



FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
January 5, 2021 – 10:00 A.M.
COMMISSIONERS/COUNCIL MEETING ROOM, #203

The Franklin County Commissioners met on January 5, 2021, at 10:00 A.M. in the Commissioners/Council meeting room. Those present were Tom Linkel, Gerald Wendel, Tom Wilson, Faye Hay and Karla Bauman, Auditor.

Open: The meeting was called to order and the pledge of allegiance was led by Tom Linkel.

Health Update: Commissioner Linkel read the health update provided by the Franklin County Health Department.

Age range for most positive cases – 2 day old to 94 years

Total number of positive cases – 1,280 (since mid-March)

Total number of Covid deaths in Franklin County – 29 (the most recent was a female in her 70's)

Total number of recovered cases – 1,138

Currently monitoring 113 cases including 25 that are hospitalized

Vaccine Update: The health department will be receiving a very limited supply of COVID vaccines next week. At this time only healthcare workers and first responders are eligible to receive the vaccine. Those that qualify were notified by email with a link to register. The Indiana State Department of Health decides how many doses we receive and who can get them and not the local health department. All of this info is subject to change.

Opening of Annual Bids:

Commissioners received the annual bids which were opened during this meeting. Only one fuel bid was received from Harvest Land. **Motion to accept the fuel bid from Harvest Land by Gerald Wendel, seconded by Tom Wilson, all in favor, motion carried.**

Bids received for bridge construction Pre-engineered/Pre-fabricated – E & H Bridge and E3 Bridge:

Motion to take bridge construction bids under advisement and forward to engineer to review for awarding at next meeting by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion

carried. Amended motion to include pipes and culvert bids by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Bids for Pre-cast Construction: **Motion to take bids under advisement and forward to engineer to review for awarding at next meeting by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Asphalt Materials: **Motion to take bids under advisement and forward to engineer to review for awarding at next meeting by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Sand & Gravel: **Motion to take bids under advisement and forward to engineer to review for awarding at next meeting by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Trucking: **Motion to take bids under advisement and forward to engineer to review for awarding at next meeting by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Pipes & Culverts: Amend Bridge Motion to include.

Public Hearing – REMC Broadband and Designation of an Infrastructure Development Zone within Franklin County, Indiana:

Grant Reeves discussed with Commissioners the purpose of the public hearing. Southeastern Indiana REMC is petitioning for a designation of an infrastructure development zone within Franklin County, Indiana. The infrastructure in this particular case is for broadband services. They are seeking a property tax exemption for the infrastructure. It is not a tax abatement. They have six years in which to develop the infrastructure for the exemption which includes all businesses that would do the same during that time period. Presently REMC pays the County approximately \$15,000.00 in personal property taxes each year. This agreement will not change what they are currently paying. They are expecting to serve approximately 1000 residential homes. Barry with REMC stated that they would be investing approximately \$4,000,000 in Franklin County. Other providers could take advantage of this ordinance as well and service other areas of the county.

Public Concerns:

Bridget Hayes: What exactly is Franklin County giving them? What is the estimate amount of taxes the County is giving up?

Mildred Simmermeyer: The amount of tax abatement you are giving will be forced upon the resident taxpayer because the county rate that we are presently paying will need to be increased to pay the county employees. Mr. Linkel stated he did not agree. This would not cost

the county anything and high-speed internet and broadband would be provided to over 1,000 homes. This will help especially due to Covid with working at home. E-learning is another issue the schools are having. Mrs. Simmermeyer stated that blue-collar workers do not work from home.

Sara Duffy –

1. What roads, townships and area of Franklin County is covered by this ordinance? This fiber will be attached to the electric poles. If you are currently under REMC in Franklin County this will be available to those members. This will open up to the entire county if other providers reach out to other electric providers.
2. Is it correct that this will be a money making project for REMC. Yes, there will be a fee for the services.
3. Is this a personal property tax exemption for the county, schools and other municipalities. And if so, you are freezing the \$15,000 amount they currently pay. Yes, this covers personal property taxes broadly. But businesses and new homes that come to Franklin County.

Mildred Simmermeyer – How long before we go to satellite and will no longer need the fiber optics? Mr. Linkel stated that is a good question. Mrs. Simmermeyer believes that this should be taken under advisement at this time.

Mr. Wilson: We can get with the Assessor and see how much the taxes might be on a \$4,000,000 personal property assessment. **Motion to delay this ordinance for one week while we find out from the Assessor the estimate of what the taxes might be on REMC's \$4,000,000 investment and how it would decline over the next six years by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.** Mr. Linkel asked Barry with REMC if the project would go forward if this ordinance were not signed and he said not in Franklin County.

Sara Duffy: Maybe REMC would consider making a PILOT to the school so the schools are not frozen from the amount of money they are receiving from this company. Mr. Reeves suggested they close the public hearing meeting. Mr. Linkel moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Tom Wilson, all in favor, motion carried.

Permit to install conduit: Commissioners reviewed the request for approval for a permit to install a six-inch diameter conduit in and along the public rights of way by AEP Indiana Michigan Transmission Company, Inc. Bridget Hayes asked the Commissioners what was going to be buried in the conduit. Larry Smith stated that there would be at least one fiber in the conduit with room for one or two more. Mr. Smith stated that AEP was an electric company but did not know. He stated he thought it was electricity for AEP and not the public. Mildred Simmermeyer asked if it were for the solar farm in Bath. Mr. Linkel said he could not answer that. Mr. Smith did not think it was related to the solar farm. Mr. Smith was more concerned with the bond amount. Ryan Turner with Real Estate Solutions for Infrastructures stated it did not have anything to do with the solar farm in Bath. This is for AEP communications to better connect substations with a cable for security in and around the area of the grid. We have already

negotiated and acquired the necessary easements with private landowners in the area. The project deals with levels of National Security so much of it we cannot discuss as we have signed confidentiality disclosures. We do know that it is to strengthen the grid and that substations will be able to continue communicating with each. Corinna Greene requested that the amount of the bond be established during this meeting. They are looking for a blanket bond for the whole project. Mr. Linkel would like to protect against road damage and drainage tiles. There has also been a request to change the language in the permit agreement. Mr. Reeves will review once he receives the info from Mr. Turner. What is the timeline? If Mr. Turner were to guess he would think within the next 30 days. **Motion to allow them to use the public right of ways but if it crosses private property they will have to deal with the property owner by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Board Appointments:

Motion to appoint Tom Linkel as President of Board of Commissioners by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Gerald Wendel as Vice-President of Board of Commissioners by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Grant Reeves, as the County's contracted attorney by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Larry Smith as County Engineer by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Sam Wyatt as Veterans Service Coordinator by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Peter Cates as E-911 Coordinator by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Amy Lindsey as Emergency Management Director by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Ronald Cooper to Alcoholic Beverage Board by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Cindy Orschell as Director of Area Planning Commission by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Paula Keller to the Board of Zoning Appeals by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Robert Brack to the Franklin County Park Board by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Gerald Wendel to the Southeastern Indiana Private Industry by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Tom Linkel and Cindy Orschell to SIRPIC (Southeastern Indiana Regional Planning Commission) by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Tom Linkel to Southeastern Indiana Solid Waste Board by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Bill Schirmer to Regional Economic Development Commission by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint John Palmer to Economic Redevelopment Commission by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Greg Orschell to Economic Development Commission by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Areas of Responsibility for 2021: Motion to leave the same as 2020 by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Motion to appoint Tom Linkel, Commissioner, Neysa Raible, Clerk, Peter Cates, Sheriff, Karla Bauman, Auditor and Joe Sizemore, Council to the Personnel Policies Handbook Committee by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Amy Lindsey, EMA - Volunteers: Amy Lindsey is seeking approval of three volunteers to serve on the EOC. Mary Burke, Matt Amburgey, and Jessie Olvera.

Motion to approve all three of the volunteers by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.

Waiver – Veronica Voelker: Mr. Reeves explained that the gist of reason for the waiver is that there is a clause in the contract that basically says that LOW won't poach county employees and the county won't poach LOW employees. **Motion to sign the waiver for LOW Associates to allow Veronica Voelker for employment by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.** Mrs. Simmermeyer questioned the favoritism and precedence established by signing this waiver and if LOW does not need it then it would be best not sign it. Mr. Reeves did not think favoritism was an issue because Ms. Voelker was an elected official that termed out.

Health Department – Contract Agreement: Commissioners reviewed the Independent Contractor Agreement for Tiffany Britton for grant administrator services. **Motion to approve the contract for \$10,800 for Tiffany Britton as grant administrator for the health department by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Creek Run, LLC – Commissioners reviewed the 2021 UST Compliance Services Proposal at a cost of \$250.00 per month. **Motion to sign the Creek Run, LLC proposal at a cost of \$250.00 per month to monitor our underground storage tanks by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Vehicle Quote – Highway Department: Commissioners reviewed the quote for a new vehicle for the County Engineer from Don Meyer. This quote is given at a discount rate of \$24,158.20 using the government program. Mr. Linkel said it would be paid for with the bond money. **Motion to go ahead and get a vehicle for the engineer by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Generator Quotes: Commissioners reviewed and discussed the quote received from Hirt & Ellco, Inc. with two options. One option for \$100,000.00 would supply electricity to the entire building. The second option is for the health department only and would cost \$15,000.00. **Motion to go with the \$15,000 generator for Angie by Gerald Wendel, seconded by Tom Wilson, all in favor, motion carried.**

Resolution 2021-01 – Amendment to 2021 Holiday Schedule: Commissioners reviewed the holiday schedule for 2021 which was amended to add December 31st which will be on the Friday before January 1. **Motion to amend Resolution 2021-01 amending the holiday schedule to include December 31st since January 1st is on a Saturday by Tom Wilson, seconded by Tom Linkel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Minutes – December 22, 2020, Special Meeting: **Motion to approve the December 22, 2020 Special Meeting minutes by Tom Linkel, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.**

Sara Duffy – Asked about the capacity for the conference room. Mr. Linkel stated 15 participants and elected officials and employees. She brought this up due to the number of board members for APC meetings especially during a public hearing that might have up to 30 people from the public who would like to speak. There are issues with even renting a place due to Covid concerns. Auditor Bauman suggested that once we have a chance to learn the new audio system we should be able to accommodate a large number of participants. She said it would take an independent person to handle that side of things and not the same person trying to take minutes at the same time.

CARES ACT - Motion to extend the 80 hours of sick time for Covid related illness or quarantine to each employee to be tracked by the Auditor's office by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried. Each employee will only receive a total of 80 hours for

Covid related illness or quarantine so if they have already used that time in 2020 they will need to use their own sick time should it be needed in 2021.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn by Tom Wilson, seconded by Gerald Wendel, all in favor, motion carried.


AYES:

NAYS:





Gerald Wendel

Gerald Wendel



Tom Linkel

Tom Linkel



Attested By: _____
Karla J. Bauman, Franklin County Auditor