

**MINUTES
JOINT FOUNTAIN COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS & COUNCIL
MARCH 03, 2025
9:00 A.M.**

The following Fountain County Commissioners were present at the meeting: Aaron Fruits and KW Rice. Tim Shumaker was absent.

The following Fountain County Council members were present at the meeting: Kelly Carlson, Jeff Fishero, Denise Crowder, Jim McKee, Dudley Cruea and Todd Hegg. Jeff Carver was absent

Call meeting to Order:

Fountain County Commissioners – Aaron Fruits
Fountain County Council – Kelly Carlson

Department Heads

Dispatch – Dana Stonebraker

Dana informed the Council and Commissioners that she has let a dispatcher go, but a part time employee has now taken that fulltime position. This next payroll will have 2 employees with a lot of overtime. She would also like to add a position back on the salary ordinance that was left off in 2024 for 2025. Dana did pass out information regarding this position. The Council will discuss on 03/10/25.

Holiday Pay – 6 additional days for Jail, Sheriff, EMS, and 911

Andrew Krout wanted to discuss the figures for the 6 additional holiday pays for the Emergency Services. He would like to see the departments get the same holidays as other county employees. They are currently being paid for 9 holidays. Denise Crowder said that Andrew has worked hard to get the department a decent pay and she appreciates it, but the budget increase will be hard. Andrew did say that they have housed out of county inmates and brought in quite a bit of money.

Andrew also would like to discuss the additional \$2,000 for Bob Kemp. He did watch the February meeting. The Council would like to look at the minutes and then discuss at the next meeting. Dudley would like to see more information.

BW Construction-

BW Construction gave a presentation on the explanation of different delivery methods for construction contracts. They gave a handout to the Council and went over the information. Kelly Carlson asked if they would be able to use our current design. They would like to look at it and stated it could even be changed if needed, but they wouldn't change something the county already liked. This could be put into a BOT. The new highway building may be done in phases.

Roger Azar said he had gotten some quotes for the highway building. He stated the storage building is 18,400 square feet and estimated at \$1.7 million, the fuel canopy is 900 square feet and estimated at \$90,000, the main building is 18,000 square feet and estimated \$1,950,000. The office area with all the heating and cooling area with all the finishing is \$1,480,000. The engineering estimate is \$80,000. The architectural estimate is \$200,000. And the Earth Works around it for drainage, parking lot, etc. is \$1,100,000. The total is \$6,600,000 for the project. Some buildings will require a sprinkler system due to being so large and will require \$20,000 to

\$50,000 more. Brad Crain said his building is 12,000 square feet and is under \$1,000,000. Jason Lewis said he would like the salt barn to be high priority due to losing salt during the year due to the weather elements.

Wabash River Greenway Project- Five Crossings Park

The Council and Commissioners have looked into the ownership of the land. This is currently in a trust with the Myers Family. It is a 99-year lease with the Fountain County Park Board. This was in 1993. There was a lease for 20 years which should have been renewed every four years in 1994. Dudley did talk to Zack Thomas, who was the last president of the Park Board. He also tried to get ahold of Nancy Wagner, who was also on the board, but has not been able to make a connection. Steve Coffing had originally gotten a grant for \$90,000. Zack Thomas said they did put in a walkway but it is currently covered with 6 inches of dirt and debris. It had been voted originally to provide \$450,000. It was then voted to do \$225,000, but this was not advertised. Therefore, the vote must be stricken. Todd Hegg asked if we could give the money, but put in fine print we are not liable. Kelly asked if anyone had contacted the Myers Family. Jeff Fishero said Dale had came in and explained everything including that it was a lease at a joint meeting. The intent of the trail is to build up 3 feet vs , but Roger Azar said that is impossible. DNR made them pay due to being in the flood zone. Dudley asked if the Myers family has to give permission and have, they given it. Aaron Fruits said from what he read, no but they get to keep all that is given to the trail on their land. Dudley asked County General money could be used for private land. Kim Johnson will contact the State Board of Accounts and ask. Brad Crain is concerned with the ReadI money. Bill Brewer wondered if the trail could be rerouted. Brad Crain said that would not be able to work. Roger said they had looked into that. Brad Crain is worried that if the money is not given, they may possibly lose READI money. Brad also said there are 4 other counties. Kelly Carlson and Dudley Cruea do not remember Dale stating that it was owned by Myers, but Jeff Fishero said he thinks it was in 2023. Jeff Fishero was curious if the money was not given, would this jeopardize the READI II money. Aaron and Brad will contact Julie from ReadI.

