

Benton County Commissioner Meeting March 5th, 2024

The Benton County Commissioners met at 8:15 a.m. in the Commissioners room at the Benton County Courthouse. Those in attendance were Commissioners Bryan Berry, Mike Freeland, John Fields, County Auditor, Audrey Freeland and County Attorney, Jacob Ahler

Others in attendance were: Colin Sullivan, Latisha Provo, John Gick, Harold ^{Holdeman}~~Horwedel~~, Gail Lange, Mike Budreau, Kevin Meyer, Daniel Caswell, John Cox, Jason Fisher, Jennifer Greenberg, Mike Sondgeroth, Bill Burton, Charles and Don Carless

Mike Budreau – Highway Supervisor

- Oil – they will be getting some today
- Pipe – replacing a lot of pipes. They discussed the new pipe at 300 W and if something needs to be put there so it doesn't wash away.
- Kubota – do not have anything yet
- Drag – no response on it yet
- RUA – discussed what bond limits should be set at and that wind farm bonds are \$500,000. That is what the price will be set at.
- Nick – will start tomorrow along with Davis
- Ditch – Rod is still working and looks good so far

Kevin Meyer – RQAW

They have put together an assessment of the jail, which they did a full evaluation. They spoke about the settlement that has occurred and the next steps so they can compile a 5-year plan focusing on stopping any further structure damage. Sheriff Cox said that the proposal is more than what he has in his budget and would need the board's financial assistance. The group discussed setting up a contact committee as the assessment moves forward. The board approved the expense with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried. There are prints in the surveyor's office.

John Cox – Sheriff / Fair board

John is working to get to the final quotes for the new building and then he will email all of the information to the board. He then spoke about the 2024 fair, their plans for donations and that it will be much bigger this year.

He then presented an update on his deputies and the jail; one is currently out on light duty, and one is still at the academy. On the jail side he has a new CO starting in about a week, the second bathroom in the jail is being completed today. He gave a brief update on the Durango. He believes it is under warranty, but it was not fixed correctly twice. He asked Attorney Ahler if he could draft a letter, yes he will once he receives the information.

Jason Fisher – EMA / DHS Director

- Equipment grant - \$50,800 reimbursable grant was awarded
- Energy grant - OED pays only for the plan to be developed
- Sirens – The Earl Park siren has been installed and is operational.
- EDP grant – will need a development plan established once he gets more information from NIPSCO and wind partners

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- Mitigation grant – still waiting for funds to be released. They will be placed back into the fund (4907) where claims were originally placed.
- EMT and EMR classes are underway with 10 students in each class. They might hold a paramedic class in the fall
- Ladder truck – it is with the broker to be sold

Jennifer Greenberg – Clerk

Jennifer came before the board to get the 2024 polling places approved. She submitted her request and said that there are no changes. The poll locations were approved with a motion by Commissioner, John Fields, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried

Harold Horwedel – taxpayer

Harold came to talk to the board about the what he was able to find regarding the history of the courthouse for the upcoming planned celebration (Feb-March 2025). It was commissioned in 1874 to build the courthouse which at that time cost \$54,000. In March of 1875 the circuit court held it first courtroom session.

The board thanked him for looking into the history of the courthouse. Commissioner Berry said that he found that the first cornerstone was set July 16, 1874, and they just want to make sure that the 150 year was not missed. Harold said that the historical society would like to be involved and help in anyway they can. He spoke about the wanting to get the youth involved and interested in history. Gail Lange said that they could work with the schools and said that Latisha in the Economic Development office might also have some good ideas. Commissioner Berry said that he would like to have the bell rung during the opening of the celebration.

Colin Sullivan – BF & S

INDOT is announcing the winners of the 2024 call of applications for federal aid which the county applied for Bridge 125. Commissioner Berry asked for the next steps, and Commissioner Fields asked if it is matching. Colin replied that yes it a matching grant (80/20) and once the notification of award is received, they can start to send out RFPs for the engineer and design then for inspection for a 2029 placement.

Latisha Provo – Economic Development Director

Provided some updates on Discovery Oxford and some of their plans to purchase a lot near the square and what their plans for it will be. She said that she was asked if the county or economic development has any funds to assist. After further discussion the board asked her to gather more information and come back.

Latisha asked if the board knew when her county unit would be back and available, hopefully next week.

They then discussed the Fowler Foods building and the electric cost assistance. The board discussed the amount that was stated they would allow her to assist with, \$5,000 to assist with electric costs. The second cooler was also part of the purchase agreement. Commissioner, Mike Freeland motioned to approve Latisha to provide \$5,000 out of edit funds, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion

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carried. Commissioner Berry asked Latisha if she could reach out to Jason regarding the survey to have NIPSCO help get that completed.

Business:

Minutes were presented and approved with a motion by Commissioner, John Fields, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried

Commissioner Berry asked Dan if he has had any luck with the reports, but his asset manager is working on it. Dan said that it was sent and will have it resent.

Monthly claims were approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

Pay at once claims were reviewed and approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

Payroll was discussed and then approved with a motion by Commissioner, John Fields, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried.

The Purdue Extension contractual agreement was discussed regarding the concerns with the wording. Attorney Ahler advised them that it is ok to sign it as it is written. The agreement was approved with the condition that the county is able to pay out at a prorated rate. This was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried. Let the record show that Commissioner, Bryan Berry opposed.

The resolution regarding establishing policy was discussed and determined that they will not be implementing it at this time.

The group briefly discussed the 2025 live streaming of meetings. Auditor Freeland will resend the documents to the board for further review.

The non-reverting fund for the County Home grant was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

Auditor Freeland presented a bill from Bears Auto for repairs done on the Tahoe (\$620). The board approved the claim to be paid out of their contractual services and to be paid as a pay at once with a motion by Commissioner, Bryan Berry, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried.

Auditor Freeland asked where to pay the 2nd equipment invoice for Americrew and if that could also be paid as a pay at once. The invoice will be paid according to the excel sheet and paid as a pay at once. This was approved with a motion by Commissioner,

The board reviewed a quote from Fowler Pest Control for the courthouse lawn. Commissioner, Mike Freeland motioned to approve the quote for 7 applications, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried. This will be paid for out of contractual services.

The CDL repayment agreement for a former employee was revisited and repayment schedule was discussed.

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The board temporarily closed to hold the Drainage Board meeting at 9:32 am, then reopened at 9:38 am

Attorney Ahler asked if anyone had any knowledge if there was someone at the J.O.B.S. location daily because he is needing to serve notice, yes there is.

The capital improvement plan was resigned as the totals were not originally updated to the rewritten plan.

Auditor Freeland did the annual request regarding ordinance 2019-0905 and if the following departments are still exempt, Circuit Court, Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, Sheriff, Sheriff Deputies, Coroner's office, Probation department, Court Security, Soil and Water, EMA deputies and Proctors for the OSS program. The ordinance will be amended at the March 19th meeting.

The mainstream ordinance was discussed and will be amended to include that all upgrades, IT, internet for county offices, and any other to be paid as directed by the Board of Commissioners will be paid out of the fund.

Signature web creations quote was discussed. Commissioner Berry is going to reach out to Dockery with a few questions before anything is determined.

Auditor Freeland stated that the Town of Oxford is the only entity that has not paid the county the funds that were mis distributed per the Attorney General's office from the opioid settlement funds. Auditor Freeland will send the information to Attorney Ahler for him to draft a letter.

Auditor Freeland asked about the exempt/non-exempt employees. She stated that the Treasurer shared the hours worked by her deputy in the previous tax season. Attorney Ahler asked if it was over the 32.5 hours, yes and comp time was calculated hour for hour and then anything over 40 was comp time at time and a half. Attorney Ahler will review and draft a resolution that will be added to the personnel policy with all of the specifications. Auditor Freeland stated that she will make sure it is distributed to all employees once it is completed.

Latisha brought up a new business owner who was hoping to speak to someone to see what his next steps were to obtain a variance; his new business is located within the Town of Oxford. His name is Charles and they have purchased the Asgrow/Remington Seed building. They have a potential lease for a retail store. Commissioner Berry asked how the property is currently zoned and if it was industrial or commercial, industrial. Berry advised him that he would need to obtain a variance to change it to commercial and went on to say that he would do it all at once time so he would not need to return as they fill the other spaces. He has already obtained the paperwork from Kathy, and then he will need to follow the steps and come before the advisory plan commission.

Bill Burton – Chief of Fowler Fire Department

Commissioner Berry first said congratulations to Bill for 50 years of service with the Fowler-Center Township Volunteer Fire Department.

Bill came back today to discuss the pumper truck. Commissioner Berry apologized and asked him to attend the next meeting so they will hopefully have their other proposed project totals so they can see where they are if what if any funding is available. Bill said that he also looked into grants for the truck but they are not available, but he is going to write for some grant funds to outfit the truck. Commissioner Fields asked if they were still looking at the pumper truck. Bill said depending on how much funding

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they are able to secure will make that determination. Commissioner Freeland asked how much the town is going to be able to assist with, he spoke with the Town, and they will be able to assist with around 200-300,000 so he would just need to be able to get the price down enough to where the township trustee can borrow the rest over a 6-year period.

Auditor Freeland shared some concerns about a department who has already overextended their overtime budget. The board asked her to send them and Attorney Ahler the time clock reports for their review. Commissioner Berry expressed his concerns about how it needs to be addressed moving forward. Auditor Freeland said that she will send the timeclock ordinance to him for amendment.

Don Carless – Employee Plans

Commissioner Berry said that he asked Don to come today to discuss a recent situation that happened at the clinic. Berry has spoken with the employees at the clinic and asked what they would like to see their access removed. Berry asked how the insurance is structured and what happens if they are not able to do the wellness portion at the clinic. Don replied that it depends on the definition of the clinic and what could be done. Don said that the county can remove someone's access with the provisions discussed. Attorney Ahler will draft a letter.

Don provided a brief update on the plan and that it is running well. There were some high claims within the first month, but it is now well below expected. Commissioner Berry asked him to look into the STD and LTD insurance for options and asked him to stop in and talk with Beth.

Business continued

Commissioner Berry said that Hoosier Wind sold out to AES and have reached out to him. So, the county has been using Wood when they do the decommissioning, and he would like to stay with them, so he wants that terminology added to those plans.

AEP and the IRG sent a letter of credit and there are still some issues. IRG will not sign the MOU and say that BP is the operator of the project. Commissioner Berry does not feel comfortable and does not want to have what happened before with the drop in assess values. Commissioner Berry is going to contact them. He talked about how they state there is no expiration, but that is not how he reads it. The group had further discussions and agreed that there should be no expiration unless it matches the life of the project. They then discussed the letter of credit or bond again and will list that an escrow account is to be opened. The amendments are that the county will determine who will be used and the escrow account.

Gail Lange said that the Benton Review will be doing an article on Bill Burton's 50 years of service and Latisha Provo as the new Economic Development Director.

Latisha asked for clarification on grants, accounts and what is needed from her. Auditor Freeland said that they can work together and get that completed.

Latisha then asked about the number of quotes needed for the environmental study that needs to occur, yes at least two.

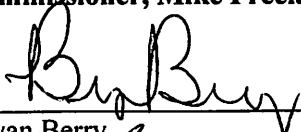
Commissioner Freeland stated that Rick Gretencord reached out about the 2024 landscaping. Commissioner Freeland suggested that they also get one from Courtney Krug. The board will review and discuss the two at the next meeting.

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Drainage questions on the Durrell bids, there were two things in there one for rip rap and one was for culvert pipes. Commissioner Berry asked if they should be two separate bids or can it be listed within the same bid as time and materials, yes it can.

Commissioner Fields asked if Berry was able to get a hold of Jim regarding the grain leg. No he has not yet but will reach out today.

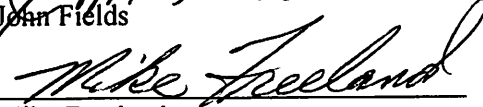
With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:36 a.m. With a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, second by Commissioner, John Fields, motion carried



Bryan Berry



John Fields



Mike Freeland



Attest: Audrey Freeland, Benton County Auditor