
Gibson County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
March 20, 2024

The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on March 20, 2024, at 4:45 p.m. at the North Annex Meeting Room.

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

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

MINUTES: The minutes from the March 5, 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 presented on 03/20/2024 were \$2,281,498.70. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Clerk/Treasurer Reports were acknowledged by the Commissioners.

Department Reports

Sheriff Vanoven gave Commissioners the employment watch; they have five openings in the jail; three openings in dispatch with six part-time employees helping fill these positions; one open work release field officer position; one open deputy position, two deputies will graduate from the Academy on April 19th. He gave Commissioners a comparison report on criminal arrests between 2023 and 2024. At this time last year, they had made 6 criminal arrests compared to this year's 40 arrests. He feels that DUI arrests are a problem, as that is most of their arrests.

Purdue Extension ANR Director, Abby Heidenreich reported that the extension office had over 70 people attend the recent homesteading conference. She reviewed all extension office activities.

Purdue Extension Part-time Hire – The Extension office would like to hire a part-time employee; they have money in the budget; this will be the second part-time employee. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve this part-time hire, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Health Department Administrator Shade came before the Commissioners to express her concern and excitement to help with first responder training. Interested parties should contact the Health Department to sign up for classes. Next, she told everyone that world TB Day is on 3/24/24. This is a global fight against tuberculosis. TB is curable and treatable; a skin test can be done to detect it. In District 10, which includes Gibson County, there is an uptick in this disease. She feels this causes more concern in the health department, because they do all their testing in one room, they really need more space to try and keep everyone safe. Commissioner Fleetwood feels that both Commissioners and Health Department should approach the ARPA Core Group for funding to train new people in CPR.

COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS

Update on Jail Project – Owner’s Representative George Ballard told Commissioners this project is 65% complete. They hope to finish in October. They are installing the jail pod cells in the building; they are double stacked and welded together, they will be completed tomorrow. The drywall is complete in the office portion of the building. Mr. Ballard presented a copy of the builder’s plaque; he requested approval from Commissioners.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to adopt the plaque format and spelling as presented, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Bid Award on EMS Building – Attorney Spindler explained that J. Koberstein Construction, Princeton was low bid on this building at \$1,463,552.33; the estimated completion time will be ten months. Attorney Spindler explained that under Indiana law, if Commissioners wish to award the bid, it must be to the lowest, most responsible/responsive bidder. Attorney Spindler and Mr. Donovan both agree that the low bidder qualifies for consideration. Attorney Spindler explained that the Commissioner’s options are to reject, table, or award the low bid. The low bid did not have a bid bond, but they did have a performance bond. Attorney Spindler feels the publication gives the opportunity to waive irregularities. Attorney Spindler recommended Commissioners award the low bid.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the low bid by J Koberstein Construction, Princeton, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. The motion was carried 2-1 with Commissioner Burns casting the nay vote. Commissioner Burns voted no to the process. He explained that a building committee was organized so they could develop plans and ideas. He feels this process was totally overlooked, thus he voted no.

Update on Hazleton Boat Ramp Survey – Julia Rahman explained that Habitat likes to do special projects and she feels this is a good one. She said that Duke has donated money for the Hazleton Boat Ramp project; she feels there are several other entities willing to help. She feels they need to have the property surveyed so they do not encroach on someone else's property. This property is in the County’s name because no one purchased this property at a 2000 tax sale. There are no mandates to survey the property. The County could use the current legal description and put the survey burden on the recipient of the property. Commissioner Fleetwood wonders if the County could survey so the Town can use the property for a beautification project. Julia Rahman feels the Town or Township might be interested in this property; there is a local church interested in maintaining the property. Commissioner Fleetwood suggested that Attorney Spindler draft a letter or email Surveyor Martin and request a survey of the property before conveying it to another entity.

EMS Director David Pond – Director Pond spoke on the need for the EMS building and thanked Commissioners for their help/support on this project.

COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS

Animal Shelter Letter of Support – Advisory Board Member, Sharon Werne presented a letter of support to Commissioners. This letter of support is required to seek grant money, which is needed for the project. The Commissioners will review the letter and bring it back to the next meeting. The animal Shelter has been working on bid specs for the first phase of the project. The Highway Department has been helpful in moving dirt off the five-acre site, but they would like the Surveyor to mark off five acres, so they stay within their boundaries. They do not foresee the property ever transferring over to Animal Services. Commissioner Fleetwood asked Attorney Spindler to also request this survey. Commissioner Montgomery exited the meeting at 5:30 p.m. The location of this five-acre site is between the garage and the dumpsters. Larry Michel asked when they will start the project; Ms. Werne hopes to start the first phase in August or September. Larry Michel asked if they understood how much maintenance five acres will require. Ms. Werne says they plan to add on in the future and they will have outdoor play areas, and stable areas to house livestock; they understand the maintenance requirements.

Habitat for Humanity – Julia Rahman works for Habitat; they have started a house in Oakland City on Main Street. They are going to start a Habitat ReStore and they are very close to having a building to open ReStore; ReStore is a building that houses donations to help build houses, they will take donated, slightly used products, or even used furniture. She told Commissioners she is hearing more about homelessness in Gibson County; she hopes Habitat will begin working on this.

Citizen Comments – Commissioner Fleetwood reminded everyone of the 2-minute time limit to voice concerns and a clock that will keep track of this time limit. All commentors must approach the podium, state their name and address.

John Perkins, candidate on the election ballot, wanted to apologize for the improper placement of an election sign on Coal Mine Road near the Bridge of Honor. The sign has been removed.

Bob Schmits of Francisco would like to see the vacant, Francisco School used as a vocational training center. He feels there is plenty of room for machines and could be well utilized for this type of project. Commissioner Fleetwood would like to meet with Mr. Schmits and see what/where they can go with this idea.

Larry Michel of Ft. Branch commended Mr. Schmits's idea of a vocational training facility. Habitat feels a vocational training facility could be a good partner for them as well. Mr. Michel feels there are election campaign signs being stolen; Sheriff Vanoven advised this is a felony.

Julie Shade, Health Department Administrator said she would like to help save taxpayers money and combine the health department with the new EMS building. She feels this would be a good fit for the community and worries that time and money are running out. Commissioner Fleetwood would like to work with the Health Department to find them suitable space.

Commissioner Fleetwood asked everyone to sign up to be a poll worker; stop by the election office to enroll. There are currently fifteen open slots.

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


Minutes from March 20, 2024



Warren Fleetwood, President



Kenneth Montgomery, Vice President



Nick Burns, Commissioner



ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor