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Gibson County Board of Commissioners  
Regular Session  
December 03, 2024

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The Gibson County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on December 03, 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 November 19, 2024, meeting were approved as presented. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve minutes, seconded by Commissioner Fleetwood. With no further discussion, the motion carried 2-0, with Commissioner Burns abstaining due to his absence from that meeting.

**CLAIMS:** Total claims presented on 12/03/2024 were \$1,419,160.27  
Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve claims, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

The Commissioners acknowledged the Clerk's reports.

**Department Reports**

Sheriff Vanoven reported that the jail's daily population is averaging 110. Sheriff Vanoven gave the staffing report. They have four openings in Corrections; one open Deputy position; and Communications and Community Corrections are both fully staffed.

Sharon Werne of Animal Services reported that the current building is in bad shape, and they are still overflowing with animals. They had a very successful fundraiser in conjunction with Susan Bobes' Pizza. They are still fundraising for the new building

EMS Director Pond reported the new EMS building is going up quickly. Director Pond submitted a letter of intent to retire on December 31, 2024. Commissioners thanked Director Pond for his 42 years of service and dedication.

**COMMISSIONERS OLD BUSINESS**

**Update on Jail Project** – Owner's Representative George Ballard told Commissioners they are working on the dispatch center and installing video cameras. They have rescheduled the open house; the date will be announced later.

**Sollman School Project / Update on Covered Bridge Nominations to National Historic Register** – Stephanie Richard with Indiana Landmarks told Commissioners that applications have been submitted for the nominations for the national historic bridge registration for both Wheeling and Red Covered Bridges. She will report back when there are developments.

She also was present to discuss the Sollman School as the last remaining one-room school building in Gibson County. She reviewed the history of the 135 rural schools in Gibson County. Sollman School opened in 1890 and closed school operations in 1927; there is a proposal to relocate this one-room school to Hopkins family park and restore the inside and outside of the

school so it can remain a part of the county for many more years. The cost to move the building is \$50,000. This will move the building to the park and seat it on a new foundation. MCF House Movers has been consulted regarding the condition of the building; Indiana Landmarks has used this company and has recommended them for this project. The Hopkins Park Board is in favor of receiving the building, if the building is in stable condition. The Park Board feels the school could enhance visitors to the park. Indiana Landmark has suggested the project be done in phases. The cost breakdowns of the phases are as follows: Phase I would be moving & installing the new foundation at a cost of \$50,000; Phase II would be the structural repair & roof replacement at a cost of \$44,000; Phase III would be siding replacement at cost of \$49,000; Phase IV would be paint, window & door replacement plus some small miscellaneous items at a cost of \$42,000; Phase Va would be to restore the interior and Phase Vb would install the mechanicals. This project is shovel ready; they have insured this is a viable project; when the money is allocated, they will meet with MCF to work through the details and complete site prep; as soon as contractor's schedule and weather allows, they will make the move in Spring of 2025 and finish the entire project by end of year. If no funds are allocated, the project is less viable and riskier; the school could be breathing its last breath as the building has suffered a lot of deterioration and weather infiltration. Ms. Richard has compiled a list of possible grant sources which could become available, at the earliest, in July 2025 or fall 2025. However, waiting until then could mean the collapse of this structure. She requested that Commissioners allocate funds for this shovel ready project. She asked for people in support to come to podium; state their name/organization. Allen Burke, Historian of Princeton Public Library; Eric Heidenreich, Gibson County Visitors & Tourism Bureau, Gary Seibert, Stan Michel, Dr. Quentin Emerson, Ed Block, Larry Michel, and Robert Schleter all spoke about this structure. They are in favor of this project. Commissioner Burns asked if it was on any national landmarks; it is not. He wonders if the move would affect the building being placed on the national landmark. Ms. Richard clarified that she only started working for Indiana landmarks in July, 2024; they were working on this when she began; the school was placed on "The Ten Most Endangered Properties" list, which is widely publicized in the media. This designation is nothing governmental or official. But it did allow her to request funds from Indiana Landmarks to have plywood placed over the windows/doors and tarps placed over the roof. This action occurred approximately two weeks ago. The National Historic Registration for state and national lists can make a project more eligible for grant funding but it will not keep it from being torn down. Typically, when a building is moved from its original location, it will become ineligible for the national register or the state register. There could be other grants available, though. If they pursue putting it on the register, it could hold up the movement of the building; she wonders if this is the best solution. She does not feel it is guaranteed and adding this time could cause the demise of the building. Commissioner Burns wonders if there is money that can be allocated for this project. Attorney Spindler feels there will be some money coming back from ARPA projects. Auditor Watkins wonders how it will be insured since the insurance agent commented that it could not be insured. Ms. Richards feels that the agent was talking about the current location and condition. She feels MCF would carry the insurance during the move. Commissioner Fleetwood feels it could depend on the building's use and how it will be insured. Ms. Richards feels while the building is being restored it would be like any other building under renovation. Commissioner Fleetwood is open for any direction and/or suggestions. Commissioner Burns feels there are still a lot of unanswered questions. He is concerned ARPA does not have enough money to fund the move, let alone the reconstruction; they will need to see how much remains from returned projects and the next meeting is December 19<sup>th</sup> @ 4:15. The Commissioners will meet again on December 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Commissioner Montgomery feels we need to try to get money from ARPA.



Commissioner Fleetwood feels this item should be tabled until they have more answers; Commissioner Burns motioned to table this project, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0. Commissioner Montgomery stated that he would hate to see the building torn down. Ms. Richards feels this building is an important intersection of Gibson County's culture of education, agricultural, and architectural history.

**Final ARPA Approvals and MOUs** – This item was tabled.

**Geo Tech regarding County's Web Design** – Mr. Owens made a presentation on the new website. Mr. Owens explained the new website is close to opening. It is handicapped accessible and mobile ready. Each department may have their own calendar. One request they heard consistently was to place job listings on the website. Geo Tech would like to move to the next phase, they requested Commissioners approval so the site can go live, and the old website can be disbanded. Some departments have made their own websites, but they have been incorporated into this website. The Sheriff Department is still paying and maintaining their own website and will continue to do so, but this will be linked into the Sheriff's Department. Geo-Tech will train all department heads and provide help in updating the new website. Geo-Tech feels 100% of the old website transferred, including all the old minutes. The new website will have more information than it currently does. As soon as the site goes live, GO Gibson can be linked. Commissioner Fleetwood asked for a motion to approve payment of \$1800 to finish the website and get the site up and running. Geo Tech will cancel the current provider's contract. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve final payment of \$1800, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. The vote was 3-0.

**Final ARPA Approvals and MOUs** – Commissioner Burns feels these items need attention so they can move forward in the next ARPA meeting. Attorney Spindler presented the following Core Group recommendations from the December 2, 2024 Core Group Meeting. Attorney Spindler explained that a Memorandum of Understanding would need to be issued on the following projects so the balances for each can be spent in the years 2025 and 2026.

- 1) Hopkins Park \$65,044.24
- 2) Magistrate Tech Improvements \$30,168.09
- 3) Magistrate Courtroom Improvements \$10,000
- 4) Highway Department Equipment \$320,000
- 5) Animal Services Building \$741,500 plus an additional \$3,959.66 award added to the balance.
- 6) Go Gibson \$6,005.58
- 7) Courthouse Basement Improvements \$1,284.11
- 8) Sewer System (Oakland Unincorporated) \$200,000 plus an additional \$25,000
- 9) Health Department New Building \$400,000

Commissioner Burns and Montgomery both chose to approve the lump sum amounts as read into the minutes by Attorney Spindler. Attorney Spindler entertained a motion to approve the recommendations from the ARPA Core Group Committee on items one through nine as read into the record. Commissioner Burns motioned to approve the recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Montgomery. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

**Road Study on CR 950 S / CR 250 W** – Sheriff Vanoven gave Commissioners three recommendations.



- 1) A three-way stop with spinning reflectors should be placed at the intersection of CR 950 S and CR 250 W.
- 2) Post a thirty mile per hour speed limit.
- 3) Post “stop ahead” sign and “children at play” sign.

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

**Bridge Replacement of Gibson County Bridge #73** – Highway Department employee, Debbie Marvel presented this item, which is really a formality to continue with this federal bridge project. Attorney Spindler has reviewed and approved this document. Commissioner Fleetwood entertained a motion to approve. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

### **COMMISSIONERS NEW BUSINESS**

**EMS Change Order** – J Koberstein Construction submitted a change order for additional engineering work for the new EMS building. The original bid amount was \$1,463,552.33. The requested change is based upon a Donovan & Donovan email stating that Neikirk Engineering did not have final approval and requirements from IDEM and The Corp of Engineers until after the bids were received and approved. The change order causes the bid to rise to \$1,630,306.59, which is a difference of \$166,754 and a 11.4% increase. Attorney Spindler recommends Commissioners approve this change order as the project is still under the TIF allocated budget of \$2,000,000. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the change order, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

**Health Insurance for Public Defenders** – Public Defender Moody was present to request the contract attorneys (4) being changed over to employees so they can be provided with the health insurance benefit. She feels this change will help retain public defenders. She has published an advertisement in several different places to try and get public defenders; she has not received much interest because there is a shortage of Attorneys. The County now only has five or six attorneys. She also feels the large caseloads are a reason for not being able to attract attorneys for this position. She feels offering health insurance would help recruit and retain attorneys. If the County is unable to provide public defense, the state will provide the service on the county's dime and the cost will be significant. Public Defender Moody has talked to both Team Care (Insurance Provider) and the Teamsters Union to ensure this change can be made. Public Defender Moody told Commissioners that she has a local attorney interested if they approve this insurance benefit. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve changing these four attorneys over to employees with the health insurance benefit in Public Defender Moody's office, seconded by Commissioner Burns. With no further discussion, the motion carried 3-0.

**EMS Director Position** – A presentation was made by EMS employees AJ Aldredge and Arica Cole regarding the retirement of EMS Director Pond. Arica and AJ have both been asked to take this position, but they would take a large cut in pay and be removed from the union, which neither one of them wishes to do. She has been talking to several people and they have come up with a new idea for this position. She feels that her and AJ can split the current director's duties with the new titles of Deputy of Administration and Deputy of Operations and still work the ambulance full-time on their normal shifts. On their days off, they could perform the deputy duties. Shannon, the Union Representative, along with the State of Indiana advised that Dr. Gilbert should take over the duties of hiring, firing, and disciplinary actions. Dr. Gilbert is very receptive to this new idea and his new title should be renamed Chief Medical Director. There would be two new positions added titled Second Deputy of Operations and Second Deputy of Administration. Job Descriptions for all positions were presented to the Commissioners. They would like to take the current Director's salary and split it between the three of them. They propose that



Dr Gilbert's salary be increased from the current \$8,000 and add the health insurance benefit the current director receives to his package; he would be an exempt, non-union employee and will need to log 1201 hours to get PERF and insurance, which he is already doing. Dr. Gilbert is on-call 24/7, he assists with writing protocols and assists with drug administration. Arica and AJ propose keeping themselves as non-exempt, union employees. She has talked to the State, the Union, Council Members McGraw and Overton and they all feel this is a very innovative idea. The Union will have to add an amendment to the contract to make this work. They propose this action to occur on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Arica says they are already getting requests from potential employees to come to Gibson County to work in this new atmosphere. Commissioner Montgomery feels this is a great thing, as it will not cost the County anything, but the discussion. They plan to present the idea to the Council at the next meeting. David Pond wonders if Commissioners would allow him to stay on as a part-time employee, like the Owner's Representative, and oversee the building construction. He requests \$21.05 per hour; he predicts his hours to be low as he feels the hard part is finished. Arica feels this is a good idea and she is agreeable so he can see the project through. Commissioners Burns nor Montgomery see a problem with this, but suggested they seek approval from the Council. Commissioner Fleetwood entertained a motion to approve David Pond as the Owner's Representative at an hourly rate until the EMS building is complete, subject to Council approval. Commissioner Montgomery made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The motion carried 3-0.

The Co-director's idea is information only. They will go to the Council to seek their approval and come back to Commissioners.

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


Patty Vanoven, Gibson County Chamber invited everyone to their open house on December 4<sup>th</sup> from 11-3. They have tickets for sale for the New Years Eve Thunderbolts game at \$35 per ticket.

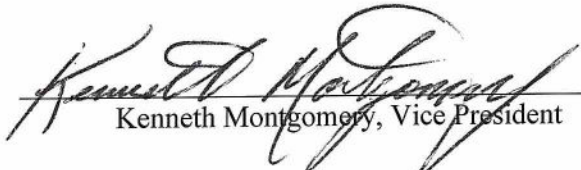
With no further discussions, Commissioner Montgomery motioned to adjourn the meeting, however Attorney Spindler had more items to address. He wanted the Commissioner to know that ARPA cannot pay another government entity, therefore, the County should try to find the money to pay the City of Princeton for the Christmas lights. Commissioner Montgomery motioned to approve the payment, contingent upon Judy finding the money, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The vote was 3-0.

Attorney Spindler presented an amendment to the MOU with Mainstream which added language regarding the local farming community concerns suggested by Commissioner Fleetwood. Commissioner Fleetwood explained that the local farming community felt some of the language in the document should be strengthened; he suggested the amendment be tabled to allow more time to discuss the specifics of the MOU. He feels Mainstream wants to use flexible language, rather than specifying that the project will use boring and existing infrastructure. He fears if the MOU is not specific, the entire project could use open trench. Commissioner Burns feels they will be receptive to making changes. The County's goal is to use existing poles and keep them at consistent heights so big machinery can move under the lines with ease. He does not want to create a disadvantage for the property owners or farmers of the community. This will be brought to another meeting. Commissioner Fleetwood entertained a motion to table this item. Commissioner Montgomery made the motion, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The vote was 3-0.

Commissioner Montgomery's motion to adjourn was still on the floor, seconded by Commissioner Burns. The vote was 3-0.

Minutes from the December 03, 2024 Meeting.

  
Warren Fleetwood, President

  
Kenneth Montgomery, Vice President

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Nick Burns, Commissioner (absent)

  
ATTEST: Mike Watkins, Auditor

