

## REGULAR MEETING OF THE JASPER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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The Jasper County Commissioners met this date at 8:30 A.M. C.S.T at 910 S Sparling Ave., Rensselaer, Indiana with the following members present: Rein Bontreger, Craig Standish and Ryan Hilton. Also present were Auditor, Diana Boersma 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. Standish made a motion to approve the minutes from February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the minutes from February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026 as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the minutes from February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026 as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

PAYROLL CLAIMS: Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the payroll claims with checks dated February 13<sup>th</sup> and February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

CLAIMS: Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the claims, as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

SHERIFF WILLIAMSON: Mr. Williamson stated they had a squad car damaged at Family Express when an individual crashed into it and then took off. He stated the individual was apprehended a few blocks away in Wheatfield. He stated the vehicle was a Dodge Charger and it was totaled and they are getting a payout on that to replace it of around \$13,000. He stated they are not going to buy much for \$13,000. He stated they have a 2018 black squad that has given them all kinds of trouble over the past couple of years and they would like to auction that one off. He stated they just need a title to do that, and they would have to sign off as Commissioners. He stated they are wanting to put the money from that car along with the insurance claim so they can buy a good used squad, preferably a Dodge Charger, so they can transfer all of their equipment over to it from the totaled vehicle and get a squad back on the road. He stated the Dodge Charger that they have, the black one, they don't use it other than just to drive to locations, it is not the most reliable squad in the world. He stated what they think they will do is run it through the car auction in Indy with a dealer or they could also sell it local if they could get someone to buy it, they just want to get rid of it so they can put the monies together and buy a better squad car. Mr. Standish stated he talked to the Sheriff and Brandon both about it and it makes sense. He stated they have had a lot of trouble with this car; it was bought sight unseen and brought into the department and has been a headache ever since. He stated it makes sense to get rid of it and utilize the funds from it to purchase something else. Mr. Standish made a motion to allow the Sheriff to sell it in whatever way he thinks is fit. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Bontreger stated he doesn't know if they specifically talked to the Sheriff about it but whenever the next one is up, they committed one of their used vehicles to go to the Weed Board and they just need to make sure that happens when one is ready. Mr. Williamson stated okay. Mr. Bontreger stated preferable a SUV or a pickup. Mr. Williamson stated they have 3 cars slated to come in and then they will be moving cars around. He stated as soon as the Auditor gets the title arranged, they will get it to the Commissioners to sign.

CORONER BOERSMA: Mr. Boersma stated half of their staff have gone to an inactive list at the moment. He stated they have not totally resigned because they don't want to lose their certification that they have worked so hard to get. He stated this is because of the workman's comp issue, not that they are not covered, it is just that if something was to happen to them and they would not be able to return back to their daily lives or their usual vocation. He stated their employers range from funeral directors to nurse practitioners, steel workers and medics. Mr. Boersma stated their daytime job is what they live on, but workman's comp, if they are injured doing part-time coroner work is what it would pay out from. He stated most of them have given him letters of withdrawal for the moment. He stated he as spoke to Stace about it. He stated it is the fear of losing their home purchasing, vehicle purchasing, and their livelihood if something should happen. He stated he has brought this to the attention of the state association. He stated the Coroners Association is working

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CORONER BOERSMA CONT'D: with Indianapolis, they sent the letter that they got from Stace to them, they have sent it to Kendall, to Aylesworth, to Mark Dinda, across the state. He stated they are working trying to figure out what is going on. He stated he got a letter from the state association in the State of Kentucky and they are facing the same problems and they are working on that as well. He stated they are working towards putting a full-time coroner's office together. He stated Indiana has that but that is required when there is a population of 400,000 or more where you have a full-time medical examiner's office. He stated we are not at that point, but they are busy enough that they have the need to look forward to probably putting something closer to full-time and putting some full-time people on. He stated he has copies from the State Board of Health that just came in that are a guideline of the least they expect of them and that they report on. He stated that is a guideline that they ask for and he finds it kind of overstretched. He stated they are now collecting statistical data across the state and he believes that what they are working towards is a full-time department in each county or maybe an abridged department for multiple counties together. He stated everything in that guideline has to be collected and put in their report. He stated they have a new reporting system now the state has come up with and it gets implemented April 1<sup>st</sup> and all of that stuff goes into that document. He stated it is called COHERO and is ran by the state. He stated how they explained it is that way the State Board of Health, if it is a violent crime or whatever, they have access to statistical data from each department throughout the State Board of Health. He stated the first entry they did on a case the other day took just a little over an hour and twenty minutes to fulfill one report. He stated they are still having to do both sides of it, both the reporting systems and he hopes that when they get this other system live they can get that down to 45-50 minutes to get that hour and a half out of the way and maybe eliminate the second one altogether or what they would call the first one they had before. He stated the CCMS they say is going to go away and then they will go to COHERO which is a lot more statistical data collecting that has to be gotten as that is the guidelines that they have. He stated he just wanted to bring it to their attention that they have lost half their staff, and again, its not because they are worried about that, but if you look at that guideline by the state there are so many things that could go wrong with the individual collecting that information and he understands why the people are willing to withdraw after putting all that time in to get their certification. He stated they have had a good amount of people, they have lost a nurse practitioner, a funeral director, a paramedic. Mr. Bontreger stated the question came up and they talked with Stace, their insurance agent and provider, and if they are able to provide a policy that would cover something like that would they be willing to come back active. Mr. Boersma stated the last one he talked to was the nurse practitioner after talking with Stace and they talked about that. He stated she and the paramedic both said no because it would not be beneficial even with that because the employer is most likely not willing to hold their position or hold their job open while they mend. He stated if it's a broken leg you are talking 12 weeks. He stated he does not have an answer for this yet and that is why he has asked the state association to get involved and the lawyers and that and they asked him to give them until the week after the session closes so that they can get with the legislators and with the state and have more in-depth conversations. He stated right now they are trying to close out the last two weeks or the last week of the session and then they can sit down and do more. He stated with the incidents happening around us, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, that is looking like that is the way they are going to go is to a full-time department and he does not know that they are ready to do that yet but is something that they have to consider if they don't have the help. Mr. Standish asked how many part-time deputy coroners did they have before this. Mr. Boersma stated on a bond, they have open for 12 but they only have 8 and with those there are people like one that works in the steel mill so she works 8 to 10 hours a day so she is not available all the time. He stated one of them, the nurse practitioner, works in Lafayette so she is not available all the time. He stated basically, the ones that have covered most of this have been Nina, that works for him, and Teresa, who works part-time, which they are going to talk about doing something different in the next election because the Sheriff has agreed to, she works for both of them at the same time. He stated she is still going to continue to do the work that needs to be done at the annex for him but they want to move that all under one budget so that it is not confusing for everybody else, the

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CORONER BOERSMA CONT'D: auditors office and timesheets and all that. He stated they have Pastor Bill from Virgie, who is an employee. He stated they had a hundred and some calls last year and he had to go to the Council as to how to pay him for his comp time because he had 90-some hours of comp time in the last quarter of the year. He stated they have to figure that out with the part-time but with the part-time people working, they are not available all the time. He stated the paramedic that worked for them, works out of town all the time. He stated this is not a job that anybody can do, you just can't walk down the street and say hey do you want to be a deputy coroner and go out and pick up people and parts and things like that. Mr. Bontreger stated it is an ongoing topic and if it turns out they need to consider those insurance policies as a stopgap then they will ask Stace to prepare a quote for some of that if they would need to fall back on that option. Mr. Stace Pickering stated there may already be some products in place that the county already has. Mr. Hilton asked Mr. Boersma, in his tenure, historically, what has he seen as far as injuries for deputy coroners. Mr. Boersma stated in the 27 years, as far as in our county, they are really cautious and he is a pain in the ass about things, about gloves, shoe coverings, hats, hairs and making sure they have what they have to have. He stated maybe a needle stick, somebody slid down a ditch bank and tore some clothes and scraped and cut themselves. He stated like he said, they have a nurse practitioner and a paramedic that worked for them at the time. He stated they have had a pulled muscle, somebody had a back strain but nothing that they ever had to have an OSHA recordable over.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MARY SCHEURICH: Ms. Scheurich stated she has two rezones. She stated one is in Jordan Township, it is an 8.475 and needs to be rezoned to be buildable because it is in the A1 district that requires 10 acres. She stated the Plan Commission recommended that unanimously. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the rezone as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Scheurich stated the next one is MBIP LLC in Kankakee Township and is a 20-acre tract. She stated it is for material storage, such as gravel and different products like that. Mr. Bill Ferngren stated he is an attorney in Valparaiso Indiana and his address is 570 Vale Park Road Valparaiso 46385. He stated he is here on behalf of the petitioner MBIP LLC.. He stated Danny Marshall, sitting in the first row, is a representative of his client. He stated this comes to them from the Plan Commission, back on January 26<sup>th</sup>, they went before the Plan Commission for a public hearing after notice, etc..., and left that meeting with a favorable recommendation unanimously to rezone this property from its current zoning ag to the I2 classification. He stated there were some conditions attached to that, primarily no hazardous types of materials, that they needed to have drainage board plans and approval, and along with that, correlated would be an erosion control plan. He stated just recently he received the draft drainage plan and erosion control plan from their engineer and those he delivered just before the meeting and emailed them. He stated hopefully, Mary got a copy yesterday. He stated incidentally, the property that is negligible issues with respect to the drainage will simply be overland flow just like it does today and erosion control measures will be put in place and so forth. He stated to the property, 20 acres, located on County Road 1400 North, located immediately to the west of the NIPSCO property, just south of Georgia Pacific and they are looking to rezone this property to allow, as Mary indicated, outdoor storage. He stated when he first got in touch with planning staff he was not sure what zoning classification for his client's use was appropriate and they determined that I2 was the natural fit for that. He stated again, it is outdoor storage, stockpiled materials, and use of equipment related to that use and in the petition they set forth the types of materials which would be generally clean aggregates, both fine and course, topsoil, earth, rock, clay, asphalt, other types of materials you would normally expect for that sort of stockpiling of materials on a site such as this. He stated so when they are looking at a rezone of property, what do the County Commissioners ultimately need to look for. He stated and you're guided primarily by your Comprehensive Plan and your ordinance and what it asks you to do, or directs you to do, rather, is to pay reasonable regard to your Comprehensive Plan, including current conditions, what are desirable uses for the land, how do you conserve property values in the community and also responsible orderly growth. He stated they believe that this piece

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT MARY SCHEURICH CONT'D: of property, as it is proposed, meets those criteria. He stated first, it is adjacent zoning and adjoining uses are similar or perhaps even more intense than what they are looking to do here. He stated the material stored on the property would be, as requested by the Planning Commission, not to include any hazardous types of material. He stated they are not seeking any relief from an ordinance with respect to where they can store this material and otherwise deviate from the plans that are required under an ordinance to submit for a building permit application. He stated, importantly, there is no burden on the taxpayer. He stated currently, the property is essentially vacant land, but the adjoining uses are primarily the same and here they will just continue that type of use, which, again, going back to the Comprehensive Plan, is an orderly extension of industrial uses next to this property. He stated the Comprehensive Plan talks about keeping industrial uses together to minimize traffic impact and other burdens on taxpayers. He stated again, they think this is very much in keeping with that, that the roads used in and around this property are already being used for these types of purposes the burden on these roads will not be anything more than what they already experience today. He stated his client is in the heavy highway construction business so they are very familiar with the impact and how these operations are undertaken and they specifically identified this property as one that would be suitable and if it wasn't they would not want to be located in this location. He stated the reason why they are here, they feel like they want to expand their growth, grow their business in Jasper County, identify a need, and are looking forward very much to being a part of the Jasper County community. He stated going back to the commitments, again, he wishes they had been able to provide that information to them a little sooner but they are prepared to go before the Drainage Board now that they actually have information that they can present to them, to discuss both the erosion control and the drainage plan, and with zoning in hand, assuming that day comes, they would follow whatever your ordinary course is with respect to building permits or site improvement location permit, as it is called under the ordinance. He stated with those things in hand they believe this is a good location, they have studied it, they are doing the best they can to make sure they follow all of the terms in the ordinance and look forward to being a part of the Jasper County community. Mr. Vince Urbano stated there was a copy they sent to them yesterday afternoon and they will be on the April agenda because they did not have things in time to be advertised so they will be heard in the April meeting. He stated whatever they do today can be contingent on the Drainage Boards review in April. Mr. Bontreger stated they mentioned no toxic materials and it is basically just raw aggregates and so forth but you would not be putting in any non-toxic byproduct of any type. Mr. Ferngren stated yea, I guess whatever your ordinance requires as far as hazardous materials they are certainly not seeking to put hazardous materials on the property. He stated if your ordinance permits it, that is the type of product that they will be putting there. Mr. Standish stated would this be stockpiling only or is there potential for screening or crushing operations to be set up on this in the future. Mr. Danny Marshall stated he would like to have the availability to do that should it fit within the zoning but there is not a set plan for that operation down there. Mr. Standish stated he would then be subject to an air permit if they are going to do any sort of power screening and they would have to revisit that again because the way he is taking it now this is for stockpiling material, trucks, loaders, pretty much it. Mr. Marshall stated it is for a general purpose construction yard for him to stay relevant in the area with upcoming work that he would like to be able to be a part of and it helps him be a part of those projects. Mr. Hilton stated he sat in on the Plan Commission meeting as well as Vince and he thinks depending on getting that on the Drainage Board and running as contingent he thinks we are in good shape. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the rezone subject to Drainage Board approval in April for the purpose of stockpiling and if the need changes to a screening operation they would need to bring that back and revisit it again. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

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MOOLENAAR SUPREME PROFESSIONAL LAWN CARE: Mr. Bontreger stated they have bids for lawn care, fertilizer, weed and grub control with the following bids:

Surveyors Office: \$662.00

Sheriffs Department: \$3,100.00

Courthouse: \$1,680.00

Health Department: \$1,400.00

Mr. Bontreger stated this is pretty much what they have had in place previous years. Mr. Hilton stated they are very comparable to last year. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the lawn care, for the chemical application, as presented for the locations indicated. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Standish stated they need to solicit bids to get the lawn fixed from where they trenched last year and did some construction work at the Courthouse as well as the drainage from the building out to the sidewalk as they talked about it last year.

B & H MOWING SERVICE: Mr. Bontreger stated this is the mowing bid for the Jasper County Fairgrounds and is pretty similar to last year. He stated it is \$750 per mow and they start April 1<sup>st</sup> and end October 31<sup>st</sup> and have their insurance and documents in place. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the bid for mowing at the Fairgrounds. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

JIMS LAWN CARE: Mr. Bontreger stated the mowing bid for the Sheriffs Department is approximately 28 mows per season at \$190 per mow with a total of \$5,320.00. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the bid. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Bontreger stated they have a bid for the Health Department, 28 mows, \$90 per mow with a total of \$2,520.00. He stated Mr. Standish mentioned he was going to extend the space a little bit. Mr. Standish stated Jim had talked to him in passing and there was 155 feet out there on a ditch bank that they had not been mowing. He stated there were always trees there and they removed the trees. He stated somebody, they don't know who, he would assume probably St. Joe had been going down through there a couple of times a year with a bushhog mowing it He stated it looks a little tough, but he is going to extend the mowing to the ditch. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the bid. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Bontreger stated they have a bid for Lairds Landing to be mowed approximately 14 mows, \$35 per mow with a total of \$490.00. He stated this is the boat launch just east of town. He stated it was kind of in no-man's land as to who should take care of it and they did not want the city running mowers down the road to get to it as there is not a lot of room on that bridge. Mr. Standish stated to be clear this is kind of a trade-off because they are going to do some landscaping care for them up around the courthouse that they are in no-man's land with finding somebody to do that. He stated at the farmers market pavilion they are going to do the maintenance on that and upkeep of that so this is the trade-off for them doing that. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the bid. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

COLLEEN CULP MOWING: Mr. Bontreger stated they have done this previously and it is the same price as last year, \$60 per mowing. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the bid. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Standish asked if anyone has ever trimmed the hedges, the bushes in front. Mr. Urbano stated yes, they do. Mr. Standish stated they are going to start shading the windows. Mr. Urbano stated Brian did it one year, Tom did it one year, and they will take care of it. He stated they would like a little bit of mulch purchased for the back area where it is all dirt and has been like that since they moved it. He stated it would be nice to just clean that up a little bit for people coming in. Mr. Bontreger stated they will put it on the April agenda.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS KAITLYN BOOMSMA: Ms. Boomsma stated it is grant season and their grant is due April 1<sup>st</sup>. She stated she provided them a copy of the proposed grant budget and their ask for the State grant. She stated the state cut Community Corrections grant funding by another \$12.1 million so she is expecting a cut to their grant because everyone is getting cuts. She

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COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS KAITLYN BOOMSMA CONT'D: stated last year they cut the State grant by \$7 million and they lost about \$54,000. Mr. Bontreger asked what was last years grant request. Ms. Boomsma stated she requested about \$740,000 and she kind of did some moving around and is requesting \$685,000 and some change this year. She stated last year they requested \$740,000 and only got \$422,000 and prior to that they were getting \$474,000 because of the cuts. She stated the grant request would put all of the correctional officers into the grant to pay for all of their salaries. She stated she is also asking the state to give them additional funding to cover a second surveillance officer. She stated this would be beneficial for the county because right now when their surveillance is going out to do home detention checks they are taking a correctional officer from the desk to go with them because they go in twos for safety and that just leaves one CO in the building while they are out doing those checks and having a second person would be more helpful. Mr. Bontreger stated if you don't get enough from the grant is that something you might consider pulling out of project income if it is a significant enough need. Ms. Boomsma stated at this time probably not, if they can't fund it, they probably will not ask for that position to be had and they will just keep rolling with what they are doing right now. She stated if she could hire a part-time person, it would help a lot with that because she can put that part-time person in. She stated they make a schedule for when they are going to go on a check so they know when they are going and she could put that part-time person in to help cover the desk, but she does not have any part-time applicants. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the request concerning the state grant application of \$685,488. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried. Ms. Boomsma stated the request is due in April and they find out in June what they are going to get. Mr. Bontreger asked if she has residents that are still available to do some community hours and support for the festivals and things like they have in the past. Ms. Boomsma stated yes. She stated the Fair Board and Little Cousin Jasper, all of the things that happen every year, they are aware and will usually give them a call asking if they can get people and they will get people signed up. She stated they have sent people over to the DeMotte Legion sometimes and some food banks and stuff in town. Mr. Bontreger stated he just wanted people to be aware and at least contact her and see if there is an opportunity that would connect and mess with what she has to offer.

BARNES & THORNBURG: Mr. Bontreger stated they need to sign and approve the Barnes & Thornburg engagement letter. Mr. Beaver stated he did read through it and it looked pretty straightforward to him, it is their form letter and he does not see any problems with it. Mr. Bontreger stated this is outside counsel working in conjunction with Attorney Beaver to negotiate on behalf of the county. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the engagement letter as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

ATTORNEY BEAVER: Mr. Beaver stated the Soil and Water MOU is a bigger project than he had thought, it is related to the proposal to amend the Weed Board Ordinance by adding an invasive species to it. He stated the statute gives the Weed Board authority to go on the property without consent of the landowner and to remove weeds that are noxious weeds under a statute that provides maybe 6 different species that this can be done for. He stated then you have a separate statute that provides for different types of plants, which includes invasive species and it is the township that has the authority to go onto property without the consent of the landowner to remove those and the costs then go back to the township. He stated the State establishes separately by a statute the Soil and Water Board, or Water Conservation District, and they have no authority to go onto anybody's property unless that is something that is being consented to by the landowner. He stated he thinks that we are going to have to have more hands-on deck to delegate authority. He stated he did see and pull the job application notice or posting from the Soil and Water Conservation Districts website and he does see here on the agenda there is a position under the Weed Board, and his assumption is those are related. He stated it will probably be more than a MOU because they may have money going back and forth or stipulated where this position will be undertaking roles on behalf of different entities and it is more complicated than just the annual contribution from one body to another, especially given the constitutional issues and liability issues that could arise with different bodies having authority to make entry onto peoples property without their consent.

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ATTORNEY BEAVER CONT'D: He stated he would like to think he can have something for the April meeting as he has got some decent momentum on it but they will probably need to have all the townships of the county involved. He stated he will need to know, he thinks this would be a county appropriated position, but then who that line of authority is. He stated the posting provides that it is the Executive Director of the Weed Board, which is a county position, not a state position and so he does not know who that is. He stated the ordinance does provide for the board to appoint an Executive Director so they will have to make sure that they have clear lines of authority on this. Mr. Bontreger asked if this new position is going to be the Executive Director of the Weed Board. Mr. Jim Martin stated yes, that is what is in the ordinance and they are trying to follow it. Mr. Beaver stated the posting provides it would be reporting to the Executive Director so if this is the Executive Director then that is something that tightens that up a little bit.

Mr. Bontreger stated EDP invoice and construction compliance has been a topic and there are a few outstanding invoices that we need funds from the developer to come in. Mr. Beaver stated Jake Dammerall did email him with the invoices that are awaiting payment and what he had asked for is, is there anything else that would be paid under the cost sharing agreement. He stated the answer appears to be unclear because we have other portions in our road use agreements where we have had amendments and where their design costs, for example, the culverts, are included on the schedules themselves and so it would not be a separate payment that would need to be made unless we are going to expand the use of the cost sharing agreement to cover costs that are already covered elsewhere in the road use agreement. He stated he talked to Jake on Friday about this and he understands it was well. He stated he expects that he will be able to work out, with Phil, those things. Mr. Bontreger stated so if some of those invoices are actually applicable to some of the money we have received for those other, the infrastructure, or whatever. Mr. Beaver stated right, going forward and he does have an itemization of the invoices that are awaiting payment which he will get copies of those from the auditors office and send those off and that should be something he can get out to EDP this week as far as the present bills and then they will determine if any future work needs to be requested.

Mr. Bontreger stated they did receive the second payment for the Dunns Bridge EDA. Mr. Beaver stated Sarah picked that one up. He stated they need to make sure they get the invoice to EDP for the first payment of the Wind Farm Economic Development Agreement payment, which will be arriving in June. He stated he wanted to make sure they get that invoice, even if there wasn't a provision that they have to send an invoice, they want to send an invoice anyway, for our records. Mr. Beaver stated he will include that on his request that he gets out to EDP this week.

WEED BOARD: Mr. Jim Martin stated they are trying to do what is best for the county at the Weed Board. He stated their meetings are the second Thursday of the month, at the Sparling Avenue location at 1:00PM, and the public is invited. He stated they have received 4 or 5 applications for this new position that they have all been talking about and 3 of them could start tomorrow. He stated they have really good candidates and are moving forward on that. He stated the Weed Board is going to meet later this morning and work on the contract for this person, they have some ideas, and then they will bring it to the Commissioners for approval. Mr. Bontreger stated as you share emails with Mr. Beaver, you can just send him your draft of the contract, and he can look it over and make sure it fits within our standards. Mr. Beaver stated the Council needs to have an appropriation for the position, now that he is clarified on his end that this is a county position, the Council needs to appropriate. Mr. Bontreger stated to make sure you are on the Council agenda. He stated the Jasper Newton Foundation has generously provided them with some money, they have what they call a designated donor fund that is for conservation and from that fund they have given them \$1,700 to be used for activities/outreach, that sort of thing. He stated their Community Grants fund have given them \$5,000 to go to the salary for this new employee so this will be more money available. He stated Jordan Township has pledged \$2,500 and they will keep looking. Mr. Bontreger asked if they will have enough time to get this person employed and actually deploy and do some spraying this spring. Mr. Martin stated they are not going to be doing

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WEED BOARD CONT'D: early spraying like they wanted to. He stated they will not get boots on the ground until June which is after a lot of the plants go into remission from dry season, this is the best time to spray them. He stated they have 3 interviews scheduled for next week and will probably be making their decision after that.

PROBATION MIKE SPANGLER: Mr. Spangler stated Autumn could not come in, she had a situation to take care of this morning, and their peer coach was just here but she had to leave also. He stated they did present to the Council the \$20,000 that they are asking for. He stated she was supposed to get them a copy of the budget and everything that the money was to be used for. Mr. Standish stated he does not recall seeing that. Mr. Spangler stated she was working on it, he thought she had it done, and he apologizes. He stated he knows she was looking to use it for supplies for Community Corrections, for the jail, and for any probationers that are going to be used as well as covering time spent. He stated they are employees of Valley Oaks, they are not paid by the County or anything and this money will not be used for salary or anything like that. Mr. Bontreger stated it is money to help augment expenses. Mr. Spangler stated they are asking for \$20,000 but this is their first year getting going so they might need \$50,000 they are not sure. Mr. Bontreger stated this would be out of the Restricted Opioid fund and he believes the fund balance of that is \$480,000. He stated he thinks they can do that, they have given to other local needs on the addiction side of things from the restricted and unrestricted and thinks this is a good use of that. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the \$20,000 expenditure out of the Restricted Opioid fund. Mr. Hilton seconded. Mr. Bontreger stated that is settlement money from industry and is not taxpayer dollars so it is good use of these funds. The motion carried. Mr. Standish asked if they had spoke to Newton County yet. Mr. Spangler stated he knows she has contacted them to get on their list but he does not know if she has been there yet. He stated this \$20,000 will be used for Jasper County residents.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT KATE BARRETT: Ms. Barrett stated historically, in March of every year, the Health Department comes and asks for permission to purchase the county employee flu shots. She stated last year they purchased 67 and this year they are asking for 60. She stated they would do the 50 regular doses and then 10 high doses and those are just for the employees. She stated if they purchase them in April they get a discount and the total would be \$1,627.68 and she thinks they usually pay that out of fund 1112. She stated they used 46 last year which is why they brought the number down to 60. She stated they are able to use those for the public after they use them for the employees, so they keep them for a little while and then they do get a small reimbursement back for anything that they do not use. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the purchase of 60 doses as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Barret stated they do a baby shower at the Connection Center in DeMotte, and she believes that is April 11<sup>th</sup> and then this summer they will have their vaccine trailer out at the back-to-school events. She stated they are hoping for some different things in the fall that they will announce at some point.

### COURTHOUSE GAZEBO & GROUNDS PERMIT:

RENSSELAER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: Mr. Bontreger stated they have a permit request from the Rensselaer Chamber of Commerce for Kids Night at the Farmers Market. He stated it is during the summer, and they want to be able to use the lawn like they did previously and is for a 3-hour use. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the permit. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

SONYA HAYES: Mr. Bontreger stated they have a permit request from Sonya Hayes, from Wheatfield, for March 28<sup>th</sup>. He stated they would like to use the northeast corner, quadrant 2, for a No Kings protest and are expecting around 25 people. He stated that would be from 12 to 2 on March 28<sup>th</sup>. He stated he believes they did use that area last year and he does not recall if they did give use of the yard because the sidewalks are technically city. Mr. Standish stated he does not recall. Mr. Bontreger stated he thinks the important thing is not to impede traffic if there is traffic

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SONYA HAYES CONT'D: there. Mr. Beaver stated there was permission that was given inside the courthouse retaining wall but the applicants did not want to be inside the wall, they wanted to be out on the sidewalk which is a public way so really they can be out there, probably without even a permit, so long as they are not impeding traffic but they would need the Commissioners approval if they decide to stay up on the other side. He stated from a liability standpoint you want them to use the steps and not climbing over the wall, even though that is what everybody does. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the permit. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

RENSSELAER FARMERS MARKET: Mr. Bontreger stated the Rensselaer Farmers Market has requested to use the county parking lot, until the pavilion project starts and then, on Thursdays, they are going to go back to use the street. He stated they want to kind of piggyback on some of the Thursday night cruise-ins. He stated he suggested that they could use the old Johnny Rust lot if there were some people that were there that wanted to set up during that time if the parking lot is full and the street is full. He stated that is from Tammy Culp in the Rensselaer Farmers Market and it is their seasonal use and they are, of course, excited to have the pavilion by the end of the season. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the permit. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

JASPER COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICE SHARON COLEE: Ms. Colee stated she had a discussion with Mr. Hilton on their mowing at the Jasper County Community Service Rensselaer Center. She stated they would like to entertain moving their current contract that the Commissioners pay to Nagel Deer Farm contract for mowing. She stated it is a \$197 decrease, and they feel that it is time that they move their services for the need that they have and the timing and so forth they feel this would be a better fit for their Senior Center, if, with approval, that they enter the contract with that. Mr. Bontreger stated the total of \$3,360 includes 30 mows, spring and fall cleanup, maintenance of weed control, and some shrub trimming and mulching. Mr. Hilton stated there is a lot of support from the board members for that service. Mr. Standish asked if there would be an issue with this of them being an employee out there too, as far as, conflict. Ms. Colee stated she does not think so, they have a confidentiality policy that someone has had to do and they have done that in the past. Mr. Beaver stated you do not want the decision maker to receive a monetary benefit. He stated if somebody is going to be performing work for their employer that is outside the scope of the employment you just want to make sure it is a clear line that the responsibilities performed under the contract are not part of the job duties otherwise he does not necessarily see a problem with it since the Commissioners are the ones making that authority and are not ones that benefit from the contract. Mr. Bontreger asked if he would be able to provide the same kind of liability insurance that the other services do. Ms. Colee stated yes. Mr. Bontreger stated as long as we have a record of that and it is a separate LLC. Ms. Colee stated he is a seasonal employee, so at the time that he is doing the work for this he would not be working for them. She stated he is their energy assistance intake agent so it is different timing that he would be working. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the contract as presented as long as they get a copy of the liability insurance. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Colee stated she is not sure what happened at the Fase Center, on the very front entry door the door would come open probably about every 10 minutes all on its own, it was constant, and they finally had to lock the door and direct people to come in at different entry and exit areas. She stated they called Hamstra's, they came out and looked at it, then also Precision Glass in DeMotte came out and looked and it and they could not fix it. She stated they directed them to A-1 Door. She stated it was very costly, more than she had anticipated but as you can see by the detail of the description that they repaired, it was basically an operator type of unit on there, they tested it, and it was defective. She stated the cost of that was \$774 and then \$231 in labor and \$22 in fuel surcharge the total was \$1,027 for the repair. She stated they will take care of any costs, they can do that in their budget between Hamstra and Precision for coming out because there is always that service charge that they usually add to that when it comes in. She stated if they want to table this till April that is fine since they have not discussed it, she was just giving it to them but it was part

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JASPER COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICE SHARON COLEE CONT'D: of building repair and wanted to present that for consideration. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the repair invoice of \$1,027 for the Fase Senior Center in Demotte. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Standish asked how the Head Start room wall that was worked on last year was. Ms. Colee stated no issues.

JASPER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY STEPHANIE JOHNSON & JUDY KANNE: Ms. Stephanie Johnson asked if the Commissioners got a copy of the document that she emailed them. She stated she is here to talk about the historic village at the Jasper County Fairgrounds. She stated the three buildings they are concerned about are the Cabin, Rosebud School, and the Parr Post Office. She stated since the 1960's the Jasper County Historical Society has tried their best to maintain those through fundraising. She stated the county actually owns those buildings. She stated they are suggesting that the County hire Kurt West Garner, who is a heritage preservation engineer, to come and take a look at those buildings so that the County can make a plan for repairs. She stated he does a lot of work in our area assessing the historic buildings and he will create a short-term and long-term plan for restoration work. She stated they do know that the roof on the cabin has an issue and they do not know to what extent until Kurt gives them some input. She stated they also lost some of the shutters off of the schoolhouse in the last windstorm. She stated they heard from their handyman that boarded those up that the sills are pretty rotten so at this point they can't really attach new shutters. She stated just some maintenance things, they have always raised the money for doing these kinds of repairs and they are having a hard time doing that and even knowing what it would cost and what the needs are. She stated they would like to recommend that the county hire Kurt West Garner, it is an \$800 quote. She stated that is for the assessment and the report, and within the report, he will give them short-term and long-term plan but he will also give them a range of approximate costs without getting all of the estimates. She stated the Historic Society is willing to facilitate Kurt being there, getting that report for them, translating it if it needs to, and they are also willing to coordinate any construction efforts. Mr. Bontreger stated once they get the plan, get some costs, are there any grants out there for maintenance or help on some of the historical buildings or do they pretty much need to consider it a county building. Ms. Johnson stated since the County owns the building they can't apply for grants, they can only apply for grants on the buildings that they own. Mr. Bontreger stated is that something they need to consider down the line, transferring ownership to the historical society. Ms. Johnson stated they have not had that conversation amongst themselves at all and she does not know how they would generate the funds. She stated the reason she came to them during the budget was because their grants are pretty much gone right now. Mr. Bontreger stated even if they transferred ownership they could still be a significant portion of their budget to see that the job gets funded. Mr. Standish stated they would still carry insurance on them because they are on the fairground property. Ms. Johnson stated right now they are curating the displays inside. Mr. Bontreger stated they do appreciate the volunteers and asked how my visitors/attendants do they have during the fair. Ms. Johnson stated last year was low and they had 150-200 people come through during the fair. Mr. Bontreger asked if they were planning anything special with the USA 250 this year. Ms. Johnson stated they have talked about it and as far as having enough volunteers to make that happen and what that looks like, they don't have an exact plan yet but they talked about maybe having the cabin open. She stated the flea market is going to be back this year and they had talked about having the log cabin open during the flea market. Mr. Hilton stated there is an opportunity to explore transferring that over. He asked if they had a conversation with Jasper Newton on seeing what kind of historical preservation grants are out there and if they are significant. Ms. Johnson stated no, in the last year those grants have gone away. Mr. Standish stated they are probably more of a private sector grant, he would guess if there was anything available at this point. Ms. Johnson stated they have been doing some research. She stated the Valparaiso Library, one of their county libraries, has software that they can visit them and use and it is specifically grant software, it scours the internet for grants that are relative to whatever keywords you put in. She stated that is an appointment that they will

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JASPER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY STEPHANIE JOHNSON & JUDY KANNE CONT'D: have in the next couple of weeks, to go up and have their software scour the internet for potential grants. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve \$800 to get the report done for the Jasper County Historical Society. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

NIPSCO CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATE: Mr. Rob Ridge, Director of Major Projects for NIPSCO Generation Construction stated he wanted to give a specific update related to the Schaefer Gas Peaker project and provide a little bit more context behind the project that they haven't done previously for this particular audience. He stated he brought Mark Runyon, who is another Director in their organization. He stated historically he has led this project but Mark will be taking over in the near future so they likely will hear him speak related to the project. He stated they brought flyers related not just to the Schaefer gas peaker project but also related to the combined cycle gas turbine project as well and the intent of that was really to answer some of the frequently asked questions that the community might have. He stated overall in the Schaefer gas peaker project high level scope related to the project, the project includes installation of simple cycle gas turbines at the Schaefer Generating Station to meet the overall generation needs. He stated that scope includes installation of deep and shallow foundations for the pre engineered metal buildings as well as the equipment that will generate power there. He stated it includes installing four combustion turbines, one will be a larger industrial frame machine that is good for over 200 megawatts and then three smaller aeroderivative machines that are good for about 50 megawatts each. He stated obviously then with that, you will have all the infrastructure to tie into their existing gas line and their electric substation at that location. He stated as far as where they are at today, general overall, project status, they did receive zoning approval and their improvement location permit and building permit. He stated they are soliciting bids for their general works contractor to build the rest of the power plant so mainly the mechanical components and things like that and you will notice they have other stuff in flight. He stated as far as when they will start receiving some of that more major equipment, it will be at the second half of the year, so June 2026, with other large components coming in January 2027 and then all the way through the July timeframe when they will have some of the larger equipment delivered to the site. He stated overall construction is really focused on a couple of things, main scope related to, the main power area is the pre-engineered metal buildings that they are installing. He stated there is a control and admin building as well as a warehouse with a compressor building attached to that one, so they have been installing that. He stated they have been focusing in on the electric interconnect, so how they will tie into the existing transmission system, so have a small collector yard next to the new units where those will be installed as well as installing transmission poles to feed over to the existing Schaefer substation. He stated in the slides that they have they do have a couple photos related to that warehouse and compressor building as well as their electric interconnect. He stated not to bore people to death with the details of combustion turbines and things like that he did want to talk a little bit more about the purpose behind a gas peaker facility like this. He stated this technology is really used for demand, peaks in demand. He stated it helps complement a lot of the renewables that they have installed, so when the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing you can quickly turn on these types of units to run for a handful of hours and then turn them off, again, during peak times. He stated they are actually installing two different types of combustion turbines to really fit that need. He stated industrial frames, so the larger units are a little bit cheaper to install, however, the smaller error derivative machines are actually quicker and easier to get online promptly. He stated you could turn them on and off multiple times in a day and they are really good at that function. He stated they are currently on schedule. Mr. Bontreger stated they appreciate that, it allows them to let folks up in the area know what is coming, when activity is going to get more robust.

Mr. Bontreger stated Karen is here from NIPSCO and asked if there were any comments she cared to make on anything. She stated no. Mr. Hilton stated is now a good time to mention the traffic backup on 231. He stated he sees it to be a problem, he stated he knows ARCA is going the best they can out there on 231 from Rensselaer going north but the traffic lineups that they are creating in those two different sections are becoming intrusive in his opinion. He stated if emergency

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NIPSCO CONSTRUCTION PROJECT UPDATE CONT'D: services need to get out of Rensselaer and go north or vice versa, they are going to see a significant issue with that. He stated as you see spring planting coming into play you are going to have farm equipment going through those very narrow working areas as well. He stated if she can pass that along to them and the higher authorities to see what they can do to either tighten up the windows, open it up, be more watchful on cars lining up. He stated he thinks there were at least 35 in the line that he was in this morning and that was before 8:00. He stated that was times two because they stopped him at the first one and he got through that one and they stopped him at the second one. Mr. Urbano stated intersections are not being covered either and you have crazy traffic coming out at the intersections going different ways. He stated if they are going to shut that down in that long of a span, they need the personnel at each intersection to make sure that traffic is controlled all the way through, you are going to have a head on collision or something like that in those areas. He stated it is right in front of his office and it is ridiculous the way that they are managing things. Mr. Hilton stated even cars exiting out of their own driveways might not know where the traffic flow is coming or going. Mr. Bontreger stated it would be good to see if they can boost their management of that, so please pass that along. He stated that is one of the benefits of them coming frequently and they can kind of work through this. He stated he knows that is not their project directly but indirectly they can help. Mr. Hilton stated it took a 25-minute drive 45 minutes, and that was before 8:00. Mr. Standish stated one of the things that would help is, they are putting up their work ahead and flagger ahead signs right at 7:00 in the morning so school bus traffic, worker traffic, all that is coming and going back and forth. He stated we have daylight at 6:00 if that traffic control can get out there before traffic really hits the road to eliminate that stoppage. He stated he ran into it this morning. He stated there were four traffic control vehicles just driving up and stopping in the middle of the road, getting out to put up a sign that says, flagger ahead, clear out at Division Road and nobody was flagging traffic. He stated they just stopped and then a line built up behind and they are trying to peek around all the trucks to see if they can pass them. He stated that would help a portion of it.

WHEATFIELD EMS: Ms. Bonnie Veden, Kankakee Township, stated she is here also on behalf of Wheatfield, David Myers, and Ryan Myers, Walker Township to introduce their new director, David Duttlinger. Mr. Duttlinger stated he can be contacted by cell number and email address and can be contacted whenever, no different than 911, he is open 24-7 so any problems, concerns, feel free to let him know. He stated he comes from Wheatfield and is a 4<sup>th</sup> generation living there. He stated he took over the family farm and has about 3,000 acres that they run. He stated he worked at Portage Fire Department full-time, did 24 on 48 off shifts there for 20 years, retired, came back home, and this opportunity came forth to step up and help his community. He stated he threw his hat in the ring and was awarded the position. He stated he plans to make sure that they are running a safe, efficient, and reliable service. He stated with the projected growth with the NIPSCO project and economic development and everything happening up in their corner of the County, there is going to be a lot of growth happening and there might need be some budgetary changes to work with this upcoming growth. He stated he will keep them informed and up to date as things happen. Mr. Bontreger stated they will as well as they are mindful of those needs. He stated they have had conversations with Bonnie and Myers and others from Wheatfield, Kankakee, and Walker Townships recognizing there is going to be some revenue needs and demands and they are actively working on negotiating those amounts to be able to cover those needs and the will certainly keep them posted as to the progress on that. He stated he always knew he was a farmer but did not know he had all this other background so it is good to have his expertise now deployed here locally for us. Mr. Hilton stated he thinks this is a good opportunity for Northeast Jasper County to have Dave on board, understanding the logistics and the community and seeing the growth and needs that are going to be required there, he thanks him for accepting the challenge.

OVERHEAD DIGITAL PROJECTOR & SCREEN: Mr. Eric George joined the meeting via Zoom. Mr. Bontreger asked if he had gotten any input for them on a potential overhead projector and a screen here for the meeting room. Mr. George stated they asked Rat Pak who installed the audio-video equipment in that room to get them some numbers to get either a Smart TV, like an

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OVERHEAD DIGITAL PROJECTOR & SCREEN: 85-inch TV to connect and do presentations and a projector with a screen, the electric screen that drops down. He stated they highly recommend the Smart TV, just because it is a cleaner install and is a lot less expensive. He stated the projector alone is about 40% of the quote that they got to get installed, running electric to the screen and then mounting that projector. He stated the projectors do have a shelf life on those lenses and this one in particular has 20,000 hours so it would probably last 10 years so that is probably not a huge concern. He stated the ability to connect to the Smart TV and cast from a laptop to be able to give presentations and with the price point that seems to be a lot more budget friendly and what they would recommend. He stated he is happy to go either route that the Commissioners want but that has kind of been the recommendation and input from them. Mr. Bontreger asked if it was possible if they went with the TV as opposed to a wall mount is there some kind of mobile cart or something that they could use. Mr. George stated that is what they use at Arcem. He stated he uses it every Monday morning for a staff meeting that they cast to the TV and it works really well. He stated all of it connects back to the Wi-Fi and they can get that all connected to the Wi-Fi at the CASA building and make it easy, the connection and training, and then have somebody to support that very easily. Mr. Urbano asked, can't you use your current TV's. Mr. Hilton stated he can't see that from where he is sitting. Mr. George stated he priced the TV with it being mounted and that cost was \$4,185. He stated if they don't have to mount it and they just put it on a cart they may be able to save a little bit of money so he will get that updated. Mr. Bontreger stated they did get the camera to work this morning, but it was initially having difficulties, and he would not mind getting a quote for a backup camera to maybe mount right beside that one. He stated it is not an immediate crisis but when we are trying to set up a meeting and something is not working it would be great to be able to just go to a backup position if that is the case. He stated they don't need that information today but maybe they could circle back and hear from him at the April meeting. Mr. George stated he apologized for that inconvenience on the camera this morning, they have reached out to Rat Pak who had originally installed that. He stated he will make sure that they get a quote for the April meeting and he would like to have them there as well before that meeting starts in April just to make sure if there is any issue they can address that while they are there. Mr. Bontreger stated they rebooted the camera itself 2 or 3 times, rebooted the computer 2 or 3 times, and unplugged and replugged, did all the things that you tell us that we are supposed to do and it took about 3 times and then it finally cooperated.

TIME AND ATTENDANCE SOFTWARE: Mr. Bontreger stated Ms. Boersma has helped coordinate some of this conversation and there are two different proposals. Ms. Boersma stated one is from TCP and Mason is supposed to be either online or here and then the other is with LOW that is our current financial software. Mason joined the meeting via Zoom. Mr. Bontreger stated what specific issues are you seeing in your department Ms. Boersma that you are concerned about and are we seeing it across the board in every department or is it more just looking to potentially go digital with something that we are currently doing analog. Ms. Boersma stated the timesheets getting turned in by department heads has improved a lot in the last 6 months so that is not quite the problem that it used to be. She stated there are a few issues, once in a while that don't quite jive with the timesheets or what we feel anyway. Mr. Bontreger stated they looked at the TCP quote, and the bottom line is \$48,000. He asked Ms. Boersma if she has talked with the various departments to see if they are having issues. Ms. Boersma stated she has not had any time lately. Mr. Bontreger stated that Sarah VanDrunen, the new HR Generalist, may help do some of that research for them. He stated, Mason, we have your proposal and are looking at it and he thinks before they can really make an informed decision, they need to do some internal polling as to how it is going to work with the various departments to see if this is really a need at this particular price point and it will take a least a month or so to have those internal audits taken care of. Mason stated there are seven counties in Indiana today that do use TCP and he had referenced, he thinks, Boone, and that was the one that they thought about maybe reaching out to at the last conversation they had. He stated he did come equipped with a few bullet points that he knows from conversations with Auditor Boersma, as well as their email, just following the variety of departments, so he was

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TIME AND ATTENDANCE SOFTWARE CONT'D: going to break that down for them. He stated Auditor Boersma mentioned the first one with just a manual process overall, hours are being turned in, or saying, I worked these hours but no one was to be seen on the floor during those hours submitted. He stated secondly for Auditor Boersma and her team, they are compiling and storing each of these timesheets, for an audit purpose, this increases risk and most importantly, it is extra work for her team. He stated he knows they are spending a lot of salaried hours also approving, editing, entering timesheets today, plus any type of PTO, overtime, comp time, all into LOW when they could just do that for them and let it be a click of a button and send it to allow. He stated lastly, in their email, they did mention that there was concern about employee feedback or the convenience and breakdown of different departments or how there is a variety by department. He stated with those other counties, each department does it completely different so it is not something they can just say here is a one stop shop, this is how TCP works. He stated if a highway department or a transit department has to use it differently than Auditor Boersmas office might use it they are happy to adjust and configure it that way. He stated as far as pricing is concerned, are we in your realm of possibility or what were you thinking in terms of the cost for this. Mr. Bontreger stated they have not discussed it enough to know if this is in the realm or not. He stated you talked about hours to edit and he guesses they need to try to figure out if they are spending \$48,000 worth of hours to do it the way they are currently. He stated they do have a quote from LOW as well, which is \$45,000, so it is in the ballpark that he are talking about. He stated he is not opposed to streamlining and going digital if it makes sense, if it saves money, if it is more accurate that probably is a possibility. He stated he is concerned about timing, is this something they look at and decide to do next year. He stated he feels like they need more information and since they have an HR professional on staff now that can help them investigate this further. He stated they are not saying no today but they are going to say they are saying not right now, until they do a little more internal investigation and find out if it is really worth this investment. He asked what the annual cost is once it is set up. Mr. Standish stated about \$15,000 a year. Mason stated yes, it would be \$11,520 for 256 users of the system, and then for the hardware devices, which is variable, right now, you guys are sitting at eight different hardware or time clocks, which if that was to go down, your hardware support and maintenance would also be variable to go down. He stated that is just going to be contingent on the amount of devices you do purchase. He stated in terms of the quote from LOW, they also have an incentive for March at the current moment, they did get approval by the end of the month, they have a 50% off on the time clock implementation services so that \$12,390 would drop down to roughly \$8,702. He stated that would be just under the LOW quote as well, again, with signing at the end of March. He stated with the implementation itself, they normally see an implementation of about four months. He stated it is normally three to four days after the Commissioners and Auditor Boersma have signed off on this that they will reach and start a kickoff call and then it is about a four-month project from there. He stated based on their availability they will meet with the team once a week, they will plan out how to phase this approach, so they wanted to start with one department, roll it out to another department etcetera, they are happy to do it that way it is entirely up to them but their average expectation is about four months. Mr. Bontreger asked who would be the best person to reach out to with Boone County. Mason stated the last one that was contacted was Kaylee Jesse and they are servicing around 300 employees there. He asked thinking about a legit approval process, do they need to try to coordinate for a Commissioners meeting to motion for approval on that, he thinks the next one was April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Mr. Bontreger stated they would unless he had already provided it, they would need to see what a contract looks like for their legal to review. Mason stated he can send that over to Sara and Auditor Boersma, they have those agreements ready to be sent. Mr. Hilton stated he would not mind at least talking to other counties and seeing what they are doing and asked to be provided a list beyond Boone County so they can structure and see what their population density is. Mason stated there are 7 counties in Indiana. He stated he is happy to share that and will reach out to get those references for them and see if anyone would want to collaborate with them on the matter. Mr. Standish stated it would be interesting to see how it gets implemented in different departments because the County Highway, the Surveyors, the Sheriffs Department, they have people in the

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TIME AND ATTENDANCE SOFTWARE CONT'D: field versus the Health Department or the people in the Courthouse. Mr. Bontreger stated he is not afraid of the cost if it is going to actually save hours that could be applied to something else. Mr. Standish stated the question that rolls his mind is does the cost of this getting implemented eliminate the position that we currently have for payroll. He stated does it take that place because we don't have to do that manually anymore, he stated that is a selling factor if it ever gets to the point of to the Council. Mr. Bontreger stated those are questions to be answered. He stated he will say he does not think it is realistic that they will have a decision made by the end of March so they will miss out on the discount and he understands that. He stated maybe they will run a special later on in the year but for now they will take it under advisement, get the research done, reach out to the contacts, and certainly communicate with him, they will not ghost him, they will let him know whether they are going to do it or not so they will get him an answer one way or the other when they have had time to look through this.

CENTER FOR WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS LISA DAUGHERTY: Ms. Daugherty stated she is the President and CEO of the Center of Workforce Innovations, a non-profit entity that is contracted among many other roles, contracted to staff and manage the public workforce system. She stated she is here today to ensure that they have got just a little bit of background on what her organization is, what they do, how they are present in the community, and how they may help address the workforce challenge that they have that continues to grow and evolve. She stated they may see them present in the community as Work One, that is the office over on Drexel, largely there, they provide adult education services She stated they also provide career coaching, readiness, assessment, interest assessment around jobs, connect job seekers with employers in the community. She stated what they may not know is that they are largely funded through federal legislation which provides a framework for the public workforce system and Commissioner Standish has recently been appointed to the Chief Elected Officials Board, which again is a requirement of that legislation. She stated they are also going to be appointing a member from the community, Andy Francis with Advance Auto to the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, the federal legislation requires that framework. She stated the state identifies the workforce development regions, and so we are Region 1, which includes Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Newton, Jasper, Starke, and Pulaski Counties. She stated she will bring a member of her team forward to share a little bit of information with them about the work they do with employers in the community. She stated what she has come to know in this role is that while her organization is responsible for workforce development as the intermediary, bringing educators, training providers, employers, and job seekers together, it has to happen from within. She stated part of the reason for her being here is to ensure that they are informed about these resources that are available to them, it is also to invite them to engage. She stated she wants to make sure that they understand what they do and how they can benefit the community, but it does take the requirement, they need community leaders and employers leaning in and working with them to bring solutions to the table. She stated she has given them a slide deck and she has also included some at the back. She stated within their role in the public workforce system, they provide labor market information, both to communities, leaders, and employers, so that they can better assess the current situation with the workforce and then of course with engagement understanding needs, challenges, that leads to solutions. She stated they have some flexibility with some of the dollars that they have to create custom solutions for entities. She stated she is not going to go through every slide because she knows they have other agenda items but this is the type of labor market information they use as a baseline to start discussions in communities so they see what the challenges might be that are obvious. She stated when she looks at the data overview, one of the things that stands out to her in Jasper County is that there is a 10% decrease in prime age workers in the past 25 years and there is an increase in the 55-plus age workers in the community. She stated that data point tells her that they should be having some discussions about the age of the workforce in the community and what strategies might bring younger families into the community if that is what they desire, it has to start with that. She stated they see projections; they look at employers, they look at jobs that are posted, they

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CENTER FOR WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS LISA DAUGHERTY CONT'D: look at the projected changes within the industries and with that information they want to be having discussions and making plans. She stated they work very closely with the economic development entities throughout the region. She stated they participate in business recruitment meetings with employers when they are trying to bring new businesses in, they want to make sure that the community has the skills to fill the jobs when the employers do come. She stated they have a variety of partnerships that allow them to offer not just adult basic education but they are looking at combining, they call them IET's, Integrated Education Opportunities. She stated so if someone has not received their high school diploma, these days, you can find a job without that diploma, they combine skill training with that adult basic education so there is greater upward mobility when folks have those different credentials they combine specific, maybe like, CDL training so that in that short amount of time that they are earning the credential, they are also earning that certification that is going to earn them a better paying job. She stated they have relationships in the community with employers. She stated she is going to bring DeeDee White who is the Director of Business and Talent Strategies and she is going to give them a couple of examples about the types of relationships. She stated the more they lean in together on this topic the better solutions they arrive at for the benefit of the community. Mr. Bontreger stated looking at some of these numbers, how do we compare with the other counties in our region. Ms. Daugherty stated, largely, some of the trends that they see are typical. She stated when you get into some of the northern communities where the population is more dense and more urban they see lower education attainment, greater unemployment. She stated unemployment at 3.7 for Jasper, if they noticed that, that is technically, in her world, considered full employment. She stated anything below 5%, so think about the issue that they have. She stated a 62% labor force participation rate is on par with state and national averages but if you have got an aging workforce, declining birth rate, and low unemployment you have got lots of employers unable to fill jobs. She stated they have a very concerning challenge and have to be laying strategies, plans together to address those gaps. Mr. Bontreger stated he sees residents in poverty and without high school diploma, are our number consistent with other counties or are we an outlier in that regard. Ms. Daugherty stated median household actually is higher than what they typically see, so the data for her leads her to the next question, the median household income is higher so you probably just have a wider range. She stated you have probably got a number of people that are higher income and, in that range, but you probably have a number of individuals that are very low in income so the question becomes what do those averages or numbers look like as opposed to the median but by median it is higher. She stated she feels good about the high school diploma but that is still a thousand people that could be moving in and filling with good jobs. Mr. Bontreger stated do you factor in entrepreneurship, there are a lot of self-employed family businesses in the county, whether agriculture or other service-type businesses, how does that impact this. Ms. Daugherty stated when you say factor in, if an employer is reporting wages right, payroll, then all those numbers are entered in. She stated the challenge that they have, which is more popular now, since COVID, is when there is gig work it is not easy to tie those numbers because people are in and out at their convenience. She stated that is a strategy some employers should consider if they can and have the flexibility to do that. Ms. White stated her role is to lead their business services department, in its simplest form, their existence is all about attracting, training, and retaining talent for our businesses here in the community. She stated she wants to very quickly highlight some of the things that they have done here in this community for the employers. She stated they have a rural water apprenticeship with the City of Rensselaer that they were able to support through funding. She stated they were able to support an intern with Alliance Bank and they had Spanish for supervisors for Belstra Group and again for the City of Rensselaer they were able to support 5 Class B CDL trainees through St. Joe College. She stated last week, they signed a couple of agreements with Donaldson, she stated they are doing leadership training with them and they are also supporting their forklift training, two cohorts. She stated this is all done through funding that they have that further supports their upskilling and making their businesses whole. She stated these are just a few examples of the things that they do, they very much want the community to lean in with them, they want their

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CENTER FOR WORKFORCE INNOVATIONS LISA DAUGHERTY CONT'D: industry partners to lean in with them, it will help them. She stated they have such a broad reach as far as federal, local funding, they have the Work One folks that come in every day who are looking for employment and they can make those connections with their placement, folks that are in their system. She stated Top Jobs in Jasper County is a new initiative that they have and they are looking for employers that have a number of positions that would speak to a broad range of individuals, so anywhere from somebody that is, an entry-level worker all the way through somebody that is a little bit more skilled. She stated so anybody that is coming in through their Work One system what they want to do is match these top jobs with those, so it is basically bringing opportunity, or bringing talent to opportunity and they are featuring businesses all throughout the community here so it will be a local initiative for the folks right here in the community. Mr. Standish asked as we get into summertime and have college students returning home, is there some initiative through your organization to help businesses fund internships. Ms. White stated as a matter of fact they have done that, yes, the grant that they have used is getting ready to sunset in May. Ms. Daugherty stated they are just launching two summer youth programs in the city of Gary, and she just had a meeting late last week with the Michigan City. She stated communities have the desire to have these programs, they have the funds, but they don't have the workforce development expertise to run those programs, so they can come to the table. She stated they do have to have funding if they want those interns to earn money. She stated they have several buckets of money, but they do not have an endless supply, and she does not want to create that expectation. She stated Michigan City and Gary both found within their redevelopment funds dollars available to help these programs. She stated it has to start with the individual need of the community, the city, and the administration. She stated it starts with the employer. She stated they understand those needs, they figure out a way to meet their need and provide people with experience.

OTHER BUSINESS

COMMISSIONER STANDISH: Mr. Standish stated the Rensselaer Senior Center, last year when they were doing the repairs out there, they had found a couple windows that had leaky panes with moisture between the two panes, and they need to address that this year. He stated the Extension Office also has windows with wind blowing in and they will need to look at those windows also. He stated the Courthouse has issues with windows and tuck pointing as well as the retention wall repair that is needed. He stated he is trying to find local contractors that could tackle that or at least give a price on that. Ms. Stephanie Johnson stated she could get the Commissioners' numbers for restoration on landmark buildings. Mr. Bontreger stated that would be great, the Courthouse is a landmark building. Mr. Standish stated if possible, they would like to get this started and completed before July 4<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Bontreger stated the north side needs a power wash too. Mr. Hilton asked if it was possible that Mr. Ed Cain reach out to a couple fencing company in regard to the retaining fence around the north lot.

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT ED CAIN: Mr. Ed Cain stated the salt barn roof has been done and the guys were there working on the doors Friday and they will be back to finish up the overhead doors. He stated he gave the Commissioners an email about the prices for the unit bid prices from Town & Country and he also has it at the meeting if the Commissioners want to approve it. Mr. Haberlin stated that is what they would want to do. Mr. Bontreger read the unit bid pricing from Town & Country:

HMA Binder \$83/ton  
HMA Service \$93/ton  
Tack Coat \$1,100/ton

Mr. Cain stated down by the wind farm project they will be getting quite a bit done this year. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the bid. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER JACK HABERLIN: Mr. Haberlin stated he has a right-of-way permit that is a little confusing because it says 1100 North, but it is really McCoysburg Road. He stated it is

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COUNTY ENGINEER JACK HABERLIN CONT'D: for the company Metro's, where he believes they have a knifing machine now on 1100 North and the County does not allow knifing. He stated someone from Metro was going to speak. Mr. Bontreger asked if there was anyone there from Metro, in person or online. There was no response. Mr. Haberlin stated Ryan had called him and said there is a knife machine on 1100. He stated he went there and met a gentleman from Higgins Cable and told them they cannot knife. He stated then he had a call from a guy, John, they have done many projects here before and he does not know why they want to knife but then he got an email where they said they were going to come to a meeting but maybe they were going to hold off until April but they acted like they had to start right away. He stated if they do knife this one it is through McCordsburg Road. Mr. Standish stated it is his opinion if they don't allow knifing they don't allow knifing, he does not want to start allowing it anywhere. Mr. Hilton stated they do not allow knifing. Mr. Haberlin stated that is what he told them. Mr. Bontreger stated it sounds like they need to wait until they come in person. Mr. Haberlin asked if they should hold off on it. Mr. Bontreger stated he would say so.

BF&S JAKE DAMMARELL: Mr. Dammarell stated they have received word that there may be some additional funding for CCMG coming up and they are going to now take some proactivity in terms of getting an advertisement out there. He stated they are looking for authorization from the Commissioners to advertise for public bids regarding the 2026 road resurfacing projects. He stated those bids would be delivered to the auditor's office on April 3<sup>rd</sup> by 2:00PM and then read aloud here at the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting and taken under advisement pending the future funding through CCMG. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the advertisement and to authorize secure sealed bids as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

VS ENGINEERING TIM HOLLANDSWORTH: Mr. Bontreger stated Tim is here concerning construction compliance concerning Zelestra. Mr. Hollandsworth stated they will be mobilizing back out in April. He stated in the meantime, coordination with the highway department, they are going to go out and do some work to restore the roads to a more drivable condition and now they will be invoicing Zelestra the work that they do so it is not, the County's not doing the work for Zelestra, they are invoicing them to make sure they get reimbursed for this. He stated this is not going to be the conclusion of that road work, it is just to make it a safe, drivable condition. He stated they are still going to be coming back once they finish their work and demobilize to restore the roads to what they were or better condition. He stated some of this work in April is going to consist of the vegetation buffer and then deconstruction of any added roads or the added turn blister and the laydown yard deconstruction. He stated they will be coming to them with a proposed revision to their opaque fence. He stated once they get that they will verify it against County ordinances prior to presenting it to the Commissioners.

### PUBLIC COMMENT

NANCY STRUDER: Ms. Nancy Struder stated she is representing the Chamber, and she wanted to thank them for approving their permit for Kids Night. She stated they did mention that the Farmers Market is talking about moving to Thursday. She stated the purpose of their event is to bring attention to them and wondered if they could modify their request for the 21<sup>st</sup> or the 23<sup>rd</sup>, whatever they coordinate with them, would that be okay. The Commissioners stated they are fine with that. Ms. Struder stated they are just going to do one event each year. Mr. Bontreger stated he does not know if they were going to move all of them to Thursday, they might do two a week that way. Ms. Struder stated she will coordinate with them. Mr. Bontreger stated they will note that the Kids Night would coordinate with the Farmers Market. Mr. Bontreger called for a vote for that amendment. The amendment passed.

DOTTIE WARRICK 322 S. SUNSET DR. RENSSLAER: Ms. Warrick stated she wanted to bring the Commissioners awareness about what she is hearing from constituents on data centers. She stated they want total transparency; they are really concerned about water, the water supply and the environment. She stated she went to the Soil & Water Agency, and the director gave her

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DOTTIE WARRICK 322 S. SUNSET DR. RENSSELAER CONT'D: the information that they are looking at except the first two pages, she did those. She stated aquifers have no boundaries, what happens in Jasper County could affect other neighboring counties like Newton, Pulaski, Starke, LaPorte, Porter, and Lake Counties. She stated she thinks there should be a better way to run and build a data center. She stated also, in agreement, what if NIPSCO gets bought by another company. She stated as you know, she has possible concerns about carbon capture injection on site. She stated at a Benton County open house in April of 2023 a BP representative told her how safe the CO2 pipeline in DeKalb Illinois was. She stated in 2024 brine and CO2 migrated into an undesignated underground zone, which could affect their, she thinks it is the Muhammad Aquifer. She stated she has written a letter requesting a moratorium until they get more information on how to research a better way to build a data center that she is presenting to the Commissioners. She stated she would like to give a shout out to Michelle Douglas who she has been friends with since June of 2023, she stated Michelle was suffocated in her backyard when there was an explosion within a mile of her house. Mr. Bontreger thanked her for her input and stated he does appreciate it, he looks over the things that she sends to them. He stated there is a lot of discussion on this topic and a lot of localities and counties throughout this state and the neighboring states as well. Ms. Warrick stated that is because there is a lot of your neighbors that can be affected by this. She stated she is not against this but if they just wait until there is better technology. She stated they know how she feels about carbon capture. Mr. Bontreger stated they are not a fan of it either. He stated he did see something in the state-proposed legislation that was going to try to put a ban on piping it, he thinks. Mr. Standish stated there is technology out there now that they are talking about, capturing it and storing it above ground and then being able to transport it off to utilize for carbon capture and utilization. Ms. Warrick stated just don't take it to Newton County.

EXTENSION OFFICE CARMEN FORTNEY: Ms. Carmen Fortney stated Purdue has changed the way that they do their computer leases and their leases are up this year. She stated instead of doing a new lease, they will now be buying computers. She stated problem with that is their current budget, which is about \$3,000, will not cover all 5 of them getting computers, it may cover one or two. She stated they are wanting permission or approval to move some money from some of their budget lines to cover computers and possibly also looking to the Council or Commissioners, whomever, to get some extra funds to cover the computers. She stated a new computer plus monitor and docking station will be about \$1,634 each. Mr. Bontreger stated could you work out a deal to procure equipment through our IT. Ms. Fortney stated no, so the laptops absolutely not, he did say that if they chose to do their monitors and docking stations that way, that it would not be supported through Purdue so if anything happened to them then they can't access it remotely to try to fix it or anything like that. Mr. Bontreger asked if the County is purchasing the computers or is Purdue purchasing the computers. Ms. Fortney stated as she understands it, they have their seeded funds, she thinks the County puts that money in there. She stated she kind of inherited it when she took over as CED, and so they use those seeded funds to keep their leases up to date but as far as support, they are on Purdue's servers and for them to be able to fix the computers they access them remotely and they have to order through them other than that they will not be supported if anything happened to their computer they would be dead in the water. Mr. Bontreger stated that would be a conversation to have with the Council to find out what money they have got there and if they have got the money then if they need to purchase them and that is the way they are going to make them do it then they have to do it. He stated so that would be a question to the Auditor and Steve Jordan from the Council. He stated they support them getting the hardware they need. Mr. Standish stated just so they understand one of the lines they are going to transfer money out of is their line for intern help through the summer because they got their intern to volunteer their time this year to help through the fair so they could use that money to buy the computers. Ms. Fortney stated if they could avoid using that line that would be great, that would be their last resort as they have considered all of their lines. Mr. Bontreger stated the fiduciary responsibilities are with the Council if they need to explore where they need to potentially draw money from, hopefully not having to

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EXTENSION OFFICE CARMEN FORTNEY: take money away from paying interns, that would be a conversation best had with the Council and if they need the Commissioners support, they have it.

EVIE PARRISH: Ms. Evie Parrish stated she is representing the Wheatfield Chamber of Commerce and would like to invite the Commissioners to the next Wheatfield Chamber meeting which will be Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM at the bowling alley in Wheatfield. She stated they would like to discuss the future of Wheatfield with everything going on with the negotiations and some of the community members would like to talk to them and see what the best interests for Wheatfield might be. She stated it is open to anyone in the community to discuss moving forward and they would love to see the Commissioners there.

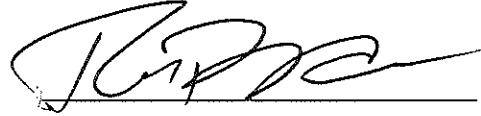
RENSSELAER MAYOR JEFF PHILLIPS: Mr. Phillips stated he got a letter from Ms. Kanne talking about wanting to do something together on the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He stated Mr. Arnold was in touch with him last week and they are going to try to get a meeting for everyone who wants to participate together, and all try to work together and celebrate.

There being no further business, Mr. Standish made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

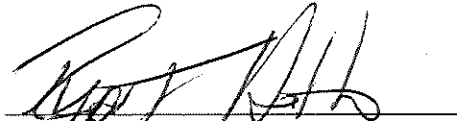
ATTEST:



Diana Boersma, Auditor of Jasper County



Rein Bontreger, President



Ryan Hilton, Vice President



Craig Standish, Member