
Gibson County Board of Commissioners
Regular Session
January 23, 2024

The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on January 23, 2024, at 4:45 p.m. at the North Annex Meeting Room.

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

Members Present: President Warren Fleetwood, Vice-President, Kenneth Montgomery, and Commissioner Nick Burns.

The Commissioners regular session meeting was suspended at 4:45 for the Financial Meeting. The regular session meeting reconvened at 4:55.

MINUTES: The minutes from the January 09, 2024, meeting were approved as presented. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve minutes, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

CLAIMS: Total claims in the amount of \$2,038,909.47 were presented and approved by Commissioners. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Department Reports

Chief Ballard told Commissioners they had nine sheriff sales last week, which was a big number for them.

COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS

Update on Jail Project – Owner’s Representative George Ballard told Commissioners they have poured some concrete block walls and window frames have arrived, but the windows have not been delivered. They want to put the roof on the jail pod, but they will have to wait for better weather.

Community Crossing Matching Grant Commitment Letter – SJCA representative, Michael Stevenson presented this letter for Commissioners to approve and sign. \$3.2 million is the estimated cost of the paving project; they will apply for \$1.5 million in Community Crossings Matching Grant, leaving a \$1.7 million match from the county. He requested that Commissioners sign and approve the Commitment Letter. The paving will be 2” overlays to existing pavement because the parameters of the grant reward and encourage paving over existing blacktop roads. INDOT also looks for projects that connect county roads to state roads. If Gibson County is not awarded in this session, they can try again in June/July. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the Commitment Letter, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Advisory Committee for TIF District – This item was tabled, but later in the meeting Travis Nolcox wanted to ensure this issue would be back on the agenda. He stated that North Gibson School Board would like to have a member on the RDC advisory board as it has been 7 years since they had representation on this board. Commissioner Fleetwood will have to investigate this matter and be placed on an upcoming agenda. Larry Michel feels there is a statute for a non-voting school board member, and

it is being met by South Gibson School Board Member David Lewis. Travis Nolcox feels North Gibson School needs representation because they have a bigger stake than South Gibson School Board.

Solar Ordinance – Commissioner Fleetwood explained that the County has a solar ordinance. He told the audience that there will be an open house on January 30, 2024 from 5-7 at the Ft. Branch Community Center at 112 N Railroad Street in Ft. Branch. He feels there will be a lot of different companies that can help explain the county residents’ concerns for the project. He told everyone that all state and federal permitting agencies have been involved in the permitting process of the project for Gibson County and the EPA has signed off on all metals and contaminants in this project. Commissioner Fleetwood wanted to try and address citizen concerns regarding setbacks on this project. He asked Attorney Spindler to read the setbacks from the ordinance. Nonparticipating landowners will have a 25’ setback from their property line and there is also a 150’ setback from the foundation of an existing residence. Commissioner Fleetwood asked Mr. Lynch to discuss ground cover near these solar structures. Mr. Lynch feels the solar company should plant pollinators in the solar area. He also suggested that clover be planted in the areas of this solar field because it can be mowed. It will also provide a source of protein for bees and will help deter noxious weeds. Someone else in the meeting suggested a 300’ setback from property lines to help keep a farm berm, as 300’ is an acre. Someone else in the crowd asked about the drainage plan and Commissioner Fleetwood said they have been referred to Three i Engineering regarding the storm water drainage issue. Mr. Lynch said the planting of clover could also slow down the flow of water. The Solar Company is planning to fence around the farms, but they are not required to install any other barriers besides the fence. Commissioner Fleetwood feels some talk should be had about this so property owners are not strangled by these panels. Commissioner Fleetwood feels if they take the concerns of landowners back to the solar farm company, they will work with the community to do this the right way. Attorney Spindler also feels Arevon has been cooperative, transparent, and very good to work with. They are open to non-participating and participating property owners. Todd McConnell feels that the County should be thinking about setbacks for all highways and interstates to help protect them. Another resident does not feel the 150’ setback is enough. He feels they need to start at the property line, and not the foundation. Commissioner Fleetwood said some states have evergreen tree placements in their ordinances for barriers. Shannon Kreig says this is their retirement home and they do not want to look out over solar panels. She also suggested the planting of sunflowers as they are supposed to absorb metals. Randy Hall feels they need a 300’ setback from property lines. He fears they can come in and claim eminent domain because they are a utility. Adjacent parcels are regulated in the ordinance, and they cannot attempt to exercise eminent domain as a utility provider. Larry Michel feels whoever rents to the solar companies should be very educated and they should seek legal counsel before entering into an agreement. He feels the county will be stuck with an eyesore at the end of the project; he just visited California and he saw abandoned farms in that area. Roy Lynch agrees with Larry Michel’s sentiments as the contracts are huge and not always in favor of the landowner. Stephanie Kreig asked for statistics and Commissioner Fleetwood suggested she attend the open house to get this information. Somone in the audience suggested people visit GibsonSolar.com for information. A concerned citizen asked if CR 350 S was going to be widened in the future. Commissioners explained that the County would have to buy right-of-way before this could happen. She wonders if the right-of-way could be purchased if the solar panels are in the way. Commissioner Fleetwood feels this project is at a rest as it might have impacted a lot of homes’ driveways and front yards. Someone suggested bigger setbacks for crossroads and intersections which would allow for future widening. David Doughty suggested setbacks on all county roads. Commissioner Fleetwood thanked everyone for their input and suggested everyone attend the open house and make the same expressions of concern.

COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS

E-Rep Service Agreement 2024 – Josh Armstrong and Tami Hack were present to discuss the 2024 agreement. E-Rep is engaged in business development and retention, community development, and the knowledge of sharing business development. Mr. Armstrong highlighted some of the thing’s E-Rep can

do for Gibson County. He explained that they are actively involved in the I-69 development. They feel they might have some blight elimination grants coming up and Stellar Grants are back from OCRA. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this agreement, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.


Small Structure Recon on County Roads Contract – SJCA representative, Michael Stevenson presented this contract to Commissioners. SJCA will search and identify all the small structures. There was a 2008 small structure search where 922 structures were found; they will not charge for any of these. This is a tool they will use for planning and budgeting. Once they have the inventory, they can move forward with a plan. They hope to find 80-90% of these small structures. They will look at mapping and use GPS to zero in on structures. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this contract, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Medical Leave (1) – Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this medical leave, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

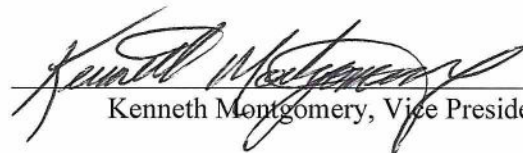
Citizen Comments – Todd McConnell asked for developments on road restrictions for trucks traveling CR 350 S east and west and CR 100. They have had new issues since they were at the last Commissioner meeting to discuss this. He does not feel there are enough signs. He suggests they restrict trucks from traveling on this road. Commissioner Fleetwood suggested based on what was and what should be, he wonders if they could re-establish with the same requirements but add bigger signs and update any missing signs. He feels they should include Sheriff Vanover and the Deputies to try and get some extra patrols in the area. Tom White suggested no through commercial traffic with a \$750 fine. Commissioners will try and meet with Toyota Officials soon to discuss this. Chief Ballard suggested an ordinance, so they have clarification for enforcement. A concerned citizen asked why Toyota was not bonding roads like the coal companies.

With no further discussions, Commissioner Burns motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote to adjourn was 3-0.

Minutes from the January 23, 2024 Meeting.



Warren Fleetwood, President



Kenneth Montgomery, Vice President



Nick Burns, Commissioner



ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor