

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session September 8, 2020

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday September 8, 2020 at 9:00AM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Blake Gerber, Kevin Woodward and Tamara Robbins. Also, in attendance were County Attorney, Roy Johnson and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: Motion made by Tamara Robbins, seconded by Kevin Woodward to approve the minutes from August 17, 2020 regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: Motion made by Tamara Robbins, seconded by Kevin Woodward to approve Payroll #17 in the amount of \$241,832.37, #18 in the amount of \$234,314.47 and 144 claims totaling \$538,939.31. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 85 inmates, 34 pretrial Superior, 20 pretrial Circuit, 9 DOC and 18 F6 DOC. The Sheriff's Department advertised for bids for a 1989 AM General Humvee-H1. One bid was submitted. The high bid is now \$4,500.00. All bidders will be notified, the next bid opening will be at the September 21st Commissioner meeting. The minimum bid for that meeting is \$4,550.00. Sheriff Holliday informed the Commissioners that a grant was awarded in the amount of \$174,797.38 to be used for updating radios for the Wells County Sheriff's Department, Ossian Police Department and the Bluffton Police Department. The grant was awarded by the State Homeland Security Program.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Josh Cotton informed the commissioners that 102 miles of chip and seal have been completed. One crew is north, one crew is south, completing hand patching and backhoe jobs before winter. Mowing of the side ditches will start again in preparation for winter. He addressed the local farmers to mow back the corn at the intersections.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag informed the commissioners that the Wells County Regional Sewer District was awarded \$6,622,000 in forgivable loan dollars by the State Revolving Loan Fund. These funds will go toward the construction of the Murray and Liberty Center sewer collection systems. The projects will be released for bid at the end of 2020 with construction beginning in the spring of 2021. Rumschlag stated "This award was dedicated to the regional sewer district based on the needs of the community; the project priority score established by the state and the regional sewer district's readiness to proceed. The district would not have been able to do this without the support of the County Commissioners and County Council in providing matching dollars to the planning process as well as a loan dedicated toward the engineering and permitting of these two areas." Work on Bridge 304, the White Bridge, will start on September 14th. The bridge will be closed to traffic for 60-75 days. Rumschlag will be coordinating with the City of Bluffton to review speed limits at the perimeter of Bluffton city limits for uniformity. 4 right-of-way documents were presented to Board of Commissioners for their approval. Motion made by Tamara Robbins, seconded by Kevin Woodward to approve the rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

Statewide 911: 911 Director Adam McCartney informed the Commissioners that he has resigned his position as 911 Director and will start with Motorola Solutions on September 21st. He thanked the Commissioners for their partnership over the years. His recommendation to the Commissioners for his replacement was Kyle Randall, Bluffton Police Chief, to serve as the interim or future director. The 911

director oversees the Bluffton Dispatch Center, Randall already oversees the dispatch center in his position as police chief. Motion made by Kevin Woodward, seconded by Tamara Robbins to appoint Bluffton Police Chief Kyle Randall as 911 Director. Motion carried 3-0.

COVID-19 Grant: Mike Lautzenheiser Jr. updated the Commissioners on applications for small business loans through the COVID-19 grant. \$50,000 was awarded to Wells County to be distributed to area businesses through an application process. The grant board has approved applications for the total amount of the award, those applications have been forwarded to the state for further approval. After approval, the funds may be distributed to the qualifying businesses. Also presented to the Commissioners was a plaza request for September 18th and 19th. Bluffton NOW will be having a Mural and Music Fest. The event will not be on the county's portion of the plaza, but they were asking permission to access the outside water spigot for use by the food trucks during the event. Bluffton NOW would cover any additional expenses for the water bill for the month of September. Motion made by Kevin Woodward, seconded by Tamara Robbins to allow access to the plaza and water supply for the Mural and Music Fest, September 18 and 19, 2020. Motion carried 3-0.

Veteran's Officer: Dewey Randall updated the Commissioners with statistics on local veterans. A 5-year comparison on veteran population, compensation and pension was presented. Surrounding counties were in the comparison. Wells County veteran population had a 22% decline from 2014-2019 but the compensation/pension portion had an increase of 22%. Randall also informed the Commissioners that his office would be closed on Wednesday, September 24 and Thursday, September 25th.

Court Appointed Special Advocate Program Contract: A contract was presented for Commissioner approval for the Wells County Circuit Court's CASA Program Director Professional Services Contract. This contract is between the Wells County Circuit Court and Virginia M. Vogel, Program Director. Motion made by Tamara Robbins, seconded by Kevin Woodward to approve and sign the Wells County Circuit Court's CASA program director professional services contract (Misc. 2020-15). Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll Tax Deferral: President Trump issued a payroll tax deferral in a presidential memorandum on August 8, 2020(Notice 2020-65). The notice allows employers to defer withholding on affected employees' compensation during the last four months of 2020 and then withhold those deferred amounts during the first four months of 2021. Employers can choose to not participate in the deferral. The Commissioners instructed Attorney Roy Johnson to draft a document to not participate in the deferral. A document will be presented at the September 21st Commissioner meeting.

Mask Mandate: The Wells County Health Department has received threatening calls/email after closing a local eatery in Bluffton, Yergy's, due to not complying with Governor Holcomb's Executive Order. The business was closed due to complaints and continued noncompliance with health department regulations regarding Executive Order 20-37. Ted Claghorn thanked the commissioners for their service. He was in support of Matt Yergler, Yergy's, stating that he felt the business was targeted for speaking publicly about the mask mandate and the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Tamara Robbins addressed the audience regarding Executive Order 20-37, the mask mandate. Robbins spoke in support of the Health Department and actions taken by that department to enforce that mandate. Roger Thornton offered his encouragement to the commissioners. He feels the local officials have been treated unjustly and would like the community to hit the pause button and reassess the situation. Leon Berning feels the Health department staff is doing the best they can for the community. It appears to him that Governor Holcomb has overstepped his authority and has put the health board and the health

department in a tough spot. Matt Yergler stated he is not trying to divide the community; he is just trying to run a business. Yergler stated that he believes there should be more checks and balances within the health department, making sure the health department doesn't target people, ruining businesses and livelihoods.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 10:12AM, motion made by Tamara Robbins, seconded by Kevin Woodward. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Blake Gerber

Vice President, Kevin Woodward

Tamara Robbins

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor