

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session April 4, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday April 4, 2022, at 9:00AM 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 Colin Andrews, and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes from the March 21, 2022, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #7 in the amount of \$257,571.91 and 148 claims totaling \$440,345.42. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Jail stats; 84 inmates, 32 pretrial Superior, 25 pretrial Circuit, 8 F6 DOC and 6 DOC.

**Highway:** Shawn Bonar informed the Commissioners that adding stone to gravel roads will be complete this week. Crews will be on the roads patching and working on drainage pipe replacements. Please be aware of crews working in the roadways, was his plea. Dust control applications start today through April 29<sup>th</sup>. The highway department is open from 7am-3pm, cost is \$1.57 per foot. Michael Vanover asked about the process for converting gravel roadways to chip and seal. Shawn stated that a petition needs to be completed. Right of way forms need to be completed for each residence along that stretch of road. The chip and seal list are a first come first serve basis. The right of way form completion needs to be unanimous. Conor Jackson stated that he will be giving a highway garage update for County Council on Tuesday evening. The pre-engineering steel for the Highway garage has been ordered.

**Highway Engineer:** Nate Rumschlag gave an update on current and future projects. Bridge 121 is proceeding and on schedule. The Murray Stormwater project will be a 10-week timeframe, groundbreaking is today. A request for engineering design services for Bridge 65 with BF&S for \$104,520 was presented for approval from the Commissioners. This project would be for 2024. Commissioner Stringer requested more design quotes to be presented to them for the services presented. Bridge 403 is still in the planning stages; the start date should be in 2022. The foundation design scope of work for Bridge 402 on 500W will need to change from pile foundations to a more complex spread footer and wingwall design due to the depth of rock encountered in the field and the skew of the ditch under the current small structure. There is resistance from a property owner for the additional ROW needed for this small structure. Rumschlag was requesting approval for USI to prepare detailed ROW requests for the minimum areas necessary for the final design. These ROW parcels would then be sent to the County Attorney for discussion on how to approach the acquisition of the necessary ROW. The supplemental agreement with USI is for an additional \$22,100. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the supplemental agreement with USI Consultants for \$22,100. Motion carried 3-0. Nine right-of-way documents were presented to the Commissioners for their approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept, and sign the nine right-of-way documents. Motion carried 3-0.

**Cube and Company:** Cube and Company specializes in being an owner representative and primary contact person for projects. Mike Swann was on hand representing Cube and Company. Commissioner Stringer stated that Cube and Company would be the Commissioner liaison to review bids, give his

opinion on best and worst scenarios for the County Highway garage project. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to hire Cube and Company as the Commissioner representative for the County Highway Garage. Motion carried 3-0.

**Interlocal Agreement:** Attorney Andrews is working with the Town of Ossian and Economic Development on a draft interlocal agreement for a spec building in Ossian. A document was not presented for comment, the subject was tabled.

**PTABOA:** An Ordinance was passed by the Commissioners regarding the PTABOA board at the March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. This Ordinance states that the Commissioners, the appointing authority over two PTAOA board members, may remove a member of the PTABOA board without cause. The board member against whom removal action is sought shall have notice of removal action at least seven days prior to the meeting where the matter would be heard. The member would have the opportunity to be heard by the Commissioners prior to the removal action at a public meeting. The removal action would be considered passed if the removal motion receives a majority vote. Notice of a meeting was sent to a board member prior to the current meeting. Attorney Andrews had not received a return receipt for the certified letter, so he could not confirm that the letter was received. This topic will be revisited at the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**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 wishes to attend. Stringer proposed a 5PM meeting time. Commissioner Blake Gerber questioned if the Drainage Board and Solid Waste board meetings would or could also be moved to the later time. The Commissioners will reach out to the other boards. This topic will be revisited at the April 18<sup>th</sup> Commissioner meeting.

**Washington Commons:** The Wells County Solid Waste District was requesting permission to use the Washington Street Commons Saturday, May 7, 2022, from 9AM - NOON for a Shredding event. Approval has already been given by the Bluffton City Board of Works. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow use of the Washington Commons on May 7, 2022, from 9AM-NOON for a Shredding event. Motion carried 3-0.

**Public Comment:** Courtney Pfister asked to speak on road changes for the proposed County Home Road curve correction federal aid project. He is 100% opposed to this project. The proposed construction will cut through his farming property and leave a small section unfarmable, or nearly. In May 2021 he purchased the Hauk farm, which he had farmed for years prior to the purchase. Pfister wished to talk about the facts. Notification has been a problem from the start. Grant applications were submitted and approved, soil samples and some surveying had been completed prior to any notification being sent to the Hauk family. Since purchasing the farm Pfister has had no notifications mailed to him personally. Pfister did receive an email notification from Rumschlag in March about a public meeting at the Library in April. The Pfister family is currently working with Wells County on the Hoosier Highway project, he stated his family is not against change. Pfister had a discussion with Rumschlag early in the planning process, Pfister discounted that the County Home Road project would progress. Pfister would like to shut down the project, if possible. This project is taking valuable farm ground out of service, he stated. Options might be entertained by Pfister, but in the current context he is not going to sell his land for the project. Pfister presented a notification letter that was sent by BF&S to the Hauk family, it was sent to one Hauk daughter labeled with the second Hauk daughter name.

Bob Park a resident of Lancaster Township spoke on the widening of SR1 to 224 and bypassing Ossian. His concerns were focused on property owners that are not informed. Park felt any project should be relayed to all property owners via mail at the beginning stages. A roundtable discussion for SR1 expansion and bypass is scheduled for April 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 9:43AM. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer. 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