STEUBEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
July 1, 2019

The Steuben County Commissioners met at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, July 1, 2019, in the Commissioners’ Room of the Steuben County Community Center. Present this day were Commissioners Ronald Smith, James Crowl and Lynne Liechty. Also present were Ruth Beer, Steuben County Councilwoman, Donald Stuckey, County Attorney and Kim Meyers, Auditor.

Isaac Lee, Steuben County Economic Development Corporation, came to the Commissioners to speak about a Housing Strategy Study. Mr. Lee said he sent a draft letter to the local utilities and he received a check back from NIPSCO to help with the project. He said that the proposed study will be done by HPG Network; however, they are not the only company that was looked at.

Mr. Lee stated that Commissioner Liechty provided information on the County’s Comprehensive Plan. He said that in Chapter 2 it talks about 2025 and increasing high quality jobs along and Chapter 3 is regarding encouraging growth near infrastructure. He said reading through that supported the idea of combining resources through a strategy, rather than a study, to allow alignment and coordination of development efforts.

Isaac Lee said the Regional Plan projected 20,000 homes in the next five (5) years across the region and the northern region actually had a more significant number than any other portion. Mr. Lee stated that the proposal is a 12-18-month proposal and will cost $70,000.00. The first portion of the proposal is about coordinating resources, stakeholders and getting those individuals together. Mr. Lee said that the identification of HMPO, which is the main organization that will drive this study, is very important. He said that because the EDC sent out the draft letter, the EDC will be a lead entity. Furthermore, the EDC Board has expanded their staff and added a position in Workforce Development. He said they will announce the name later this month, but that person will play a large roll in the implementation of the Strategy across the County.

Mr. Lee stated that they have been very successful in working with other Utility Companies and the Private Sector to come up with just under $26,000.00. That amount has lowered, across the board, how much other municipalities will be requested to contribute based on percentage of population. He said at one point, they were looking at the County to contribute approximately $41,000.00. With the current contributions they have been able to generate, the County’s contribution would be approximately $27,000.00 and with the duration of the study, it would be payable over two (2) years.

Isaac Lee said that the industries are struggling to find bodies and the next question is where will they live? He said that the Study is very important in the sense that it is not talking about low to moderate income housing, it is talking about market rate.

Lynne Liechty stated that there is oversight on the Committee. Isaac Lee said that in the HPG document it talks about stakeholders or a committee design with the lead HMPO, probably the EDC, being constantly involved in the process and the implementation. Mr. Lee said the strategy is one side of it, but the actual implementation is another side.

Ronald Smith asked if Mr. Lee is requesting the Commissioners to build monies into the budget cycle for the next two years to help do this study. Isaac Lee said to be very specific, he is requesting funds, if there are any left for this year and then for next year’s budget proposal.

Lynne Liechty asked Mr. Lee to explain how this will fit within County’s Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Lee said there are pieces in there that have already been adopted that talk very specifically about the housing aspect. He said that he feels this provides more barriers or boundaries to control development where it best fits for all. Mr. Lee said they can allow development to happen and not coordinate it or they can initiate it and make sure it is for the benefit of the greater good and that is what he feels this strategy does.

Bill Schmidt asked if the stakeholders are people that will make money off of this or will there be people from the public whom have no potential of making any money. Isaac Lee said the stakeholders he is talking about are the Municipalities, Governmental Entities and organizations like the EDC. Mr. Schmidt said that the
Municipalities will make tax money, but people that sit on the EDC are developers, real estate agents and bankers and those people could make money off of this. Mr. Schmidt said he would like to know how they plan on separating those people whom may have a conflict of interest in choosing these sites and directing this whole thing. Isaac Lee said that the EDC Board operates on a very strict Conflict of Interest Policy and that policy states that if conflicts arise, those individuals are removed from the voting processes of anything that is done. Mr. Lee said that because they are adding the stakeholders into the meetings, they will all have a say in that.

James Crowl asked if the Plan Commissions from the Cities and Towns will be involved in this. Isaac Lee said that they should be, but they have not been asked at this moment because the process they are going through right now is funding the strategy. Mr. Lee said in the initial stakeholders and the Municipalities will help them identify what the Steering Committee will look like, so he imagines Planning Commissions would be involved.

Ronald Smith stated that Matt Bell was present at a meeting last week and a lot of this same information was covered. He said conflict sometimes arises between the County and the City concerning expansion processes. Commissioner Smith said that they do want to allow the EDC to create a plan and they do realize the problems and parameters that exist. He said that they put the EDC in place and that means the Commissioners need to be a player as well.

Isaac Lee stated that the EDC wanted to make sure they gave every possible financial option available to the County Commissioners because the County’s portion was so much higher based on the population. Mr. Lee said if they get the general consensus from all of the Municipalities they will move forward with the proposal and manage through the financial aspect as they go.

James Crowl said that they have been chastised for not being more Economic Development friendly, but if Steuben County doesn’t have a strong Sheriff’s Department, good roads, good transportation, good hospitals or ambulances, there wouldn’t be any Economic Development. He said that is their job as a County to make sure those entities are there every day for the public. Isaac Lee said all of those items are generated by the tax services which are generally derived from the payroll of the industry.

Ronald Smith asked if they actively pursue it for this year. He said they can’t kick it into the next two (2) years because that means they would be promising monies that the Commission Board doesn’t yet have the right to spend and it can’t be done that way. Commissioner Smith said they want to be supportive.

Lynne Liechty asked Kim Meyers if there were any possibilities. Ms. Meyers said that there are possibilities in CEDIT for additional funding to be requested. Isaac Lee said that total he is requesting is $27,785.00. Ronald Smith said he would like to explore the possibility of doing that out of CEDIT and in the next meeting perhaps they can make a commitment on the amount.

Ronald Smith stated that this summer’s activities have already started at the County Parks and asked if the Commission Board should take a serious look at shedding the Clear Lake Property or continue to try to make improvements. James Crowl said that they have already decided to do the work that was planned for this year. Frank Charlton said the Clear Lake Beach is in terrible shape. Commissioner Crowl said no matter what, they should continue on with the process that has been started because the improvements will add to the value of the real estate. Frank Charlton thought that perhaps they could get five (5) lots out of the property if they decided to sell.

Gary Johnston, Clear Lake Zoning Administrator, said that the minimum lot size is 50 feet and the setbacks are 30 feet from the lake, 25 feet from a street right of way and 5 feet on either side. Molly Wehrenberg, Member At-Large, said that they are only at this meeting to gather information and they do not have any comments at this time. Ms. Wehrenberg said the information they had was one (1) letter and it didn’t state any specific information.

Lynne Liechty said the expense, upkeep and problems with the Clear Lake Park are an issue. She said that they currently are spending about $14,000.00 - $15,000.00 in upkeep costs this year. Commissioner Liechty said the value of keeping the property is no longer to the Commission Board’s advantage and she thinks it would be best to have it go to private lake property.
James Crowl asked if the Town of Clear Lake has any interest in taking it over as their own park. Ronald Smith said that is one of the answers he was looking for. Ms. Wehrenberg said they would have to present that to the Town Council and they can’t state any opinion today. Donald Stuckey stated in the past, Clear Lake indicated the Town didn’t have the ability purchase the Park. He said that the Town of Clear Lake is a pretty small population and generates limited amounts of revenue to have a Parks System. Frank Charlton said there was some interest, but if the Town of Clear Lake took it over it would not be open to the public.

Ronald Smith said that a lot of people have been at the Crooked Lake Beach and wondered if this would increase the amount of people utilizing that beach. Donald Stuckey stated that he thought most of the people that use the Clear Lake Beach come from out of state.

Donald Stuckey stated that both the Commissioners and County Council have to approve the sale, there has to be appraisals done and it has to be sold at the appraise value. He said if you are dealing with another public entity, there is more flexibility in adjusting the price. Mr. Stuckey said that there was an appraisal done before; however, that is not good anymore.

James Crowl said that this needs to be taken to the County Council. Kim Meyers stated that she could put it on the July 9 Meeting Agenda. Donald Stuckey recommended getting a consensus from the Council to see if they are in favor of moving forward.

Bill Schmidt asked what type of Conservancy could purchase the property. Donald Stuckey said that it would have to be a taxing Conservancy; however, if someone donated enough money to a Conservancy District to purchase it, he doesn’t see why they couldn’t.

Lynne Liechty said that she will attend the Council Meeting and Ronald Smith said that he may be in attendance as well.

Molly Weherenberg said it would be nice if the Commission Board would communicate with them, other than a letter, so they can come more prepared. She also stated that it would be appreciated if communication would be sent after the July 9 Council Meeting. The Bridget Harrison, Executive Director of the Clear Lake Conservancy, stated that she would like to be included in that communication as well.

Brett Hays, NICC, submitted the TANF Grant Reimbursement Request for approval. James Crowl made a motion to approve that request. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Mr. Hays also submitted information from Jeff Bassett, Business Impressions, regarding Xerox machines. Mr. Hays said that this is what they are needing to function properly and it would save some money. Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve the changes. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Brett Hays informed the Commissioners about water leakage and damage at NICC. Mr. Hays said that he believes having the gutters cleaned may fix part of the issue. He submitted a quote in the amount of $1,000.00 from Sevits Tree Service to clean the gutters two (2) times a year. Mr. Hays further requested that the Commissioners pay for half of that service. James Crowl made a motion to approve the quote from Sevits Tree Service and to pay for half of the gutter cleaning. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Mr. Hays stated that he has been in contact with Erin Schiffli about submitting an insurance claim on the damage. He also reported that the roof warranty runs out next year.

Pam Feller, Probation, submitted a Grant Application for approval. She said this would help fund the CR 26 changes. Ms. Feller also informed the Commissioners that there is training on the Pre-Trial Release Program on October 4, 2019 if the Commissioners want to attend. Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve the Grant Application. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Donald Stuckey stated that Clint Knauer is here to submit documents and photographs of the Pranger Building in Pleasant Lake. Mr. Knauer said that he went out this morning to take photos so they were current. He
said they have been in contact with Mr. Pranger since January, 2019 letting him know that the building, which was
damaged by fire, needed to be torn down because it fell under the Unsafe Building Ordinance. Mr. Knauer said
typically they have always given 180 days to owners of unsafe buildings to tear them down and come into
compliance. He said currently they are past the 180-day deadline, he had a meeting with Mr. Stuckey and a letter
was sent to Mr. Pranger. Upon receipt of that letter, Mr. Pranger came into the Building Department, stated his
intentions and that he is going to work through the process. He said the building would be removed and a steel
building would replace it.

Mr. Pranger stated he was not ignoring the issue and he’s been working on it. He said that the fire was
under investigation by the Fire Marshal and was put on hold. He said the fire was in the middle of October, 2018
and he spent a lot of the winter removing items. Mr. Pranger advised the building was uninsured and he was trying
to recover as much as he could. He said he knew they were in a time crunch, he got John Merritt lined up to do the
demolition; however, they ran into issues with the utility locations and a live gas main.

Donald Stuckey suggested, based on the representations, that by July 31 everything will be done and
recommended the Commissioners reschedule the hearing to the first meeting in August. If everything is done, this
matter will be over. If the demolition is not done, the Commissioners can impose fees.

Ronald Smith recommended that Mr. Pranger inform the Lion’s Club officially what is being done because
there is a lot of rumors.

Gary Fair submitted a quote from Stanley Steemer in the amount of $1,180.92 for shampooing of the 2nd
and 3rd floor carpeting in the Community Center. Mr. Fair stated that this is who did the carpets last time. James
Crowl made a motion to approve the carpet cleaning quote. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion
carried with three (3) ayes.

Mr. Fair also submitted an invoice in the amount of $620.00 from BTS for repairs made to the Courthouse
HVAC. Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve that invoice and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Gary Fair discussed the hedge removal and replacement between the MSD and the Council on Aging
parking lots. Mr. Fair stated that having no hedges there would make snow removal easier and he has also been
requested by employees to place a picnic table in that area. The Commissioners agreed that Mr. Fair does not have
to replace the hedges.

Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve the claims submitted for payment this day totaling $1,184,582.56.
James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes. James Crowl stated that he was
disappointed with the amount of money being spent by JDAI. Kim Meyers explained that the claims that are
submitted are not just for food, they are for hours worked by the Cahoots staff as well.

James Crowl made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 17, 2019, Commissioners’ Meeting.
Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Zach Mahan, GIS Coordinator, requested permission to obtain a key for the basement of the Community
Center in case the building needs to be unlocked during a tornado. The Commissioners informed Mr. Mahan that
the Community Center was not a designated emergency shelter and due to that, a key would not be distributed.

Frank Charlton informed the Commissioners that Kylee Harris’ computer crashed last week so they are
trying to get the reservation schedule back. Ms. Harris said the information is gone, the software representatives
have not been very helpful and they are hard to get a hold of. Kylee Harris said she does have hard copies of the
reservations. Ronald Smith asked if it could be done on both computers and Mr. Charlton said that the software is
only for one computer.
Frank Charlton reported that the trees in the circle by the Horse Barn are dying and a branch has fallen. The Commissioners recommended getting an estimate for tree removal.

Mr. Charlton said the beach area is getting out of control. Ronald Smith recommended speaking about the matter in the next Park Committee Meeting.

Frank Charlton reported they had a meeting with the Campers and the DNR last weekend. The conclusion was that most of the docks are illegal and if they don’t fix them, they will be fined. He said the DNR is giving them a chance to comply. James Crowl recommended having the docks fixed by August 1.

Mr. Corcimiglia came to the Commissioners regarding a drainage issue at his home near Jellystone Park. He said it has been happening for a long time, but has gotten worse recently. He said he was to the County Highway for assistance and was told it is his tile. Mr. Corcimiglia said from the Burlingame property to his catch basin there is a 12” tile which is at the surface of what he drains off and goes to Barton Lake. He said it is at the bottom of the property because he drained it all by purchasing several thousand dollars’ worth of pumps and has been pumping water for 3 weeks continuously. Mr. Corcimiglia said a year ago they moved out of their house because their insurance was canceled due to the basement flooding. The drywall has been torn out and the home is not livable. He said the water runs back over 300, into the swamp, makes a circle and goes all the way around. Mr. Corcimiglia said if he doesn’t pump the water, it won’t go away. He wants to know if the culvert that goes across the road is the County’s culvert. He said the water is flowing through the tile okay, but there is just so much of it because there is 12” worth of water across going into an 8” tile. Mr. Corcimiglia said if the 8” tile is his tile, he would go ahead and replace it, but he would like to see the water retained on the other side of the road. He said if he shuts his pumps off today, tomorrow morning 300 will be flooded.

Donald Stuckey said there is no legal drain and it has to be a legal drain for the County to do anything. He said that if water naturally flows, there’s nothing that can be done legally but if someone retains the water and releases it, then there are legal remedies. He said it sounds like the 400 acres naturally flows toward Mr. Corcimiglia and it may be an engineering problem, but he doesn’t think the Commissioners can do anything and he doesn’t think they have the authority to go off the right of way to do anything.

Mr. Corcimiglia said he was told by the Highway Department to plug the hole. He asked if the water could be retained on Burlingame’s property. James Crowl said if it is a private drain, tax and Highway dollars cannot be used to fix the drain. Mr. Corcimiglia asked why he has to drain the other 400 acres that are coming into the 12” tile to his catch basin that goes into an 8” tile. He said he is going to have to dig it up and install two (2) 14” inch tiles in order to keep up.

Jennifer Sharkey said she will go out to check the contours of the land and check the catch basin, culvert and tile if they are in the right of way.

Jennifer Sharkey, Highway Engineer, submitted Centurylink Utility Permit #2841 for approval. James Crowl made a motion to approve Utility Permit #2841. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Ms. Sharkey updated the Commissioners on the major projects that are in progress.

Ms. Sharkey reported that the 100 N drainage project will be scheduled in the fall. She also said that she will need to verify that The Pier Place has removed the lifts from County property.

Jennifer Sharkey submitted her 2020 budget. She stated she added funds for calcium chloride for dirt roads and she said some of the other items have hand written notes by them to explain the changes.

Ms. Sharkey reported that since the Community Crossings project bids came under the amount Steuben County was awarded for the 2019 Community Crossings Grant, she was informed that the max cap is for what you
actually spend, not what you are awarded. She said there is still approximately $137,000.00 Steuben County is still eligible for. Ms. Sharkey requested permission to submit an application for Round II of the Community Crossings in the amount of $137,838.00 to help with some work they would like to do on 500 S from Pleasant Lake to 400 W. Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve her request. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Jennifer Sharkey informed the Commissioners that in late August there is a road safety audit scheduled for the Old 27 and 800 S intersection and they are looking to pull crash data from DeKalb County as well.

Ms. Sharkey stated July 17 is the public hearing on the nomination of the Lime Lake/Lake Gage Bridge to the Register of Historic Places. She said she is planning to attend that hearing based on the email response that was received from the DNR. Ms. Sharkey said if it does become a historic property, maintenance and construction costs go up and timelines get longer. She said her concern is if the structure is required to be taken out of service because of some sort of structural failure, emergency services would have to go all the way around the lake to service that community. Ms. Sharkey said they try to keep the integrity of the bridge as is and they do not look to alter the historic nature of it as it currently stands.

Donald Stuckey submitted a Release of Temporary Highway Easement for approval. He said that the construction was done ten (10) years ago and was never released when it should have been. James Crowl made a motion to approve the Release of Temporary Highway Easement. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Jennifer Sharkey read through Emmett Heller’s report due to his absence. Ms. Sharkey updated the Commissioners on the Highway Department’s daily activities.

Ms. Sharkey said the Western Star Chassis approved at the previous meeting was for the Distributor and the other two (2) chassis that are being questioned are for two (2) Tandem Axle Dump Trucks. She also submitted a registration application for the F-550 because the other paperwork had errors and a registration application for the Distributor Truck Chassis.

James Crowl said he thought Emmett Heller talked to everyone about the trucks, but permission was never requested in a public meeting. Ms. Sharkey requested permission to purchase the two (2) 2020 Western Star 4700SB Tandem Axle Chassis in the total amount of $196,310.00. Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve the purchase request. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes. Lynne Liechty told Ms. Sharkey to make sure that the trucks go through the proper channels.

The Commissioners signed the minutes from the June 3, 2019 Commissioners’ Meetings for the Index Book, which were approved at the prior meeting.

Kim Meyers, Auditor and Melissa Bixler, Treasurer, submitted the Monthly Comparison Report for review and approval. James Crowl made a motion to approve the Monthly Comparison Report. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Lynne Liechty made a motion to officially approve the HVAC repairs made to the Surveyor’s Office in the amount of $1,500.00. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Judge William Fee, Superior Court, submitted a request to obtain a credit card for the express use of both Judges and the Magistrate to provide only necessary items to Jurors during Trials. Judge Fee stated the way they do it now burdens the Judges and Staff with the initial outlay of funds. Kim Meyers, Auditor, recommended the Commissioners approve blanket permission for the Courts to use the Commissioners’ Credit Card when needed for Jury Trial costs. James Crowl made the motion to approve the Courts using the Commissioners’ Credit Card when needed for Jury Trial costs. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Rae Delaney, Payroll, submitted the June 21, 2019 payroll in the amount of $409,786.76 for approval. Lynne Liechty made a motion to approve the June 21, 2019 payroll. James Crowl seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.
Lori Hickey, Auditor’s Office, submitted the second quarter Miscellaneous Claims in the amount of $565,161.71 for approval. James Crowl made a motion to approve the Miscellaneous Claims. Lynne Liechty seconded that motion and the motion carried with three (3) ayes.

Kelli Johnson, Chief Deputy Auditor, stated that the Commissioners agreed to write off several hundred thousand dollars of taxes on the WeKon & Scott property. Ms. Johnson said there was also an agreement to accept around $9,000.00 for the property and she is informing the Commissioners that it is now back on Tax Sale again.

The Commissioners received the following correspondence: TPG Investment Firm re: Business Plan; Zhang Solicitors re: Correspondence; John Sampson, NEIndiana re: RDA Board Elections; Vanessa Hurtig re: Opportunity Zone Event; Joy Hudson HPG Network re: June Caucus Event; Blake Scott, CBTS re: IT Services Provider; Janel Meyer SCSWCD re: Approved Board Minutes; Joy Hudson re: May Meeting Report; Eric Barry re: Issue

STEUBEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

_____________________________________________
Ronald L. Smith, President, South District

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James A. Crowl, Vice President, Middle District

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Lynne Liechty, North District

Attest:

Kim Meyers, Steuben County Auditor