

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session May 6, 2024

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday May 6, 2024, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Michael Vanover, and Blake Gerber, County Attorney, Ted Storer and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes from the April 15, 2024, regular session, and from the April 30, 2024, special session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #9 in the amount of \$296,240.96 and 251 claims totaling \$1,000,178.71. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 68 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 39 pretrial Circuit, 1 F6 DOC and 6 DOC. Holliday mentioned House Enrolled Act 1158 regarding county contracts. The House Enrolled Act is effective July 1, 2024. All contracts must be in the name of Wells County, must be submitted to the County Attorney and President of the Executive board. The Attorney and President of the board have 20 days to respond back regarding the contract. If approval is given, the county official can sign the contract and submit the fully executed contract to the Auditor to upload into the transparency portal. Attorney Storer is preparing the documents for implementation prior to the effective date.

**Wells County Highway:** Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on new and ongoing projects. The 2023 highway annual report was listed on the agenda, Bonar suggested discussing the report at the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. New parking curbs were installed at the Bargain Hut. Bridge 105 replacement is beginning today and will be completed in 90-110 days. The department is in the 4-10-hour day cycle. Bonar said that some employees will be working overtime on Fridays to complete projects. The highway garage update included heat and AC are not working, power washer is not working, the concrete in the wash bay is cracking, roof work needs to be done for leaking, and door seals need to be repaired.

**Council on Aging:** Executive Director Betsy Collier presented a statistical update to the Commissioners on current ridership. Also presented to the Commissioners for review and approval were the 2025 INDOT 5311 Operating and the 5339 Capital Grants. Several documents made up the grant paperwork. An Authorizing Resolution (Resolution 2024-04) was presented which authorizes Auditor McCormick to make the necessary certification and assurances and be empowered to enter into an agreement with INDOOT for the provision of rural public transportation services within Wells County, a Certifications and Assurances document, a pass-through agreement, a labor warranty, a certification and assurances document for updated vehicles, Certification of use of project equipment and facilities, and a categorical exclusion classification of capital project checklist made up the grant applications. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve, and allow President Jeff Stringer, Attorney Ted Storer and Auditor Lisa McCormick sign the presented documents, where applicable. Motion carried 3-0.

**Health First Indiana:** Chris Esterling, Health Board President, and Molly Hoag, Health Board member, were on hand to discuss 2025 Health First Indiana funding. Esterling expressed the Health Boards desire for the Commissioners opt in for the 2025 funding. Public Health Nurse Lynn Blevins presented a proposed budget that could be implemented if Health First Indiana funds were received for 2025. The Commissioners have a deadline of June 1, 2024, to opt in for 2025 funding. Attorney Storer presented an Ordinance for approval to accept funds. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Ordinance 2024-07 to accept funds from the State of Indiana for public health services by the Wells County Department of Health. Motion carried 3-0.

**Community Plan Appointment:** Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. requested board appointments for a steering committee for the development of community plan processes. His request was for the Commissioners to appoint one elected official member and one citizen member to the steering committee. The appointments were tabled until the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**ROW and Utility:** Eight rights-of-way and one utility permit were presented to the Commissioners for review, two of the right-of-way documents were currently unsigned by the applicants but will be signed at the Area Plan office. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the eight rights-of-way and one utility permit, pending applicant signatures. Motion carried 3-0.

**Public Comment:** Jessie Laniak spoke on behalf of Paddlefish Solar regarding their zoning application with Area Plan. Laniak stated that a decision was made to rescind the application and focus on education and communication. Laniak stated that another application might be submitted later. Megan Dunham felt the citizens against the project had done their due diligence and were not in favor of the project, education or communication would not make a difference. Polly Wymer did not feel that the solar company had notified the effected area as they had stated that they did. Michelle Bowman only recently was made aware of the project via Facebook. Fred Wymer spoke on the industrial side of solar, he thought solar should be handled like other utilities with governed regulations. Tabby Fate believes in property rights, but solar rights should not trump everyone’s rights.

**Adjourned:** Blake Gerber motioned; Michael Vanover seconded to adjourn at 6:02PM.

### **Wells County Commissioners**

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President, Jeff Stringer

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Vice President, Michael Vanover

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Member, Blake Gerber

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