

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session August 19, 2024

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, August 19, 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 August 5, 2024, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #17 in the amount of \$300,599.76 and 171 claims totaling \$1,351,898.78. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday submitted the jail total via text and Commissioner Vanover reported 83 inmates.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on projects. Bridge 105 concrete approaches are complete, the subgrade for the road is complete, side walls have been poured, asphalt is scheduled for next week. The completion date is estimated to be September 24th. 1500 ton of topsoil has been captured at the highway department to be used as needed for future projects. Highway employees are mowing side ditches and prepping roads. Chip seal will start next week, 450S and 450E will be sealed Tuesday. Several items were discussed that will require minor adjustments at the Highway garage: pressure washer flu, janitor door sticks shut, oil room door does not close, Co2 fans need a higher thermostat, garage door adjustments, door 2 does not latch, breakroom exterior door does not latch, the mechanics office has a compressor on order, and 2 VAV's are not working.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre reported on project updates. CCMG 2023-02 450E Phase II advance notice of road closure was posted. Whitacre estimated that the project will take 3-4 weeks to complete. A meeting with ERI to discuss Bridge 404 (Harrison 1059), which is River Road over Markley Ditch, will be held later this week. This structure is in the City/County limits. Whitacre will set up a meeting with the City to discuss an interlocal agreement to share the match on the project. A September special safety call for projects is in the works. Whitacre is working on completing a systemic shortform to submit to INDOT's office of traffic safety to determine eligibility. He is looking at approximately 50 miles of roadway striping for a safer roadway. Funding for the project if approved would be 90/10. The preliminary estimate is \$500,000 with the match being approximately \$50,000.

Library Update: Library board member Matt Yergler updated the Commissioners on library happenings. Registered in the Summer Reading Program this year were 1,456 children, 260 teens, and 629 adults. Infants (birth to 24 months) completed 1656 activities, children (age 2 to 6th grade) read 486,720 minutes, teens read 387,284 pages, and adults read 1,507,706 pages. Stats are above last year's numbers for circulation, and study rooms, and holding steady for meeting rooms. Yergler applauded Friends of the Library for their support of programs. 1,000 books before kindergarten, monthly programming, author visits, Boo in Bluffton, continuing education, various library giveaways, summer and winter reading programs, and the Children's book festival are funded by Friends of the Library.

Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Remote Worker Recruitment Program: Ben Ledo, Vice President of Enterprise Sales for Make My Move, shared information on a regional program to attract remote workers to Northeast Indiana. Ledo requested a onetime expenditure of \$15,000 from Wells County to partner with surrounding communities to relocate 100 remote working households to the region. The relocated remote workers will contribute to the local economy and bring jobs to the area. Each community will, in addition, contribute \$5,000 to a remote worker who moves to their area. Make My Move markets applicants and reviews applications. Commissioner Stringer was apprehensive about funding \$15,000 and applicants relocate to another county. Ledo then discussed that preferences differ among workers regarding community and amenities in Wells County and community and amenities in other counties. The Commissioners would like more information and follow up during the September 3rd meeting.

Timber Ridge Secondary Plat Revision: Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. presented a revised secondary plat for Timber Ridge subdivision on 250N for Commissioner review. The original request was for shared driveways on all lots except for one. Through design and buildout plans it was suggested that it would be best to move the single drive from the east lot to the west lot, flipping the initial design. It is a cosmetic change to the layout. There will still be 8 shared driveways and one single. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the Timber Ridge secondary plat revision. Motion carried 3-0.

Council on Aging: Betsy Collier presented the 2nd Quarter 2024 claim for reimbursement. The claim amount totaled \$119,553. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and allow the President to sign the 2nd Quarter 2024 reimbursement claim. Motion carried 3-0. 2024, to date, Wells on Wheels stats were presented to the Commissioners which are trending up. Collier inquired about the additional funding request that was presented to the Commissioners in June. Commissioner Stringer would like a return on investment report regarding the additional funding. If a report can be submitted to the Commissioners, they will entertain the request during the September 3rd meeting.

