

January 5, 2021

Council Chambers
Vigo County Annex
Terre Haute, Indiana

Roll Call:

Present: Brendan Kearns, Mike Morris, Chris Switzer

Others Present: County Attorney Michael Wright, Auditor James Bramble, Chief Deputy Auditor Cheryl Loudermilk, Tammy York-Allen, Kevin Gardner, Bruce Allen, Larry Robbins, Bruce Allen, Diana Smith, Kim Bennett, Kylissa Miller, Kara Wright, and Joey Lehman.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Auditor James Bramble opened the meeting and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mr. Bramble stated that this was the reorganizational meeting and asked for nominations for President. Chris Switzer made a motion to elect Mike Morris as President. Brendan Kearns asked for clarification for what the definitions were of the officers as far as duties of the office. Mr. Bramble stated that it is to preside over the meetings. Mr. Morris agreed. From time to time, there are documents that require the signature of the president and that, too, would be a duty. County Attorney Michael Wright stated that the Commissioners' statute contemplates an organizational meeting where officers are elected. That's specifically in the code. But beyond that, there is no statutory definition. There are some ordinances that would definitely reflect the Council having a president. For the board to act, there has to be a majority. That's the nature of the Board of Commissioners in every county in the state. These are duties set forth by the legislature. Discussion continued. Brendan Kearns seconded the motion for President. Upon a voice vote of 3-0, the motion was unanimously approved. There was additional discussion regarding the other officers and duties. President Mike Morris then made a motion to elect Brendan Kearns as Secretary. Chris Switzer seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote of 3-0, the motion was unanimously approved. Mike Morris then made a motion to elect Chris Switzer as Vice-President. Chris Switzer seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote of 3-0, the motion was unanimously approved.

There were no comments from any other businesses or Commissioners.

Mr. Morris asked Jim Bramble to provide an update on the CARES money, etc. Mr. Bramble advised that the CARES Awareness fund claim was sent in last week. We used all but \$35,000 or \$36,000. We haven't heard anything back on that. The big CARES Act fund appropriation died December 31 and a request of Council will be submitted as soon as a determination can be made for how much money needs to be requested. Any further aid will be determined by Congress. A short discussion ensued.

Mr. Bramble then asked if the Commissioners wished to continue with weekly meetings to be held on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. That was confirmed although it was stated that the office hours of operation for the Commissioners' Office will be 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The office will be open even if a Commissioner is not present in the building. The purpose of these meetings was reviewed and discussed.

Michael Wright stated that he had received an email from a member of the public reading as follows:

"I submit this as public comment for your meeting on January 5, 2021. One month ago yesterday, Frederick Whitlock died while in the care of Vigo County as an inmate in the Vigo County Jail. And an autopsy revealed that untreated Covid 19 contributed to his death. The next week, a single round of testing revealed 108 positive Covid cases in the jail, a third of all inmates, all of which had gone untracked until Whitlock's death. In the weeks since, your constituents have raised concerns about the County's handling of this situation. As you begin a new year in the wake of the Covid crises, would you spend a few minutes of your meeting addressing your role in this situation that has already killed one of your constituents and left hundreds of families in our community scared for their loved ones in the jail. Specifically, I would appreciate your response to these questions: what actions have you taken and are you taking to understand how Covid went entirely untraced in the jail until one inmate died and over a third of the inmate population tested positive? What actions have you taken and will you take to ensure that the county is doing everything in its power to care for the victims of this outbreak and minimize future harm through proactive medical care, Covid testing and other protocols.

In response to the email, and after discussing the issue with the Commissioners, Mr. Wright advised that he had sent the email to the Sheriff. For the purposes of today's discussion, the Sheriff is the constitutional office holder who oversees the operation of the county jail. That is specifically in the Indiana Code. The Commissioners are required to provide a jail for the Sheriff. Beyond that, the day to day operations of the jail fall to the Sheriff, the jail commander and their respective staffs. The response received from Sheriff Plasse was:

"Covid was not discovered in the jail because inmates were not showing symptoms or reporting those symptoms to jail medical staff. Mr. Whitlock did not report any symptoms to jail medical. Quality Correctional Care can verify this. The Vigo County Sheriff and Quality Correctional Control are following state and local health department guidelines as we always have and will continue to do so."

Mr. Wright stated he felt like he answered the question as to what role the Commissioners play in the jail operation. The Sheriff is following state and local guidelines on every activity that goes on in the jail. They have a strict procedure for receiving new inmates to try and prevent

potential spread in the facility. They have done everything in their power to try and keep the virus from penetrating the facility. As with everyone else, that effort didn't prove successful. Health professionals are reacting to that. They are doing everything they can to minimize future risks. There was a brief further discussion.

Review of Minutes/Claims. James Bramble submitted claims for the week of December 26, 2020 through January 1, 2021 in the amount of \$3,820,671.16. Brendan Kearns moved to approve the claims. Chris Switzer seconded the motion. Upon a voice vote of 3-0, the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morris announced that the Board of Zoning Appeals will meet in the morning, January 6, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Morris had received a call from Mr. Collett that he would like to meet with any or all of the Commissioners tomorrow after that meeting.

Comment from Commissioners or other Vigo County Representatives. County Assessor Kevin Gardner briefly discussed appointments for PTBOA Board.

Public Comment. There was no public comment.


Mike Morris, President


Chris Switzer, Vice President


Brendan Kearns, Secretary

Attest:


James Bramble, Auditor