The Steuben County Commissioners met at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, February 10, 2020, in the Commissioners’ Room of the Steuben County Community Center. Present this day were Commissioners James Crowl and Lynne Liechty. Other Elected Officials also present were Ruth Beer, Steuben County Councilwoman and Kim Meyers, Auditor.

James Crowl stated that CASA did not renew their Rental Lease for the small office in the Community Center and he felt that space would make a good office for the Commissioners to use. The matter will be discussed further, in a regularly scheduled Commissioners’ Meeting, once the keys are returned to Erin Schiffli, Commissioners’ Assistant.

James Crowl said that there are numerous desks, chairs and filing cabinets being stored in the basement of the Courthouse. Erin Schiffli said she will contact Jace Crozier to see if the items can be placed in an online auction.

The Commissioners discussed the water heater replacement at the Annex.

James Crowl asked if anyone spoke to Gene Gray regarding his complaint. Commissioner Crowl said he would reach out to Mr. Gray.

Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve the Council on Aging 5311 Operating Grant Voucher in the amount of $47,435.00. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with two (2) ayes.

Lynne Liechty made a motion to sign the proposal of the 200 W Beautification sign for Indiana Signworks. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with two (2) ayes.

James Crowl said he was at Lake George and Long Beach Lake to take a look at the water problem last Thursday. James Crowl said Long Beach Lake is five feet lower than Lake George. People on the west side of Lake George have purchased back lots which are even lower. Commissioner Crowl said water keeps coming back towards the road and the garages are flooding.

Lynne Liechty said Lane 150 is also flooding. James Crowl said they just put in a new culvert and it seems to be okay now, but there is no regulated drain or tile that the Surveyor has anything to do with as it is all-natural drainage.

James Crowl said there is a dam and the dam has a stand pipe, but they can’t find the stand pipe when the water is high. He said when you own the dam, you are responsible for the damages if that dam goes out. Commissioner Crowl said the people of Long Beach Lake are responsible for that dam and they say there is nothing wrong, but there is something wrong and it is a real problem.

Lynne Liechty said the drainage issue has gotten worse and will continue to do so with more buildings going up. She said it needs to be addressed and they are trying to find a solution. Commissioner Liechty said to fix all of Steuben County’s drainage problems, you are looking at an extraordinary cost.

Bill Schmidt said the Zoning Ordinance used to say that if you build on a back lot, you had to take the water to the lake. That worked fine, except for back lot people whom did not have lake access. It ended up being such a problem that it was removed from the Zoning Ordinance.

James Crowl said when the Surveyor doesn’t have the right to go on someone’s property, because it is not a legal drain, apparently it is the Commissioners’ responsibility; however, they can’t trespass on someone’s property either. Lynne Liechty said people are assessed along the public drain system and the issue is that everyone outside of that still contributes to the drain, so you have $1,000.00 in that assessed value fund but there is an $80,000.00 fix.
Bill Schmidt said that at one time the Surveyor had suggested a Cumulative Drain Fund and that the whole Lake James Chain should become a regulated drain. Mr. Schmidt said that would generate funds for the Surveyor to address some of these drainage issues.

Lynne Liechty said an issue arises when those people are assessed in that area and there are other areas that have much larger drainage problems, there is no fix for them. Commissioner Liechty said she has been looking into a Cumulative Drain Fund and Kim Meyers has helped her a lot on that. She said she spoke to Elkhart County and they put it in their property tax but Steuben County can’t do that because we are already at maximum levy.

James Crowl said that they are trying to put together a common drainage law for anyone that is in the permitting business for new homes and they are trying to come up with a solution.

STEUBEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Ronald L. Smith, President, South District

James A. Crowl, Vice President, Middle District

Lynne Liechty, North District

Attest:  
Kim Meyers, Steuben County Auditor