Rock Creek Stone Quarry Discussion: The Commissioners discussed the next steps for the Rock Creek Stone Quarry Vacation of a Public Way. Attorney Storer reported that there had already been a public hearing on the original request, which was withdrawn. The current request is to vacate and relocate the roadway. The petitioner seeks the adoption of an ordinance to vacate CR 500W south of the intersection of CR 500W and CR 100N and construct a new roadway to the west of the current location. Commissioner Gerber inquired about holding an Executive Session prior to a public hearing on the topic. Attorney Storer will research the possibility. A public hearing will be held on September 3rd at 5:00PM prior to the regular session.

Economic Development Commission Update: Commissioner Stringer stated that interviews for an Economic Development Director are ongoing.

2025 Holiday Schedule: The 2025 Holiday schedule was presented to the Commissioners for their review and comment. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the 2025 Holiday Schedule as presented. Motion carried 3-0.

Asset Purchase: County Attorney Ted Storer presented an Asset Purchase Agreement for documents for Commissioner review. The assets in the agreement are surveys, drawings, notes, section corner field books and files prepared and held by the former Stody and Associates. Said assets are specifically

inclusive of the areas of Wells, Huntington, and Blackford Counties. The seller, Hoehn Corp., and the buyer, Wells County Commissioners, are listed in the agreement. The purchase price of the assets is listed as \$40,000 with a closing date of September 15, 2024. Attorney Storer listed two contingencies included in the agreement, which were: 1. The assets are to include all assets of all the documents of Stoodly and Associates, including documents related to Allen County as well as the other counties listed. 2. The seller must obtain a clearance letter from the tax authorities. If a clearance letter cannot be obtained, neither party will be bound by the agreement. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and sign the asset purchase agreement as presented. Motion carried 3-0.

Prosecutor Contract: County Attorney Storer and Commissioner President Stringer were presented a request for review of a proposed county contract from Prosecutor Colin Andrews with Advent Financial. Upon review of the document Attorney Storer stated revisions on some contractual details. The contract is automatically renewable, the Commissioners prefer that any contract has a specific term to allow for renegotiation of price and terms. The vendor requests that the contract be subject to Kentucky law and any litigation has jurisdiction and venue in Kentucky. The Commissioners prefer that these venue and jurisdiction issues be subject to Indiana law and the courts of Wells County, Indiana. And lastly, there are no provisions or warranties concerning the vendor has no other issues with Federal or State governmental entities that would exclude Wells County from entering into the agreement, and that the vendor uses the E-Verify system, which is a statutory requirement. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the Prosecutor contract pending revisions listed. Motion carried 3-0.

Holiday Closings: Auditor Lisa McCormick requested approval for closure of Wells County offices (Courthouse, Annex and County Extension) from Noon – 2 PM for a Thanksgiving luncheon for Wells County employees at the 4-H park on Wednesday, November 27th. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the closing of Wells County offices (Courthouse, Annex and County Extension) from Noon-2PM for the Thanksgiving luncheon on November 27th. Motion carried 3-0. Also requested was to close Wells County Offices (Courthouse, Annex and County Extension) at 2 PM on Friday, December 23rd for a Holiday gathering on the 3rd floor of the Courthouse for employees. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the Christmas gathering and dismiss afterward with pay. Motion carried 3-0.

Cancellation of 2nd Meeting in September: Streets are shut down around the Annex Building for the Bluffton Street Fair September 16-21, 2024. Consequently, parking is a problem. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to cancel the September 16, 2024, Commissioner meeting. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Information Officer: Public Information Officer LeAnne Gibbs-Wyss submitted her resignation effective August 30, 2024. The position is not funded in the 2025 budget request. Commissioner Stringer felt the funds would be better allocated to other economic initiatives at this time.

Northern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council: Commissioner Gerber received an invitation to serve on the NIRCC board. The Commissioners agree that Gerber should sit on the board.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:12PM. The motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to adjourn. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor