

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session November 21, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday November 21, 2022, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. In attendance were Commissioners, Michael Vanover, Blake Gerber and Jeff Stringer, County Attorney, Colin Andrews and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

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

**Payroll and Claims:** Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #23 in the amount of \$262,639.43 and 346 claims totaling \$747,878.29. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 79 inmates, 27 pretrial Superior, 28 pretrial Circuit, 14 F6 DOC and 1 DOC. An inspection was conducted on the new roof which passed inspection. Sheriff Holliday believes they will be in the renovated portion of the jail by mid-December. The main corridor is nearly complete, the lobby construction will begin within the coming weeks.

**Wells County Highway Supervisor:** Supervisor Bonar updated the Commissioners on current projects. 200W and 700N are projected projects for chipping in 2023. Mowers are in storage for the year, stone roads are being graded before a hard freeze. Bonar also gave an update on the Highway Garage. Salt storage footers have been poured and the concrete T panels are scheduled for delivery on November 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup>. Construction on the Salt storage building is scheduled for the week of December 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>. Cold storage footers are half complete, the structure will be delivered this week. Storm drainage is started, and the low voltage wiring is out for quotes. The Commissioners had requested a detailed description of permit fees. Bonar submitted a spreadsheet of types of permits and fees for each. A right of way cut permit fee would be \$50 for the permit and an additional \$50 fee for the inspection, \$150 fee for an inspection after hours. A field or driveway permit fee would be \$50, with a fee of \$350 for stone provided to the location or \$150 fee for fill dirt to be provided to the location. Oversized load fees would be \$150 per trip or \$1,000 fee for an annual permit. Road crossing permit fees would be \$320 for a stone road or \$520 for a paved road. The biggest questions centered on the oversized load fees. The Commissioners felt they needed more information on the oversize load portion of the fee schedule. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to have Attorney Colin Andrews create a permit fee ordinance with the fees as presented, not including the oversized load fees. Motion carried 3-0.

**Highway Engineer:** Nate Rumschlag updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. Rumschlag is compiling a FAQ sheet regarding the purpose for a 30-foot standard right of way. That fact sheet will be posted on the County website and local media. Rumschlag explained that the need is driven by safety and should not be negotiated arbitrarily. Also in process is the small structure list for 2023. Rumschlag discussed inflationary pricing on small structure supplies. Commissioner Stringer suggested putting secondary casings in the ground when they are working in the hard to permit areas. The county would own the casings and would be a cost savings in the long run. Stringer would like to know the cost of placing additional casings. Nate listed pending projects for future Community Crossing Matching grant applications. Bridge 170, Bridge 65, Bridge 85, County Road 450E and County Home Road & 300S intersection were all listed. Three utility permits for Heartland REMC were presented to the

Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the three utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. Thirteen rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the thirteen rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

**Parks Department:** Bluffton Parks Department Director Brandy Fiechter came before the Commissioners requesting an increase in the Wells County contribution for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks display. Fiechter stated that the cost each year increases in price, Wells County has not been asked to contribute additional funds for several years. Wells County currently budgets \$5,000 for the fireworks. The current 3-year contract, 2022-2024, is for \$15,600, of which half would be \$7,800. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve \$7,800 for 2023 and 2024 to be given to the Parks Department for fireworks. Motion carried 3-0.

**Zoning Ordinance Amendment:** Mike Lautzenheiser presented a recommended APC do pass amendment to the Wells County zoning ordinance. The recommended zoning changes are from Suburban-1 Zoned District to an Agriculture Residential Zoned District to allow for a kennel operation. The property is located at 4496 East Elm Grove Road. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Ordinance 2022-26 amending the Wells County zoning ordinance and zone maps. Motion carried 3-0.

**Vision 2035:** Michael Lautzenheiser presented a page modification to the Wells County Vision 2035 Comprehensive plan. This modification was on the Transportation page 53, potential county and state road projects. Ossian was added to the sentence "A prioritization of efforts should be taken to develop options and complete the goal of connecting Bluffton and Ossian with a four-lane highway to an interstate and Fort Wayne". Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Resolution 2022-11 updating the Wells County Vision 2035 Comprehensive plan. Motion carried 3-0.

**PTABOA:** Chandler Gerber addressed the Commissioners announcing his resignation from the PTABOA board, effective immediately. Gerber was caucused on to the Bluffton Common Council and would be a conflict to serve on both boards. Commissioner Vanover formally accepted Gerber's resignation and thanked him for his service.

**PHP:** A renewal for health coverage was presented to the Commissioners at the November 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. The renewal for 2023 had an increase of 9% on the current plan. Options were given to reduce the increase to 5% or 4%, both options would increase deductibles. The Commissioners tabled the discussion at the November 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the renewal with the 9% increase with PHP and keep the deductibles as they are currently. Motion carried 3-0.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:43PM.

### 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