
Gibson County Board of Commissioners
Regular Meeting
September 17, 2024

The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on September 17, 2024, at 4:45 p.m. at the Southwest Annex.

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 September 3, 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 09/17/2024 were \$2,942,051.52. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Clerk/Treasurer Reports were acknowledged by the Commissioners.

Department Reports

EMS Director Pond told Commissioners they have started the dirt work on the new building. They are trying to keep the surface wet to keep the dust down.

Chief Deputy Ballard presented the employment reports, and they show two openings in the jail; four openings in dispatch; one opening in work release for a field officer position and one opening for an office manager; and there are two open deputy positions. Chief Ballard then told Commissioners about an incident on August 9, 2024 involving Officer Quentin Might; he saved a 2-year-old child’s life from drowning. This is the fourth lifesaving event in one year for Officer Might.

COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS

Update on Jail Project – Owner’s Representative George Ballard told Commissioners they had a state jail inspection on Monday; they will return to do another walk through prior to the jail opening. They will pour sidewalks very soon in conjunction with INDOT; ERS radio service is working on a process of transferring the radio service without losing connectivity. The current radio tower will continue to run the communications system. They will have the capability of switching from the 800-radio system to VHF. The new generator is in place and will run 95% of the services; it has a 1,000-gallon tank.

Animal Shelter Bid Opening – Attorney Spindler asked Sharon Werne to discuss the bids received. Low bid came from K & M Construction, a local contractor, for a basic building without offices, quarantine, laundry or medical at \$2,170,000. They quoted options for various packages that would finish the interior building and that amount was \$2,400,000. \$1,239,000 is the secured money that Animal Services has for the new building. Commissioners will provide \$800,000 from ARPA funds, EMMY Corporation, the animal service not-for-profit will provide \$200,000, and the remainder of the money has been from donors. They will be able to remove a cost of \$21,000 for fill dirt and that will leave a shortfall of approximately \$900,000. They will apply for the READY grant, which could provide for 20% of the project; she is hoping for a quick turnaround on this; they will apply for the highest amount possible.

They are looking for some other grant options, private donors or trying to do a bare bones building, however the current shelter is bursting at the seams and the building is limping along. Attorney Spindler feels the Commissioners can reject all bids; award the contract to the low bid, contingent upon attorney and engineer review and being able to shore up the shortfall in funding; or table until the next meeting in October. The amount available to build is \$1,239,000 but it is going to require \$1.9 to get to a shell option and that does not include water, septic, or electric. The Animal Shelter Board feels this is the building that will last the county for 20-30 years, and they do not feel cutting back is an option. They would like to do what they can now and finish modules as the money becomes available. Ms. Werne will look forward to the RDC for TIF money and she plans to attend all city/town meetings to get a letter of support for the READY Grant. Commissioner Burns feels the item should be tabled to look at funding options and wait on results of the READY grant. This items will be placed on the agenda for the 2nd meeting of October.

Commissioner Burns motioned to table the matter until the 2nd meeting of October, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

The animal services will host an open house October 5th from 10-2 and a golf scramble on October 13th in Oakland City then Bobes will host a Spaghetti dinner give-back on November 25th.

Review Burn Ban – Commissioners have had a burn ban in place since the last week of August due to lack of precipitation. The Princeton Fire Chief recommends the burn ban be extended until the county receives substantial rainfall.

Commissioner Montgomery motioned to keep the burn ban in place, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS

Prosecutor Office Furniture – Deputy Prosecutor Abby Cox represented Michael Cochren on this item. They are in the process of buying new office furniture for their new building and they are trying to move the existing furniture to other departments. They request approval from Commissioners to give the furniture to other departments or allow the furniture to be auctioned. They will have nowhere to store this furniture, so they are looking for storage options. The auction should be held before the Prosecutor moves. The new building is 75% complete; they hope to move into the new building mid-November. Commissioner Montgomery made a motion to approve this transfer, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The vote was 3-0.

They have been discussing a county auction and this furniture would be allowed into the auction. The animal shelter could use and store the furniture. Commissioners authorized an interoffice transfer from the prosecutor's office to other offices and any surplus, including other county office surplus, will go into auction by a motion from Commissioner Burns, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Hummel Electric Traffic Signal Agreement – Attorney Spindler has reviewed the agreement and recommends Commissioners approve it. Commissioners motioned to approve the agreement, as they feel there are no other options with a motion from Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

Pigeon Creek Watershed Commission Resolution – Vanderburg County is trying to form a Commission for this watershed; they have included Gibson and Warrick County Officials in these meetings. Gibson County wants to be good stewards of the regulated drains, as Gibson County has taxed and taken care of Gibson County regulated drains for nearly 100 years. Vanderburgh is in the process of regulating its drains. Gibson County wants to ensure they maintain all drainage authority with their own identity through this process. Commissioners feel the watershed is very encompassing and goes hand in hand with agriculture and development; Commissioners support responsible, lawful drainage improvement. Attorney Spinder suggests a tag team effort with Warrick County to take a unified front

supporting the position. Commissioner Fleetwood feels Gibson County has well established, regulated drains and through this being grandfathered into our county, he feels there is significant groundwork already taken and an established “process” of drain maintenance. He feels Gibson County has authority over our ditches and the authority is vested in the drainage board. He also feels the citizens have elected the Commissioners to represent them to maintain the drains and ditches and Gibson County does not want to relinquish that authority to any other entity, authority, government agency, or benefactor that might be considered.

Commissioner Fleetwood would like to entertain a motion to allow Attorney Spindler to talk to Warrick County Officials about a joint resolution establishing our drainage control and authority in Gibson County and allowing Warrick County their own control and authority. Commissioner Montgomery is afraid Vanderburgh County will assess taxes on Gibson County, but only use the collection for repairs in Vanderburgh County. Tom White says that years ago, while he worked in the Surveyor’s office, they had a joint board with Warrick County. An unsuccessful effort was made to get Vanderburgh County to join the board. Michael Stevenson feels this Warrick/Gibson Board was dissolved prior to him being the elected surveyor. Commissioner Fleetwood has heard, in the joint meetings, to form this new Commission, that property will be double taxed. What this might mean is that if you have property in the Pigeon Creek Watershed, then you will be taxed through Gibson County and the Pigeon Creek Watershed both; this watershed is large. It would also mean that Gibson County would have to seek approval from that Commission to work on any ditches. Commissioner Fleetwood reiterated Gibson County Commissioners are not interested in relinquishing control over the ditches or impacting additional taxation to the people in Gibson County. Gibson County has been paying taxes on these ditches for many years, and we do not want to be pulled into this watershed and have extra taxation. Michael Stephenson believes the code allows a petitioner to create this watershed and if the County does not want to participate, then the County would have no say. He feels we should be involved so we have an eye on it. Commissioner Fleetwood feels we need to collaborate with Warrick and let Vanderburgh know that both Warrick and Gibson are non-participants and will maintain authority in our own counties. There is one other water shed in Indiana and that is the Kankakee Watershed. Michael Stevenson feels Vanderburgh County could petition and create the watershed on their own. David Pond feels Gibson and Warrick should participate in the group, so Gibson County knows what is going on. Commissioner Burns is on the ditch board, and he has not heard anything on this matter. Plus, Warrick County is going to get two new commissioners and Commissioner Musgrave from Vanderburgh County will be leaving her seat as Commissioner; she was leading the charge on this item. Commissioner Fleetwood asked Commissioner Burns to contact Mr. Elpers, from Vanderburgh County, but also draft a joint resolution with Gibson/Warrick County as a matter of insurance. Commissioner Burns made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 3-0. Attorney Spindler had prepared a questionnaire when this item was brought about in a prior time and he shared the questionnaire with Warrick and Vanderburgh counties, but no one responded. Commissioner Fleetwood feels that Mr. White’s comment regarding a joint, court-ordered drainage board partnership between Warrick and Gibson, to regulate Pigeon Watershed, needs to be investigated to determine if it has been officially dissolved, as he does not have any records supporting this dissolution.

Major Medical Leave (1) was approved by the Commissioners with a motion from Commissioner Montgomery, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The vote was 3-0.

Soil and Water Conservation – Attorney Spindler would like approval to fill an employment vacancy. The Soil and Water Conservation Board was concerned with the proposed employee’s dual employment by the federal government for grant writing. Attorney Spindler does not see a problem with this dual employment. Commissioner Montgomery made the motion to approve the employment, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The vote was 3-0.

Resolution for Report of Collections – Attorney Spindler presented a resolution that will mandate all agencies of county government to provide a report of collections and a bank statement to the Auditor’s

office, retroactive to January 1, 2024. Commissioner Burns made the motion to approve this resolution, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 3-0.

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 commentators must approach the podium, state their name and address.

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

Minutes from the September 17, 2024, Meeting.



Warren Fleetwood, President



Kenneth Montgomery, Vice President



Nick Burns, Commissioner



ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor