

**Wells County Commissioners**  
**September 6, 2022**

**Regular Session**

The Wells County Commissioners met on Tuesday September 6, 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, Attorney, Colin Andrews and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from the August 15, 2022, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #17 in the amount of \$256,167.36, #18 in the amount of \$253,720.25 and 241 claims totaling \$361,292.52. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 90 inmates, 32 pretrial Superior, 31 pretrial Circuit, 13 F6 DOC and 7 DOC. Sheriff Holliday updated the Commissioners on the jail renovation. Intake is estimated to be complete and occupied by October. Holliday was requesting some upgrades in the renovation; increase kitchen delivery door, paint and resurfacing of existing flooring and tiling in the main lobby. Commissioner Stringer requested he obtain three quotes for each upgrade and bring it back for review.

**Poka-Bache Coalition:** Michael Lautzenheiser, Jen Starky and Dan Avery presented the Commissioners a proposed resolution to include Wells County in the Poka-Bache Coalition. This Coalition is formed by local governments: Wells, Allen, DeKalb, and Steuben Counties and the cities and towns within each county. The coalition vision is to explore the most effective way to complete the Poka-Bache Connector Trail from Ouabache State Park north to Pokagon State Park. As stated in the proposed Resolution, the Poka-Bache Connector Trail will, when completed, result in the enhancement of the Northeast Indiana region by supporting the regions health and wellness, spurring economic growth, improving access to the natural environment, and attracting additional tourism. Also recommended was an Interlocal Agreement with previously mentioned local governments. The Interlocal agreement creates a task force with a member from each government participating in the task force. The task force shall have the powers to set forth the vision and mission set in the interlocal agreement. The agreement shall remain in effect for a period of five years. The Commissioners requested that the Resolution and Interlocal Agreement be tabled until the October 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**Wells County Highway Supervisor:** Shawn Bonar informed the commissioners that a pipe crew is working on a tile failure that occurred recently. Side ditches are being mowed in all parts of the county. Sight distance issues are being taken care of when the personnel are available, and time allows. North chip seal roads have been patched for the winter months; south roads are getting patched currently. 2021 road conversions, 800E and Oblique, have 3 layers of chip seal applied. Backslopes of the ditches will be completed when crops come off. 2022 road conversions will get started when crops come off: 200W and 700N. Habig excavating has broken ground for the new Highway garage. INDOT is replacing a bridge on SR 3, between 1000 S and 1100 S. This project is expected to start on March 1, 2023. SR 3 will be closed for the proposed improvements, therefore creating a need for a road detour. An unofficial

detour has been identified: from SR 3, west on CR 1000 S, south on CR 900 W, east on CR 1100 S, returning to SR 3. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the unofficial detour for SR 3. Motion carried 3-0. Conor Jackson updated the Commissioners on Highway garage re bids that were received on September 1, 2022. These included: #3, concrete, Bowman was the low bid for \$1,282,740, #5, masonry, Schmucker was low bid for \$279,855, #7, General Trades, CME was the only bid for \$436,800, #8, Overhead Doors, RDC was the only bid for \$264,815 and was quite high as far as Conor was concerned, #10, Drywall and Acoustical, Jones commercial Interiors for \$167,550, #11, Flooring, Jack Laurie Group for \$79,285, #12, Painting, F&S for \$96,434, #13, Fire Protection, VFP for \$204,443. #18 Fencing and #19, Landscaping only had one bid each and Jackson suggested pursuing the fencing and landscaping another way. Shawn suggested purchasing the seeding equipment and doing it in house. Jackson felt he could get a maximum guaranteed price based off the current information. Jackson questioned what direction the City of Bluffton was headed with the utilities going out to the project. Commissioner Stringer will call Mayor Whicker and clarify with him.

**Highway Engineer:** Nate Rumschlag informed the Commissioners of a federal rail elimination grant. INDOT has authorized design team, DLZ, to prepare and file an application on behalf of Wells County. This application, if awarded, would reduce the financial obligation with the current Local Trax project. Rumschlag was asking for approval to present, to each Commissioner, the final application prior to the October meeting and to allow the President to sign. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow the President to sign the Federal Rail Elimination grant application. Motion carried 3-0. Rumschlag discussed road conversion packets for the next conversion season. He stated that a big reason for the slow conversion process is the lack of property owner response. Commissioner Stringer stated that it might be beneficial to post the ROW listings on the county website so each road section could see if their section of road had outstanding ROW dedication documents. Three utility permits were presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the three utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. Five rights-of-way were presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the five rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

**CADA Annual Report:** Molly Hoag and Angie Dial presented the 2022 grant request for Citizens Against Drug Abuse (CADA). Funds for the grants are collected through the "Drug Free Community Fund"; a total of \$20,657.94 was collected in 2021 for distribution in 2022. Total grant requests for the 2022 period were \$19,992.89. The funds not requested, \$2,546.91, will be distributed in the 2023 grant cycle. The grants are divided within four categories: Administration, Education/Prevention, Treatment/Intervention, and Judicial. The appropriation request for the grants will be presented to County Council at the September 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Wells County Council on Aging:** Betsy Collier and Sandra Bayne presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2022 reports and invoice for Commissioner approval and the 2022 annual report. Year to date ridership is 17,658. An average of 2207 trips are made monthly in 2022, and average approximately 108 trips daily. Sandra also gave stats on senior ridership, total riders by age group, as well as annual data for trips, vehicle miles, passenger miles, gallons of gas and total gas expenses. Blake Gerber motioned, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow President Michael Vanover to sign the 2022 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter reimbursement paperwork for the Wells on Wheels public transit program in the amount of \$136,829.00. Motion carried 3-0

**Cell Phone Discussion:** Commissioner President Vanover initiated discussion on an additional cell phone policy allowing a stipend for a personal cell phone. Currently Wells County will issue a cell phone for the department head or authorized personnel and pay for the phone as well as the monthly billing. There is

not a policy allowing for a stipend. Discussion was on policy requirements and who would be eligible for a stipend. Commissioner Gerber stated it would be beneficial for all Commissioners to reach out to other governmental units about similar policies. Commissioner Vanover requested the cell phone discussion be tabled until October 3<sup>rd</sup> when other governmental policy information be brought for comparison.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:20PM, motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Commissioners**

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President, Michael K Vanover

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Vice President, Blake Gerber

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Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor