

DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
January 30, 2023

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

Others Present: Auditor Susan Sleeper
 Attorney Andrew Kruse

MATTER OF HIGHWAY

Ben began discussing Bridge #132 that is in the design process, but Ben wanted to know how the Commissioners wanted to proceed with the guardrail at a cost of \$30,000 or to extend the box structure an additional 15 foot on both sides to eliminate the guardrail with an additional cost of \$60,000. Commissioner Watson yields to Ben expertise and Commissioner Watson like the idea to eliminate the guardrails on this project, Commissioner Hartman agrees.

Community Crossings Matching Grant (CCMG) bidding date, working with City that plans to take to The Board of Works on Feb. 7th, back to the County Feb. 13th to be signed by Commissioners and advertised Feb. 17th and Feb. 24th to be opened on March 6th. Ben asked Attorney Kruse if he wanted to review the contracts and he will since this is the first time while being County Attorney.

Highway Tower quotes were received from J&K Communications, Inc. Ben asked for 2 quotes one for 100' and 120' and both would support a 2 ft. receiver for AES Internet. The 100' tower quote was \$100,781.56, and 120' tower quote was \$116,156.36 that included installation with a new antenna and cabling down to the tower. A short discussion took place on this topic.

MATTER OF ANNUAL BOARD OF FINANCE MEETING

President Todd Sanderson opened the meeting at 8:54 a.m..

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the Board of Finance meeting minutes from January 24, 2022. William Hartman seconded, and all approved.

Michael Watson motioned Todd Sanderson as the **President** of the Board of Finance. William Hartman seconded and all approved.

William Hartman nominated Michael Watson as the **Vice President** of the Board of Finance. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

Michael Watson nominated Sandra Wilcox as the **Secretary** of the Board of Finance. William Hartman seconded and all approved.

Michael Watson made a motion to approve the **State of Investment Policy** that now includes investment ability with funds that are backed by the Federal Reserve and Federal Government Agencies for all three to sign. William Hartman seconded, and all approved.

Treasurer Sandi Wilcox went over the Cash and Investment Report and 3 Year Revenue Comparison Report. She can invest up to 2 years without having to come back and re-doing the investment policy.

However, due to the rates, most of the CD's are invested for 6-month terms. They are currently invested in Beacon Credit Union and Flagstar. Local banks compete with interest rates, and that is how they are chosen by the Treasurer. Community State Bank is the County's main bank. Many of the County's Investments are also with Trust Indiana, Beacon and Garrett State Bank. Star Bank is the bank that the County uses for online property tax payments by property owners, and that account relationship ended in August of 2022. Excise tax is just held until it can be disbursed at settlement time at Trust Indiana; excise is not a county asset. In 2022, interest earned was \$872,031.71, as compared to 2021's interest earned of \$71,262.72 and 2020's interest earned of \$235,175.44.

Next, warrants outstanding and unpaid in the amount of \$623.86 were reported. Michael Watson made a motion to move the **outstanding and unpaid checks** from their accounts into County General in the amount of \$623.86. William Hartman seconded, and all approved.

Sandi then went over the 2022 Summary of Collections Report that went through the Treasurer's Office last year. Most of the property tax payments came by way of walk-ins, mail or dropbox at 53.6%, Mortgage Escrow at 25.7%, Electronic Payments at 15.6%, Partner Bank Locations at 4.5%, and Misc. Collections such as TRECs, AFCS at 0.6%. The delinquency rate for 2022 was at 6.97%, up from 6.50% for 2021, but still down from 7.30% in 2020. That represents about \$2.1 million dollars in delinquencies. There were 64 tax sale properties in 2022, compared to 130 in 2021 and 149 in 2020.

Finally, Ms. Wilcox went over 2022 Achievements and 2023 Goals. **Accomplishments included:** Implementation of LOW Tax Info (previously PATi system), replacement system for online payments, maximized interest earned on County money, inventoried, indexed and organized basement storage, streamlined the delinquent Government employee process, First Deputy completed the Professional Development Leadership Academy, digitized their alcohol clearance research database which results in more efficient research, and developed process and procedures for the horse drawn vehicle ordinance fee collection. **Goals for 2023 are:** work with Auditor's office to complete the cleanup of the remaining parcels with unknown owners and unknown locations, develop marketing plan to increase Invoice Cloud usage to 10%- double our on-line presence, update & refresh Treasurer offices website, work with investment advisor to maximize the interest return to \$1.2M, and reorganize and realign staff functions for increased internal controls and staff flexibility.

William Hartman made a motion to approve the **Board of Finance Annual Report**. Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.

The next meeting will be January 22, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

Michael Watson made the motion to **adjourn** the Board of Finance meeting at 9:30 a.m. William Hartman seconded, and all approved.

MATTER OF VA BURIAL ALLOWANCE

Ronda Hunkler and Travis Holcomb attended to speak on the amount of burial allowance that is allowed, which is currently \$100. Ronda handed out IC 10-17-10-1 Qualifications for allowance. This allowance is what the County can cover for the Veteran's Burial cost and \$100 for monument placement. Ronda would like to propose an allowance of \$500 for reimbursement for Next of Kin for burial, based on research she has done from surrounding counties and also to keep the \$100 for the placement of the headstone. Travis explained that what prompted this request in their office is the rate of inflation.

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve to increase the Next of Kin burial reimbursement to \$500 and to keep the \$100 for the placement of the headstone. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

MATTER OF SOLAR DISCUSSION REVIEW OF CHANGES

Commissioner Sanderson reviewed the red-lined version and is fine with the document. Commissioner Watson has some concerns on the set-backs but believes the document can go on to the Plan Commission. Commissioner Hartman questioned whether the screening should be required from 401' to 599'.

Commissioner Watson is not in favor of that at all, as they have already expanded the original setbacks and we should see how the plan plays out. Commissioner Hartman feels additional screening at 600' would be a compromise with the land depreciation value. Chris Gaumer went through the document for clarifications. Further Discussion took place.

Chris then spoke on the Soil & Water information that Nellie Peffley submitted to the Commissioners that consist of mainly mowing ordinances to be added to the CSES. Chris' opinion is the five bullet points that Nellie is requesting is already part of the CSES in section P: Ground vegetation and landscaping.

William Hartman asked for public comment for or against the topic:

Andrew Provines wanted to say Thank You and agreed with the changes made today and they appreciate the Commissioners backing to protect the landowners.

Ben Steury wanted to add to the fire plan and feels there should be a no burn zone within a 800'-1,000' of the solar panels, as the majority of fires are set by landowners themselves. He then spoke on new revenues, setbacks, and the amount of money that will be lost to the County with the current setbacks in place. The idea is to be efficient, not to take the efficiency out of the process.

Steve Feters read his prepared letter from the farmers and landowners of DeKalb County who wish to express their deepest concerns with the proposed amendments to the county's ordinance for the development of commercial solar projects. As advocates for property rights, they are particularly concerned with the efforts of some individuals to impose and limit their ability to use their land as they see fit. They feel that adopting the proposed changes to the ordinance would establish a particularly dangerous precedent for the future of the county. Given the immense benefit that these projects will have for DeKalb County, it is especially imperative that we remain steadfast in our commitment to these freedoms and values. Steve handed out his letter with 22 signatures approving what Steve had read.

Tim Maldeney stated that the pro-solar group did not come back in because they thought it was set in stone at 400' and he hopes the Commissioners realize they are taking away money for the kids in the schools and he hopes they are happy with themselves.

Chris Gaumer will get this on the Plan Commission agenda on the February 15th meeting and explained that the Plan Commission will only be reviewing the changes and provided a favorable, unfavorable or no comment on what is provided. The Plan Commission cannot makes changes and Chris wanted to be sure the public knows that if they attend no changes can be made.

Todd Sanderson made a motion for the president to sign the Application for Text Amendments of the Unified Development Ordinance to be submitted to the Plan Commission. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

Todd left the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

MATTER OF INSURANCE TRUSTEES: HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL

Rex Whitten with Insurance Trustees introduced the members that he brought with him and went over the insurance process.

Forrest Williams with Unified Group Services, a Third party administrator provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Commissioners. They cover customer service, claim scrubbing, member-facing program navigation, proactive compliance, and next steps.

MATTER OF COURTHOUSE SECURITY DISCUSSION

William Hartman began with how to get cell phones brought into the courthouse, and feels signage needs changed specifically outside the front door stating no cellphones on the 3rd floor, also providing lockers for patrons to place their cellphones if they are brought in, he would also like a sign on the back side of the elevator door stating no cellphones on 3rd floor and signs on pedestals at the top of each staircase. Sheriff Thomas reached out to Sheriff Joe Dowdell who specializes in courthouse security who has sent a questionnaire to be filled out and then will move to a conference call and a possible visit. Sheriff Thomas also would like the judges to be included in the final decision. Commissioner Watson does not feel signage will be any more effective than the signs we have now as patrons still bring their cellphones into the courthouse. Commissioner Watson reminded that the purpose of not having cellphones on the third floor is not to punish someone to bring their phones in, it is to protect the parties involved in cases being held from being videoed or pictures taken. Discussion took place. Commissioner Watson feels the best solution is to get the administrative offices outside of the courthouse so that the courthouse only contains judicial offices, therefore a no cellphone policy in the courthouse could be put in place. Commissioner Hartman states they do not know how long that would take with the other projects the Commissioners have on their plates and in the meantime should work on a solution for the current timeframe.

MATTER OF SHERIFF OFFICE SATELLITE LOCATIONS

There has been a Memorandum Of Understanding between Sheriff's Office and Town of St. Joe has been put in place to have a satellite Sheriff Office that will be of no cost to the County, with the Deputies having secure access at all times to help increase the presence in that part of the County and decrease response times.

MATTER OF MINUTES

Michael Watson made the motion to approve the minutes as amended dated January 24, 2023. Todd Sanderson seconded, and all approved.

MATTER OF TRAVEL REQUESTS

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

- 1) Michael Watson to testify for HB 1411-speed limit bill at the Statehouse on January 24, 2023. Estimated cost of \$173.50 paid by department travel.
- 2) Jennie Short to attend Newly Elected Coroners Training held at the Sheraton Keystone Crossing in Indianapolis on Feb. 7, 2023. Estimated cost of \$135.50 paid by department travel.
- 3) Lindsey Kartholl to attend HR Roundtable Discussions held at DeKalb Chamber Partnership on Feb. 8, May 10, August 9, and November 1, 2023. Estimated cost of \$100.00 paid by department travel.
- 4) Ronda Hunkler and Travis Holcomb to attend Northeast District CVSO Meeting held at the Whitley County Government Center on Feb. 22, 2023. Estimated cost of \$28.00 paid by department travel.
- 5) Deputy Reed Hansen to attend Advanced Search and Seizure held at the Warsaw Police Department on Feb. 28, 2023. Estimated cost of \$225.00 paid by department travel.
- 6) Deputy Matthew Haber to attend Glock Armory's Course held at the Huntington Police Department on May 4, 2023. Estimated cost of \$250.00 paid by department travel.

Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.

MATTER OF 2022 ANNUAL JAIL REPORT RECEIPT

Michael Watson made a motion to acknowledge receipt of the 2022 Annual Jail Report. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

MATTER OF SHERIFF OFFICE 2022 EXPLORER TITLE PAPERWORK

Michael Watson made a motion for the president to sign the Title Paperwork to obtain title for the vehicle below. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

2022 Ford Explorer: VIN# 1FM5K8AC1NGC23892, purchased 1/10/2023.

MATTER OF TRAVELERS CASUALTY AND SURETY COMPANY DOCUMENTS

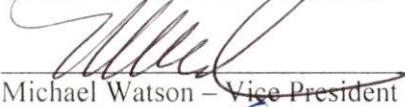
Michael Watson made a motion for the president to sign the Travelers Casualty and Surety Multi-Factor Authentication Attestation, CyberRisk Social Engineering Fraud Supplement, and CyberRisk Short Form Renewal Application for 2023. William Hartman seconded and motion carried. (Todd did not participate in the vote)

MATTER OF OTHER DISCUSSION

Topics Include: Recorder's Office PCU Replacement, Todd Land, Sunny Meadows Water heater, Visitor's Bureau process, and Humane Shelter Sale.



William L. Hartman – President



Michael Watson – Vice President



Todd Sanderson – Vice President

Attest:



Susan Sleeper, Auditor