

## **DEKALB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

July 24, 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 ANNEX FURNACE/AC UNIT**

There are four units at the Annex Building; this is the third of the units that needs replaced. Larry asked if they should go ahead and replace the fourth unit at the same time or let it run. Larry presented quotes for replacement as follows:

    Auburn Heating & Plumbing: 80% @ \$9,785.00, 96% @ \$11,085

    Felger Hart: 92% @ \$12,985

The Commissioners would like to do both units and to see if Auburn Heating & Plumbing would give a break to do both units at the same time.

Michael Watson made a motion to accept and replace both units with a 96% efficiency unit from Auburn Heating & Air Conditioning. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

### **MATTER OF GENERATOR QUOTES**

Larry brought quotes in for a generator for the Courthouse and the Jail. Votaw did express that a combined generator for the Courthouse and Jail would not be a good idea and if the Jail moves the new generator can be moved to a new building. The generators would both be stationed at the Jail. The Commissioners are concerned with the placement in case the jail building is torn down at some point and would like to think about the placement before

### **MATTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

Ronda Hunkler feels like Travis Holcomb is the best spokesperson for DeKalb County and she also wanted to thank the Commissioners for supporting her department. She is looking for a Veteran that would have familiarity with documents and she would do most of the training. Dotty continued with other recruitment around the County. Dotty handed out the worker's comp claim reports for review from the Safety Committee Meeting. The biggest complaint on the new health plan is that none of the area dentists are in network. Dotty has encouraged the employees to contact the companies and discuss concerns and ask questions. Dotty said she is also receiving positive comments on the new health plan changes as well. Commissioner Hartman feels the complaints have been very low considering the changes that were made.

## **MATTER OF SB-4: HEALTH FUNDING PUBLIC COMMENT**

Auditor Sleeper read into the minutes letters in support of the SB-4 Funding from the State of Indiana House of Representatives, Tyler Johnson, Susan Glick & Ben Smaltz.

**Dr. Tyler Johnson:** Began by Thanking the Commissioners for having this public comment session and understands the Commissioners have a big decision in front of them. The bill that has been in the making for two years that was put forth at session this year was picked apart in many different ways. He really would like to be available for questions. Commissioner Sanderson asked Tyler why he voted against the final bill and why he is in favor of the bill now. Tyler said there was one item on his checklist that he wanted to see further explained and that is for the Counties that do not comply how those are tracked. He does not want DeKalb County taxpayer money going to another County and be able to utilize those dollars here. Commissioner Sanderson then asked what Dr. Tyler Johnson what he feels is the biggest issue in DeKalb County, his response is mental health and substance abuse. Dr. Tyler Johnson also expressed that obesity is also a concern, and he recognized that he is not the best example for that concern. Commissioner Sanderson expressed that he is also a little overweight and how will more money help the majority of blue collar works to make the better decisions. Dr. Tyler Johnson feels that the in-person meeting and collaboration is very important. Commissioner Hartman said the in the United States there is approximately 10x more deaths from smoking than guns and most of the gun deaths are from suicide. Dr. Tyler Johnson responded that personal responsibility could be discussed all day but that we should help when it is available.

**In favor: John Graft 5898 CR 7 :** He is here because he read in the paper that Commissioner Sanderson stated that most of the comments received have been negative. John read further in the article and recognize there are some concerns with the State powers and he finds it hard to believe or representatives would lead us in a bad situation and he is in full support of the new funding. John also expressed his concern that mental health is huge, his own brother died of a schizophrenia complication. Schizophrenia is a chemical imbalance, not caused by wrong choices or substances.

**Against: Ashley Grogg- Fort Wayne:** She is extremely well versed and has been following this bill for a very long time. She said that Public Health is a need and worthy cause but not worth fiscal irresponsibility, lack of transparency, or common sense. Ashley discussed that there are loopholes in the bill that the County will be held to and how will the county be able to get out of what they already opted into? She then asked several rhetorical questions. And ended with, this program will be used as a blueprint to strip Counties of their autonomy and undermine the Constitution to reject tyranny. We must protect the sovereignty in this County. "Will this vote be the shot heard around the world, or just a dud?"

**In favor: Suzanne Drerup-Davis- 5724 CR 29:** She applauds the State for their efforts to improve our healthcare in DeKalb County. She also found that sales tax is our largest revenue and that we should benefit from our tax dollars. She sees absolutely no downside to providing core services to our most vulnerable population. Suzanne says to opt-in and if there is anything that needs to be changed the Commissioners can do that since they are in Control.

**Against: Ann Forti-5125 CR 60:** Feels the greatest issue is Trust. She feels everyone in the room is motivated by what best serves the public and everyone sincerely desires quality public health measures. The question is WHO gets to control the outcomes and DO WE trust WHO is in control? Her comments focused on government health agencies establishing some of the most draconian health measurers over the last several years that most of us have ever seen in our lifetime, in particular as it relates to vaccine mandates, as stated in her notes. Ann ended with asking the Commissioner's if DeKalb County currently has the ability to provide adequate public health services without having to opt in to something that could opt us out of our autonomy? And, if the County does, Ann would like to strongly encourage you to consider voting YES for autonomy, and NO for opting in on that which could potentially lead us to being under the thumb of additional draconian policies in our future.

**In favor: Renee Hood 801 E Houston (work address):** Mental Health Coordinator and School Social Worker at Garrett-Keyser School District. She gathered information on the number of vapes that were confiscated from elementary to high school and read those results. Tall Cop Says Stop presentation by Jermaine Galloway was held in March on drugs, vaping and dangers of the uses. He also does community scans throughout the Country, and when he performed some of those scans in DeKalb County he found some products that he had not found in any other gas stations in the Country. Renee feels this bill is very important to provide education for these students beginning at a very young age, as there are elementary students that pick up vapes on the ground and do not have any idea what is in them or what they even are. Our children are the Future and it is very important to Opt-In.

**Against: Larry Williams 2418 Woodland Trail:** Larry had sent an email prior to the meeting and went over the details. Larry feels the need for good public health care is real, but feels SEA 4 is poorly conceived legislation. He feels that Governor Holcomb's Public Health Commission and the Indiana Legislature have failed to produce a fair solution to public health concerns of Indiana counties. He feels SEA 4 fails to address citizen mistrust of Public Health that was severely weakened by Covid political mismanagement. He feels SEA 4 failed to address the issue of Public Trust in their recommendations for public health law updates. He also feels the Health Commission claims that more money for the IDOH will lead to improvements in public health are unsubstantiated. Larry believes that SEA 4 creates a costly \$240 million Public Health bureaucracy and will not adequately protect the safety & privacy of medical data collection. and finally feels that this bill will pave the way for significant IDOH involvement with schools.

**In favor: Tammy Stafford:** Executive Director of St. Martins Healthcare in Garrett. She wants to bring up that it states very clearly that the services that are available are to be done with a collaboration between organizations in the Community. There is not a need to hire 5 more full time nurses, this is to help those that need the help that she serves every day. St. Martins just spent over \$300 thousand dollars to overhaul a mobile clinic because there are so many 'blue collar' uninsured residents in DeKalb County that cannot even get basic health care. Tammy says 'shame on you' if you don't opt-in to the funding available.

**Against: Kellen Dooley 2128 Dallas Court:** The biggest concern is what happens when the rules are changed down the road, and what does the 'opting out' look like in the future? Do we have to pay back the money, is that in writing? He does like the ability to use the money for the good but

**Against: Andrew Provines 3920 CR 75:** Understands that we have money and we have control. He feels the State could have come in and gave the Counties money, but they didn't because they want to be sure the County spends it on what they want it spent on. Andrew disagrees with opting in.

**In favor: Claramary Winebrenner 400 E 7<sup>th</sup> Street:** Claramary is in favor of taking the money, she learned many things from her father. The first is if someone is handing out money, take it and figure out the rest later. She knows many in the room are suspect of the bill. There are conspiracy thoughts also happening. IC 16-46-10-2.2(l) clearly states that the County can opt-out at any time. Claramary expressed that this is an experience and why not see how the County can better the Community with the money that is available.

**Against: Ashley Grogg (2<sup>nd</sup> time):** Public Health is about prevention on disease management, and wanted all to know that the other nurse that spoke was talking about disease management. She then went on to say that she spoke with Auditor Sleeper last week and went over the average of the levied dollars to the Health Department and for the first year the County would be putting in about the same as what would be received at the low end of the funding available. Further, opting out send a clear message to the legislators that the county is just not going to join in on a plan that has not been fully vetted.

**In favor: Dr. Mark Souder:** The problems in the State has been discussed and are nothing short of horrendous. Commissioner Hartman interrupted and asked how Dr. Souder compared our numbers against the surrounding States. Dr. Souder didn't really now as there are multiple factors for comparison. Dr. Souder's made the point that he went into the medical field to help and make a difference and that is what the County should be doing it trying to help and better the County. The programs that are required, the County is already doing 10-12 of them. He feels that in DeKalb County the additional programs that should be focused on include: Tobacco prevention, student health, early childhood learning/behaviors, obesity, and substance abuse/mental health/substance abuse. Dr. Souder personally talked to Lindsey Weaver and also attended one of her presentations and she assured the Local Health Officers that the money would not need returned and that it would be easy to opt-out. She is in charge of running the program and Dr. Souder feels the State took a somewhat erroneous bill and turned it into a very manageable bill and is in favor of opting in to the funding. He also covered that we have a good team here between the County and Health Department and had no problem standing up to things that the County feels should change.

Commissioner Hartman stopped the discussion with others in attendance who wanted to speak. Commissioner Watson expressed that if we held this opportunity and someone has attended they should have the ability to speak. Commissioner Hartman than asked if there was another for or against patron that wanted to speak, because he was keeping it even.

**Against: Renee Hammitt:** Wanted to say that she is completely against opting in and that the County should wait to see how the surrounding counties do with the opt in choice before doing so for DeKalb County. She asked how many people are going around knocking on doors for help. She feels this has a lot of strings and Government Control.

**In favor: Sarah Payne 109 Greenhurst Ct:** Helps run Fortify Life and previously worked for DeKalb Health and is very aware of the topic. She attended to learn more of what the issue were for and against the bill. Sarah has taken notes and recognized that many of those speaking against the bill are based on speculation, national talking points and possibly conspiracy theory and those that are for the bill are those that have done the research, working in our community and have firsthand knowledge. She saw Tyler from United Way get up frustrated because Commissioner Hartman was not going to allow the rest of those in attendance the opportunity to speak. Sarah hopes that as a representative government the Commissioners will take that into consideration. Sarah is not sure where Ashley serves patients, but she knows that Tammy Stafford and herself serve many residents right here in DeKalb County that are dealing with poverty. This isn't a just rotating speakers that are in favor of or against the topic, this is people in our community that are representing many patients in our community that would benefit from services of this funding and she hopes the Commissioners will recognize this.

Auditor Sleeper ended the session with reading into the record a letter from County Health Department Director Cheryl Lynch.

#### **MATTER OF PAYROLL**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve payroll for the period of July 2-15, 2023. William Hartman seconded, and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF CLAIMS**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve General Claims consisting of warrant # thru in the amount of \$, and wire transfer # thru in the amount of \$. Michael Watson seconded, and all approved.

#### **MATTER OF HIGHWAY DISBURSEMENT REQUEST #1**

Todd Sanderson made a motion to approve releasing the FIRST draw request to GM Development Companies, LLC in the amount of \$1,356,559.14. Michael Watson seconded and all approved.

Sitework/Utilities: 65.31% complete

Concrete: 3.21% complete

Pre-Engineered Metal Buildings: 54.34% complete

General Conditions: 4.08% complete

Overhead: 9.78% complete

### **MATTER OF MINUTES**

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

### **MATTER OF TRAVEL REQUESTS**

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

- 1) Sandi Wilcox & Joni Humbarger to attend the AIC Leadership Class held prior to the Treasurer Annual Conference held at the Indiana Memorial Union Conference Center on August 1, 2023. Registration Fee and parking in the amount of \$136.00 paid by County Elected Officials Training Fund.

Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

### **MATTER OF BZA APPOINTMENT**

Jeremy Watson has moved to Allen County/Fort Wayne and will no longer be able to serve on the Board, his term ends 12/31/2023.

Commissioner Hartman nominated Larry Williams to serve on the BZA board to finish the term ending 12/31/2023. Commissioner Watson explained that he had talked to Mike Shuherk as well. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

### **MATTER OF PETERSON CONSULTING SERVICES, INC ENGAGEMENT**

Michael Watson made a motion to approve entering into the engagement with Peterson Consulting Services for the County's Capital Asset reporting. Todd Sanderson seconded and all approved.

### **MATTER OF FUTURE HIGHWAY FUNDING**


Commissioner Hartman feels that he does not know much more than the Council already knows. Commissioner Watson feels the only wildcard is if the LITED funds can or cannot continue funding the Highway operations. All Commissioners agree that LITED can fund for at least 2024 and then they need to take a hard look. Commissioner Sanderson expressed that Ben had provided detailed information and will get Auditor Sleeper a copy for budgeting plans.


### **MATTER TRAVEL POLICY CHANGES**

Auditor Sleeper put together a couple documents that displayed the amount of miles used so far in 2023 and per diem of other Counties. There has been 7396 miles of training done on County owned vehicles with the majority being used for Sheriff Department training. Todd feels that by seeing these values it is not worth requiring employees to use their own vehicles and would be in favor of seeing quarterly travel reports on miles used on County owned cars for training and this will be reflected in the travel policy to be voted on next week. Commissioner Hartman asked what the others feel is a good number for a per diem amount, Todd feels \$35-38, Hartman feels \$40, Watson feels \$50. They all agree on \$40 per diem to be approved in the new policy.

### **MATTER OF OTHER DISCUSSION**

Topics include- Bat project complete, DNR viewed the County owned pond and the deepest part is 2.5 ft. which explains the dead fish and the City of Auburn is still interested in the property, and the Cedar Creek bank re-stabilization re-bid specs being worked on.

  
William L. Hartman – President

  
Michael Watson – Vice President

  
Todd Sanderson – Vice President

Attest:

  
Susan Sleeper, Auditor