

JENNINGS COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETING

March 6, 2025, 6:00 P.M.

Annex Building

Matt Sporleder, Alex Zimmerman, Shane Boswell, and Charlie St. John were present. Matt opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Judge Bright came to discuss a couple of issues with the commissioners. Judge Bright states that she spoke to the county attorney and the Auditor concerning the policy with grants. Ellie asks the commissioners, as a county, where do we fall on grant applications and grant funding. Ellie says that her new programming is funded through state grants. Judge Bright said that she understands the grant policy was put in place because of the State Board of Accounts, but this is required for federal grants and not state grants. Judge Bright feels as if she is getting a lot of push back on the grants she is applying for. Ellie states that she applies to the grants that do not require matching money, so these grants would not cost the county anything. There was only one grant that required matching money and that was for new recording equipment in the court room. Matt asks Judge Bright where she is getting the push back from and she said from the council, in which Matt responds with "Really", even if doesn't require matching funds? Matt states, this makes no sense, I don't get it. The new program person would need to be placed on the salary ordinance to become an employee of the county. The council did not want to create any new positions in 2025 because the county has taken a big hit on insurance. Judge Bright stated that it would not cost the county a dime and the position would be funded by the grant. Matt said that in the past someone was hired with grant funds and the grant funds ran out and they wanted the county to pay for it. Ellie said that Jerry Lamb said that exact same thing. Ellie says that if the funding goes away, the program will be eliminated, and that Sherry was told this when she was hired for the position. Ellie said that overall that her concerns were with the grant policy, she was caught off guard. Shane said he believes the issue with the council is that they do not want to add any new positions for 2025. Ellie says again that it isn't going to cost the county any money, in which Shane replies, yes, it will cost the county some money with insurance. Ellie says that the grant will cover all the funding, which includes fringe benefits. Matt asks the county attorney if they (commissioners) can approve Ellie's request since the commissioners are over personnel, and Alex responds no because that position would need to be added to the salary ordinance. Alex says that the commissioners could approve the position, but the council would have to find the funding for it. Alex says that obviously there is grant funding, but it would still have to be added to the salary ordinance. Shane asks where Sherry works at currently and if Ellie has office space for her. Ellie explains that it is the other issue that I have. Ellie asks the ladies to introduce themselves to the commissioners before getting into the office space issue. Cathy Vawter has worked for Bartholemew County for 28 years in problem solving courts. Cathy explains that Jennings County is behind and that most of the other counties have Problem Solving Courts. Cathy said that she specializes in addiction to hardcore offenders: the people that are felons and have a long history with drug use. Cathy says that this program is harder than probation and that there is more accountability, and more drug screening so in return they see better results. Up next is Sherry Porter. Sherry has been practicing law for about seven years and now is coming back to Probation. Sherry will be the Pre-Trial Program coordinator. The Pre-Trial program goals are to maximize release and maximize public safety. This program is a voluntary program and is not required. Ellie says that the Family Recovery Court (FRC) has been a success over the last two

years. Ellie said that the first option for office space was the prosecutor's office. There will need to be some construction done to be able to have office space there. Matt said that he thinks the first step is to be able to get Sherry hired. Sherry said that she can not see clients until she is a salaried employee with the Probation office. Ellie said that she still needs office space now. Ellie said that she has exhausted a lot of options and that she is just getting a NO from department heads. Ellie said that if they rent space, it will cost \$350.00 to the Town of Vernon. Shane said that his opinion is that this all should have been figured out before hiring for these positions. Alex mentioned the conference room in the basement of the annex. The commissioners are good with Sherry using the space in the basement as a temporary solution. Matt asks Ellie if her grants are also audited by the State Board of Accounts. Ellie said that they are audited by the Indiana Office of Court Services. Matt says to Ellie, "You are saying that you fall outside of the realm of having to follow the rules that everyone else has to follow?" Ellie said that the auditor and herself received an email from The State Board of Accounts that said the courts are not bound by the guidelines. Matt told Ellie, "Here's the deal, If we get gigged for it, I am throwing you under the bus! That's just the way it is." Matt said that "we were told that we must have that documentation on grants, so if you are telling me that you fall outside of that and you are not going to follow the rules, that's fine. But you know what they say about crap and flowing downhill. You will be at the bottom of it!" Shane said that he would think that everyone would need to follow the rules. Alex said, "I also have that same opinion so you can throw me right under that bus too".

Kenny Freeman presents the commissioners with payments that he would like to make with money from the 2024 GO Bond. This includes dash cams, body cams, and three new vehicles, plus the outfitting of these vehicles. Kenny has an invoice for one of the three vehicles that he would like to get purchased. Matt asked Kenny if he was trading the old vehicles in on the new ones. Matt wants to keep the numbers flat with the county insurance. Matt said the only problem he has with the paper Kenny gave him is that the RFID, and the jail maintenance are not included in the bond. Shane made a motion to approve the bond items, which are the body cams, LPR, and the vehicles (3). Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously. Matt instructed Kenny to speak to the council about funding the other items that were not included in the bond.

In the fall, the county advertised a 99 Explorer, and no bids were received. Alex has been asked by the Parks Department how to proceed. Alex is asking the commissioners to declare it junk and to scrap it. Shane wants to add it to the K of C sale and whatever it brings, it brings.

Sherri brought the commissioners a utility reimbursement agreement for \$93,400.00 to move utilities for the Brownstown Rd/O&M project. Alex states that he has not seen this agreement and would like to review it before the commissioners sign it.

Charlie makes a motion to trade in one of the county highways three skid steers for a new one at \$60,000 and to purchase the mini for approximately \$82,300.00. Shane seconds the motion, passed unanimously. Sherry will need to follow up with the council for funding.

The county highway had a truck that was overturned, and the commissioners had approved the price of \$21,000 to get it repaired. Sherry says that they have come back with an additional \$15,000 to repair it. Sherry said that on the original quote they noted that they would check and advise on the frame repairs. Now there is an additional \$5700.00 to straighten it. They are also saying that there needs to be a new PTO and Pump. The one that is on it has seized up. The lift cylinder was originally quoted at \$700 and now they are saying that it was quoted wrong and is \$4000.00. A tailgate cylinder was quoted and not a dump bed cylinder. Shane makes a motion to approve the

extra charges but would like Sherry to try to negotiate the price due to the quotation error. Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Sherry discussed the federal funding for the three bridges, Sherry said that she is short on money to pay additional engineering fees. The commissioners have decided to remove one of the three bridges so that the county did not need to find additional money. Matt asks if there is one that they can comfortably remove from the list. Matt thinks that one of the Vernon bridges needs to be the one removed. He doesn't think that both projects need to be happening at the same time anyway.

Marie Shepherd presents a request from Christopher Bartels about moving E CR 425 N approximately 180 feet to the south, at his own expense. In Bartels' letter, he states that this would allow the back of his home to overlook the river. Teresa Ragsdale, the spokesperson for people that live along that road had many questions. Teresa spoke to the commissioners about her concerns. She says that when she spoke to the realtor, Bartel was just going to build a little place for himself and was still going to allow Mr. Herr to farm the farm ground. Now suddenly, they are hearing talk about moving roads and building multiple houses. Alex states that it is premature for Bartel to ask the commissioners to approve moving the road before he has even purchased the property. Shane made a motion to table this discussion, Charlie seconds the motion, passed unanimously.

Alex introduced Jim Troiani to the commissioners. Jim is the new deputy prosecutor in Brian Belding's office.

Alex does not have any issues with the agreement for Brownstown Rd/ O&M. The agreement does state that the price can increase depending on any additional work that needs to be done. Shane made a motion to approve the agreement, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Louann Wilkerson, Donna Wagner, and Dallas Grider from First Financial Bank offered the county employees free checking and free HSA under their Work Life program. The program offers credit building repair, to include financial literacy. Matt asks HR to get with Louann and her staff to roll this out to the county employees. Shane made a motion to approve, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Brad Ponsler with Soil and Water discusses comp time with the commissioners. Brad said that they have done a good job at managing their employees and he feels like it would be a shame to penalize the employees. Matt said that no one is being penalized. No decision has not been made concerning comp time yet.

Nicci presents several travel requests. The first is for the highway department to send the three road bosses to school. The fees associated with this will be paid from the highway fund. Shane made a motion to approve the request, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously. The second request is from Probation. Superior and Circuit Probation will attend the same conference. Fees associated will be paid from the Probation User Fee's fund. Shane made a motion to approve the request, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously. The next request is from the Treasurers office. They will be attending two different conferences. The conference on August 5-7 will be paid for by the Elected Official training fund, and the Spring conference will be paid out of the Treasurers budget. Shane made a motion to approve, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously. The Veterans Service Officer has training next month. There are no fees associated with this training. Shane made a motion to approve, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously. The Prosecutors office will attend a child support conference in June. All fees will come out of the child

support budget. The Health Department will attend the district conference, and there are no fees associated with this conference. Pam Petry with the Health Department will be attending a conference in Madison. There will be no fees associated with this conference. Shane made a motion to approve the three-travel request, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Alex said in other news, the State awarded Jennings County \$1.5 million for the Community Crossing Grant.

Nicci presented a quote to the commissioners for Risk Assessment Training. Cody and Nicole liked the presentation and feel that it would be a good idea. The quote is from IMPG and is \$30,000.00 for the year. There will most likely not be savings seen on insurance for a few years. The counties insurance company recommended this for the Sheriff's Department and the jail. Matt is requesting that the jail LIT tax pays for this training. Shane made a motion to approve and to see the council for funding. Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

Shane made a motion to eliminate one of the bridges in Vernon off of the Federal Aid, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

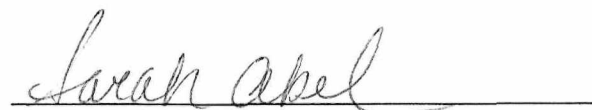
Charlie made a motion to approve prior minutes, Shane seconded the motion. Passed unanimously. Shane made a motion to approve payroll and claims, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

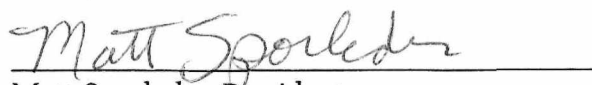
The commissioners received two quotes for the salt building out at the highway department. The first quote is 42' x 80' open on one end, \$27,937.00. D&D sales are at a 40' x 70' and with freight included the cost is \$35,500.94 and it will be shipping out of Canada. The only other cost will be the blocks. Shane made a motion to approve the quote from Calco at \$27,937.00. Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

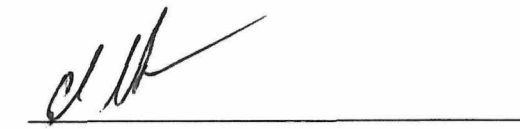
Matt said that there needs to be a deadline on the agenda. Matt suggests that nothing be added to the agenda after 12:00 pm. on Wednesday. Shane thinks that it needs to be a deadline of Tuesday at noon. Shane made a motion to allow the deadline to be Tuesday at noon, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

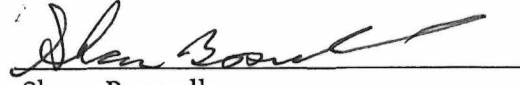
Amy asks Matt if someone was going to council for the building and equipment purchases and Shane said that he or Sherry will go to council for the funding.

Shane made a motion to adjourn, Charlie seconded the motion, passed unanimously.


Sarah J. Abel, Auditor


Matt Sporleder, President


Charlie St. John


Shane Boswell