

## **DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

January 23, 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 HUMAN RESOURCES**

Dotty began this morning with discussing a few deputies at the Sheriff's Office that were not able to use all of their PTO time as they stepped up to the plate when the office was short staffed. Commissioner Watson and Sanderson both wondered if the deputies would be able to take the time off as well as use their new PTO time awarded. Commissioner Sanderson would like to suggest to Council to pay out unused PTO at the end of their anniversary date each year. Dotty then went over how the Repository time came about to begin with. Dotty then went over recruitment around the County. Dotty gave a report on the Safety Committee Meeting that took place, and went over Work Comp claims that closed and remained open. Dotty explained that we offer some voluntary insurances, one being Boston Mutual and this has been handed off to a closer broker and they would like to service the existing policy holders and open up to other employees that would like to take out a policy. The Commissioners are ok with allowing this as long as the employee is not doing this on work time. For the past few years, the County has had wellness screenings offered to our employees, and when we joined Anthem, they gave us a \$5,000 allotment and the County used about half of that in 2022. Parkview has contacted Dotty to ask if the County was interested in doing the screening again, so Dotty wanted to see if the Commissioners wanted to do the screenings, wait for the possible new insurance structure, etc. Commissioners agree to go ahead and have the wellness screenings.

### **MATTER OF MAINTENANCE**

Larry explained that his part time worker is very interested in everything the job entails and would like to become full time. Larry feels it would be a good idea to bring him on to get a lay of the land as both he and Clint will not be here forever. The young man is looking for a 'home' with a stable position. Commissioner Watson said this would be more of an apprentice type position because this job is not trainable in 30 days. Larry told the Commissioners that he would not be asking if he did not feel this person would not be a good employee. Dotty is big on succession plans and this is a nice plan. All Commissioners are in support of adding the full time positions and having Larry take the request to the Council.

### **MATTER OF ANNEX HEAT EXCHANGERS**

Each year our heat exchangers are inspected and there are three that need replaced, all three have cracks in the heat exchanger. Larry provided quotes to just fix the part that is wrong and that came in at \$6,900 to fix all three at once. He also has quotes for new if the Commissioners want to review those that came in at \$30,000 to replace all at the same time, if they replace individually it would be \$33,000. Commissioner Sanderson asked if the rest of the unit was still good, and if it is he would be in favor of repairing instead of replacing.

**Todd Sanderson made a motion to repair the heat exchanger units in the amount of \$6,900.**  
**Michael Watson seconded and all approved.**

### **MATTER OF HIGHWAY**

Ben received a bill from Right Speed for \$4,145.68 for the 0804 CR 32 issue when a cable was cut while moving the berm back for water drainage, and knocked out the phone line in that area. Andrew Kruse asked what our standards are for this type scenario; however, the cable was negligently installed. The commissioners would like Ben to work with Andrew to send back a letter in response.

Ben gave a brief update on projects his department is working on. Next, discussion on where to locate the tower at the highway department took place. Commissioner Sanderson then brought up BOT funding and where we are so that the project can be purchased, and Commissioner Watson explained that the financial advisor for the Council will present at the February Council meeting and the Council should be able to vote. Commissioner Watson informed Ben that the SB 1774 is still alive at 50/50 split between MVH and MVH Restricted funds but includes salt, sand and plowing. HB 1411, the speed limit bill is set for hearing; this will let the county set speed limits on county roads without going through all the hoops to get it done. Gate operators at the new facility was discussed next.

### **MATTER OF EPIC INSURANCE PRESENTATION**

Commissioner Hartman explained what the County was looking to move toward concerning health insurance. Denny Wright stated: "The County can have any plan design they want" and depending on how it is structured will depend whether the price would be more or less than what is currently in place with Anthem. Discussed the logistics of how a change should occur, and what should be in place to move forward. Additional discussion took place on DeKalb Central School and the plan/process they have.

### **MATTER OF CLAIMS**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve Special claims in the amount of \$2,610.57 consisting of warrant #'s 133927 thru 133928 that were processed on 01/18/2023 and General claims processed on January 23, 2023 in the amount of \$855,253.14 consisting of warrant #'s 133932 thru 133936 and wire transfer #'s 23425 thru 23547. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

### **MATTER OF PAYROLL**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve payroll for the period of January 1-14, 2023. Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.

### **MATTER OF MINUTES**

Todd Sanderson made the motion to approve the minutes as amended dated January 17, 2023. Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.

### **MATTER OF TRAVEL REQUESTS**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the following travel requests:

- 1) Michael Watson to attend Mayors and Commissioners Caucus Meeting held in Huntington on January 18, 2023. Estimated cost of \$49.00 paid by department travel.
- 2) Zachary Kerley to attend SRO Training held at the Hammond Administrative Building on February 12-17, 2023. Estimated cost of \$1,220.00 paid by department travel.
- 3) Thomas Olinske to attend Computer Investigation Training held at Auburn PD Training Facility on February 22, 2023. Estimated cost of \$495.00 paid by department travel.
- 4) Derek Bergdall to attend Breath Test Operator Certification held at the Indiana Department of Toxicology on March 8, 2023. Estimated cost of \$300.00 paid by department travel.

Todd Sanderson seconded, and all approved.

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

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the Surveyor's official bond for 2023 in the amount of (\$15,000). Todd Sanderson Seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF VOTING SITE LEASE AGREEMENT**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve and for the president to sign the Voting Site Lease Agreement. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF ORDINANCE 2023-R-1: DCC 4-1-10-1 AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING A POLICY TO WRITE OFF DEBT**

Michael Watson motioned to pass on SECOND Reading Ordinance 2023-R-1: DCC 4-1-10-1: An Ordinance Establishing a Policy to Write off Debt. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF COMMISSIONERS ATTORNEY FEE AGREEMENT FOR 2023**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve and all three to sign the Attorney Fee Agreement with Andrew Kruse for the year of 2023, for the amount of \$45,000 payable bi-weekly and is considered an employee of the County and eligible for County offered benefits. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF SOLAR DISCUSSION REVIEW OF CHANGES**

The Commissioners went through the Commercial Solar Energy Overlay District updated document with their changes from last meeting. Discussion on the setbacks and buffers took place. Commissioner Watson explained that currently our setbacks are the most restrictive in the State. Commissioner Hartman expressed they are trying to get to a happy medium. Commissioner Sanderson likes it, but also understands Commissioner Watson's remarks.

Andrew Provines expressed that they understand that complete screening is not going to be 100% and feels they need to rely on the Commissioners to have wiggle room in order to do what is best for the citizen, depending on the layout of the scenario at hand.

Commissioner Watson asked the Attorney if the County could negotiate with the landowners, and Andrew Kruse feels standards are needed to have something to go by. Commissioner Sanderson does not want to be involved with the negotiations. Commissioner Hartman and Commissioner Watson both agree the County should not be involved in the negotiations. Commissioner Watson also expressed that the Solar Companies do not come to town to screw everyone, that is not on their agenda. Commissioner Hartman feels Watson has more faith in modern day business owners than he does and feels it is always about the money. Commissioner Watson has not found that the current solar companies around the State have screwed the residents. Commissioner Sanderson does not feel they are going to screw anyone, but the Commissioners are here to set standards and if they do not want to comply then they will need to come to a consensus as landowners.

Ginger Miller asked if the screening applied to the substation as well, and yes it does per Commissioners.

Trina Roudebush brought a couple of visuals for everyone to see what may be expected when a project is put in, the picture example was taken from 300 feet away with minimal screening taken by an average height man, not from up in the air. She also went over other methods of screening and showed different examples of what kind of vegetation could be used. Commissioner Sanderson asked how the solar companies solved erosion control from water runoff, and Trina explained that they use a lot of pollinator plants as they do not feel a lot of rock is a good use of the land. Trina also explained that they treat each job as its own. Commissioner Watson asked where the substations are generally located. Wayne DeLong from Geenex said substations are more located at the point of intersection.

Ginger Miller spoke on property values and case studies on industrial solar that concluded up to a 30% decrease in assessed values. Ginger is a local realtor and talked with many local appraisers and they feel the decrease could be even larger. She mentioned three case studies of the Neighbor Agreements that have been used, one consisted of a monetary offer of \$17,000, another offered \$5,000-\$50,000 to adjacent property owners, and yet another offered 10% of appraised value plus \$1,000 annual payments not to exceed \$35,000. These payments are significant because the developers' own appraisers have determined that solar farms will have no adverse impact on adjacent property values, however the payments can only be interpreted as implicit knowledge or admission of value impairment or decline, according to Ginger. Ginger then discussed Property Rights, we all want to protect them and in IC 32-30-6-6 and IC 32-30-6-7 a nuisance is defined in part, as offensive to the senses or personal enjoyment is lessened by the nuisance and that a civil action can take place. The right to the use and enjoyment of the land is a broad category that generally includes four different types of harm, according to Ginger. She then pointed out two of the four: mental disturbance or annoyance and interference that causes economic loss or depreciation of the property. Ginger then had provided photos of examples that she feels most DeKalb residents want to see and why they want to move to the country, she asked the Commissioners to really look at the photos and asked how they all felt when viewing them, peaceful, serene, calm? Then she handed out photos of industrial solar and what one does NOT want to see in rural DeKalb County. She again asked the Commissioners how they felt when looking at the industrial solar pictures, stressed, angry, betrayed? Ginger ended with stating "there is no common sense being used with green energy projects the federal government is trying to push". "Let's not be a pawn in this farce." She went on to say there are many areas of the country and here in Indiana that are denying solar because they know it is not efficient power, and asked to please not allow industrial solar here.

The Commissioners are ready for the ordinance to go to the Plan Commission and will make a motion next week on the changes from today.

#### **MATTER OF ARP AGREEMENT WITH DEKALB COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP, INC**


Michael Watson made a motion to have the president sign the agreement between the DeKalb County Economic Development Partnership, INC and the DeKalb County Commissioners to receive their ARPA award amount for the County Wide Housing Study in the amount of \$26,000. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

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

Topics Include: Zoom screen, OCRA introduction, water heater at sunny meadows quote from Auburn Heating for \$6,500 and the installation, OCRA introduction,

Attest:

  
Susan Sleeper, Auditor

  
William L. Hartman – President

  
Michael Watson – Vice President

  
Todd Sanderson – Vice President