

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session July 5, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday July 5, 2022, 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. Also, in attendance was County Attorney, Roy Johnson and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Jeff Stringer was absent after 5:15PM.

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

Payroll and Claims: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #13 in the amount of \$257,389.93 and 178 claims totaling \$2,429,403.78. Motion carried 3-0.

PTABOA Board: Three applications were accepted for the PTABOA Board appointment. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to appoint Nathan Schrock to the PTABOA Board, term effective immediately through December 31, 2022. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Stringer excused himself from the meeting.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 87 inmates, 30 Pretrial Superior, 22 Pretrial Circuit, 23 F6 DOC and 3 DOC. Construction is focused on upgrading video court accommodations. Sheriff Holliday invited the Commissioners to the Sheriff's department to see the progress, don't wear good shoes, he stated.

Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar reported that chip and seal started on June 27th. Staffing shortages are a problem with sickness and vacation. The department is working diligently to complete all tasks at hand. Slow down and be patient when approaching road crews or equipment, Bonar reiterated. Bid packages for the Highway Garage will be advertised in July with opening in August.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag informed Commissioners that he would have the road conversion list for the July 18th meeting. An agreement with Jutte Excavating was presented to the Commissioners for approval. This award amount is not to exceed \$527,251.78 for CCMG 2022-01 Bridge 19 on CR 800E. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the agreement with Jutte Excavating (Misc. 2022-10) for Bridge 19 CCMG 2022-01. Motion carried 2-0. The second call for CCMG projects for 2022 is in process. Rumschlag had three options for Commissioner consideration. Option 1 was for CR 450E, a 1-mile rehabilitation, with an estimated cost of \$732,140. Option 2 was for Bridge 170 & Bridge 85 with an estimated cost of \$836,570.21. Option 3 was for Bridge 402 & Bridge 85 with an estimated cost of \$741,468.98. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to sign a letter of financial commitment for Option 1 CR 450E for \$732,140, local match of \$183,035, to be paid out of LIT and/or Highway funds. Motion carried 2-0. One right of way petition was presented to the Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the right of way request. Motion carried 2-0.

Bi-County Services: Tim Ramsey presented his annual financial report and request for funding for Bi-County Services to the Board of Commissioners. Tim stated that Bi-County's biggest challenge is

staffing. Finding qualified staff is a difficulty that they are constantly working to overcome. Their focus currently is on maximizing program revenue, controlling operating expenses and improving staffing levels. Bi-County is asking for \$41,280 for 2023, the same amount that was requested for 2022. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the 2023 funding of \$41,280.00 for Bi-County services. Motion carried 2-0.

Low Income Funding: Leon Berning informed the Commissioners of a funding option for Regional Sewer District services for low-income residents. The Regional Sewer District has completed sewer systems in Murray and Liberty Center. Individuals that must connect to the new systems have to decommission their current system and install electric hookup. Some of these individuals are in a low-income threshold. Berning reached out to the Wells County Foundation and Chamber of Commerce for assistance in starting a fund for donations for these individuals. Letters were mailed to Chamber members to solicit donations. These donations will be accepted and distributed by the Wells County Foundation. A screening process will identify the eligible individuals and funds will be distributed directly to the contractors for those individuals. Berning stated that it has been a year long process to bring this to fruition.

Tourism Update: Audry Dudley and Chad Kline gave an update on Tourism for the Commissioners. A booklet included “places to be, year-round, seasonal, things to do, arts & entertainment, free concert series, yoga run walk, pedal & paddle, cars jeeps motorcycles tractors, fairs festivals and markets, sweet treats and unique eats, antiques and boutiques, and places to stay”. She was hopeful that the color palate and branding choices will identify Wells County Indiana as its own entity. The steering committee has been working on the branding for over a year. Dudley stated it has been a long but educational process. 71% of visits to the website are direct visits, 25.9% are searches, 1.1% are referrals via a link. Events generate the most interest on the website. Merchandising options are being considered currently.

Economic Impact Study: Chad Kline advertised a Request for Proposals in February for an Economic Impact study for State Road 1. Hunden Strategic Partners will prepare the study for \$72,000. 65% of the study will be on SR1 in Wells County and 35% will be on Allen County SR1 roadway. Kline was asking for Wells County to approve \$46,800 from LIT Economic Development funds for their portion of the study. Allen County has agreed to fund \$25,200. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve funding \$46,800 toward an Economic Impact study for SR 1, funding to come from LIT funds. Motion carried 2-0. Kline would like to create a committee to oversee this project, one member from Wells County Commissioners, one from Allen County Commissioners, Chad Kline, one from Ossian, and one from Greater Fort Wayne, Inc.

Wells County Historical Society: The Board of Commissioners received a letter from the President of the Wells County Historical Society requesting funding of \$12,000.00 for the 2023 budget year. This is an increase over the previous year’s funding by \$2,000. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the request for \$12,000 in funding for the Wells County Historical Society in 2023. Motion carried 2-0.

Statement of Salaries and Wages: The commissioners were presented Form 144, statement of salaries and wages for all Wells County departments for the 2023 budget cycle.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:53PM

Wells County Commissioners

President, Michael K Vanover

Vice President, Blake Gerber

Member Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor