

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session June 6, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday June 6, 2022, at 5:00 PM 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 Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from May 16, 2022, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #11 in the amount of \$257,391.48 and 322 claims totaling \$1,385,424.71. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 89 inmates, 29 pretrial Superior, 21 pretrial Circuit, 19 F6 and 5 DOC. Construction is moving forward and is currently in the kitchen and intake areas, meals are being prepared off site. The roof is to be completed by July.

Highway: Conor Jackson updated the Commissioners on the Highway Garage plans. The plan set is 95% complete. Currently working on pinning down firm estimates. Jackson stated that Mike Swann has some information on single specking for the salt storage. The current pricing is for Canadian steel. Pricing will be provided for an American steel product. The next construction meeting is in two weeks.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag presented the Commissioners with updates for ongoing projects. Road conversion petitions are closed for 2022. Four bids were received for Bridge 19(CR 800E north of 900S) CCMG 2022-01. The low bid was from Jutte Excavating for \$527,251.78, which is under the estimated cost in the CCMG application of \$625,150. Rumschlag is in communication with Adams County to assist with the match for this project. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to issue a letter of intent to award to Jutte Excavating for Bridge 19 replacement. Motion carried 3-0. The Murray Stormwater project, storm sewer is complete. Restoration work is underway, and asphalt will finalize the project. Three utility permits were presented to the Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the three utility permits. Motion carried 3-0.

Cube & Company: Mike Swann, Cube & Company, was retained by the Commissioners as an owner representative and primary contact person for the Highway Garage project. A proposal and acknowledgement were presented to the Commissioners for approval. Fees for the Owner's Representative services are calculated on an hourly basis at \$118.00 per hour. That rate includes payroll, taxes, insurance, overhead and profit through December 2022. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the President to sign the acknowledgment copy retaining Cube & Company as the owner representative for the Highway Garage at a rate of \$118.00 per hour. Motion carried 3-0.

Annex Sound System: Two sound system bids were received for the Annex meeting room. ITI and Stylus were the submitters. Owner Rick Elwell was in attendance and answered questions regarding his system. The Stylus bid was \$5,060.74, ITI's bid was \$6,171.00. ITI included wireless microphones, Elwell did not think wireless was advisable as wireless would not be a good fit for the room and how it would

be used. Stylus would incorporate the current wired microphones into the new system. Stylus would include a processor to automate how the sound is regulated in the room and livestream. ITI bid included a mixer not a processor. Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to accept the bid from Stylus for the meeting room sound system for \$5,060.74. Motion carried 3-0.

PTABOA Board: PTABOA board appointment was tabled until June 21.

Offsite Utility Connection: A letter with attached water and sanitary sewer service plans were presented to the Commissioners for their consideration. PCI developed the plans related to water and sanitary sewer service for the proposed Highway Garage. The letter states that the County will cover the costs of the Base Bids and, if requested by the City, the County would enter into an agreement with the awarded contractor to install the Alternate system improvements subject to an agreement whereby the City will reimburse the County for the difference between the Base Bid and Alternate bid. The County has already performed the topographic survey, will acquire permits for the utility extensions, will prepare bid documents and advertise the work. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the utility extension letter and plans. Motion carried 3-0. The approved letter and plans will be delivered to the City for their comment.

Plaza Request: Bluffton Free Street Fair requested use of the Plaza for September 18-25, 2022. This request was tabled until proof of liability insurance is received.

911 Consolidation: The consolidation agreement is currently in the City's possession.

County Farm: The Commissioners, Kurt and Lance Fiechter and Mounsey Family Farms are named in a lawsuit filed by Gaiser Farms. Gaiser Farms is suing the County for violating the terms of the lease by allegedly failing to notify Gaiser of the lease termination in a timely manner. The Fiechter's and Mounsey farms have retained Tony Crowell as their legal counsel. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to support legal costs up to \$5,000 for Kurt and Lance Fiechter and Mounsey farms. Motion carried 3-0. An agreement will be provided later for signatures.

Audience Participation: Several audience members spoke on the North Corridor Study concerning the four-lane expansion of State Road 1 with a bypass around the town of Ossian. Concerns were if this was a want and not a need. What is the need or basis for the expansion and bypass? Other options should be considered if the outcome is a speedier way to 469, were some of the bullet points. The Commissioners commissioned the study, hence the questions for the Commissioners. Wells County is one county out of 11 without a four-lane highway. Based on cell phone data a great deal of commuters travel from Wells County to Allen County. The audience members want to be ahead of the project so their objections will be heard. The audience wish is to sit down and have discussions prior to the decisions being made. Commissioner Stringer stressed that we do need a four-lane highway in Wells County. There is not enough opportunity for our youth to stay or come to Wells County. If industry grows our opportunities also grow. All agreed that more studies need to be done for more options to see what makes the most sense for Wells County. Solar farms and solar legislation were discussed.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:35PM. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Michael K Vanover

Vice President, Blake Gerber

Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor