
Gibson County Board of Commissioners
Regular Session
September 5, 2023

The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on September 5, 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 and Commissioner Warren Fleetwood

MINUTES: The minutes from the August 15, 2023, meeting were approved as presented. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve minutes, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

CLAIMS: Total claims presented on 09/05/23 were \$4,156,474.88. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Clerk/Treasurer Reports were acknowledged by the Commissioners.

Department Reports

Health Department Administrator Shade gave the department reports to Commissioners.

Sheriff Vanoven presented the August reports for his department. He reported 100 as the daily average incarcerated population of the jail. He gave a staff update to Commissioners; he has two open deputy positions; four open dispatch positions; five open correction officers; and one open facility officer.

Extension Office – Abby Heidenreich told Commissioners they just wrapped up the State Fair. They will start 4H enrollment in October. They currently have a Master Gardner class. They are disbursing local produce bags throughout the county.

Credit Card for Purdue Extension Office – Abby Heidenreich requested Commissioners approve a credit card for the extension office. This office does not currently have a credit card; this will assist their office. The standard credit limit is \$2500 per month; Auditor Watkins will put it in motion if Commissioners approve. Commissioner Burns motioned to allow a credit card in the extension office, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Animal Services is now in possession of their new vehicle. This vehicle was purchased with ARPA funds; they are very appreciative of their new vehicles. They hope to break ground in spring on their new building. The shelter is bursting at the seams, as is every shelter around the country. They are seeking foster homes for some animals. They have a fund raiser on 9/9/23 at the Haubstadt Fire Department Movie Night; they are requesting shelter supplies or cash donations. They will also bring some animals out for adoption.

Privatization of EMS - An audience member asked how many commissioners were in favor of privatizing the EMS. No one raised their hand.

COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS

Update on Jail Project – Owner’s Representative George Ballard told Commissioners they poured footings on the site beams for the jail pod. They will pour again tomorrow. All steel studs are in place for site A. They are deciding on kitchen equipment. They are planning to have it under roof by December. He invited the public to go to GCSO and watch the live construction camera.

Prosecutor’s Building – Prosecutor Cochren presented the Three-i Design architectural engineering design for the Prosecutor’s building. Prosecutor Cochren requested the Commissioners approve this building plan.

Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve the plan, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Farm Bureau Insurance Proposal – Nathan Beloit presented an insurance proposal to Commissioners. The general liability cost came in at \$320,296, which is a savings of almost \$90,000. He proposed a \$3 million aggregate limit, instead of the current \$2 million; the \$5 million umbrella coverage is constant with both carriers. The current deductible for public officials per loss is \$10,000, his policy is \$5,000. The cyber deductible Mr. Beloit quotes is \$10,000; it is currently \$25,000. The Law Enforcement policy was quoted with \$5,000 deductible; it is currently \$25,000. The auto coverage was quoted with \$1,000 deductible across the board, we currently have deductibles of \$2,500 for emergency vehicles and \$5,000 for ambulances. Building replacement coverage is estimated at \$43 million; it is currently rated at \$42,967 and we currently have a \$10,000 deductible; Mr. Beloit quoted a \$2,500 deductible. The worker’s compensation is based on payroll of over \$9 million and he is quoting the annual premium at \$199,909. He included the last three pay histories from EPIC so Commissioners could see the rate of change per year as he anticipates the annual premium to surpass his quote. Mr. Beloit suggested that Commissioners should shop their insurance every three years. He feels the use of a broker hurts the county and is never beneficial; he suggested the use of local agents, as there are plenty in the county.

Re-precincting for Oakland City – Attorney Spindler explained to Commissioners there was a voluntary annexation in Oakland city that encompassed sixty-two acres and five parcels. The clerk’s office needs the Commissioners to accept the document so these residents can vote in the city elections. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve the re-precincting, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Probation Building Gutter Project – Attorney Spindler requested approval for an estimate prepared by Danco. The estimate will repair a design flaw with an approximate cost of \$2,520; they will run gutters under the concrete, so the downspouts no longer dump rainwater onto the sidewalk, possibly creating a hazard especially in cold weather.

Commissioner Burns motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS

Gibson County Coal Road Bond – Peter Wissell of Gibson County Coal requested that Commissioners approve an agreement to install a rock dust facility. He explained there is a portion of a road that is bonded they longer use and will be installing a rock dust facility. This will be located 2 miles south of the SR 64/SR 65 junction on CR W 280 S. This is a paved road and they do not cross any bridges. The bond will be valued at \$100,000 per mile; they will bond 1.35 miles of road and will have 5-6 trucks per day over the life of the mine, which is expected to be 20 years. They have drone footage of the current road; they will repave if/when it is needed. They presented a map of CR 250 S which turns into CR 280 S all the way to the permitted site. This road was paved in 2013 with Gibson County Coal TIF money. They will share the drone video footage with the Commissioners; this will be delivered with the bond. Dennis Simpson explained this area is in the wellhead protection area for Owensville Water and no chemical

mixing is allowed in this area. Mr. Wissell explained they will haul rock dust, but no hazardous chemicals. Larry Michel told Commissioners he has been hearing that some of the roads in this area are in bad shape and he has been told the cost to pave a road is \$200,000 per mile. Mr. Wissel told everyone they would be doing an overlay and they based their figures on the bond rate information in Ordinance 2015-1. The trucks they are using would be 80,000-pound trucks. Commissioner Fleetwood feels the rates should be updated before granting approval. He asked if Gibson County Coal could come back to the next meeting. They do not anticipate any semi traffic for another three months; thus, they will come back regarding this matter.

Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to table this item until bonding rates are updated and approved, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Peabody Coal Road Bond – Ed Hartzburge requested that Commissioners approve the bond as presented. They have changed bonding companies and Attorney Spindler has the old bonds and new bonds to review; Attorney Spindler has no issues with this company change. The next item is termination of some road bonds that have been reclaimed. Commissioner Montgomery, Highway Superintendent Johnson, and Mr. Hartzburge have toured the roads and found them to be satisfactory. He requested Commissioners sign off on the bonds. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to approve and accept the bond releases, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 3-0. The Commissioners motioned to approve the replacement bonds as presented with a motion from Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Hazleton Lot – Attorney Spindler explained this was property acquired by the County after an unsuccessful tax sale; a church has expressed an interest in this ½ acre of land appraised at \$300; the church would be a non-profit.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to donate to the church. Commissioner Fleetwood would like to lease the land and keep it as a public access site; he feels the county could end the lease at any time. Commissioner Montgomery worries the County could be held liable if there were an accident on the land and the county were in a lease situation. Commissioner Burns does not feel the property is very valuable and he feels the church will take better care of the property and he seconded the donation to the church. With no further discussion, the motion was carried 2-1 with Commissioner Fleetwood casting the nay vote.

Geo Tech Solutions Website – Robert Owen of Geo Tech Solutions has presented a proposal to create a new website for the County. The Commissioners want to create a more user-friendly website with more accessibility and transparency for the taxpayers of Gibson County. The cost would be a one-time billing of \$3,600 with each additional page costing \$150. The maintenance cost would be billed monthly after that initial one-time cost. Auditor Watkins has used this company and has been satisfied with the work. Commissioner Fleetwood motioned to take this proposal under advisement for further review, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Unrestricted Opioid Funds of \$8000 be awarded to The Well of Gibson County – Commissioner Burns requested that Commissioners approve an award of \$8,000 to The Well of Gibson County. David Doughty explained all the programs The Well provides. It is held at the library and is a non-profit. The Addiction Committee feels this would be good use of opioid fund money. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve the award to The Well, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Major Medical Leave (2) - approved by the Commissioners with a motion from Commissioner Burns seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 3-0.

A man stood and addressed Ken Montgomery regarding his dissatisfaction of his service while in office.


Owensville EMS Station - Dennis Simpson asked Commissioners to speak. He is concerned about the Owensville EMS station not being manned. He feels the citizens of Owensville have put forth a lot of money to house the EMS employees; they have also purchased ambulances to support the EMS. He wonders if another base could be shut down to staff the Owensville base. Commissioner Montgomery explained they have an employee shortage, and this is the reason why they are not staffing this base. Commissioner Fleetwood says EMS is one good reason why we have government – to protect the people and look after the citizens. He feels this is a public service for the good of Gibson County and it is unfortunate to be in this position. All three commissioners support fair pay for the EMS. The Commissioners are on the citizens and EMS employee's side. He thanked Mr. Simpson for standing up and speaking on this matter and he does not feel it is fair to shorten any part of the county. He feels the rates for EMS employees are lower than in surrounding counties by at least \$4 per hour. The County Council is the fiscal body, he hopes they will help resolve this problem. The Commissioners have worked on this for 3 years and he feels if they can get this rate up to a fair amount, they might be able to retain the workforce and keep all EMS bases staffed. Mr. Simpson asked why, when short on staff, does it always affect Montgomery Township taxpayers. Director Pond says they cannot put people in each community because he does not have the number of employees required to do this. Mr. Simpson asked if Princeton station is always staffed and why. Director Pond feels he must cover the greatest areas of the population; he must choose the bases with the greatest amount of run volume; it is not a personal decision but based on statics and facts. Director Pond requested these concerned citizens to pack the next Council meeting with people. He feels he has fought the council to try and get pay for these employees since he has been in his position, and this is a nationwide problem. Director Pond explained when they received the requested 24-hour shift pay last year, all county employees received a \$.50 per hour raise, except the EMS. He feels his employees work 800 hours more per year than any other department in the county. He hopes there is light at the end of the tunnel, but he needs the people's support. Mr. Simpson feels the whole county should be equal, and he feels they should rotate the empty base. Director Pond says they are trying their best, but their crews are getting tired. He feels EMS privatization talks have hurt employee morale. Commissioner Fleetwood feels if the council does not address this issue now, they will soon be hearing from other communities as this is a county-wide issue and if they do not increase wages, more employees will be lost. He says threats of privatization will not happen with this group of Commissioners. The Commissioners have requested a \$2 per hour raise for all employees. Director Pond is afraid if something is not done soon, we might lose the rest of the EMS employees. Mark Fehrenbacher disagrees with opinions of Commissioners and Director Pond regarding privatization, he feels they should review this idea with an open mind; he also feels the volunteer fire departments are facing the same situation. Running these services is not cheap and some hard questions must be asked, thus you should leave options on the table. Commissioner Fleetwood feels you should be open minded about many things, but he feels after extensive research he can say confidently, this would not be a cost benefit for the county, and it would reduce the service to the county. They would lose control of this service because open, public forums would not be a possibility at Deaconess. Barton Township Fire Chief told Commissioners they have Warrick County come assist them a lot of times if Gibson County EMS is out of range to assist them. He feels the medics are here because they live and love Gibson County. He has had discussions with EMS employees about their new 24-hour shifts and he does not feel it is fair than an EMS employee is paid the same as the highway department employee that drives around in a truck for 8 hours per day. Director Pond says they have been unable to replace the employees that have left. Last month, they had over 500 runs and with a reduced staff; the staff is tired. Larry Michel wonders if there are any programs to encourage youth/people to move into this service. A coordinator for a Southern Indiana Impact Assistance Program stood up and told the crowd they had been trying to help with this shortage and they offered free education in this field, they had planned to put six people through training, but could only find two interested candidates. One has passed, but the other one had not yet passed. Barton Township Fire Chief says he has money to send people for training, however when interested candidates see the wages of EMS employees, they change their minds.

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

Minutes from the September 5, 2023 Meeting.



Kenneth Montgomery, President



Nick Burns, Vice President



Warren Fleetwood, Commissioner



ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor