

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session January 17, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday January 17, 2023, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Michael Vanover, Blake Gerber, and Jeff Stringer, County Attorney, Ted Storer and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from the January 3, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #1 in the amount of \$285,544.49 and 185 claims totaling \$814,488.13. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 75 inmates, 23 pretrial Superior, 25 pretrial Circuit, 15 F6 DOC and 4 DOC. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of January.

Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. A failure near Bridge 147 was discovered by County personnel after a resident reported a depression in the roadway. A sinkhole 6' deep, 11' wide and 4' long was found beside the bridge. The road was closed, the sinkhole has been repaired. It is estimated that the road will be opened later in the week. The highway garage concrete footer construction was slowed due to weather. Walls are up on the cold storage building. The salt storage building is complete. Bonar was given verbal approval from the City of Bluffton to utilize their radio tower for the Highway repeater at no cost to Wells County. Details are still being compiled for the Low Voltage bids.

Highway Engineer: A draft INDOT agreement for Community Crossing Matching grant funds was presented to the Commissioners for consideration. Rumschlag was recommending approval and authorization to allow Commissioner Vanover to sign this contract digitally when received via DocuSign from INDOT. The agreement is for CR 450E (1200N-1100N) rehab. The INDOT project cost estimate is \$549,105, with a 25% commitment from Wells County. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and allow President Vanover to sign the agreement digitally with INDOT for CR 450E rehab. Motion carried 3-0. Rumschlag presented a Right-of-way services contract for Bridge 71 with Butler, Fairman & Seufert, Inc. for a not to exceed price of \$27,095. Wells County will be responsible for a 20% match, approximately \$5,419, paid out of the Cumulative Bridge fund. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the contract with BF&S for right-of-way services for Bridge 71 for \$27,095. Motion carried 3-0. Also presented was a Construction Engineering Inspection agreement for Bridge 105 with Beam, Longest and Neff, LLC for a not to exceed amount of \$208,100. Wells County will match 20% with Cumulative Bridge funds estimated at \$41,620. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the consulting contract with BLN for Bridge 105, not to exceed \$208,100. Motion carried 3-0. Letters of financial commitment for 2023-01 Community Crossing Matching grant applications were presented to the Commissioners for consideration. Bridge 170 has a total projected cost of \$541,323 with a local commitment of \$135,330.75 which will be funded with Highway CCMG funds. Bridge 85 has a total projected cost of \$389,092.74 with a local commitment of \$77,818.55 which will be funded by the Cumulative Bridge fund or LIT Roads & Bridges. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and sign the letters of financial commitment for Bridge 170 and Bridge 85 for 2023-01 CCMG applications.

Motion carried 3-0. Letters of financial commitment were presented to the Commissioners for a local call for applications for Federal Aid Preventative Maintenance. Bridge 200 is an application for rehab of the surface and joint repair, estimated project cost \$472,563 with a local commitment of \$94,512.60. Bridge 107 has a total rehab project cost of \$389,092.74, with an estimated local match of \$77,818.55. The local match will come from the Cumulative Bridge fund or LIT Roads & Bridges for both projects. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve, and sign the letters of financial commitment for Bridge 200 and Bridge 107 for rehabilitation. Motion carried 3-0. An updated letter of financial commitment was presented to the Commissioners for the Local Trax Grant. The updated funding for this grant will come from the SR 301 Road Transfer fund or LIT Roads & Bridges. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the updated letter of financial commitment for the Local Trax grant. Motion carried 3-0. A Utility permit was presented to the commissioners for approval, motion made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the AEP Utility permit on 800N. Motion carried 3-0.

Veterans Annual Report: Dewey Randall updated the Commissioners on the 2022 activity in the Veterans Office. Walk-ins, incoming calls, outgoing calls, claims, questions, and POA were all up in 2022. Veteran deaths were down in 2022. A spreadsheet of geographic distribution of VA expenditures was distributed as well as a daily log of interactions with local veterans' affairs. Randall thanked the Commissioners for his 2023 reappointment, the Commissioners commended him on his dedication and job performance.

Workers Compensation Renewal: General Insurance presented an updated Workers Compensation Renewal to the Commissioners. The effective date of the policy is 02/01/2023-02/01/2024. Two quote proposals were offered: Bliss-McKnight for \$81,815 and Indiana Public Employers' Plan for \$78,011. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to accept the Indiana Public Employers' Plan proposal for \$78,011 and allow the President to sign the proposal. Motion carried 3-0. Commissioner Stringer requested an additional page be added to the policy which lists the liability limits for bodily injury at \$1,000,000.

