

## **DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

January 9, 2023

Commissioners Present: President William L Hartman  
Vice President Michael Watson  
Vice President Todd Sanderson

Others Present: Auditor Susan Sleeper  
Attorney Andrew Kruse

### **MATTER OF REORGANIZATION**

Attorney Kruse opened up nominations for President:

Todd Sanderson motioned to nominate William Hartman as President. Michael Watson seconded Attorney Kruse closed nominations and called for vote with the motion passing (2,1) with Hartman voting against.

### **MATTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

Dotty handed out the 2022 turnover rate for DeKalb County that came in at 25.7%, she related the higher number of separated employees to departments that had or would have a change in Leaders. Dotty is working on the Certificates for Years of Service and asked if the Commissioners wanted to continue recognizing the employees for reaching their milestones, all agree to continue. Dotty then went over recruiting for the County. Dotty spoke briefly about longevity pay and that she had communicated to the employees. Dotty announced the safety committee meeting that would take place on January 20<sup>th</sup>, and what she is going to cover.

*Regular Meeting paused at 9:00 a.m. for the advertised Public Hearing*

### **MATTER OF PUBLIC HEARING ON BOT HIGHWAY PROJECT**

Commissioner Watson's concern is that financing is in the discussion and the Commissioners do not have ability to approve financing. Tyler Wolfe said he understood that the Commissioners approval was just to move it forward to the Council for approval. Attorney Kruse questioned Tyler on who would be providing the contract for review. Commissioner Watson made mention that there could possibly be a second option for the Financial Advisor to review and just wanted to be sure the Commissioners are not locking the Council into something. Commissioner Hartman asked again for anyone for or against the project.

Lynn Reinhart 4224 CR 71 | He is not going to speak either for or against, but reminded everyone that he had attended some earlier meetings as he was cautious of the project but it has been decided and he shall support the decision to better DeKalb County. He is concerned on the amount of funds that will be allocated to the project and then the council possibly coming to the public for a wheel tax when the funds run low. Commissioner Hartman responded. Lynn feels that by Hartman saying the Highway had been neglected is a negative comment against the Commissioners and their predecessors. He also explained his concern on the standing buildings and utilizing the cost already in those buildings. Commissioner Watson feels they have been very prudent on this project with the planning and decisions made to get to this point.

*Public Hearing closed at 9:14 a.m.*

*Regular Meeting reconvened at 9:14 for Public Hearing*

#### **MATTER OF MEMORANDUM OF RECOMMENDATION**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Recommendation to pass on to Council, contingent on Council's approve of the finance package. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF HIGHWAY 2023 BID RESULTS**

Ben Parker presented the results of the annual materials and supplies bids that were opened on December 19, 2022. The Commissioners in the past have accepted all bids and used the best price available at the time of purchase to save the County money. Also, sometimes a vendor does not have a material available when the County is ready for it.

**Todd Sanderson motioned to accept all bids as presented for 2023. Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.**

#### **MATTER OF HIGHWAY**

Ben announced that Bridge 9 on CR 60 is estimated to start 2/26 for construction. Ben will have bid specs done soon on Bridge 57 on CR 41 to send out. Once everything is approved by the State then Bridge 132 on CR 72 will start. Bridge specs are coming together for the Community Crossings Grant for CR 35; it was a little different with this project as part of the project is with the City of Auburn so they decided to bid the projects separately. Next, a brief discussion took place on Calcium Chloride percentages applied and cost difference. Commissioner Hartman said there has been a request on CR 44 to reduce to a 45 mph speed limit from the current 55 mph limit, and asked if there has ever been a traffic study done on that road. Ben explained that most of the increased dust is from shift changes. Commissioner Sanderson asked if dust control is a qualification for a traffic study, but traffic/speed would be a qualification. Commissioner Hartman is in favor of doing a study and reducing the speed if it is qualified, depending on NIRC's results. Ben expressed the study will not be done until spring, as they do not like putting the strips down on the road during plowing season. A short discussion took place on the deteriorating of CR 35.

#### **MATTER OF TITLE CHANGE OF SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Sheriff Thomas discussed the title of his department, going forward they will be titled as the DeKalb County Sheriff's Office to reflect the constitutional establishment.

#### **MATTER OF COURTHOUSE SECURITY UPDATES**

Sheriff Thomas began with discussing why the security was put in place in the first place and that was to ensure a weapon was not brought into the courthouse. Sheriff Thomas knows the two biggest issues at this time is cell phones in the courthouse and the screening of all employees. Sheriff Thomas feels the cellphone ban in the courthouse is unreasonable, unnecessary and not a safety issue. He is aware the courts do not want cellphones in the courtrooms and wants to work with the judges to come up with a resolution. Sheriff Thomas is proposing evaluation and collaboration and he would like to consult with the Office of Court Services, meet with the involved parties, think outside the box and come up with a solution for all those involved.

Commissioner Sanderson agrees that our employees are all serving the county and if we can't trust our employees then they shouldn't be working here and should be treated as the Prosecutor and Judges. Sanderson also feels the third floor needs to be protected from phones and feels the solution is simple and feels signage and an ordinance imposing a stiff fee for someone who does take a phone in and to the third floor. Commissioner Watson thinks if only the third floor is going to be banned from cell phones then there would need to be someone on the third floor policing that floor and the long term solution is to get the business office outside the courthouse. As far as the employee entrance, he is fine either way as the system moves quickly. Commissioner Hartman is with Sanderson on signage and fines and feels the issue would stop as long as the sign is placed specifically for the public to have to walk around or they won't read it. Hartman feels the employees should be screened, as the holdup is the bag check. Sheriff Thomas does not disagree with the comments made as this all comes back to the purpose of why the security was put into place in the first place and he would like to consult the experts. Commissioner Hartman feels this is just a beginning spot and some changes need to be made going forward.

#### **MATTER NEW HIRE INCENTIVE AT SHERIFFS' OFFICE**

Sheriff Thomas is looking to adopt new ideas and initiatives to help with recruiting of certified police officers. He is proposing the following:

- 1) The county accept a certified officer's time of service at their previous employer and it be reflected in their PTO time.
- 2) The county accept a certified officer's time of service at their previous employer and that time be credited to them in the Sheriff's pay matrix.

Sheriff explained that recruiting a certified officer substantially decreases the county's training cost and time. Commissioner Hartman asked how much it cost to send an officer to the academy, with that being upwards of around \$10,000. Commissioner Sanderson likes the idea of paying them for their years of service, but does not like mixing the incentive in with PTO time as he feels that will set precedent for other offices that would have different credentials. Commissioner Hartman suggests paying the top pay and adding an additional 5 days PTO. Watson feels recruiting and retention is tough everywhere and they really need to think hard on how to structure that with law enforcement to help the Sheriff with having a more successful program. Sheriff Thomas currently has a lateral hiring process in place and would like to be able to put a hiring incentive out there to try to recruit officers. Auditor Sleeper feels that the deputies need the incentive, but asked if the Commissioners are ready to answer to other departments that have asked or will ask. Commissioner Hartman suggested possibly putting a limit on this incentive to get the office staffed. The commissioners would like to think about this for another week, as making quick decisions may be detrimental. Commissioner Sanderson asked if the tattoo policy has been changed and it has along with the facial hair policy, as those are internal office policies, and was updated effective January 1, 2023.

#### **MATTER OF SOLAR OVERLAY DISCUSSION- CHRIS GAUMER**

Chris came to debunk some of the false statements made about the ordinance. He is not interested in getting into whether solar should come or not come or whether things are made in China or not as he does not have any control over that type of decision. The ordinance is not fast-tracking solar companies; it is not a red carpet being put down for solar companies in contrast to comments made at prior meetings. The overlay district has to come before the Plan Commission and the County Commissioners, the County is not flat out allowing solar in any part of DeKalb County, and the County is not bringing in just any solar company, it has to be an industrial project. Chris went through the option he's heard on whether to remove the overlay entirely and require the solar companies to rezone the property. He went through the four zoning districts that commercial solar could go in, discussed their setbacks, and landscaping requirements. He discussed with the commissioners that the overlay district allows the commissioners to have control of who comes to DeKalb County and where they go. Putting more restrictions in place for

the road use agreement, decommissioning plan and other items required. Commissioner Watson spoke on the State of Indiana being pro alternative energy. Commissioner Sanderson asked if the State enacts HB1381, if the local ordinances will be null and void, Watson explained that two years ago the bill was going to trump the local ordinances, but currently they may not include those counties that are already in place. Commissioner Hartman feels the local ordinance should have some say, but that will depend on who is writing the ordinance at the State. Commissioner Hartman would like to revisit the recycling language in the ordinance, setbacks and total acreage allowed. Commissioner Watson is in total agreement with Hartman in what needs to be looked at in the ordinance. Short discussion on proposed changes on the UDO and having small groups to go over changes.

#### **MATTER OF PAYROLL**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve payroll for the period of December 18-31, 2022. Todd Sanderson seconded, and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF CLAIMS**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve December 2022 Bookkeeper and Payroll claims along with Special claims in the amount of \$14,570.25 consisting of wire transfer #'s 23275 thru 23276 that were processed on 1/4/2023 and General claims processed on January 9, 2023 in the amount of \$687,260.40 consisting of warrant #'s 133903 thru 133925 and wire transfer #'s 23277 thru 23389. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF MINUTES**

Michael Watson made the motion to approve the minutes as amended dated December 28, 2022. Todd Sanderson seconded, and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve the following travel requests:

- 1) Sandi Wilcox or Joni Humbarger to be paid \$30 per month for daily local bank traffic.
- 2) Effie Campbell to attend Building Extensions Presentations Training held at Wells County Extension Office on January 6, 2023. Estimated cost of \$61.50 paid by department travel.
- 3) Richard Ring to attend the 2023 Legislative Conference held at Hilton Indianapolis Hotel on February 7-8, 2023. Estimated cost of \$318.00 paid by department travel.
- 4) Dotty Miller to attend NIHRA Monthly Meeting held at Ceruti's in Fort Wayne on March 1, April 5, June 7, & September 6, 2023. Estimated cost of \$21.50 each month paid by department travel.
- 5) Sandi Wilcox & Joni Humbarger to attend Spring Treasurer's Conference held at Renaissance Indianapolis in Carmel on March 7, 2023. Estimated cost of \$297.00 paid by department travel.

Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF OFFICIALS' BONDS FOR APPROVAL**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the following officials' bonds for 2023: blanket bond for all County employees (\$5,000 each), Clerk Holly Albright (\$120,000), Coroner Jennie Short (\$15,000), Auditor Susan Sleeper (\$30,000), Treasurer Sandra Wilcox (\$300,000), Recorder Leta Hullinger (\$15,000), and Sheriff Brady Thomas (\$30,000), and for all three to sign. Todd Sanderson seconded, and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Michael Watson made a motion to appoint Mike Shuherk to EDC for a term beginning on Jan 1, 2023 and ending Dec. 31, 2025. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF EMS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

Michael Watson motioned to appoint Brady Thomas as the Member of the Public to the EMS oversight committee with an open-ended term. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIVING THE 2022 NORTHEASTERN CENTER REPORT**

Michael Watson motioned to acknowledge receipt of the 2022 Northeastern Center year-end report. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF FIDLAR CONTRACT**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve and for all three to sign the Fidlar contract for Stage 1 – Scanning Only of 129 Mortgage Books from 1845-1963, based on 8.5 hour days for a total of \$26,994.31 to be paid for by Recorders Perpetuation Fund. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF SCULPIN SOLAR CONSULTANT COSTS AGREEMENT CHANGES**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the amended agreement final format in which the Developer must pay \$100,000 within 15 days of the full execution of the agreement, and an additional \$50,000 on the date of issuance of final permits to commence construction, with a cap of \$250,000. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.


Larry Williams asked if there were any changes from the original agreement, which is only the cap of \$250,000.

#### **RECEIPT OF PRECINCT BOUNDARY CHANGES**


Todd Sanderson motioned to acknowledge receipt of the adopted precinct boundary changes in Order 2021-434 and 2022-300 from the Indian Election Division. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF OTHER DISCUSSION**

Topics Include: Commissioner Certificate Sale, possible evening meetings at least once a quarter,

  
William L. Hartman – President

  
Michael Watson – Vice President

  
Todd Sanderson – Vice President

Attest:

  
Susan Sleeper, Auditor