

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session May 1, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday May 1, 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:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from the April 17, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #9 in the amount of \$267,699.19 and 186 claims totaling \$798,837.75. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Jail stats were submitted via email and Commissioner Stringer reported 61 inmates, 22 pretrial Superior, 22 pretrial Circuit, 10 F6 DOC and 4 DOC.

**Wells County Highway:** Shawn Bonar presented a promissory note for employees who obtain their CDL through training at the Wells County Highway Department. The amount of the promissory note is \$5,000. This note will be reduced by \$1,250 increments for every six months of employment after completion of the training. The entire amount of the note shall be forgiven after two years of continuous employment with Wells County. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the promissory note for employees who complete CDL training from Wells County. Motion carried 3-0. A landowner on 700N by Markle would like 700 feet in front of their residence in asphalt. The property owner would reimburse the highway department the difference in price from chip and seal to asphalt. Attorney Storer felt that Wells County could do that if we allowed that choice to any property owner who would want the same option. Storer suggested publishing a notice giving everyone the opportunity to participate if the Commissioners wish to go that route. Chip and seal season is scheduled to start at the end of May.

**Public Comment:** Todd Zeplin, 8162 N. Meridian Road, a Union Township resident, would like to have his road chip sealed. One property owner has not donated the right-of-way on the one-mile section of road, that landowner does not live in the area. Tim and Amy Roehr, 8099 N. Meridian Road, would also like that section chip sealed. Traffic volume has increased due to travel to and from Allen County. Rumschlag and Bonar expressed the need for upgrades in this section. County Attorney Storer will investigate options for negotiating and acquiring the right-of way. Commissioner Vanover hopes to offer steps to move forward within the next 30 days.

**Highway Engineer:** Nate Rumschlag updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. Wells County was awarded CCMG funds for Bridge 170, Rumschlag was requesting approval for the President of the Commissioners to sign the grant award via DocuSign. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow the President of Commissioners to sign the agreement for Bridge 170 via DocuSign. Motion carried 3-0. Rumschlag was requesting permission to advertise for bids for Bridge 170, advertisement would be May 11 with bid opening on June 8<sup>th</sup>. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve advertising for bids for Bridge 170. Motion carried 3-0. Wells County was awarded CCMG funds for Bridge 85, Rumschlag was requesting approval for the President of

the Commissioners to sign the grant award via DocuSign. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow the President of Commissioners to sign the agreement for Bridge 85 via DocuSign. Motion carried 3-0. Rumschlag was requesting permission to advertise for bids for Bridge 85, advertisement would be May 11 with bid opening on June 8<sup>th</sup>. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve advertising for bids for Bridge 85. Motion carried 3-0. Rumschlag submitted the 2022 Highway Annual report for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve, and sign the 2022 Highway Annual report. Motion carried 3-0. An update for the Regional Sewer District was given. The Kingsland project is expected to start in June. Materials are arriving and being stockpiled for that project. Rumschlag was requesting approval to allow the President to sign the agreement with Engineering Resources for engineering services for River Road over Markley Ditch. The agreement total is \$56,900. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the agreement with Engineering Resources for River Road over Markley Ditch and allow the President to sign. Motion carried 3-0.

**Plaza Request:** Audry Dudley, Bluffton NOW representative, presented a request for use of the Courthouse Plaza for the Parlor City Market. The market begins on June 3 and will run most Saturdays through fall. Vendor hours are between 7am and 1pm, the space will be used from 7:30am – 2pm for vendor set up and tear down. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow use of the Courthouse Plaza for the Parlor City Market on most Saturday's, June 3 through fall, 2023. Motion carried 3-0.

**Council on Aging:** Betsy Collier presented two 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2023 claims for reimbursement. The claim amounts were \$78,309.00 and \$51,869.00. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and allow the President to sign the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2023 claims. Motion carried 3-0.

**Paddlefish Project Update:** Paddlefish Solar updated the Commissioners on the projected timeline. The project timeline span was 2022 through 2027. Jesse Laniak and Trena Roudebush stated that a public open house will be held. Community engagement activities sponsored by Paddlefish Solar include a solar safety workshop for regional first responders, STEM summer camps with Southern Wells Schools and the Boys and Girls Club, sponsorship of chamber events, a \$5,000 scholarship for a graduating Southern Wells student and one \$5,000 scholarship for a Southern Wells teacher. A decommissioning agreement is in process and permit applications will be submitted soon. A site design will be available with the permit applications. Lease agreements have been signed totaling 3,000 acres.

**ArcaSearch Ordinance:** An Ordinance establishing a fee schedule for public access to plat and transfer books was presented to the Commissioners for review. ArcaSearch is developing a searchable online database that will allow users to search and view Wells County Plat and Transfer books. The proposed fee schedule will help offset the annual maintenance fees paid to ArcaSearch for this service. The proposed fees include: one day access \$5.00, one week access \$20.00, thirty-day access \$35.00, and one-year access \$400.00. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Ordinance 2023-04 establishing a fee schedule for access to the ArcaSearch site to search and view Wells County Plat and Transfer books. Motion carried 3-0.

**Banner City Alley Vacate:** A prior petition to vacate two alleys in Banner City was withdrawn. Attorney Storer has been communicating with the petitioner's council about the status of the revised petition and hearing. The Commissioners must hold a public hearing within 30 days of the date of the petition. Attorney Storer was asking the Commissioners how they would like to proceed when the petition is

received. Commissioners Stringer and Gerber suggested that we set the public hearing prior to the next scheduled meeting after the petition is received.

**Form 11:** Commissioner Vanover stated that he and some other elected officials have received calls from taxpayers regarding the newly released Form 11. This form is generated by the Assessors office annually regarding the assessment of each property for the ensuing tax year. Commissioner Vanover encouraged any property owner to contact the Assessors office if they had questions about their Form 11. Form 11 appeals are due by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourned:** Blake Gerber motioned; Jeff Stringer seconded to adjourn at 5:47PM.

**Wells County Commissioners**

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Michael K Vanover

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice President, Blake Gerber

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member, Jeff Stringer

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