

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session April 3, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday April 3, 2023, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Physically present at the meeting were Commissioners, Blake Gerber and Jeff Stringer, County Attorney Ted Storer and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Michael Vanover participated in the meeting by electronic means of communication, Zoom, which allowed the public to simultaneously attend and observe the meeting. All votes taken during the meeting were taken by roll call vote.

Minutes: A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes from the March 20, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #7 in the amount of \$268,738.69 and 125 claims totaling \$337,679.66. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Sheriff: Sherriff Holliday reported 62 inmates, 18 pretrial Superior, 23 pretrial Circuit, 14 F6 DOC and 4 DOC. Sherriff Holliday requested a 30-day medical leave for an employee. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve a 30-day medical leave of absence for a jail employee and to revisit the request at the May 1st Commissioner meeting. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Commissioner Stringer requested current drug arrest statistics from the Sheriff. Stringer would like to have reports consistently so trending can be documented. Sheriff Holliday reported 29 arrests, March 20 – April 3, of which nine were related to drugs. Six involving marijuana, two involving methamphetamines and one involving fentanyl. Alcohol is the number one arrest in Wells County.

Highway: The Commissioners were updated on current projects. Bonar is training with LTAP to be an in-house CDL trainer for the highway employees. Work is progressing on the 500W road conversion. Crews are spreading stone on the township roads as needed. The highway is working with the City of Bluffton replacing drainage pipes and repaving at Timber Ridge.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag gave an update on current and future projects. A federal aid grant agreement with INDOT was presented for County Home Road and CR 450E Realignment. Rumschlag was requesting approval for Michael Vanover to sign the document via DocuSign. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and allow the President to sign the INDOT grant agreement via DocuSign. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Rumschlag presented an addendum for the County Home Road and CR 450E agreement with BF&S. The addendum is for additional permitting and right of way engineering revisions. The additional scope increases the total \$45,000. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and sign the addendum with BF&S for County Home Road and CR 450E. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. A fee proposal by Engineering Resources for design services for River Road over Markley Ditch was presented to the Commissioners for consideration. The proposal is for \$56,900 and Rumschlag stated that half of the structure is in the City of Bluffton. Rumschlag would like to propose a match agreement with the city for half of the cost. Commissioner Stringer would like to have more pricing options. Rumschlag will revisit the topic at the April 17th meeting.

Health Department Clearing Account: An Ordinance to establish a clearing account for the Health Department was presented for Commissioner review. The proposed ordinance would establish a clearing account for receipt of fees collected by the Wells County Health Department. All fees would be remitted to the Wells County Treasurer monthly. The proposed account would have no authority to issue checks other than to the Wells County Treasurer. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Ordinance 2023-03 to establish a clearing account for the Wells County Health Department. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Tourism Commission Board Appointments: Audry Dudley requested approval of a board application from Jonathan Winne for the Tourism Commission Board. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to appoint Jonathan Winne to the Tourism Commission effective immediately through December 31, 2024. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Community Correction Remote Work Update: The Commissioners approved remote work for a Community Corrections employee in November 2022. A review of that request was scheduled by the Commissioners for the April 3, 2023, meeting. Director Poindexter requested a six-month extension for remote work for his part-time employee. Commissioner Stringer stated that this was originally meant to be a temporary approval. Commissioner Gerber thought a timeline of four months to revisit might be more appropriate. Stringer suggested a three-month revisit for the remote work update. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to revisit the remote work request at the July 10th Commissioner meeting, with the intent to not continue remote work. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Petition to Vacate an Alley: A petition to vacate a portion of an alleyway was filed with the Board of Commissioners. The petition was filed by David and Heide Driscoll, Theodore Mitchell, and Travis Searles to vacate a 20' wide unimproved alley located in the unincorporated town of Banner City, Indiana. Attorney Storer spoke of the responsibilities of the Commissioners concerning the petition. There is an obligation to give notice and hold a public hearing within 30 days of receiving the petition. The Commissioners set a public hearing date of April 17th at 5:00 PM prior to the regular session in the Annex meeting room.

Washington Commons: Ron Marshall requested permission to use the Washington/Main Commons Monday, May 29, 2023, from 8:30AM – 11:00AM for a Memorial Day Service. Approval has already been given by the Bluffton City Board of Works. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow use of the Washington Commons on May 29, 2023, from 8:30AM-11AM for a Memorial Day Service. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Right-of-Way: One right-of-way document was presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to accept, and sign the one right-of-way document. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Tax Bill: The Highway garage site that is currently being utilized by the Highway garage is owned by Mike and Shelley Mossburg. The highway department is working at the current site while the new Highway Garage is being constructed. The Mossburg's received a property tax bill for that property and would like Wells County to pay that property tax bill for 2023. Commissioner Gerber requested the subject be put on the April 17th agenda for further discussion.

Farm Ground: Approximately four acres were purchased by Wells County from a landowner for a road project. The landowner has made a request to be allowed to farm those four acres in the coming season prior to the road project. Nate Rumschlag stated that this could potentially cost the County more funds to allow this endeavor than would be gained in cash rent. The consulting engineer for the road project also recommended against an agreement. Rumschlag suggested planting rye grass to discourage erosion.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:58PM. The motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to adjourn. 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