

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session December 18, 2023

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday December 18, 2023, 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, County Attorney, Ted Storer and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from the December 4, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll And Claims:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #25 in the amount of \$275,293.09 and 276 claims totaling \$1,147,513.58. Motion carried 3-0.

**Hearing(s) – Jefferson Township:** Four Jefferson Township residents were appealing their denial for poor relief funds. Evan Tyson, Elvis and Christine Larkey, Jana O'Hara, and Carrie Dowel are Jefferson Township residents. Trustee Larry Heckber and Investigator Karen Rydman also addressed the Commissioners. The Jefferson Township Trustee's office denied the poor relief based on lack of funds in the budget. All four residents were eligible, the Township Board would not approve the additional appropriation for that funding. Evan Tyson requested \$551.09 for auto and insurance, Elvis and Christine Larkey requested \$500 for rent, Jana O'Hara requested \$706.66 for rent, electric and utilities, and Carrie Dowel requested \$562.89 for rent, I&M, and NIPSO. The requests totaled \$2,320.64. Township assistance guidelines were presented to the Commissioners that were approved by Heckber, but not the Jefferson Township board. Board member David Haiflich stated that the funding was denied due to lack of established guidelines. Ultimately, a motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to reject the denial of township assistance, and allow the funding for poor relief to Tyson, Larkey, O'Hara and Dowel. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 63 inmates, 16 Pretrial Circuit, 26 Pretrial Superior, 11 DOC and 6 F6 DOC. The jail renovation is winding down, ductwork is getting reconfigured for efficiency. Holliday would like to have the Commissioners grant closeout approval when requested from Ameresco.

**Wells County Highway Supervisor:** Shawn Bonar opened the annual bids for Bituminous, Stone/Aggregate, Fuel, Aluminum Box Culverts, Precast Concrete Arch Structures and Boxes, Steel Bridge Packages, Bridge Decking Products, Treated Timber Bridge Products, Steel Pipe Products, & Misc. Pipe and Fittings Bid Packages. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept all bids, using the most economical pricing depending on the job location. Motion carried 3-0. Bonar has completed INDOT training to be the Wells County Employee in Responsible Charge (ERC). Bridge 105 funding has been awarded. Wells County will receive additional federal funding dollars for a total of \$1,808,320.76 for construction, the Wells County match amount of \$108,330.19 is for construction inspection. Bonar would like to purchase office furnishing and equipment from Northern Tool, they require a credit account for those purchases. Commissioner Gerber made a recommendation for Attorney Storer to create an Ordinance for review at the January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting for that credit account. Bonar also mentioned the addition of an administrative position for his department. The Commissioners asked for a job description and financial obligations for that position. County Council approves all personnel, so his request will have to go through Council. The highway garage update included: the heat is functioning, office lighting is complete, cabinets are in the lunchroom, lockers are installed,

plumbing, hardware, and fire connection is complete. Bonar recommended waiting until spring for a concrete slab that will be poured on the south side of the building.

**Right-of-Way and Utility Permits:** 10 rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for approval. One of the right-of-way documents had not been executed by the landowner. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the 10 rights-of-way, the unsigned document contingent on signatures. Motion carried 3-0.

**TRAX FRA Genat Assistance Agreement:** An agreement was presented to the Commissioners for support services related to the Federal Grant that was awarded for the Local TRAX project. Jodi Coblentz and Ben Beer presented the document. The agreement states that the consultant shall provide services and documents related to the Hoosier Highway Crossing Elimination project. The Consultant is USI Consultants, Jodi Coblentz will be providing administrative assistance on the grant. The agreement is not to exceed \$35,000 and will continue through August 31, 2024. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Wells County Hoosier Highway crossing elimination project federal railroad administration grant assistance agreement (Misc. 2023-10). Motion carried 3-0.

**Bridge 54 Supplemental Agreement:** Ben Beer presented a supplemental agreement for Bridge 54 at the December 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. The agreement was tabled by the Commissioners. Beer explained that the costs that were listed in the supplemental agreement will now be covered by matching funds, making the agreement unnecessary.

**Joray Hills Sewer Extension:** The subject was tabled until the January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

**2024 Board Appointments:** A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Ann McNabb, to appoint Tamara Troutt and appoint Bartholomew Hott to the Health Department Board for 4-year terms. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to re-appoint Janessey Kline to the Alcoholic Beverage Board for a one-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Tyson Brooks and Tim Rohr to the Area Plan board for an annual term with Blake Gerber as an alternate for Tyson Brooks and Jeff Stringer as an alternate for Tim Rohr. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jef Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Tracy Gentis and Tyson Brooks to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a 4-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Balke Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to re-appoint Connie Brubaker to the Cemetery Board for a 5-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to appoint Blake Gerber as a lay member, Olimpia Gerber as the minority member, and Stacy Herrold and the educational member of the Community Corrections Advisory board for 4-year terms. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr. to the Poka-Bache Connector Task Force for a one-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Nathan Shrock, and appoint Ben Beer to the Property Tax Board of Appeals for a one-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to appoint Trent Markley as the Director of the Rock Creek Conservancy for a four-year term, and sign the petition to appoint director document. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to re-appoint Laura Dalrymple, Shari Duncan, and Diana Collins to the Sick Bank Committee for a one-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Jeff Reed to the Tourism Commission for a two-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Jeff Stinger, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Douglas Sundling to the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission for a two-year term, and approve and sign Resolution 2023-06 Confirming the Participation of Wells County in the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission. Motion carried 3-0.

A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to appoint Michael Vanover to the E-911 Advisory Board, Michael Vanover to the EMA Board, and Blake Gerber to the EMS Board for a one-year term. Motion carried 3-0.

The appointment to the Chamber of Commerce board and Economic Development board was tabled until January 4<sup>th</sup>.

The Highway Engineer position is currently unfilled.

**2024 Appointments for Department Heads:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to re-appoint; Ted Storer as the County Attorney/Title VI Coordinator, Bobbie Studebaker as the Courthouse Custodian, Rick Velasquez as the EMA Director, Shawn Bonar as the Highway Superintendent, Roger Richardson as the IT Director, Dewey Randall as the Veteran’s Officer, and Mike Miller as the 911 Director for calendar year 2024. Motion carried 3-0.

**ARPA Funds:** Wells County has \$750,452 in unexpended ARPA funds. Possible allowable expenditures for those funds will be discussed at the January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

**ADA Coordinator:** Former Highway Engineer Nate Rumschlag was the ADA Coordinator for Wells County. To be eligible for grant assistance Wells County must have a designated ADA Coordinator. The discussion was tabled until the January 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

**500 W Vacate:** Chase Fiechter spoke to the Commissioners regarding the petition for vacation of 500W. He stated they were pursuing relocating the roadway instead of vacating. Rock Creek Stone Quarry would like the Commissioners to postpone or table their decision for the 500W vacate.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:31PM

### **Wells County Commissioners**

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President

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Vice President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

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