

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session November 7, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday November 7, 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. Also, in attendance were County Attorney, Colin Andrews and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes from October 7, 2022, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #22 in the amount of \$260,768.81 and 169 claims totaling \$363,662.01. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 83 inmates, 25 pretrial Superior, 32 pretrial Circuit, 17 F6 DOC and 1 DOC. The annual fire inspection is complete. The public parking area is complete except for light poles. Fire dampers are complete in the renovated section of the jail, the existing section of the jail still needs to be updated. Occupancy in the renovated area is anticipated to be early December.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on fall schedules. Mowing is soon to be complete; they will be grading all gravel roads for the upcoming freezing months. The new sign truck arrived last week. There was a discussion on permit fees. Bonar would like to pay for expenses and manpower with the permit fees. This cost should be absorbed by the residents requesting the service, not all taxpayers, Commissioner Stringer suggested. The Commissioners would like to revisit this topic at the November 21st meeting. Bonar gave an update on the Highway Garage progress. The salt storage footers are poured, cold storage footers are scheduled for Tuesday. Storm drainage is in the process of being installed. Shawn requested a 30-day extended medical leave for a highway employee. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to extend the medical leave for the highway employee for 30 days. Motion carried 3-0.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag updated the Commissioners on current and possible future projects. Work on Bridge 19 is planned to start in December. Notices will go out to dispatch and schools once a start date is confirmed. The call for Federal Aid 2028 projects opened on November 1st. Possible bridge applications include Bridge 72 & 76. The Commissioners instructed Rumschlag to pause on new projects due to inflation on the current projects. Commissioner Gerber thought Bridge 72 would be a good project for 2023 Federal Aid applications for 2029 projects. Regarding a Regional Sewer District project in Craigville, VanTilburg Farms is requesting permission to use asphalt cold patch to maintain road sections within Craigville for pavement that will need to be cut to accommodate sewer installations. Rumschlag was recommending approval with the condition that VTF is responsible to place and maintain all cold patch within the limits of 700E or where a numbered road is cut within the travel lanes for the duration of the winter and until final asphalt pavement can be installed. Each section is to be patched within 21 calendar days of the pavement cut per this exception. Blake Gerber insisted on 10 days maximum for each section to be patched. Nate will make that request with VTF. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the use of asphalt cold patch with each section to be patched within 10 calendar days of the pavement cut. Motion carried 3-0. Five utility permits were presented to the Commissioners for their approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the five utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. Four rights-of-

way were presented to the Commissioners for their approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the four rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

PHP: A renewal for health coverage was presented to the commissioners with PHP. The PHP proposal included a 9% premium increase for the current plan. Claims are currently at 118% of premiums. PHP had alternate plan proposals which would increase deductibles while lowering the premium. The Commissioners opted to table the discussion until November 21st. Reports will be presented at that meeting to show the impact of each proposal. Principal Dental, Vision and Life plans have a 0% increase for 2023.

PTABOA Ethics: Brandon Harnish submitted recommendations, action steps and a resolution to the Commissioners concerning PTABOA ethics. The Commissioners recommended sharing these suggestions with the Assessor's office for comment and continue the conversation at the November 21st meeting.

Cell Phone Policy: The cell phone policy concerning a stipend has been discussed at length. Various stipend methods and offering a cell phone and no stipend have all been discussion points. All Commissioners believe that the current policy is the option they would like to continue. The current policy is offering a cell phone for eligible employees or office holders with no stipend.

Community Corrections Job Description Update: Blake Poindexter distributed a new job description for a part time employee that would include remote work. Said employee would work approximately 7 hours in the office, with the remainder of hours utilizing remote work. Part time employees are capped at 28 hours per week. A remote work tracking spread sheet is required to track all hours and jobs completed when working remotely. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the updated job description allowing remote work, but will review the request during the April 3, 2023, meeting. Motion carried 3-0. Attorney Colin Andrews will review the current remote work policy and will possibly update that policy at the November 21st meeting.

Revenue Sharing: The American Rescue Plan appropriated \$2 billion to the Treasury for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 to provide payments to eligible revenue sharing counties and eligible Tribal governments for use on any governmental purpose except for a lobbying activity. The American Rescue Plan directs the Secretary to reserve \$750 million to allocate and pay to eligible revenue sharing counties, considering economic conditions of each county using measurements of poverty rates, household income, land values and unemployment rates, over a 20-year period ending with September 30, 2021. Wells County is an eligible revenue sharing county eligible for two disbursements of \$50,000 each. The application deadline is January 31, 2023. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve applying for the additional American Rescue Plan funds via the Treasury. Motion carried 3-0.

Right to Life: Lucy Papaik, outreach coordinator for Right to Life of Northeast Indiana, requested permission to use the sidewalk on the east side of the Courthouse on June 24, 2023, for a Rally for Life from 10-11AM. This event will take place at 7 other courthouses within 8 county areas of Northeast Indiana simultaneously. The gathering will consist of 15-20 individuals, it will be a peaceful rally. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Rally for Life on the east side of the Courthouse sidewalk on June 24, 2023, from 10-11AM. Motion carried 3-0.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:26PM. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Michael K Vanover

Vice President, Blake Gerber

Member, Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor