

Benton County Commissioners Meeting December 5th, 2023

The Benton County Commissioners met at 8:15 a.m. at the Benton County Courthouse in Fowler, IN 47944. Those in attendance were Commissioners Bryan Berry, John Fields, Mike Freeland, County Attorney, Jacob Ahler and County Auditor, Audrey Freeland.

Others in attendance were: Mike Budreau, Colin Sullivan, Carole Hoff, Karen Hurtubise, Latisha Provo, Kelly Balensiefer, John Cox, Jason Fisher, Dave Benner, Bryan Benner, Daniel Caswell, Kathy Sarault, Nathanael Shumate and Niccole McGinnis

Mike Budreau – Highway Supervisor

- Started grinding, trimming trees and working on berms when they can
- Straightening pipes – finding a lot of plugged pipes (full of dirt).
- Permits to cross the road – needs to be revised to include all surface types. \$2,500 is the standard fee for a blacktop. It was discussed if maybe they should charge per depth, no it is not necessary. Attorney Ahler will draft something
- Bridge – is there a start date for Nick to start, no there is not. The bridge is done and waiting.
- 300 E - There was an issue involving an accident where a wheel broke off and there is not an accident report. Mike Budreau said that it had settled and 1 ½ inches but the accident happened prior to that and there are witnesses. The damage is estimated to be around \$3,000 and now has an accident report from the individual. The board discussed whether or not they were going to pay anything on it. The contractor stated that he would testify if needed. After more discussion the board tabled the discussion until more information is received
- Generators – has Metzinger checked out the generators yet, not sure. Commissioner Berry will reach out to him
- Recycling building – Shawn is done. Matt is hoping to get there this week and Lyle has been contacted to finish electric. They will have Tommy or Bill do the drywall
- Contract – will be signed today Colin provided a copy

John Cox – Sheriff

- Job reclassification – he would like to request approval for a temporary light duty job description. It states that it would be approved per doctor's review and updates and that per the doctors release the employee would return to their regular full duty job description. This would be for the sheriff's department only. Attorney Ahler advised the board that it should be approved for specific departments and not across the board and signed by both parties. The request was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.
- Training – End of year updates – John invited the board to attend the in house training he will be holding on Wednesday from 10-11 a.m., a chili bar will be provided following. He highlighted what he would be discussing and reviewing with the team.

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- Temporary help – John asked for the Commissioners blessing to utilize Paul Griner in the jail as he is available. The board said yes as long as it does not affect his VSO duties.
- Stanley Steemer – Yoman has not had any contact with the sheriff, but he has spoke with RQAW and they should be reaching out soon
- Staff & equipment – all CO's have now received Kevlar gloves to wear when searching a person. He could be down a total of 3 COs by the end of January. He does have a job posting out for road deputy and CO's and has received applications.
- End of year update – he will be sharing a power point with the Council to recap the year and asked the board to attend if possible

Jason Fisher – EMA / DHS Director

- Grant – was awarded a \$25,000 grant for EMS training grant. It can be used for paramedic tuition, and we have until 2026 to utilize the funds. He might have 1 or 2 that are interested in attending. He has reached out to see if Austins will be covered or not
- Mitigation – they gave some preliminary numbers from the FEMA that would be allotted to Benton County for mitigation projects. Nature disaster would be the basis, tornadoes and windstorms. Tornado sirens were discussed by the advisory board, so Jason is getting quotes for those. The preliminary numbers are around \$200,000 in mitigation funds. One of the programs is for tornado shelters and the matching portion is 25%.
- Siren replacement – total replacement with speaker system is approximately 385,000.00. Fields asked if that was adding any new ones. Jason said it would replace everything existing and would possibly have a chance to add another one to a town since the one at fairgrounds is not in service.
- Staff – full staff currently – has 2 out on medical leave
- Gas meter – they are in, and he will get with Attorney Ahler to see if there is a liability release that needs to be put in place since the county applied for the grant and are gifting to the fire departments. The training is scheduled for next month and all of them have been invited.
- Billing – Jason would like to request to increase billing fees by 25%. Berry asked where that would place us compared to others. Even though it seems very high the amended amount is still lower than Warren and Tippecanoe counties
- Collections – Pre-Covid the collection agency. Jason asked about using pay gov for credit card payments. If approved the credit card policy would be signed annually. The use of credit cards with pay gov will be approved once the mailing address is confirmed
- Mainstream – Boswell med shed is not yet connected. Berry will call but everything is signed so should be just a couple of weeks
- Conference – It went well. There are a lot of billing changes coming
- Ryder/Diary incident – topic was revisited and discussed at length. Jason is going to contact the fire department and also contact the State Fire Marshall. Commissioner Berry said that they need to be shut down until an RUA is approved. It was advised that a bond might be an option. Who should be included was then discussed.

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Dave and Bryan Benner – Taxpayer

They came today to discuss the possibly dairy farm that could be coming near Bryan's home. They stated that they do not want their property value to decrease. Berry said that they have not yet come before the board. Freeland then stated that they have done some test wells and if the water is not sufficient, they have a second possible location in Newton County. If there is water, they would then have to go through the process of requesting a special exception, a road use agreement and permits before anything can start. Although if they get approved through IDEM there is not much the board can do to stop it. Then it would go through the BZA and Plan Commission for zoning. Dave and Bryan expressed their thoughts about the dairy and how they are not in favor. They thanked the board for their time. Berry said that he will forward a contact with the dairy to Bryan.

Kelly Balensiefer – Assessor

Kelly came before the board to get the 2024 PTABOA board members approved. She has one member who has informed her that they would be stepping down. She added that it is difficult to find political parties who are able to serve on the board. She stated that she would like to request a motion to eliminate the political provision and remain with a five-member board. Sarah Cantu, who will be leaving employment at the end of the year, has expressed interest in sitting on the board. Kelly said that she did advise Sarah that she would not be allowed to vote on anything she valued while employed.

The board needs to appoint three from the list below and then Kelly will attend the council meeting for them to appoint two others. The individuals highlighted below were appointed with a motion by Commissioner, Bryan Berry, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried.

1. Marci Burton
2. Kristen Huston
3. Jamie Cackley
4. Sarah Cantu
5. Jami Elson

The request to waive the political parties was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

Kathy Sarault & Nathanael Shumate – Health Dept & Resurrection Studios

Kathy introduced Nathanael and stated that they came today to get an update on the ordinance for the county. Berry said that the sign looks good. Nathanael thanked him and said that he spent 8 hours on the design. Attorney Ahler advised them on what he had drafted based on what Tippecanoe County has in place. The board can adopt it and then sign it at the next meeting. They discussed what penalties are in place for violations. Nathanael said that Tippecanoe Co. uses a three strikes and penalty charged and if they are not paid then they are closed until they

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are. It was advised that if they wish to allow him to move forward today then they should approve with a contingent permit and then advertised and passed. Notice and Hearing of any violations would be placed on the next agenda. It will need to be advertised in two public locations as well. The approval of the ordinance for Resurrection Studios was approved with contingencies with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

Kathy then asked about the pricing for the annual permit and presented the following.

Practitioner - \$100

Apprentice - \$20

Guest artist - \$25 (which is good for 1 week and paid as needed)

The permit fees above were approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried

Business:

The Commissioner meeting minutes from 11.21.2023 were approved with corrections, motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion passed.

Colin Sullivan – BF&S

Colin provided the contract for the broadband project to be signed. The board signed the agreement. The board thanked him for their copies of the maps.

Business continued:

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

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

Auditor Freeland asked about a claim paid for signage and after some discussion it was determined that a letter will be sent out stating the approval process for economic development funding.

Payroll were approved by Commissioner, John Fields, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried

The board took a short recess at 9:32 a.m. for their Drainage Board meeting. The board reopened after the Drainage board meeting at 9:58 a.m.

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Latisha Provo – Economic Development

She said that she will be the interim librarian for Otterbein and provided updates

She said that she received a phone call regarding the grocery store and that if the county wants the coolers they need to be moved asap. The contract was given to Commissioner Fields to get with The Leeks on signing it if they want the coolers. She then stated that the cost to restore the power at the store so inspections can be done will be \$13,000 and asked if there was anything the county could do to help, no decision was made.

She moved on to discuss READI 1.0 and if all of the procurement items were completed. Berry said that he should receive an invoice today but asked her to get more information on what exactly she needs.

Latisha spoke about Right Steps (Childcare) and that there are 40 seats in Benton County that could get up to \$1,000 to become licensed or expand their existing childcare center.

Ag Strategies with KIRPC update was provided about a possible benefit on a food chain and this is a regional base.

She is working on websites and updates. She is working with Whatsup 24/7 to make it visit the site smother and she stated that the sheriff is as well.

READI 2.0 – GLC has hired 4th Economy as the consultant, and they will be holding 1-3 meetings a week, which will be time consuming but necessary to compile the data. The regional development plan will be asking all of the LEDOs to gather some of the data for a survey for businesses in the counties. They also want data on investments from 2021. Berry asked who was making these rules, both. The board feels that if they were hired then they should be doing the work, or she will be overwhelmed.

Make my move and Whatsup24/7 both want to come before the board and present. She feels that it is something that would be good and would help promote at home workers. She said that they work with IEDC that gives them funding to pay for an administrative position. There is no cost to the county. Whatsup 24/7 wants to use Benton County as a pilot county as she explained more of what they will do.

Wade McCutcheon is set to build 37 more homes and asked if the board was good with the Country Club membership.

She went to the NIPSCO meeting, the small area library director meetings which she found overlaps with her current position. She said that the diary possibly coming in seems like it will be good for the county. She also met with Holscher Products and Barn Hardt Crane, both went well and expressed their concerns with economy. They are both willing to meet with IEDC about tax savings for them and their employees.

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She spoke about upcoming trainings and meetings she has on her calendar; they are with WTH GIS, meeting with IVY Tech, GLEA, 4th economy, Ashely Bice and Kathryn Baker at the Boswell Elementary School.

She will be attending her annual conference December 14th-15th.

There will be an IEDC site visit, and she let the board know the details so they can attend.

She attended the Oxford Town Council meeting and is planning on attending all of the Town's meetings.

Business continued:

Auditor Freeland asked Attorney Ahler if he had had any response from Cintas, no he has not.

The ARPA funds and deadlines were reviewed.

The sharing contracts were approved to be sent out with a letter stating that a copy of their financials are provided.

Auditor Freeland asked the board about an email from Solential Energy (Focuses on Empowering Life) and if they want her to extend an invitation to come present to them. The board tabled the discussion until the January meeting.

The total \$384,529.17 is the total paid to the Town of Oxford to date. The agreement is for a total of \$707,000 so the invoice received will be paid.

The board discussed the resolution for renewable energy as a public utility. This was approved with a motion by Commissioner, John Fields, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried.

The group then reviewed the economic agreement letter from BP agreement to be paid over a 3-year period. Berry said that they will determine how it will be distributed to taking districts which will be done at a later date.

The 2024 contract for Attorney Ahler was reviewed and approved with a motion by Commissioner, John Fields, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried.

The sealed bids were reviewed and approved as follows:

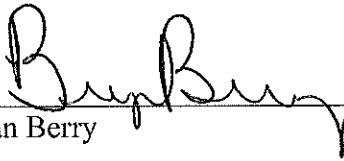
- 2017 Dodge Ram 1500 pick up
- Dwight Stacy - \$8,546.50
- Daniel Poindexter - \$8,501.00

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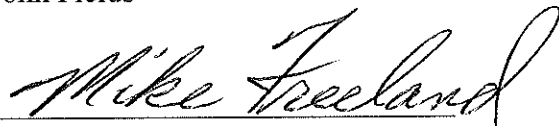
The board awarded the pickup to Dwight Stacy with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, Bryan Berry and motion carried.

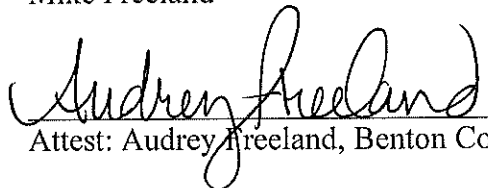
The group discussed the other vehicle (Tahoe) since no bids were received. Freeland said they need to see what Alsop's will give as far as trade in value.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m. with a motion by Commissioner, Bryan Berry, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields.


Bryan Berry

John Fields


Mike Freeland


Attest: Audrey Freeland, Benton County Auditor