Additional Appropriations

Health Department	Liability Insurance	\$11,000.00
Health Department	New Server	\$10,000.00
Sheriff	Retirement	\$34,322.00

Hearing Opened at 10:55 a.m.

Public Comment-

Carol Owens asked what the retirement was for and why the increase. 2024 was roughly \$135,000 and 2025 was roughly \$169,000. Denise Crowder did let her know that this is figured by an actuary and is 1-2 years behind.

Dudley Cruea had some questions about Fund 1206. There will be no more money put in this account. Jenny Eads informed him that 1161 is the HFI money now. Jenny also said that the HFI fund may be up to \$100,000 short but she is unsure. She will keep everyone updated.

Hearing Closed at 11:03 a.m.

CEDIT-tabled	Greenway Project	\$225,000.00
Sheriff-tabled	Deputy Sgt/Detective	\$2,000.00

484

A motion was made by Denise Crowder and seconded by Dudley Cruea to approve the Health Department for \$11,000, Health Department for \$10,000 and the Sheriff Retirement for \$34,322.00.

Vote: 6-0

Commissioner's Room

They reviewed the bids from Three Nails Construction LLC, Slider Tree Service LLC, Ricketts Electric and United Electric. Slider Tree Service and Ricketts Electric were approved to start construction. They will begin as soon as possible.

Highway- Discuss building

Jeff Fishero said it is a bad situation and speed is important. He does not want to make them wait. It could be done in phases. Roger Azar said they got the figures from a Nucor Steel Contractor. He also contacted 2 other contractors. Carol Owens asked if the figures included an exhaust fan. Roger did say the more bells and whistles included, the higher the price.

Brad Crain

He stated that when he built the EMS building it was \$1,050,000. He said he would like the Council to consider the city of Covington taking the Stringtown road to the I-74 bridge. They will also put a center line down Stringtown Road to the bridge.

Solar Discussion

The Commissioners discussed the APC and the meeting. Four members resigned this pass weekend. Bill Brewer asked where the Commissioners and Council stand as far as solar. He asked about the ordinances. Aaron Fruits said he never approaches anything with an absolute no. He said they have to be very careful when dealing with residents' property. Bill also said KW was going to stop everything. KW said there is not a way to stop everything. He said to write the ordinances, there needs to be input from people for and against solar. KW said every citizen in the County has a dog in the fight. Bill Brewer disagreed. Ethan Myers said if they adopt an unconstitutional ordinance there is recourse. Bill said things should be protected but you cannot make them unreasonable. Bill's concern is that the APC meeting accomplished nothing. Bill asked if they voted on a technicality to remove the permit from Dolphin Solar? They did vote to remove due to a breach. That is what they were advised to vote on.

Wayne Delong- Dolphin Solar

Mr. Delong did watch the APC meeting. He said the ordinance has a very specific process. He said they are exceeding the requirements of the ordinance. They have vested rights in this project. He said they are here to answer any questions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Larry Schrock asked how it works. Roger Azar said they had met the requirements of the ordinance so the permit was issued. Larry asked more questions regarding the permitting process.

Kelly Carlson said she has an agreement with Dolphin Solar. Her parcel is not currently in, but she does have the agreement. She has not voted on any thing to do with Dolphin Solar. She was very transparent with this information. She did inform the public there was a Conflict of Interest and she would not be involved.

Bill Brewer said the White family sold their land to the Solar Company.

Kelly Carlson stated that the Commissioners and the Council sign a Conflict of interest. Bill said that one individual comes to every meeting with the intentions of getting Roger Azar fired. Kelly said they cannot deny Roger the fact to do his own business. Roger said he does not vote on anything. He is only contracted. He did say he does do some work for Mr. Ratcliff. Roger cannot control what the ordinance says. Bill Brewer said Roger does a great job.

Jim McKee said the APC is in dire need of an attorney. They would like suggestions.

Guy Rahm asked if Dolphin met all the requirements of the ordinance, are we required by law to give them a permit? Ethan Myers said it was the vested rights. Aaron Fruits had asked Roger Azar if they did meet all the requirements. If they meet all the requirements, they are given the permit.

**THE NEXT FOUNTAIN COUNTY COMMISSIONER
MEETING WILL BE
March 17, 2025
At 6:00 p.m.**

**THE NEXT FOUNTAIN COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING WILL BE
MONDAY, March 10, 2025
AT 9:00 A.M.**

A motion was made by Denise Crowder and seconded by Dudley Cruea to close the meeting for the Council.

Vote: 6-0

A motion was made by KW Rice and seconded by Aaron Fruits to close the meeting for the Commissioners.

Vote: 2-0


ATTEST






