

**Wells County Commissioners
September 3, 2024**

**Public Hearing
Regular Session**

The Wells County Commissioners met on Tuesday, September 3, 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, Blake Gerber, Attorney, Ted Storer and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

Public Hearing

A public hearing was held concerning the consideration of a petition filed by Rock Creek Stone Quarry, Inc., pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-3-12. The petitioner requested the vacation of a portion of the public right of way known as County Road 500 West south of its intersection with County Road 100 North, more specifically described as: that portion of County Road 500 West south of the intersection of County Road 500 West and County Road 100 North to a point south of the Whitelock Ditch culvert on County Road 500 West, a length of 1,650 feet. An initial hearing on the Petition took place on December 4, 2023. The petitioner now seeks the adoption of an ordinance to vacate that portion of County Road 500 West, constructing a new roadway to the west of its current location, and otherwise granting the relief requested in the petition, which will not take effect until December 31, 2025. Attorney Jon Bomberger opened the discussion stating that the current road, 500 W, will be unvacated until the new road is completed, conditions are met, and Wells County has verified and dedicated the new road. All expenses will be incurred by the Petitioner. County Attorney Storer inquired if soil tests have been completed, Chase Fiechter did not want to get too far into testing until they know if the vacation ordinance will be a reality. Commissioner Gerber inquired about traffic flow after the new road completion, Fiechter thought most traffic would go south to SR 124. Harry Mosure and Jim McAfee are concerned about the project, referencing drainage and area resident concerns. Laura Roberts was not opposed to the project and stated that this is a good compromise. Rick Johnloz spoke on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce and Brickley farms supporting the project. Attorney Storer spoke of three options for Commissioners: move to approve it, list other conditions, or no approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow Attorney Storer to meet with Surveyor Jarrod Hahn, Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar, and the Highway Engineer Nate Whitacre to create a comprehensive list of conditions to be included in the petition. Motion carried 3-0. The public hearing was closed.

Regular Session

Minutes: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2024, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #18 in the amount of \$296,392.84 and 121 claims totaling \$305,237.28. Motion carried 3-0.

Union Township Appeal: Union Township resident Jenee Lauer notified the Wells County Commissioners of an appeal to the action by the Union Township Trustee Brian Imel. The reasons listed for the appeal were refusal to supply an application, and severe communication deficiencies. Township Trustee Brian Imel stated that she has been awarded benefits for June, July, and August for slightly more than their policy allows. Attorney Storer stated there was not a denial of benefits, she has received benefits, just not the communication that she was expecting. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to deny the appeal of benefits for Jenee Lauer. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 80 inmates, 29 pretrial Superior, 44 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 DOC and 10 DOC. Sheriff Holliday reported that there is still an occasional smell in the jail, it is getting better but not gone. Further investigation is ongoing. A federal grant has been awarded to the Sheriff's department that would allow Sheriff Deputies who participate in the grant be paid double the time in lieu of time and a half. The grant period is October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025. Attorney Storer drafted and presented a Resolution to allow for that compensation. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Resolution 2024-07 for compensation of certain sheriff employees due to the special grant at double time. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar informed the Commissioners that he is reluctant to proceed with chip and seal if the temperature drops below fifty degrees for an extended period. The crews have been doing landscaping and other miscellaneous duties which leaves them falling behind in chip seal. Bridge 105 will be open by September 6th. Bonar estimates that the Bridge 106 project will start within the next 30 days. The Fire Marshall has signed off on the certificate for the Highway garage. One right-of-way was presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the right-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre informed the Commissioners of future and ongoing projects. Work has started on 450E between 1000N and 1100N. Pipe and inlet work has been completed and the project is on schedule. The September Special Safety Call for projects is open for application submissions. Approximately 93 miles of roadway will be addressed with new durable pavement marking. The cost estimate is approximately \$860,000 with a local match of \$86,000. Whitacre will prepare a letter of financial commitment for the October 7, 2024, meeting. Requests for proposals for construction inspection for Bridge 71 closed last Friday. Six letters of intent were received. Whitacre and the Commissioners will complete scoring packets for each firm. Packets are due back to Whitacre by September 25, 2024.

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. Commissioner Vanover would like to preview a full market presentation for Wells County. A kickoff meeting will be held with Make My Move and Wells County to create an understanding of what Wells County wants to accomplish; Ledo explained. A motion was made by Michael Vanover to approve the onetime expenditure of \$15,000 to participate in the Make My Move program, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 2-1 with Jeff Stringer voting no.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:55PM, the motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor