

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session October 21, 2024

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, October 21, 2024, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Physically present at the meeting were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer and Michael Vanover, County Attorney Ted Storer and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Blake Gerber participated in the meeting by electronic means of communication, Zoom, which allowed Gerber to simultaneously attend and observe the meeting. All votes taken during the meeting were taken by roll call vote.

Minutes: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes from October 7, 2024, regular session. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #21 in the amount of \$288,309.55 and 246 claims totaling \$1,329,311.72. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 82 inmates, 23 pretrial Superior, 35 pretrial Circuit, 3 F6 DOC and 21 DOC. Sheriff Holliday discussed outstanding issues and warranty items regarding the jail renovation. Items that are outstanding include: concrete sealant issues, caulking issues in corridor, HVAC in Central Command area is not working, Temperature control in the east & west cell blocks is inconsistent, Book-in area issues, the Detective Office picks up noise on recording devices when conducting interviews, phone mounts in R2 & R3 has moisture condensation which runs down the inside of the conduit within the block wall, and the building has been over pressurized in the morning but fine in the afternoon. Ameresco has contacted applicable vendors to investigate the causes of the issues listed and will provide an action plan for resolutions. Also discussed was the ongoing smell issue related to cracked pipes. The Sheriff continues to work with Superior to identify the problem areas.

Highway Supervisor: County Home Road letting results were received from INDOT with Brooks Construction submitting the winning bid of \$1,949,531.00. A total of 6 bids were received. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the bid of \$1,949,531 from Brooks Construction for the County Home Road project. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre presented updates to the Commissioners. Three Unofficial Detours were presented for review. All three are small structures on SR 116 and will begin as early as Spring 2025. Des. 200224 and Des. 202246 are included in the first unofficial detour, which will be SR 116 to CR 500 W to US 224 to CR 400 W then returning to SR 116. Des. 2002245 is the second unofficial detour, which will be SR 116 to CR 750 E to CR 500 S to Cr 800E then returning to SR 116. Des. 200248 is the third unofficial detour, which will be SR 116 to CR 100 W to CR 500 N to Meridian Road then returning to SR 116. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the three unofficial detours for SR 116. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Whitacre is assembling application documents for a November federal aid call for projects. He estimates that this project will bid in 2030. Bridge 72, which is located on CR 300 W over Sites Ditch, is the project he is interested in applying for. He intends to provide the Commissioners with a letter of financial commitment at a November meeting. Whitacre also presented a 2025-2028 Culvert Inspection contract with USI. This engineering service is for small structure inspections for Wells County. The responsibilities of USI include field inspections, digital output of all structures for use on the GIS system, rating the existing

inventory and posted load rating for each structure inspected that is found to be deficient. The agreement was tabled until the November 4th meeting.

Floodplain Mapping Services: Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. presented a proposal for professional services with Burke Engineering to review the proposed flood plain maps. Lautzenheiser stated that several issues have been identified that he feels will require professional assistance to resolve. Homes that are mapped into the floodplain for the first time would be majorly impacted, he wants to ensure that they should be mapped that way. A 90-day appeal period is currently in force. Burke Engineering provided a not-to-exceed proposal for \$9,800 for this service. Lautzenheiser also requested this to be funded by the Commissioners. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the professional services proposal with Burke Engineering to be paid out of the LIT Economic Development fund. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. An amended motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to allow the President to sign the Burke Engineering proposal. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Murray Cemetery: Cemetery board members Jerri Lehman, Thomas Liby, and Connie Brubaker, addressed to Commissioners concerning quotes that were presented late last year for improvements for the Murray Cemetery. The Commissioners have budgeted \$50,000 in 2025 for cemetery improvements, two proposals were presented for review. Lehman and Brubaker had differing views on which contractor should be used. The Commissioners tabled the discussion until more clarity could be given.

Rock Creek Quarry Vacate Ordinance: An Ordinance to vacate a public right-of-way was presented to the Commissioners for approval. Two public hearings have been held regarding the Vacation Ordinance, December 4, 2023, and September 3, 2024. The proposed Ordinance is subject to conditions included in the Ordinance. Rock Creek Quarry will pay to construct an alternate route which will allow traffic to flow from SR 124 to CR 100 N. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Ordinance 2024-18 to vacate public right-of-way. Motion carried 2-0 by roll call vote. Blake Gerber was not physically present so did not vote.

2025 Sheriff Salary Contract: A 2025 Sheriff Salary Contract was presented to the Commissioners for review. The contract was tabled until Attorney Storer could review the document.

EDC Update: Jeff Stringer announced that Jessica Beste has been hired as the Economic Development Director. Her first day of employment was on October 21st. Attorney Storer will work on an interlocal agreement between the entities that will be involved.

Northeast Indiana Partnership Agreement: A partnership agreement between the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and Wells County was presented to the Commissioners for review. The agreement is for three years commencing in 2025 through 2027. Wells County agrees to pay \$15,000 for the three-year commitment. The agreement provides for funding for the regional economic development program. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve and allow the President to sign the Northeast Indiana Partnership agreement. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Make My Move Contract: A contract was presented to the Commissioners to partner with Make My Move regional program to attract remote workers to Northeast Indiana. A one-time expenditure of \$15,000 from Wells County allows us to partner with surrounding communities to relocate 100 remote working households to the region. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover

to approve and allow the President to sign the Make My Move contract. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Health Department Grant: The Health Department requested approval for a grant application during the October 7th Commissioner meeting. Approval was given, but the motion did not include for the President to sign the approval document. A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow the President to sign the grant approval document for the Health Department. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Rights of Way: Three right-of-way documents were presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the three rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

2025 Board Appointments: Auditor McCormick informed the Commissioners that board appointments for 2025 will be advertised during the month of November as well as listed on the Commissioner's webpage. House Enrolled Act 1328 provides for staggering terms for Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals members. The Commissioners suggested that their two appointments be a one-year and a three-year appointment term, which allows for the County Council appointment to be a two-year term.

Other Business: Auditor McCormick informed the Commissioners that all the ARPA funds have been expended. To date, \$2,000,000 has been given to the Regional Sewer District, \$2,745,714 was used for the jail renovation, \$71,614.87 was used for new police vehicles, and \$678,837.13 was used to run utilities to the highway garage. In total \$5,496,166 was expended. McCormick requested an update to the ARPA plan to add the police vehicles and utility expenditures.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:04PM, motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor