

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session May 20, 2024

The Wells County Commissioners met in a regular session on Monday, May 20, 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 May 6, 2024, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #10 in the amount of \$294,766.55 and 299 claims totaling \$1,643,995.27. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 82 inmates, 24 pretrial Superior, 44 pretrial Circuit, 1 F6 and 10 DOC.

**Library Update:** Library board members Matt Yergler and John Stauffer updated the Commissioners on current library programs. The winter reading program runs through the month of February. The community goal was to read 500,000 pages to donate 125 books to the local Kate's Kart program at Bluffton Regional Medical Center. A total of 818,255 pages were read in total, which is an increase of 195,737 from 2023. Summer reading starts on May 28<sup>th</sup> and runs until July 31<sup>st</sup>. A kickoff party will be on June 4<sup>th</sup> with a Jim Barron Magic Show. Prizes include Chamber bucks, a 1-day pool pass for teens, a pizza of the month gift card and a \$100 Amazon gift card. Patrons can also donate books to Kate's Kart in lieu of other prizes. A mini golf fundraiser made \$3,000 for additional programming costs. All prizes are funded by the Friends of the Library through donations and fundraising.

**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 1 and will run most Saturdays through September 7. Vendor hours are between 9am and 1pm, the space will be used from 7:30am – 2pm for vendor set up and tear down. Dudley also requested plaza authorization for the summer concerts. The concerts take place at 7pm on the Bluffton NOW portion of the plaza but may spill into the plaza area. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow use of the Courthouse Plaza for the Parlor City Market and summer concerts, June 1 through September 7, 2024. Motion carried 3-0.

**Highway Supervisor:** Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on highway projects. Highway crews are starting to mow side ditches. Bridge 170 should be completed in 3 weeks. Employees have been getting aerial lift training from LTAP for the newly purchased bucket truck. May 30 and 31 are earmarked for dust control applications. An open house for the highway garage is scheduled for June 11<sup>th</sup>, county employees from 7-11am, Rotary from 12-2pm and the public from 3-6pm. HVAC is the continuing issue at the highway garage. The 2023 highway annual report was presented for Commissioner review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the 2023 Highway Annual Report as presented. Motion carried 3-0.

**Council on Aging:** Betsy Collier presented the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2024 claim for reimbursement. The claim amount is \$191,783. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve,

and allow the President to sign the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2024 claim of \$191,783.00. Motion carried 3-0. Council on Aging board member Preston Kaehr and Betsy Collier spoke on behalf of the Council on Aging regarding an increase in the annual funding. Kaehr spoke on the many services that are provided to Wells County residents. Collier requested a 23% increase in the annual funding. Wells County annual funding is currently \$40,000, \$49,200 with a 23% increase. Statistics were presented showing that ridership is on the upswing. The Commissioners will take the request under advisement until a later date.

**Community Plan Appointment:** Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. requested board appointments for a steering committee for the development of community plan processes. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to appoint Brandon Harnish as the Elected Official appointment to the Community Plan Steering Committee. Motion carried 3-0. The Commissioners will make a citizen appointment at a future meeting.

**Highway Engineer Contract:** An agreement for employment of a County Engineer was presented to the Commissioners for review. The agreement is between the Board of Commissioners and Nate Whitacre and is effective as of May 20, 2024. Employment will begin on May 27, 2024. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the agreement for employment of County Engineer (Misc. 2024-03). Motion carried 3-0.

**Economic Development Update:** Commissioner Stringer stated that interviews for an economic development director were two weeks ago. Currently there are no updates on the hiring process.

**House Enrolled Act 1158:** House Enrolled Act 1158 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 the 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 will prepare an Ordinance to be reviewed during the June 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**Vacate Roadway:** Attorney Storer stated that Rockcreek Stone Quarry would like to address the Commissioners on rerouting a roadway in lieu of vacating the road as previously requested. The subject will be on a future agenda.

**Public Comment:** Polly Wymer spoke about solar. Wymer is against solar and is afraid it will come before the Commissioners and the public will not know. The Commissioners stated that if it was a matter that would be voted on it would be specifically listed on the agenda, which is listed in the newspaper, online and posted at the meeting place. Wymer spoke of decreased property values, fire possibilities, the training needed to fight those fires, and the visual impact of the panels.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:06PM. The motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0.

**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