

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session January 6, 2025

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, January 6, 2025, at 5:00 PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Michael Vanover, Blake Gerber, Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

Re-organization of Board: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to re-appoint Commissioner Jeff Stringer as Commissioner President and Michael Vanover as Commissioner Vice President for 2025. Motion carried 3-0

Minutes: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes from December 16, 2024, regular session.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #26 in the amount of \$305,533.90, Payroll #1 in the amount of \$312,678.54 and 164 claims totaling \$595,041.09. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 80 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 41 pretrial Circuit, 1 F6 DOC and 15 DOC. Holliday reported that Ameresco will have a representative present at the January 21st meeting to discuss final payment. Any outstanding items would be considered manufacturer issues and handled under warranty; the Sheriff had no issue with making final payment.

Highway Supervisor: Supervisor Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on current projects. Highway employees are maintaining equipment. Road conversions will continue when the temperature increases. Plowing, sanding, salting, and tree removal are the main objectives currently. The highway currently has three open positions, one mechanic and two drivers. The job description for the mechanic position is being updated and Bonar will schedule interviews within the next week. Highway garage issues include garage door thresholds do not keep rain out of the building, door #1 does not close completely, louvers in cold storage not opening when they should, leak in roof, louvers opening with all doors closed, water line next to ceiling is rubbing on steel wall, the fire protection valve is leaking oil and the north louver in cold storage does not open correctly. Commissioner Stringer suggested scheduling a meeting with Conor Jackson and a Commissioner to troubleshoot and get the issues resolved. Bonar made a request for the purchase of a track loader, Attorney Storer suggested Bonar submit a request to purchase from three vendors and return with the information. One right-of-way document was presented for the Commissioner review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and sign the right-of-way document. Motion carried 3-0. A proposal to amend the required right-of-way for road conversions was presented to the Commissioners for review. The proposal recommends amending the existing standard from 30 feet to 25 feet based on conditions. As stated in the proposal, the reduced right of way would increase land use optimization, flexibility, alignment with modern standards and community engagement. The reduced 25-foot right-of-way would be implemented on a case-by-case basis. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the amended right-of-way requirements for road conversions. Motion carried 3-0.

Highway Engineer: Engineer Nate Whitacre presented the 2025 annual bid documents. Whitacre recommended accepting all bids and allowing the most economically to be used based upon operational needs. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover, to accept all bids presented. Motion carried 3-0. Whitacre will advertise for bids for Bridge 65 in the News Banner and Ossian Journal on January 16th and January 30th. The bids will be opened publicly on February 19th at the County highway conference room. One utility permit was presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and sign the utility permit. Motion carried 3-0. The application window for the 2025 Community Crossing Grant is open. Whitacre will submit an application for Meridian Road. The application is for a minor structural overlay to restore 2% crown improving drainage, safety, lifespan, and minor enhancement to structural performance. Whitacre will present a letter of financial commitment for review during the January 21st meeting.

Workers Compensation Renewal: Walker Hughes Insurance, Dan Lipp, presented an updated Workers Compensation Renewal to the Commissioners. The effective date of the policy is 02/01/2025-02/01/2026. One proposal was offered from Indiana Public Employers' Plan for \$76,028, which was up 2.75% from the previous plan year. The Commissioners tabled the renewal until the January 21st meeting.

EMA Job Description: An expanded duties job description for the EMA Director was presented for approval. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the EMA Director job description dated December 19, 2024. Motion carried 3-0.

EMA Director Appointment: The EMA Director appointment was tabled until the January 21st meeting.

Commissioner Sale: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to set a minimum bid of \$100 for properties 001-00342-00 and 001-00344-00, and a minimum bid of \$250 for properties 006-04265-00 and 015-10280-00, and to set the Commissioner sale date as March 12, 2025, at 10 AM. Motion carried 3-0.

2025 Board Appointments: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to appoint Adia Yergler to the Alcoholic Beverage board for an annual appointment. Motion carried 3-0. The Commissioners tabled the appointment to the Cemetery board until the January 21st meeting. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to re-appoint Jeff Stringer to the Economic Development board, Michael Vanover to the EMA board, and Blake Gerber to the EMS board. Motion carried 3-0.

Michael Vanover submitted his resignation to the Community Corrections Advisory board. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to appoint Eric Kiefer to the Community Corrections Advisory board to complete Vanover's term through December 31, 2027. Motion carried 3-0.

Annual Disclosure Certification: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to sign the annual certification regarding disclosure of county contracts with the business interests of relatives. Motion carried 3-0.

2025 Solid Waste Salary Contract: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the 2025 Solid Waste Contract (Misc. 2025-01). Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment: Larry Heckber has applied to serve on the cemetery board. A relative of Heckber has submitted a quote to do restoration on a cemetery that the cemetery board oversees. Larry reiterated to the Commissioners that, if appointed to the cemetery board, no conflict would arise. Heckber would recuse himself from voting on the relative's proposal. Heckber informed the Commissioners about previous cemetery clean-up projects and his willingness to serve on the cemetery board. Commissioner Stringer would like the current cemetery board to submit their recommendation for the cemetery board appointment.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:58 PM, motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor