

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session February 22, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 9:30 AM 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. Also, in attendance were County Attorney, Colin Andrews and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes as presented from the February 7, 2022, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #4 in the amount of \$266,392.67 and 220 claims totaling \$1,206,392.77. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 82 inmates, 32 pretrial Superior, 24 pretrial Circuit, 10 F6 DOC and 7 DOC. Sheriff Holliday presented the 2021 Annual Jail Report. Construction is progressing in the masonry work and should be taking the scaffolding down soon.

**Wells County Highway Supervisor:** Shawn Bonar issued praise to the emergency personnel during the recent weather event. The highway has received their salt stockpile. During downtime the Highway personnel are performing maintenance on the equipment. Crews are brush cutting to improve the line of sight. Bonar stressed that gravel gets slick this time of year with freezing and thawing. Jeff Stringer stated that in speaking with emergency personnel the roads were passible, that is the reason Wells County did not go red during the weather event. Conor Jackson gave an update on the Highway garage. The floor plan layout is 90% complete. Once the specifications are returned from PCI, the bids for the pre-engineering metal building package and steel erection can be advertised.

**Highway Engineer:** Nate Rumschlag opened bids for Bridge 403 on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Bids were received from Milestone, Jutte Excavating and RG Zacharich Construction. The low bid was from Jutte Excavating for \$327,353.10. Rumschlag was recommending approval of the agreement with Jutte Excavating, it was below the Engineer's estimate by \$27,847.90. Print bid tabs were published and made available to the public. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the bid agreement with Jutte Excavating for \$327,353.10 (Misc. 2022-05) for Bridge 403. Motion carried 3-0. The Murray Stormwater Project is out for bid, bid opening is March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Rumschlag presented an agreement with the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) for labor standards administration services for the Murray Stormwater Project, not to exceed \$10,000. Motion was made by Jeff Stinger, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the agreement with the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council for administration services, not to exceed \$10,000. Motion carried 3-0. A public hearing is scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup> for the County Home Road & 200S curve correction project. The public comment period will end on March 24<sup>th</sup>. The temporary road surface on CR 300W in Liberty Center has been a concern. Maintenance has been performed regularly by the County Highway and VTF Construction, due to the poor weather conditions and high traffic count, it has been difficult. This is the Regional Sewer District's current project. The RSD and highway department would like to have these roads remain open; they are working to have slow signs installed. Two Utility permits were presented for Commissioner approval. One from DLZ for the City of Bluffton for a sanitary sewer project in the Timber Ridge estates area and one for ORC, a consultant for AEP for aerial fiber installation primarily along US 224. Commissioner Gerber was concerned with the rebuilding of the road for the Timber Ridge

project. Rumschlag stated that they would get it on the schedule to get completed soon after the project completion. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. Seven rights of way were presented for Commissioner approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the seven rights of way. Motion carried 3-0.

**Health Department:** Wells County is currently Red, but numbers are suggesting that the status will change to Orange. Commissioners were concerned about a Health Board meeting cancellation. A representative from the Health Department was not present. Auditor McCormick will reach out to see if the cancelled meeting will be rescheduled and report back to the board.

**Community Corrections:** Blake Poindexter was on hand to discuss a part time employee who he would like to be able to work remotely. The Commissioners have a temporary remote work policy on their agenda for later in the meeting. Commissioner Stringer suggested that Poindexter amend the job description for that employee to include the option of remote work. Job descriptions are approved by County Council, Poindexter will have to discuss the topic with County Council. Poindexter also suggested a Refund Policy be adopted by the Commissioners; he feels it is a waste of County funds to refund for small amounts. The Commissioners will research other Counties for similar policies.

**Inclement Weather Policy:** An Ordinance was presented to the Commissioners regarding inclement weather. This Ordinance would also be an amendment to the personnel policy and employee handbook. The current weather policy is for specifically a snow emergency, if the County is declared a snow emergency the County offices will close, and the employees will be paid. The amended policy would be for any closings made by the President of the Commissioners. If the President of the Commissioners makes an unofficial statement that County offices will close for any instance, employees shall be paid. The policy states: Wells County Employees shall not be required to utilize personal time or vacation time if they have been told by the President of the Wells County Commissioners that employees may leave work or stay home. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Ordinance 2022-03, regarding inclement weather and amendment to the Wells County personnel policy and employee handbook. Motion carried 3-0.

**Temporary Remote Work Policy:** A temporary remote work policy amendment to the employee handbook was presented to the Commissioners for consideration. Two types of amendments were presented, a health or wellness amendment or a no employee requested amendment. The amendment allowing the employee to request temporary remote work stated, "employees who request to work remotely shall complete and submit the Temporary Remote Work Request form to their Elected Official/Department Head". The no employee request states, "The County does not allow individual employees to request temporary remote work. The County holds the policy that individuals who are employed by the County are employed to perform their tasks at their prescribed place of work and further hold that this policy ensures participation, fairness, and oversight that is in the public's interest." Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the temporary remote work policy amendment to the handbook with no employee request to work remotely. Motion carried 3-0.

**Unsold Tax Sale Property:** One property did not sell at the October Tax sale, parcel #90-08-04-514-031.000-004 located at 706 W. Wiley Avenue. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to sell the property at a Commissioner Certificate Sale. Motion carried 3-0.

**Meeting Times:** Commissioner Stringer suggested an option of changing one if not both Commissioner meeting times to later in the day. He stated that he had received comments that the meetings are not accessible for everyone who wish to attend. Commissioner Gerber stated that the Commissioners hired The Voice to live stream for that purpose. Commissioner Vanover was concerned with the Department head personnel who are required to attend the meetings. The Commissioners will discuss meeting times at a March 9<sup>th</sup> department head meeting. This topic will be added to the March 21<sup>st</sup> Commissioner agenda for further discussion.

**Plaza Request:** The Wells County Child Protection team requested permission to hang a banner from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Courthouse as well as put yard signs and blue pinwheels in the greenspaces on the Courthouse plaza. This request is for the Month of April which is Child Abuse Awareness month. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the plaza request for the month of April. Motion carried 3-0.

**Traffic Cameras:** An Ordinance was presented to the Commissioners regarding establishing a policy for use of traffic cameras in Wells County. There is currently a camera located on CR 300W spanning the Wabash River. This camera was installed on the CR 300W bridge to protect the property and will remain in place. This Ordinance states that the Wells County Commissioners are committed to protecting individual privacy and are furthermore aware of the threat of intrusive government action into the private lives of the citizens of Wells County. Any information gathered from said cameras shall be pursuant to these purposes of property protection and the security of citizens and shall only be available to public and private entities and individuals upon written request and upon approval by the Wells County Commissioners. Any future public camera installations within the jurisdiction of the Wells County Commissioners and any information gathered thereby shall be subject to the limitations and conditions set forth in this ordinance. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Ordinance 2022-04 establishing a policy for use of Traffic Cameras in Wells County. Motion carried 3-0.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 10:27 AM, motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0.

#### Wells County Commissioners

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President, Michael K Vanover

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Vice President, Blake Gerber

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Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor