

REGUGLAR MEETING OF THE JASPER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

DECEMBER 4,2023

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The Jasper County Commissioners met this date at 8:15 A.M. C.S.T at 910 S Sparling, Rensselaer, Indiana with the following members present: Rein Bontreger, Jeffrey DeYoung, and James Walstra. Also present were Deputy Auditor, Treasure Gilbert and Eric Beaver, the Attorney that represents the Commissioners. Those present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Bontreger. There was a brief moment of silence following the Pledge.

MINUTES: Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve the minutes from November 6,2023 and November 20,2023, as presented, Mr. Walstra seconded and the motion carried.

CLAIMS: Mr. Walstra motioned to approve the claims, as presented, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried.

PAYROLL CLAIMS: Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve the Payroll Claims from checks dated November 15,2023 and November 30,2023, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

BURIED CABLES: Mr. Haberlin said there was four buried cable permits. He said two are with Precision Utilities for two simple bores to service CenturyLink to residents. These are in Barkley and Union. The third permit is with KV Electric, who contracts out to REMC. He said this is a simple bore in Walker. The last permit is with US Signal for fiber optic. He said they are going to mount on existing poles. Mr. Haberlin recommends these four permits. Mr. Walstra motioned to approve the buried cables, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried.

Mr. Bontreger asked Matt Bristol, broadband manager with REMC, if he had a permit to present. Mr. Bristol said what they are looking to do is kickoff their phase two. He said they finished phase one of their smart grid that connects Northern and Southern Jasper County to the center. He said they have their beta neighborhoods completed in DeMotte. He displayed a map for the Commissioners. He said phase two is funded by REMC State of Indiana NLC and Federal RDOF to put fiber optic networks to homes. Phase two includes the following townships: Wheatfield, Union, Walker, Gilliam and Barkley. Mr. Bontreger said this has historically been the most underserved area. Mr. Bristol said the whole area has been underserved. He said there's currently not a lot of providers in the area and if there is, its most likely wireless or very slow DSL. He said they are looking to improve that by providing 1gb symmetrical fiber optic. Mr. Bontreger asked what the blue dots on the map were. Mr. Bristol said the blue dots are their wireless towers. Mr. Bristol mentioned their phase three and four in other parts of the county that they hope to complete next year. He said their long-term goal is to provide fiber optic to all members.

Mr. Bristol said for phase two they have around 135 miles of fiber cable being ran. He said its 108.65 aerial miles on their existing pole lines. He said there is 27.4 miles underground. He said the underground is mainly in subdivisions. He said with this next phase, they are hoping to serve about 1,400 homes. He said they will be hiring more people for Jasper County Connect as well. He said the project is in bid-phase right now. He said with the whole plan, they are looking at over 400 miles of fiber optic. Mr. Bontreger asked what their potential timeline was for phase two. Mr. Bristol said around eighty days. Mr. Bontreger told him to work with Mr. Haberlin and the Surveyor's Office on permits. He asked what their anticipated start date was after they get their bids. Mr. Bristol said as soon as possible.

PUBLIC HEARING / ORDINANCE FOR ADDITIONAL STOP SIGNS & REDUCTION OF SPEED LIMITS: Mr. Bontreger said this ordinance is for two additional stop signs at CR 1050 W and CR 300 S, as well as the reduction of speed limits on CR 900 W from SR 10 to CR 1100 N and CR 1000 W from SR 10 to 1200 N. Mr. Bontreger asked if there was any public comment on this matter. There was no public comment. Attorney Beaver said this has been discussed previously. Mr. Cain said he thinks the reduction of the speed limit is a good idea. Mr. Walstra motioned to approve the ordinance, as presented, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried. **Ordinance No. 12-04-23A**

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HIGHWAY CULVERT DELIVERY FEE ORDINANCE: Mr. Bontreger said he remembers discussing this previously. He asked Mr. Cain what the previous fee was. Mr. Cain said the fee was \$50.00 and they want to bump it up to \$150.00. Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried. **Ordinance No. 12-04-23B**

Mr. DeYoung asked Mr. Cain how often they deliver culverts. Mr. Cain said a couple times a month.

TAMMY MCEWAN / NSF CHECK: Ms. McEwan said that she's had an outstanding NSF check since August. She said she has given them ample time and they will not respond. She said this is only the second one she's done in thirty years. She is asking for approval to pay it and then she will put the taxes, penalties, and fees back on the parcel and it will be sold on tax sale. She said the amount is \$994.71. Mr. DeYoung asked how long the people would have to pay. Ms. McEwan said until the tax sale in July. Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

ANNEX ROOF BIDS: Mr. Bontreger asked if there were any updates on the annex roof bids. Mr. DeYoung said he hasn't heard anything. Mr. Haberlin said he hasn't heard anything either. Mr. Bontreger said they will put this on the January agenda and revisit at that time.

SHERIFF / REPLACEMENT OF OFFICER / EMPLOYEE VACATION PAYOUT: Sheriff Williamson had a request to pay out an employee's vacation and comp time over the next three pay periods. He said they have enough funds to cover this. Mr. Walstra made a motion to approve, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried.

Sheriff Williamson asked to replace a jail officer. Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

Mr. Bontreger thanked the Sheriff for working with them. He said they just got back from a Commissioners' Conference and they heard stories where other Commissioners don't have a good relationship with their Sheriff. Sheriff Williamson said he appreciates them as well as the Council. Mr. DeYoung said they appreciate the team they have together.

Sheriff Williamson had a request to replace a part-time jail controller. Mr. Walstra motioned to approve, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried.

Sheriff Williamson asked to replace a part-time secretary that will also work as a dispatcher. Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

Mr. Bontreger asked how the x-ray machine was working. Sheriff Williamson said it has been going well and they haven't caught anything coming in. Mr. Bontreger asked if the license plate readers ever got up and running. Sheriff Williamson said the two cameras at 10 and 65 have been working great and helped resolve some robberies. He said they also contracted with Vigilant, which is Motorola, to put in eight cameras. He said its been over a year of trying to get this done but, the cameras never got put up. He said the most they have done is get five cameras up. He said some cameras need updated and Vigilant asked them to update the cameras themselves. Sheriff Williamson said he told Vigilant they were done with them and they are going to contact Flock.

LIBRARY BOARD APPOINTMENT: Mr. Bontreger asked if the Commissioners had any recommendations on someone to appoint for this spot. They did not at this time. Mr. Bontreger said they will make a decision at the meeting on December 28,2023.

TOURISM BOARD APPOINTMENT: Ms. Zyan Miller said she would like to replace Eric VanKley's spot on the Tourism Board with Diva Rish. She said Ms. Rish does an amazing job with tourism efforts in Jasper County so, she thinks she would be great for the position. Mr.

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TOURISM BOARD APPOINTMENT CONTINUED: Bontreger asked if they are getting ready to come up with their plan for tourism. Ms. Miller said yes and they will be meeting on December 12th. Mr. DeYoung said he thinks Ms. Rish will be a great asset and she is very involved. Mr. DeYoung motioned to appoint Ms. Rish, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

ANIMAL CONTROL BOARD APPOINTMENT: Mr. Bontreger said they received a letter from Mr. Justin Nesius whom does not wish to be reappointed. He said they received a letter from Ms. Leda Fedor saying she was interested in being on the board. Mr. DeYoung motioned to approve Ms. Fedor replacing Mr. Nesius, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bontreger read an energy savings contract annual report from EMCOR. The savings totals are \$239,250.00.

Mr. Bontreger said there was a letter concerning Porter County Juvenile Services. He said they no longer wish to continue with their agreement. He said they will be in search of a new juvenile bid. He said he heard that Henry County is working on getting a juvenile center up and running.

Mr. Bontreger said the Assessor has a conference request to attend the Assessor Winter Conference in January. Expenses would include hotel, meals and mileage. Mr. Walstra motioned to approve, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried.

Mr. Urbano said their contractor is getting started on the R.E. Davis this week. He said the bank has not given them the final thumbs up, pending a resolution. Attorney Beaver said he talked with individuals from the bank and told them that they don't need a resolution; he can provide them with an email of the information they need. He said they won't have loan documents ready until the December 28th meeting. He said there's no reason why they won't have the money by the end of the month. Mr. Urbano said he just wanted to make sure they had the funds for the bills that will be coming in.

PUBLIC COMMENT

REBECCA DEARDORFF: Ms. Deardorff said in 2018 Nipsco announced their closing. She said there was a meeting where they had mentioned that the County's assessed value is 30% Nipsco. She wanted to know where the county stands now and when will there be a big tax hit. Mr. Bontreger said this was the primary motivation as to why they agreed to some solar projects. He said these investments would offset the loss from Nipsco. He said his understanding is that Nipsco is running one coal generator right now and it will close in 2025. He said they will continue coal in Michigan City until 2028. He said in the meantime, Dunns Bridge 1 and 2 will come online. He said the tax cliff was avoided by Dunns 1 and 2.

Ms. Deardorff said Dunns 1 came online in June and Nipsco dropped quite a bit of their assessed value for 2023 pay 2024. Mr. Bontreger said there was a negotiated amount that the assessed value can't fall below. He said there's also negotiated floor levels for the solar farms as well. He said Dunns 1 did not have an economic development agreement, as far as payments go. He said they were able to get the assessed value of 475 million back in to offset the tax cliff. He said they are going to take some time in the first quarter of 2024 to revisit ordinances and adjust some setbacks and details. He said at the Commissioners' Conference he learned that every county is facing the same kinds of issues, such as wind and solar.

Ms. Deardorff said there is an intersection in her neighborhood on Tefft Road where a row of trees is hard to see around. Mr. Cain said they are planning on taking those trees out. He said it is definitely a hazard.

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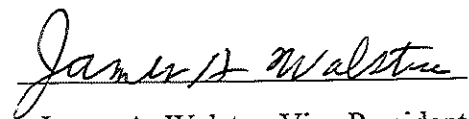
RYAN HILTON: Mr. Hilton said he recently read an article that White County is looking to adopt zoning requirements for carbon sequestration projects. He asked if they knew about this and if they were looking into it. He said a few months ago they mentioned getting the board of zoning together to discuss this. He asked if they have done this yet. Mr. Bontreger said this will be a priority the first quarter of 2024. He said their attorney has talked with attorneys from White County and the Commissioners have talked with other Commissioners to see what they can do. He said they have limitations on what they can do but, they are going to try to get something in place.

JOSH DAVIS: Mr. Davis said he sent an email about reappointing his father on the City of Rensselaer's Plan Commission. He said he is looking to do another term. Mr. DeYoung motioned to reappoint Mr. Davis, Mr. Walstra seconded, and the motion carried.

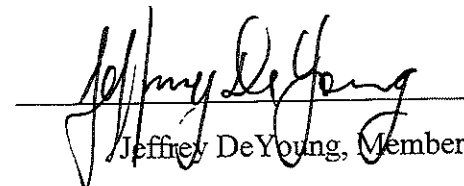
There being no further business, Mr. Walstra motioned to adjourn, Mr. DeYoung seconded, and the motion carried. This meeting stands in recess until the next meeting on Thursday, December 28, 2023.



Rein Bontreger, President

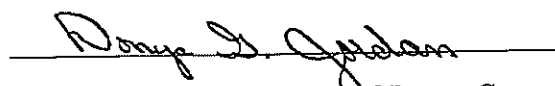


James A. Walstra, Vice President



Jeffrey DeYoung, Member

ATTEST:



Donya G. Jordan, Auditor of Jasper County