Wells County Trails: Michael Lautzenheiser, on behalf of Wells County Trails, was requesting funding for the Vera Cruz kayak launch. The proposed funding would be for engineering design development. Fundraising efforts will be utilized for construction of the launch. The request was for \$4,200 which would pay for half of the design development. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve of the \$4,200 in funding to be paid out of LIT Economic Development for design development. Motion carried 3-0.

Poka-Bache Interlocal Agreement: An interlocal agreement for the Poka-Bache connector trail was presented to the Commissioners for approval. This interlocal agreement is between local governments: Wells, Allen, Dekalb, and Steuben Counties and the cities and towns within each county. Each party that is engaged in the interlocal agreement shall be involved in the design, development and construction of a regional trail that shall be known as the Poka-Bache Connector Trail when complete. This agreement will establish the Poka-Bache connector Task Force to facilitate the design, development, construction, and completion of the regional trail project. The Task Force will establish methods for funding the Task Force. Each party that is engaged in the interlocal agreement will appoint one member to the Task Force to represent their entity. The first year of funding will be 2024, the Task Force shall establish a budget on or before May 31st of the prior year. The interlocal agreement is effective for five years. A party may withdraw from the interlocal agreement at the end of any calendar year by providing notice to each of the other parties on or before November 15th of that calendar year. Motion was made by Jeff

Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the Poka-Bache Interlocal Agreement and to appoint Michael Lautzenheiser as the Commissioner Poka-Bache Task Force member appointment for 2023. Motion carried 3-0.

Council on Aging: Council on Aging Director, Betsy Collier presented a third-party lease and service agreement for capital equipment for Commissioner approval. This agreement is between the Commissioners and the Council on Aging for vehicles that were purchased with federal pass-through funds. These vehicles are titled and insured by the Wells County Commissioners but were purchased with federal grant funding. Eight vehicles were listed in the agreement. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and to allow the President to sign the third-party lease and service agreement for capital equipment. Motion carried 3-0.

Contract for Legal Services: Beers Mallers Backs & Salin, LLP presented a contract for legal services with the Board of Commissioners. This contract sets forth the terms, conditions, and agreement under which the firm agrees to render legal services to the Commissioners. The firm designates Theodore T. Storer as the attorney to fulfill the function of County Attorney. The contract is effective January 1, 2023 and is effective until terminated with thirty days advance written notice. Services requested by the Commissioners to be performed by the firm will be billed at the rate of \$195.00 per hour. A second contract for legal services was presented relating to litigation concerning Gaiser Farms. Stated in the contract the Commissioners agree to employ Beers Mallers, LLP to represent the Commissioners for handling all matters relating to Gaiser Farms, Inc. Compensation for handling those matters performed is \$195.00 per hour, in increments of six-minute increments. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and allow the President to sign the two contracts for legal services with Beers Mallers Backs & Salin, LLP. Motion carried 3-0.

Travel Policy: An updated travel policy was presented to the Commissioners for consideration. The update would increase in the daily meal allowance. The current travel policy is currently set at a \$30 daily rate with 15% gratuity. The proposed change would increase to a \$50 daily rate with 15% gratuity in addition to the \$50.00 daily rate. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the updated Travel Policy. Motion carried 3-0.

Batson Cemetery: Tree maintenance was performed at Batson Cemetery in December of 2022. Tree limbs caused damage to the iron fencing surrounding the Cemetery. A property damage release form was presented to the Commissioners from Everett Cash Mutual Insurance Company allowing the payment of the claim to be paid directly to Indiana Fence and Rail Company, LLC in the amount of \$1,279.26. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and sign the property damage release. Motion carried 3-0.

Community Corrections Advisory Board: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to appoint Seth Whicker as the County Fiscal Body appointment to the Community Corrections Advisory board. Motion carried 3-0.

Statement of Wages and Compensation: The Commissioners received and reviewed the annual 100R report and the Summary of Receipts and Expenditures for 2022.

Public Comment: Jason Borne, representing Uniondale Fire Department, spoke to the Commissioners concerning challenges in staffing volunteer fire fighting positions. Borne stated that the fire department has just half of the volunteers needed to meet standards. Residents of Uniondale, Rockcreek Township

and Union Township may see increases in their property insurance. Eight firefighters responding to an incident is the minimum standard. Commissioner Stringer suggested the Commissioners come together with the local fire chiefs and Economic Development to evaluate action points. Prospective volunteers were encouraged to reach out for more information through the Uniondale Fire Department Facebook page.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:42PM. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Michael K Vanover

Vice President, Blake Gerber

Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor