

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session December 6, 2021

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday December 6, 2021, at 9:00AM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Blake Gerber, Michael Vanover, and Jeff Stringer. Also, in attendance were County Attorney, Roy Johnson and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from November 15, 2021, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #24 in the amount of \$247,200.22 and 205 claims totaling \$650,038.85. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 72 inmates, 25 pretrial Superior, 23 pretrial Circuit, 9 F6 DOC and 8 DOC.

Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on current projects. Mowing is completed for the season and the mowers have been put in storage. Truck prep for the winter season has begun and they are conducting repairs as needed. Oblique Road will be put on hold until power poles can be relocated. The 800E road conversion will be worked on as weather allows. Bids are being accepted for Bituminous, Stone, Dustay and Fuel. Bid opening will be at the January 18th Commissioner meeting. Commissioner Stringer requested that 700N off Marzane Rd be swept to distribute stone evenly on the road.

Highway Engineer: The Commissioners were updated on ongoing projects and the NOFA 2027 application. The application for CR 200S, phase 2, for NOFA 2027 was submitted to INDOT. Interviews will be late this month or early January. Bridge 99 was opened to traffic on November 22nd. Final lane striping still needs to be completed. Currently the road has temporary striping. Three right-of-way documents were presented to the Commissioners for their approval for 700E, 400S, and 1000S. Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

Ossian Rescue Truck: Ossian Fire Chief, Ben Fenstermaker and Bluffton Fire Chief, Don Craig came before the Commissioners to request funding for a rescue truck for Ossian. In 2007, Bluffton Fire Chief Bob Plummer started the discussion with Wells County requesting Wells County purchase a Rescue Truck every 7 years in rotation for Bluffton, Ossian, and Liberty Center. Bluffton received the first rescue truck with Liberty Center following. The Liberty Center truck was paid off in November 2021. Ossian Fire Chief Fenstermaker brought pricing from three separate fire truck builders. Pricing ranged from \$454,765 to \$630,000 depending on if a demo or build model is purchased. Delivery times ranged from 180 days to 485 days, again depending on if a demo or build model is purchased. The Commissioners requested discussing this further at the December 20th meeting. Fenstermaker will bring more detailed information on pricing.

Health Department Update: Health Administrator Marlene Hoag presented an update for the Commissioners. She stated that COVID numbers are rising. 101 deaths have been attributed to COVID in Wells County. Wells County is designated as Orange, Hoag anticipates a Red status. Testing is done at

the Health Department on Monday mornings and Thursday's, all day. The Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson and Johnson vaccines are being administered at the Health Department on Monday afternoons and Wednesday's, all day. Boosters are available for Pfizer and Moderna, 70% of vaccinations administered have been the booster. Commissioner Vanover would like to have an overall health department update. Hoag then stated that doing COVID related tasks three days still allows them to have two days for other business. Also requested was improved signage and paint striping for the handicap parking spot in the Annex parking lot. Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar will investigate that request.

REMC Support: A letter of support from the Commissioners for the Heartland REMC application for the Next Level Connections grant was presented for approval. The letter stated that rural areas throughout Wells County are in desperate need of better internet service. It is critical that our schools, hospitals, libraries, and businesses have access to a robust broadband service. Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the letter of support. Motion carried 3-0.

Interlocal Engineering Services Agreement: Wells County and the City of Bluffton are working on an Interlocal Engineering Services Agreement with the current Highway Engineer, Nate Rumschlag. This agreement would allow the Engineer to also provide the City certain engineering services in exchange for reimbursement from the city to Wells County for those services. The agreement is still in draft form and is in the City's hands currently. The Commissioners will revisit on December 20th.

Interlocal Agreement for Emergency Communications Department: Also in draft form is an interlocal agreement for an emergency communications department. This agreement would create a joint Dispatch and 911 Public Safety Answering Point for the City and County. All emergency communications within Wells County would be centrally directed and dispatched. The city and county are currently making alterations to the agreement. The Commissioners will revisit on December 20th.

Highway Garage: An agreement between the owner and construction manager as constructor was presented to the Board of Commissioners. This document spells out the budget limits as well as the responsibilities of the Construction manager. The document is signed by the Commissioner President and Jackson Construction. The controller for Jackson construction is currently going over the document. Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and allow the President to sign the agreement. Motion carried 3-0.

County Farm: a) A termination of cash farm lease agreement was presented to the Commissioners. The agreement between the Board of Commissioners and Gaiser Farms would terminate the current cash farm lease agreement. Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the termination of the cash farm lease agreement. Motion carried 3-0. The agreement will be presented to Gaiser Farms for a signature.

b) Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow President Blake Gerber to sign an application for filing a request for approval of a minor subdivision for a property on County Home Road between 350 S and 400S. Motion carried 3-0.

c) Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to sign three Warranty Deeds for the County farm prior to closing. Motion carried 3-0.

LIT Economic Development: The Regional Sewer District currently has a line of credit with Wells County for \$500,000 with Rainy Day funds. Those funds will be repaid with SRF grant funds; administrative costs are not reimbursed by the grant. The SRF will be issuing a check to Wells County for \$473,506, leaving a balance of approximately \$32,000. Commissioner Gerber thought replenishing those funds

with Economic Development dollars would be a good use of those dollars. Motion made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow LIT Economic Development funds to supplement the Regional Sewer District on the line of credit from the Rainy Day funds, not to exceed \$35,000. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment: Wiley Raborn spoke to the Commissioners concerning a bridge on 300N that had blue paint on the bridge. He was concerned about the paint and was questioning if it was a marking for maintenance. Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar confirmed that the paint was covering up graffiti. The Commissioners thought a different color of paint might be applied to lessen the look. Raborn also proposed the start of an adopt a bridge program, with boy scouts or like organizations, to check up on bridges and report on maintenance issues. Commissioner Gerber would like to reach out to other counties for research on the subject.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 10:05AM

Wells County Commissioners

President, Blake Gerber

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Jeff Stringer

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor