7-0 and the meeting adjourned at 6:03pm.

The minutes were hereby approved \_\_\_\_ with   ✓   without corrections or clarification this 23<sup>rd</sup> day August 2023.

  
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Mayor Dean Vonderheide, Presiding Officer

Attest:   
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Kiersten Knies, Clerk-Treasurer