
Gibson County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
December 19, 2023

The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on December 19, 2023, at 4:45 p.m. at the North Annex Meeting Room.

Prayer was led by President Montgomery followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Members Present: President Kenneth Montgomery, Vice-President, Nick Burns (absent) and Commissioner Warren Fleetwood

MINUTES: The minutes from the December 5, 2023, meeting were approved as presented. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve minutes, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

CLAIMS: Total claims presented on 12/19/2023 were \$30,223,647.95. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

Clerk/Treasurer Reports were acknowledged by the Commissioners.

Department Reports

Park Department report was given by President Michael Stevenson. Hopkins Park has been taking applications for part time help; they only had one applicant. He lives southeast of the park and will retire in spring. President Stevenson feels this will be a good fit for the park and recommended Commissioners approve this new hire. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the hiring of this new employee, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. The vote was 2-0.

Sheriff Vanoven presented the reports to commissioners and reported they have five openings in corrections and dispatch; in Community Corrections they have a field officer position open; and they are still taking applications for deputies. Two of the new deputies went to the academy this week and performed well. He has an agreement with Deaconess Gibson General Hospital, which is the same as last year and he recommended Commissioners approve. He has another agreement for physician services at the jail in the amount of \$33,180; this is the same as last year and recommended Commissioners approve. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve both contracts, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0. Sheriff Vanoven also requested Commissioners approve the EMS inmate transport contract to Gibson General. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve the EMS agreement, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.

COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS

Debbie Bennett Stearsman – Next year is the last year to obligate projects for ARPA. If they spend a contracted amount in 24/25 that was not approved, a re-payment will be required from the federal government. Soft costs will have to be authorized in 2024 to spend in 24/25/26.

Next ARPA Administrator recommended the Commissioners approve/disapprove the following items:

- A. Gibson County Surveyor requests \$43,191.20 to update county elevations. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to table for further discussion/investigation, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.

- B. Courthouse Sidewalks replacement in the amount of \$200,000; \$100,000 from ARPA and \$100,000 from LATCF Funds. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve this request, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.
- C. The Health Department requested \$850,000 to purchase/renovate a new health building. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to table this request so ARPA funds are not depleted, and more investigation can be conducted, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.
- D. GCC on Aging requested \$5,000 to go toward the purchase of a used, 12-15 passenger van. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve the request, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.
- E. GCC on Aging requested \$10,000 for a new food pantry and food. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve the request, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.
- F. Hopkins Park requested \$30,000 for a new tractor and bush hog mower; they do not have a budget to fund the remaining balance. Administrator Stearsman recommended that the full amount be funded. Michael Stevenson advised Commissioners they do need a tractor now, but the bush hog they would not need until spring. They need a total of \$49,495. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to table and take back to committee, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. The vote was 2-0.
- G. Sheriff Vanoven requested \$13,750. This is one-half of the cost of thirty new Glocks. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.
- H. ARPA Administrator requests a contract for 2024 and 2025 for a total of \$60,000 or \$30,000 per year. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. The vote was 2-0.

Total recommendations from ARPA Committee: \$1,111,941.20

Total recommendations from the LATCF Fund: \$ 100,000.00

Commissioner Fleetwood requested the Sheriff come back to ARPA Committee regarding the purchase of a K9.

The ARPA Committee has recommended the following projects be closed out:

31559 Covered Bridge	\$50
31562 Public Defender Furniture	\$836.75
31563 Grain Bin Safety	\$396.32
31567 Technology, Paving, Demo old Facility	\$72,089.95
31569 Annex Basement Remodel	\$14,079.03
31570 Health Department Plan	\$1,700
31571 Hart Street New Roof	\$9,690

All remaining amounts will be moved back into the other services/charges line. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to move the balances of the closed projects, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.

Update on Jail Project – Owner’s Representative George Ballard told Commissioners they might not make the 12/31/23 deadline to get the building under roof. When the windows arrive for the office building, they will install them and start drywalling. They are in a lot of discussions about this project, and it is moving along. The jail pods will be brought in on a flatbed semi, 2 at a time and unloaded onto a concrete pad that Garmon will pour very soon. They will then place them onto a roller and roll them into their permanent place. This process will prove very interesting in tight spots.

Establishment of Precincts for Recent Annexations – Clerk Smith told Commissioners that state forms were submitted to the State Election Division to establish the new precincts in Patoka Township 3 and 11 (in the Second Avenue area of Princeton where new housing is being built) and Columbia Township precinct 1 and 5. Now, precinct establishment orders need to be signed and forwarded to the State

Election Division. The orders will be published in two papers and a comment period of ten days will be allowed. All public comments will be directed to the State Election Office. Clerk Smith asked Commissioners to approve these orders as both annexations have been approved by City Councils in Princeton and Oakland City. This will allow the citizens in the annexed areas a chance to vote in the city elections.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this order to establish the precincts, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

Clerk Smith reviewed the renovations of the Clerk/Election office; she thanked the Commissioners for the ARPA money for this project.

The Well of Gibson County – Emilee Brown was present to let Commissioners know they are moving into the HUB in January, which is also where they will hold their classes. They are moving their program to a four-year program that will run from August through May. The first cohorts are actively engaged in the Community and holding down jobs; some have acquired their own house, and some are going back to school. Another thing they are working on is partnering with Safe Haven in Mt Carmel, Illinois. They are trying to help get those moms into their program. The girls enrolled in this program are single moms 18+ years of age and want to better themselves and get educated. The Well provides outside resources for these ladies. The Evansville Christian Life Center has been a partner, and in the spring, they will also partner with Albion Fellows, Building Blocks, Purdue Extension, Tulip Tree, and Work One. All donations are accepted; they are not for profit and can be followed on facebook. They are growing and moving and need more money to get behind the program.

Peabody Coal – Extend Bond – Peabody Representative, Ed Hartzburge was present to discuss this bond extension. They plan to install a new coal dust facility near the Francisco mine. The proposed route will be CR 450 E, go north on CR 50 N and then head back to the west. The new bonding rate of \$200,000 has been used to bond these roads.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this bond extension, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

Gibson County Solar Project Code Variance Request – Rick Reed, Solar Project Representative introduced other representatives: Zack, Chris, Billy and Mark. They are working on the solar plan and have submitted a preliminary drainage plan to Three I as well as a road use agreement. The presentation showed they are planning to install a 200 WM Solar System, with single axis trackers on 1100 acres. Commissioner Fleetwood asked if the trackers seep oil or any contaminants. They replied to Commissioner Fleetwood explaining that the only thing that would have oil would be the inverters, but they are encapsulated, and all leaks would be maintained within the system; there are no contaminants in the systems. The solar energy makes the system track, and they are self-sustaining. No motor forces movement. They presented a vicinity map that also showed the Duke Energy Switchyard; parcels that will contain modules; and parcels where they are looking to maximize their use. They had 1600 acres leased but are now down to 1100 acres as they try to minimize their footprint. The 1600 acres leased include setbacks. There are different setbacks, but the residential setback is 300' for non-participating landowners. All lease options are voluntary. Environmental permitting is one of their biggest hoops. The inverter will have a concrete foundation which is very shallow and the length of 2 SUV's positioned end to end. They offered a "Good Neighbor Policy" with a compensation package, but more information was requested to get this good neighbor policy compensation; there is no obligation to sign up for the compensation. The company knows this group of landowners will be impacted by the construction cycle; thus, they offer the good neighbor agreement. It is still in effect if the agreement is signed and sent in. On January 24, 2024 they will have an open house at the Ft. Branch Senior Center. Invitations were mailed to all landowners within a two-mile vicinity of the project, but everyone is invited. Questions were asked about the changing of companies, and it was explained that solar projects sometimes involve more than one company. Tenaska was the founder and Arevon bought the project and will finish it off. Gary Seibert asked if the storm water project was waived. It was not waived; they are consulting with

