

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session February 6, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, February 6, 2023, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Physically present at the meeting were Commissioners, Michael Vanover and Blake Gerber, County Attorney, Ted Storer and Auditor, Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Jeff Stringer participated in the meeting by electronic means of communication, Zoom, which allowed Stringer to simultaneously attend and observe the meeting. All votes taken during the meeting were taken by roll call vote.

Minutes: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from January 17, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Payroll and Claims: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #2 in the amount of \$272,437.65, Payroll #3 in the amount of \$268,210.72 and 167 claims totaling \$1,076,653.54. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 68 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 26 pretrial Circuit, 12 F6 DOC and 3 DOC. Construction is nearly complete; contractors are completing punch list items. The jail capacity with the renovation is just below 100.

Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. Repairs on snow equipment are being completed since the last snowstorm. Road conversion prep work is started for CR 500W between 800S to 900S. State Road 1 was closed on Saturday, January 21st by a contractor without permission. Bonar spoke with INDOT and the contractors responsible and was ensured that this will not happen again. Bonar requested approval to purchase two tandem axle trucks using a special purchase circumstance. He has been pricing tandem axle trucks and found two trucks at Stoops for a low price of \$248,894.00 each. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow the two tandem axle truck purchase for \$248,894 each. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. The new trucks would replace truck #10 and #32, #10 has 59,125 miles logged on the odometer, Commissioner Stringer would like the mileage confirmed for #10. A request was made for an additional 30-day medical leave extension for a highway worker. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to extend the medical leave for an additional 30 days. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. A highway garage update was presented by Conor Jackson. The cold storage building is complete except for detailing, salt storage building is complete and the Administrative and Garage concrete foundation is approximately 50% complete. The steel erection for the main building is expected to be started within the next week.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag presented a bid tab for CR 450E rehabilitation, CCMG 2022-02. The low bid was Brooks Construction for \$480,225. The engineer's estimate for the project was \$610,336. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the contract with Brooks Construction for \$480,225. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Rumschlag presented an agreement with USI for historic documentation and photographs for Bridge 106. The agreement is a state historic documentation supplemental contract. The contract is a requirement of the project since it is a historic bridge, no match for the funds is available for this portion of the agreement. The agreement will add \$6,000 to the existing contract. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the agreement with USI for \$6,000 for historic documentation for bridge 106. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. One right-of-way document was presented for Commissioner approval. Motion was made by

Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the right-of-way. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Four utility permits were presented for Commissioner approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the utility permits. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Harrison Township Board: Clerk Beth Davis came before the Commissioners requesting an appointment to the Harrison Township Board. Two Harrison Township board incumbents did not file to run in the General election. Two township residents ran in the General election and were elected to the board, leaving one of the three seats vacant. Davis requested an appointment be made to the board from the two incumbents. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to appoint Mick Jackson to the Harrison Township board. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Economic Development Annual Report: Economic Development Director Chad Kline presented the 2022 Economic Development annual report. Kline went over the Key Activities including business expansion & retention, industrial attraction, education & information, Grant Assistance, Collaboration & Networking and Community Site Development. Wells County Economic Development partnered with Adams Wells Manufacturing Alliance and the Wells County Foundation for National Manufacturing Day 2022; local students were participants. Tourism marketing and development is a focus for promotion and marketing for visitor activities in Wells County. The report indicated \$27.5 million in new investment, 29 new jobs and \$1.3 million in new payroll. Workforce availability is an area that Economic Development continues to work on efforts that will promote the community as a place to maintain and start a new residence. The 2023 projects include continued speculative building space, a mixed-use development project in Downtown Ossian, increased tourism, population attraction and population retention for Wells County, training programs to meet the needs of Wells County employers, Support and guidance to projects awarded READI funds, and develop brand identity for Wells County marketing efforts.

Road Use & Decommissioning Agreement: The road use & decommissioning agreements were not available for approval. The Commissioners tabled the topic to be discussed at the February 21st meeting.

Disaster Emergency Declaration: A County Disaster Emergency Declaration for travel restrictions was presented to Commissioners for approval. A red level warning went into effect on the morning of December 23, 2022, and was lifted and no longer in effect on December 24th at 12:27PM. The wording in the amendment for the County disaster emergency declaration for travel restrictions was reflected as such. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the amended county disaster emergency declaration for travel restrictions effective December 23, 2022. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Washington Commons: The Wells County Solid Waste District was requesting permission to use the Washington Street Commons Saturday, May 6, 2023, from 9AM - NOON for a Shredding event. Approval has already been given by the Bluffton City Board of Works. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow use of the Washington Commons on May 6, 2023, from 9AM-NOON for a Shredding event. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Title VI Coordinator: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to appoint Ted Storer as Title VI Coordinator for Wells County through December 31, 2023. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Contract for Legal Services: A contract for legal services was presented relating to litigation matters related to State of Indiana v. Catarino Ybarra, Jr, Cathy M. Ybarra, and others. Stated in the contract the Commissioners agree to employ Beers Mallers, LLP to represent the Commissioners for handling all matters relating to the State of Indiana v. Ybarra and others. 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 contract for legal services with Beers Mallers Backs & Salin, LLP. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

EMA Salary Grant Signature: Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the President to sign the 2022 EMA salary grant electronically via DocuSign. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

PIO: Commissioner Vanover introduced LeAnne Gibbs to the audience, she is the Public Information Officer hired by the Wells County Commissioners.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:03PM, motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Michael K. Vanover

Vice President, Blake Gerber

Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor