

## Benton County Commissioner Meeting April 2nd, 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: Collin Sullivan, John Gick, Mike Budreau, Carole Hoff, Latisha Provo, Daniel Caswell, Jason Fisher, Glenda Wallpe, Jen Bushore-Barry, Mary Brown James, Dave Fisher, Samantha Smith and Courtney Krug

### **Mike Budreau – Highway Supervisor**

- Stone – over 1,000+ loads will be hauled, all sizes. Some of it is for CCMG projects
- Roads – crew is out checking for wash outs
- Pipe – Mike has not gotten anything from DEBCO to date. Now that it is close to planting season they will just wait, the board agrees.
- Signs – Commissioner Berry asked if they placed signs on 500 N, yes, they did and will begin grinding it soon. Mike heard from the state on 71 and they will be doing one at a time
- STRD 41 (NB) – will be closed to repair the railroad tracks per the state and the county cannot stop it. They discussed how they will not follow the route and how the traffic will go through town.
- CCMG/Bridge discussion - Berry asked if they were going to put some bridges within the next CCMG, yes, they are. Colin and Jonathon will work with them and direct them on what they can write in for. Freeland asked if CCMG could be used for the bridges on the state line, yes, they could. Mike stated that their superintendent is not over their bridges though it is a separate board.
- 100 E – they have looked at this and they will keep an eye on it but there are other roads in worse condition
- Kubota – they are looking into it and are not sure why it has not been resolved
- Recycle bldg. – Commissioner Freeland will reach out to Tommy again and Schutter can do doors and windows.

### **Business:**

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

Monthly claims were reviewed, and 3 claims were discussed. Commissioner Berry asked about a claim to Farneys, 2 payments to ODP and an equipment grant claim and they were discussed. A motion was then made to approve all monthly claims except the claim payable to Farney's until they could speak with the sheriff. This was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Bryan Berry, seconded by Commissioner, Mike Freeland and motion carried.

### **Jason Fisher – EMA & DHS Supervisor**

Jason came today to discuss the need for medical debt write offs, these are claims that are unbillable and we are no longer able to collect. While the collection firm is active, but these are claims are from the COVID period. The group discussed the fees and the cost if they pursued it further. The board asked Jason to reach out to the collection agency and determine how far back they could go. They discussed the payment options offered and what limit is to be set that would be eligible for collections.

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Commissioner Berry asked for an update on the cameras at the county home, they should have been there last week, but Jason will double check.

### **Business continued:**

Commissioner Berry gave a quick update on Americrew and said they are working on the tower today and should be working in Fowler, Oxford, Ambia and Cyr. They also got something worked out for the Boswell elevator. Commissioner Freeland asked about Freeland Park and Berry said that the trees are down and there is a path leading back to where it will be.

### **Jason Fisher – EMA & DHS Supervisor**

Jason wrapped up by asking about the new building in Boswell that was discussed previously. After some discussion it was probably more than a year out. Jason said that he would like to get a meeting schedule with the Boswell board then so they can move forward with a few things and hopes that they are receptive.

### **Business continued:**

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.

Commissioner Berry wondered if there was any updates on the status of the cooler that was sold illegally, no there is no update at this time. It is unsure if the recipient is even aware that it was not his to sell. Auditor Freeland will reach out and get an update for the board.

Attorney Ahler updated the board on a few items he had been working on.

1. ITI letter was drafted and sent. He advised if there is a bill received then that can be paid.
2. Lease – tower lease has been drafted and used for all entities
3. J.O.B.S – we got service for the foreclosure. He described the next steps
4. Resolution – county policy for timekeeping procedures
5. Clinic – discussion on employee status and access. A letter will be sent

### **Business continued:**

Commissioner Fields presented a quote for new dumpster service for the county. Following some discussion the quote was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Bryan Berry seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried. Attorney Ahler will send a letter of cancellation to the current provider.

### **Glenda Wallpe – Recorder**

Glenda came before the board to inquire about using a county vehicle to attend conference. It was stated that in order for an elected official to drive the county vehicle they will need to sign a waiver stating that they will agree to be subject to drug screening. Glenda said that she could agree to that. Attorney Ahler will draft the waiver. This was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

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### **Business continued:**

Commissioner Berry wanted to discuss the edits for the County Home and asked if there was a report. Auditor Freeland stated that there was no report she could find to run for this. She then informed the board that she received a text on Saturday stating that the timeclock was down and had been since Wednesday. The board discussed the number of edits, the conflict and inconsistency of them.

### **Carole Hoff – Treasurer**

She came today to see if they had made a decision regarding Kate's pay. Commissioner Berry said that there was an hour or so of overtime that she would be due. Carole asked about the upcoming tax season and how that would be handled. Commissioner Berry said comp time until 40 hours and they do not want to go into overtime and stated that the Council would need to be involved as she doesn't have an overtime. He stated that she needs to request both comp time and overtime both. She is not sure of how much it will be; they understand that. They discussed the possible amount of time.

Commissioner Berry asked her about completing documentation for an ACH from the Greater Lafayette on behalf of the IEDC. She stated that she does not like to do it at all because she cannot control who all could see it. Commissioner Berry asked her since it is for a state agency would she be ok with it, yes if it is through the state she would.

The comp time/overtime was revisited. Carole said that Amber with the FSLA stated that she was non-exempt and asked Attorney Ahler if he was able to verify this. His response was that he could not find anything showing that she is barred from comp time. She just wants to make sure that she is ok. Carole then requested approval for her deputy through the 2024 tax season for comp time and overtime if needed. This request was approved with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

### **Business continued:**

The County Home edits, and other concerns were discussed. Auditor Freeland was directed to let her know that if her and her staff do not start utilizing the timeclock they will close the building. The overtime budget was also discussed that her staff is making more than the superintendent. After further discussion, Commissioner Berry stated that he was just going to reach out to her himself and will include the board in the correspondence.

### **Jen Bushore-Barry, Mary Brown-James & Heather- YWCA**

They started off by thanking the board for allowing him to come today and signing the proclamation. Attorney Ahler asked the group about the references and would like them to be documented within the minutes. Mary was able to provide some of them. She said some of the statistics came from the National Sexual Violation Resource center at NSVRC.org, and some of them came from Indiana Coalition to end Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking and their website is icesaht.org.

Commissioner Freeland asked if they were government/non-government entities. They are non-government but are state and national organizations.

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The board signed the proclamation with a motion to approve made by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

Mary then read off some other statistics for the room. In 2001, April was named Sexual Assault awareness month. The national awareness was created in 2000 and is not just a women's issue but a societal issue. YWCA opened their rape center in 2023 and are committed to empowering others.

### **Business continued:**

Internal control policy was discussed and reviewed. Auditor Freeland will send it to the board so they can review and amend, if necessary, at the next meeting.

Auditor Freeland brought the credit card policy so it can be amended to include the sheriff and EMS department and to update the travel meal amount.

The past employee who had a signed agreement with the county has yet to return paperwork or make a payment. Information will be sent to Attorney Ahler for him to move forward with noticing.

Commissioner Freeland said that Vic and Eberhardt both feel as if 3 phase would be better for the new fairground building. The board will move forward and get some estimates. NIPSCO has also replied that they cannot assist with the price until they know the total project.

Attorney Ahler spoke about the BP agreement and the raw testing information. Nothing in the agreement caused him concern, however the board would agree that it would not be shared but if a public access request was received it could be an issue. The group discussed it further. Commissioner Freeland stated that they shouldn't sign it if that is included. He also feels that landowners or others should be able to view the information.

**The board temporarily closed to hold the Drainage Board meeting at 9:33 am, then reopened at 9:41 am**

### **Courtney Krug – Krug landscaping**

Courtney was asked to come in today regarding her bid for the courthouse landscaping. The group asked her some questions regarding what she had listed within her bid and confirmed that she would be at each site as needed between April and November.

The 2024 landscaping bid was then awarded to Krug Landscaping with a motion by Commissioner, Bryan Berry, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

### **Business continued:**

Commissioner Berry spoke about the funding request from the Center/Fowler Fire department. They discussed previous funding assistance to other departments, and how at one time it was discussed how it was to be handled. He spoke about how they want to help them out but need to make sure it is fair across the board and like everything the cost for equipment is increasing. He also mentioned that Center did raise their tax rate this year, but it is still behind the other towns. Commissioner Fields spoke about what he is seeing in the fire department he is a part of and reiterated the cost of equipment is going up

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across the board. Until the next windfarm payments begin, which is 2028 the county will be tight on what they will be able to assist with outside of county needs. The recommendation that was given to the incoming windfarms was \$60,000 per megawatt. Pattern is the only one currently paying, EDPR will begin paying in 2028 (\$800,000 annually). The board discussed why it is a good idea to ladder out payments.

Commissioner Fields asked where they were at currently for the new windmills, they are struggling with transmission and would like to get more landowners. Commissioner Berry spoke about them using the right of way and how they prefer that they work with the landowners so the landowners can be compensated. Once the abatements come off it will assist in lowering the taxes as well.

Attorney Ahler spoke briefly about HB 1158 regarding the new law regarding contracts for the county.

Commissioner Berry said that why he knows that VSO, Paul Griner does not want any recognition he would like to thank him for his service to the veterans as well as his assistance in other departments. He will be difficult to replace but they wish him the best and appreciate everything he has done.

Commissioner Fields asked for an update on the proposed new diary. Commissioner Berry said that he doesn't know much more than what was discussed about the roads. Commissioner Freeland said that they did find water. Berry said that he doesn't know if it was enough water but to date it has not affected the surrounding wells. Commissioner Fields said that he has received quite a few phone calls, and why the location might not be ideal they are not doing anything wrong.

Commissioner Berry discussed a few applicants he has been in contact with regarding the VSO position. The board will review the applications and make an appointment at the next meeting.

### **Latisha Provo – Economic Development Director**

Latisha asked if there was anything the board would like her to add or if they had any advisements on the wind tours she is receiving. Currently she is directing them to the kiosk at the highway and other businesses to visit while they are here.

Commissioner Berry asked her about the reimbursement process. Latisha said that they will be sent as multiple checks, but she will double check with Julie. Commissioner Berry and Latisha reviewed the documents and approval process since it appears they are getting a new person each time to hopefully eliminate some of the confusion. She said that the first check should be coming soon.

Commissioner Freeland said that he spoke with Tommy Anderson, and he will be at the new recycling building next week.

The board revisited the county home discussion and the employee's hesitation on coming forward in fear of retaliation.

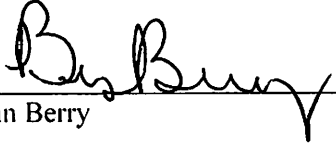
The new ordinance regarding comp and overtime was approved and signed with a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, seconded by Commissioner, John Fields and motion carried.

The board reviewed the list of those who have keycard access to the courthouse and other buildings. They would like the report to be rerun and sent to them about who has access by location. There was then

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discussion on who should be keying that access and the board feels that should remain with HR. The discussion will be revisited once the new reports have been reviewed.

**With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:26 a.m. With a motion by Commissioner, Mike Freeland, second by Commissioner, John Fields, motion carried**



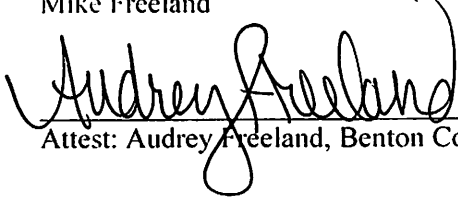
Bryan Berry



John Fields



Mike Freeland



Attest: Audrey Freeland, Benton County Auditor