Three I Engineer on the storm water project. Someone asked if the companies would come and go and leave the solar panels in the ground. Arevon owns the project; Signal will build the project; Arevon will sell the energy. Tenaska has finished their portion of the project. Arevon will bond the project on day one and funds will be available to decommission the project. The person feels the company's change names to duck out of their decommissioning and bonding responsibilities. It was explained that the coal industry is regulated differently than solar; solar is tightly regulated to protect the county. Someone asked how people will know the project is not going to speed up flood waters. A Representative explained the solar companies must meet permitting requirements to protect the people. The Representative then explained the point of this meeting was to discuss state and county level of building codes. They are focused on the permits that have to do with the electrical codes of the state. The design phase will mobilize in the second quarter of 2024; they are currently clearing trees. The permit package will be mobilized in April 2024 and will run through IDHS. It addresses the electrical and civil code is what needs to be discussed and whether the County requires a variance for this code. The solar project will build to the highest-level code, because Indiana state law is antiquated as is the County's code. They want to use the most updated code, so it is uniform at the federal level; because of this, a variance is not required per state law, they are simply making this transparent to ensure everyone is on the same level. They will continue to meet with the highway prior to construction, during construction, and after construction to assure roads are maintained.

Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to take no action on this matter, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS

Rock & Fuel Bid Opening for Highway Department – Attorney Spindler opened the bids from Mulzer Crushed Stone, Tell City.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the only bid, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

A fuel bid was opened from Wabash Valley.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the only bid for fuel, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

Health Board – Administrator Shade was absent; but Attorney Spindler explained there was a change in legislation regarding the health board appointees. They will evaluate this and bring it back to the Commissioners in January.

Animal Services – Sharon Werne told Commissioners they had received ARPA money, and they would now like to request more. They would like to request \$500,000 from the Redevelopment Commissioner. Commissioners Fleetwood motioned to approve animal services requesting this money from the RDC, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.

Next, she told Commissioners that EMA will need to be relocated. Ms. Werne feels if they know this in advance, they can incorporate her into the new Animal Services Building. Commissioner Fleetwood suggested the EMA be positioned near other emergency departments; he would like to explore other options. Commissioner Montgomery explained that all EMA equipment is located at the highway department, thus the reason for this request.

Payroll Deductions/Taxes Transfer to General Fund – Auditor Watkins explained about a bank account that was kept open when the county made the software upgrade. \$16,351.59 was left in a bank account that has remained dormant; the Auditor now requests to transfer this money into the general fund. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this transfer, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0.

Concerned Citizen Comments – A concerned citizen asked if CR 250 to CR 550 south of Francisco is still located in Gibson County as the road condition is not satisfactory; he wonders if the road could be dragged.

He also asked if the County had money to clean up dilapidated buildings. Commissioner Fleetwood has looked at possibly dedicating funds to dilapidated buildings. He wonders if it is allotted for razing buildings; he feels there are a lot of moving pieces. The buildings the concerned citizen is talking about are near CR 450 and CR 675. He thinks they were condemned years ago, but never razed. As of now, Commissioner Fleetwood does not know of any grants or funds available to accomplish this; but it is in the talks. The landowner would have to be agreeable to the razing.

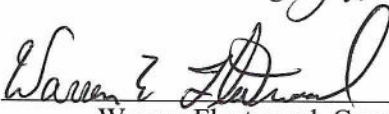
Major Medical Leave (2) was approved by the Commissioners with a motion from Commissioner Fleetwood, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 2-0.


With no further discussions, Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote to adjourn is 2-0.

Minutes from the December 19, 2023, Meeting.


Kenneth Montgomery, President

Nick Burns, Vice President


Warren Fleetwood, Commissioner


ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor