

Wells County Commissioners

Public Hearing & Regular Session November 6, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in a public hearing and regular session on Monday November 6, 2023, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Physically present at the meeting were Commissioners, Michael Vanover and Jeff Stringer, County Attorney Ted Storer and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Blake Gerber participated in the meeting by electronic means of communication, Zoom, which allowed Gerber to simultaneously attend and observe the meeting. All votes taken during the meeting were taken by roll call vote.

Public Hearing

Mark W. Shaffer and Karen S. Shaffer filed, with the Wells County Commissioners, Wells County, Indiana, a petition to vacate an alley in the town of Petroleum, in Nottingham Township, Wells County, Indiana, more particularly described as follows: To vacate the 12-foot-wide alley between lots numbered Nine (9) and Ten (10) as known and designated on the recorded plat of Hoppes 2nd Addition to the Town of Petroleum. Beginning at the Northwest corner of said lot number 9; thence South to the Southwest corner of said lot numbered 9; thence West 12 feet to the Southeast corner of lot numbered 10; thence North 150 feet to the Northeast corner of said lot numbered 10; thence East 12 feet to the place of beginning. After the public hearing, the Wells County Commissioners may, by ordinance, grant the petition and the proposed vacation. Attorney Tim Babcock and petitioners Mark and Karen Shaffer were in attendance. County Attorney Ted Storer stated that there was no written objection or remonstrances to the petition. Attorney Storer asked the Shaffer's if the vacated alley would hinder growth or orderly development in the neighborhood, hinder access to lands, church, schools, or other public building or place, or if it would hinder the use of a public way by the neighborhood in which it is located or to which it is contiguous. Mark Shaffer stated that the vacation would not hinder in any way. The public hearing was closed.

Regular Session

Ordinance to Vacate Alley: A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Ordinance 2023-18, an ordinance vacating a portion of a platted public way in the town of Petroleum, Wells County, Indiana. Motion carried 2-0 by roll call vote.

Minutes: A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes from October 16, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #22 in the amount of \$286,999.93 and 186 claims totaling \$395,990.50. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 60 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 23 pretrial Circuit, 3 F6 DOC and 10 DOC. Sheriff Holliday presented the 2023 Annual Jail Inspection to the Commissioners.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on fall schedules. 400N between 200W and 300W will be closed for approximately two weeks for the installation of an arch structure. 2-way radios have been installed in the equipment. The highway is wrapping up final touches

on projects: 450E full depth reclamation ditch reshaping and the 200W road conversion. The highway is lining the new highway garage with stone and prepping the soil for seed. Highway garage update included: 99% of concrete is complete, lighting in the salt storage is installed, office drywall is complete and painted, interior truck bay walls are nearly complete, employee parking has been paved, main entry doors will arrive and be installed next week, locker room tiling in process, fencing is 50% complete, paver and gas is expected in the next 2 weeks. Shop equipment bids were tabled until November 20th.

Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission: Ron Turpin, chair of the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission spoke to the Commissioners regarding strategic development and community growth. \$30 million has been approved by the legislature to support economic growth through the commission. These funds will be used toward collaboration and partnership to encourage growth in housing development, childcare, and marketable credential attainment. Commissioner Stringer stressed that training opportunities need to be available at a local level so travel to other localities for training would be limited. The plan goals for the NEISDC are talent attraction and retention, talent development, and housing. The commission's five-year plan is available at neisdc.org.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. Wells County has been awarded Community Crossings Matching Grant funds for 2023-02. Funds totaling \$416,624.35 were awarded for the next portion of CR 450E between 1000N & 1100N. Rumschlag was requesting authorization for the Commissioner President to sign the INDOT agreement via DocuSign. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the President Michael Vanover to sign the INDOT agreement via DocuSign for CCMG 2023-02. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Finishing touches are being completed on Bridge 85 and is scheduled to open on November 13th. A construction Inspection contract was presented for Bridge 51. Rumschlag was requesting authorization for the Commissioner President to sign the INDOT LPA contract once it has been received and reviewed. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the President Michael Vanover to sign the INDOT LPA contract for Bridge 51 once it has been received and reviewed. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. A construction Inspection contract was presented for County Home Road and 200S. Rumschlag was requesting authorization for the Commissioner President to sign the INDOT LPA contract once it has been received and reviewed. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the President Michael Vanover to sign the INDOT LPA contract for County Home Road and 200S once it has been received and reviewed. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. 2021-2023 Countywide Bridge Inspection contract is complete with no critical findings. Minor maintenance issues are being scheduled currently. The bridge asset management plan has been submitted to LTAP for approval. A Meridian Road Rehabilitation contract with VS Engineering was tabled until the November 20th meeting. The Regional Sewer District has expended all ARPA funding conveyed to them from Wells County, except for interest earnings on those funds. Reports were presented to the Auditor's office. Rumschlag reported that he has implemented a standard practice to report apparent sewage within highway work area to the health department. When a highway worker witnesses what they believe to be sewage or septic discharge they are required to photograph the apparent issue and report it to their supervisor. The highway department does not perform any investigations further but can supply the area of concern to the County Health Department. Twelve rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for their approval. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the twelve rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Five utility permits were presented to the Commissioners for their approval. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the five utility permits. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

CADA Annual Report: Molly Hoag presented the 2023 grant request for Citizens Against Drug Abuse (CADA). Funds for the grants are collected through the “Drug Free Community Fund”; a total of \$19,581.16 was collected in 2022 for distribution in 2023 with a carryover amount of \$2,546.91 from 2021 for a total distribution amount of \$22.128.07 for 2023. Total grant requests for the 2023 period were \$25.662.01. The grants are divided within four categories: Administration, Education/Prevention, Treatment/Intervention, and Judicial. \$5,532.01 is being distributed for Other/Admin, \$5,532.02 is being distributed to Education/Prevention, \$5,532.02 is being distributed to Treatment/Intervention, and \$5,532.02 is being distributed to Judicial. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve of the CADA distributions. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Imagine Early: Julie Meitzler from Imagine Early and Economic Development Director Chad Kline updated the Commissioners on Imagine Early. Imagine Early is a coalition with a goal of increasing access to quality childcare within Adams and Wells Counties. Applications for an executive director are being accepted with an anticipated start date of January 2024. The executive director will coordinate efforts in developing strategies and communications with stakeholders and fundraising. The Commissioners have allocated \$25,000 in funding for 2023, 2024 & 2025 for Imagine Early. Kline added that the board is seeking grant opportunities for additional funding.

Economic Development Update: Economic Development Director Chad Kline shared updates with the Commissioners. Kline shared a website, livebetterlivewells.com, which is an informational site for job listings, recreational attractions, school district options, housing options, community events. The focus of the site is to show quality of life, quality of place and job opportunities within Wells County.

Library Update: Library board members, John Stauffer and Matt Yergler updated the Commissioners on library activities. The summer reading program had 1,500 registered kids, 284 teens and 609 adults, a 19% increase over last year’s numbers. 126 books were donated to Kate’s Kart due to the generosity of the adult and teen patrons. Stats through the 3rd quarter were - card holders are up 711 for the year, circulation of physical material is at 83% of last year, electronic material is at 98% of last year, meeting room use is at 85%, children’s programming attendance is at 95%, teen programming attendance is at 70%, adult programming attendance is at 73%, and book-a-librarian reservation are at 97% of last years numbers. The children’s book festival was a huge success.

500W Vacate Petition: County Attorney Ted Storer addressed scheduling the Public Hearing for the 500W vacate petition. Commissioner Blake Gerber requested an Executive Session prior to the November 20th meeting to digest material regarding the petition, if appropriate. The public hearing was not scheduled.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:08PM. The motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Michael K Vanover

Vice President, Blake Gerber

Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor