

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session July 10, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday July 10, 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. Also, in attendance was 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 June 20, 2023, regular session, the June 20, 2023, executive session and the June 28, 2023, executive session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #13 in the amount of \$279,740.10, #14 in the amount of \$272,577.82 and 226 claims totaling \$438,532.04. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 58 inmates, 17 Pretrial Superior, 18 Pretrial Circuit, 8 F6 DOC and 14 DOC. Roof repairs have been completed; the flange is in the finishing stages. The interior kitchen door is installed. The remodel of the showers in each cell block is progressing.

Highway Supervisor: An Ordinance creating a non-reverting Highway Department donation fund was presented to the Commissioners for review. The proposed Ordinance would allow the Highway to accept donations of money for general restoration and improvement work of county roadways within the unincorporated areas of Wells County. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Ordinance 2023-10 creating a non-reverting donation fund for the Wells County Highway Department. Motion carried 3-0. Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. The north part of the county is patched and ready for seal season. The 200W road conversion is ready to be sealed and they are laying base stone on the 500W road conversion, it will then be ready to be sealed. Chip seal season is tentatively scheduled for July 18th. Road conversions that will be completed this year are 200W between 1000N and 1100N, 500W between 800S and 900S, 700N between Marzane Road and County Line Road and 450S between 200E and SR1. Bonar updated the Commissioners on the Highway Garage; the roof is 90% complete, bulk storage walls are complete, wash bay walls are up and waiting on pre-cast planks, siding is 90% complete. The highway department has encountered some traffic sign theft. The area of Rockcreek and Lancaster townships have been hit the hardest. Approximately 15 signs have been stolen of various types, the majority are stop or stop ahead signs. County Engineer Rumschlag estimated that each sign had a replacement value of between \$300 - \$400. Commissioner Vanover expressed fatality concerns caused by the theft of the signage.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag informed Commissioners on 2023 gravel road conversion petition and right-of-way status. Rumschlag recommended preparing ROW packets for 9 road sections. For 2024 Rumschlag recommended scheduling road conversion projects for CR 450E from 250S to 300S, CR 625S from SR3 to Willow Road and CR 100N from 500W to 600W. He stated that there are 3 other road sections that are ready to schedule for construction and 15 other road sections that still need ROW completion for between 1 and 8 property owners. Commissioner Stringer stressed that he would like to see a priority for roads that are bus routes. Terry Fisher, 10767 Meridian Rd., spoke to the Commissioners about his road and feels like it keeps getting bumped back on the road conversion list. Fisher thought at one time all the rights-of-ways were complete. Rumschlag stated that Fisher's section

of road is put on hold pending the other sections of Meridian. Rumschlag suggested giving the names of the missing rights-of-way to the other landowners who can solicit approval from their neighbors. Two contracts were presented to the Commissioners for approval. Bridge 170 and Bridge 85 have been awarded CCMG 2023-01 grant funds. Construction contracts were presented for Pioneer Associates for Bridge 85 not to exceed \$236,511.20 and with Jutte Excavating for Bridge 170 not to exceed \$569,344.00. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the construction contracts with Pioneer Associates for Bridge 85 and Jutte Excavating for Bridge 170. Motion carried 3-0.

Community Corrections Remote Work Update: Director Blake Poindexter addressed the Commissioners with an update on the remote work employee in his office. Poindexter stated that his current remote employee will not be working remotely in the future.

Bluffton City 911 Budget for 2024: 911 Director Mike Miller presented the proposed Bluffton City 911 budget to the Commissioners. Per the interlocal agreement for the universal 911 dispatch center, the proposed budget must be presented to the Wells County Commissioners and Wells County Council for review and approval. The proposed budget for 2024 totals \$1,327,443. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the proposed 2024 Bluffton City 911 budget for \$1,327,443. Motion carried 3-0.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment: Mike Lautzenheiser presented a recommended APC do pass amendment to the Wells County zoning ordinance. The requested zoning changes were from a Suburban-1 Zoned District to an Industrial-1 Zoned District to expand the Meyer Building I1 zoned property into newly purchased property. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Ordinance 2023-09 to amend the Wells County zoning ordinance and zone maps. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Flag and Cannon: Brandon Harnish came before the Commissioners requesting permission to pursue creating a Wells County flag. 12 Indiana counties have adopted flags for their counties. The proposed flag would honor the county namesake William Wells. Wells died in the Fort Dearborn massacre in August 1812. Harnish stated that “Wells charged into the enemy with reckless abandon for his own life to avenge the slaughter of militiamen and their wives and children”. The proposed design would depict Wells on a rearing horse with nine stars, representing the county’s nine townships. The colors of the flag would be charcoal and off white. Harnish also requested the return of the Civil War cannon to the Courthouse Plaza. The cannon has been in storage at the Historical Society. The cannon committee would also like to have the cannon displayed on the Courthouse plaza again. Tom Pett, a member of the cannon committee, was on hand and stated his appreciation for bringing the cannon back out into the public where it should be. Harnish has been raising outside funding for both projects so no tax dollars will be used. The Commissioners will investigate insurance coverage for the cannon prior to moving it to the plaza and encourage Harnish to pursue both projects.

Ossian Spec Building: County Attorney Ted Storer has been in conversation with Chad Kline regarding an Ossian II Spec building. The local agreement is in the creation stages but will somewhat mirror the first Ossian Spec building agreement. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to move forward with the Ossian Spec II Building agreement. Motion carried 3-0.

Emergency Closing Resolution: A fire in downtown Bluffton resulted in the closure of the Wells County Annex building Thursday, July 6th and Friday, July 7th, 2023. The President of the Board of

Commissioners ordered the closure of the Wells County Annex building and was unable to call an appropriate meeting prior to doing so. This resolution confirms the emergency closing and clarifies the compensation of any employee impacted by the closure of the Wells County Annex building consistent with the Employee Handbook. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Resolution 2023-04 for compensation of county employees due to certain emergency conditions. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Historical Society: The Board of Commissioners received a letter from the President of the Wells County Historical Society requesting funding of \$12,500.00 for the 2024 budget year. This is an increase of \$500 over this year’s funding. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the request for \$12,500 in funding for the Wells County Historical Society in 2024. Motion carried 3-0.

Statement of Salaries and Wages: The commissioners were presented the Form 144, statement of salaries and wages for all Wells County departments for the 2024 budget cycle. Statutorily this is presented to the Commissioners at the July meeting for review and recommendations. The recommendations should be presented to the county fiscal body before August 20th.

2024 Commissioner Budget: A proposed Commissioner budget for 2024 was presented for review and approval. The budgeted total is \$3,901,006, the mental health revenue amount for 2024 has not been received, the mental health amount in the proposed budget is the 2023 amount. When the mental health revenue amount is received, the budget will increase based on the mandated amount. The 2024 budget will be presented to Wells County Council for review during the budget meetings. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the 2024 Commissioner budget as presented and update when the mandated revenue is received. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment: John Schumacher spoke to the Commissioners about the 2035 vision and the reference in the plan about removing unsafe buildings. Schumacher feels that Wells County needs a building inspector to police unsafe buildings in the outlying areas of the county. The Commissioners stated that a building inspector is in their 2024 budget for possible approval.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:18PM. The 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