

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session December 19, 2022

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday December 19, 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, 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 the December 5, 2022, regular session, December 6, 2022, special session, December 8, 2022, executive session, December 14, 2022, executive session and December 15, 2022, executive session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll And Claims: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #25 in the amount of \$251,550.81 and 264 claims totaling \$1,070,051.50. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 80 inmates, 31 pretrial Circuit, 19 pretrial Superior, 8 DOC and 15 F6 DOC. They were able to move into the new intake area last week. Construction is starting in the old garage area; walls are being constructed for conference areas. The lobby is under construction and fire dampers are complete.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve all annual bids, using lowest pricing first and availability next. Motion carried 3-0. Bonar informed Commissioners that two trucks and a tractor are down for repair and should be back in the fleet this week. An Ordinance implementing permit fees was presented for consideration. Proposed fees consist of \$520 for a single cut on pavement, \$350 additionally for stone if needed, \$320 for a single cut on gravel, \$350 additionally for stone if needed, \$50 fee for a driveway permit, \$350 additionally for stone if needed, \$150 additionally for fill dirt if needed, and a \$50 fee for a right of way cut inspection during regular business hours, \$150 fee for afterhours inspections. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Ordinance 2022-29 establishing standards and conditions for the issuance of highway road and right-of-way work permits and the establishing of service charges. Motion carried 3-0. This Ordinance will be effective 30 days after publication in the local newspaper. Bonar requested an additional 30-day extension for medical leave for one of his employees. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve a 30-day medical leave extension for a highway employee. Motion carried 3-0. Highway Garage update: the cold storage main columns are installed, t-walls for the salt storage building are in place and the slab has been poured. The main building structure is being delivered today requiring 12 semi loads. Signs have been installed informing that trucks are entering and exiting. Bonar is concerned with the future of the Highway department and the employees. He informed the Commissioners that over the time he has been supervisor he has lost 8 employees. Some are retirements and some he has lost to other agencies with higher pay rates. His plea was to increase the hourly rate to entice longevity. Also discussed was Ordinance 85-2 which states that all new full-time employees in a nonelective position shall be remunerated at a salary rate of \$500.00 below the position's base rate for a period of one year from the date of hire. Rumschlag felt it hurts morale, he was encouraging the County to eliminate that Ordinance. The Commissioners suggested having a discussion with County Council who sets the wages.

Highway Engineer: Nate Rumschlag reported on future bridge funding, as requested by Blake Gerber at the December 5th meeting. The current Bridge Asset Management Plan has approximately \$23 million dollars of projects for 2023 through 2029. Active grants, both state and federal, are allocated for \$11.4 million dollars of those projects, approximately \$2.9 million in local funding. Rumschlag noted that the Cumulative Bridge fund is obligated to provide the local match for 4 of those projects. LIT funding for bridges total \$500,000 per year. Rumschlag is concerned that without additional funding options he will not be able to fund future projects. INDOT reported construction inflation of 36% since 2020. Wells County spending vs. state funding lists Wells County in a 3-way tie for 73rd out of 92 counties at 1.29, which equates to Wells County spending 29 cents to each dollar of state funding. Wells County was awarded \$549,105 for 2022-02 Community Crossing Matching grant funding. The grant is for reconstruction of CR 450E between 1200N and 1100N. Bids for the project are due on January 12th at 1PM. Two utility permits were presented to the Commissioners for approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept, and sign the two utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. Four right-of way documents were presented to the Commissioners for their approval. Motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept, and sign the four right-of-way documents. Motion carried 3-0.

Ordinance Establishing a Tourism Commission: Chad Kline presented an Ordinance establishing a commission to promote the development and growth of the convention, recreation, and visitor industry in Wells County. The Ordinance will create a new public agency that is the Wells County Convention and Visitors Commission. The Commission will be composed of nine members. Three members shall be appointed by the Board of Commissioners; two members shall be appointed by the Wells County Council; three members shall be appointed by the Mayor of the City of Bluffton and one member shall be appointed by the Ossian Town Board. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Ordinance 2022-30 establishing a commission to promote the development and growth of the convention, recreation, and visitor industry in Wells County. Motion carried 3-0.

County Attorney Appointment: The Commissioners have conducted interviews for a County Attorney but tabled the appointment until the January 3rd meeting. Current County Attorney Colin Andrews expressed great pleasure in working for the Commissioner board and Council board and values the time he has been able to serve as County Attorney. Andrews has been elected Prosecutor of Wells County.

2023 Appointments for Department Heads: Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint; Bobbie Studebaker as the Courthouse Custodian, Rick Velasquez as the EMA Director, Nate Rumschlag as the County Engineer, Shawn Bonar as the Highway Superintendent, Roger Richardson as the I.T. Director, Dewey Randall as the Veteran's Officer, and Mike Miller as the 911 Director for calendar year 2023. Motion carried 3-0.

2023 Board Appointments: Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint; Janessey Kline to the Alcoholic Beverage Commission, Tim Rohr and Tyson Brooks to the Area Plan Commission, Laura Dalrymple, Sheri Duncan, and Diana Collins to the Sick Bank Committee, all of which are annual appointments, to re-appoint Thomas Liby to the Cemetery Board for a five-year term, Roger Irick to the Rockcreek Conservancy District board for a four-year term, to appoint Molly Hoag to the Health Department board for a four-year term, to appoint Andy Yergler to the Community Corrections Advisory board for a four-year term, Blake Gerber to the Chamber of Commerce board, Jeff Stringer to the Economic Development board, Michael Vanover to the EMA board and Blake Gerber to the EMS board, annual appointments. Motion carried 3-0. Motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake

Gerber to appoint Blake Gerber as an alternate for Tim Rohr on the Area Plan Commission and Jeff Stringer as an alternate for Tyson Brooks on the Area Plan Commission. Motion carried 3-0.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:04PM

Wells County Commissioners

President

Vice President

Member

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor