

Randolph County Commissioners/Council Joint meeting

April 27, 2023

The Randolph County Commissioners and Council met in a joint meeting at 6:30 pm in the Commissioners and Council Room in the Courthouse with the following members present: Commissioner Board President Michael Wickersham, Gary Friend and Gary Girton. Council President David Lenkensdofer, Pro-tem Beverly Fields, Tom Chalfant, Mike Stine and Todd Holaday. Also present was Randolph County Auditor Laura J Martin, Sheriff Art Moystner and County Attorney Meeks Cockerill.

Michael Wickersham, President presided over the meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mike Wickersham said this is a joint meeting of the Commissioner's and Council, we have three Commissioners and 4 Council here, so we do have quorum. The first item on the agenda is the Rainy-day fund.

Rainy Day fund

Dave said I think you all know the last couple years I have asked to increase the rainy-day fund. Right now, I think we are at \$1.3 million. To me we need to be closer to the \$3.5 to \$4 million in reserves to make sure the county can operate in case of an extreme fiscal need. I would open up the floor for discussion. I believe what I have said in the past, I'd like to see it come from the windfarm monies over a five-year commitment to try to get to that total dollar amount.

Mike Wickersham asked does the rainy-day fund grow at all Dave?

Dave said it does not.

Mike Wickersham asked do you have funds that you could move into the rainy-day each budget year?

Dave said we haven't in the past because the general fund were pretty tight and that is the only funds we could use. I would just rather see it come from another fund since we are bringing another solar farm on board here shortly. We are blessed to have the solar funding coming in to try and better the county.

Tom Chalfant said I think what we've determined is a good number we should index it, so that we don't just continue to stay up with the budget. The budget goes up, it will automatically stay the same ratio, whatever we want that to be. I agree we need to raise it.

Gary Friend said the growth quotient. I have the projection out to 2035, it may be more palatable to run it up \$200,000.00 a year all the way through this directly to rainy-day. The only time it has grown is when the state give us some money back and it was mandatory we put it into rainy day. Rainy day has also been used to bridge a lot of grants and funding out there when we fall

short. So, to add another \$1.3 million to the value for the council to use. I don't think taking \$200,000.00 a year out of windfarm funds for the next ten years would be a detriment to the county.

Mike Wickersham said in a sense one might say we've used the windfarm money as a rainy-day fund instead of using the rainy-day fund and when it comes to most projects out of windfarm we've been in agreement to spend the money, so I've considered the windfarm funds, rainy day funds. That doesn't mean we couldn't take money out of the windfarm and put it in the rainy day. It obviously gives up control of those funds, the Commissioner's give up control of those funds once their transferred into rainy-day.

Dave said in four to ten years most of us probably won't be here in these positions. All I'm trying to do is protect the county going forward.

Gary Friend said I don't think I would consider rolling money out of general which seems to be gaining a positive, I would hope that we'd be considering some of that as salaries this year to catch up from being so far behind.

Dave said we are getting ready to meet on that in a couple of weeks.

Gary Friend said the general fund is probably going to grow a million dollars this year.

Dave said and that is what I've asked Laura to keep an eye on for us to make sure going forward we know where we're at on the general fund.

Mike Wickersham said if we commit \$200,000.00 over the next ten years to the rainy-day fund that means in the next two to four years or two to six years when some of us aren't around anymore that could always be changed.

Dave said it can but I think once you get the money into the rainy-day it's pretty tough to....

Mike Wickersham said I understand that but that plan could change and stop.

Dave asked Gary (Friend) is that a proposal of \$200,000.00 a year.

Gary Friend said I like that proposal, it's a steady even flow. We certainly have it coming in with the new solar farm, even out a little further than that. That would boost it up to \$3.3 million in ten year. A slow steady climb.

Mike Wickersham asked is that to start in 2024?

Gary Friend said I would say so, the next budget year. And the council has been very good, would never utilize the rainy-day fund to budget other than to bridge short falls in income and it's always paid back by the end of the year. We had a resolution yearly. You probably got one now don't you?

Dave said we do.

Gary Friend said it's good to see the general starting to go over the top of the hill, but then again we are behind in our wages. We'll see where it goes.

Dave asked are there any other questions. Bev what do you think?

Bev said I'm in agreement with Gary's proposal, \$200,000.00 per year starting in 2024. For how many years is to be determined. I think it's a good starting place.

Tom Chalfant said we have that available right, we haven't spend that all?

Mike Wickersham said really as I said before, it comes down to who controls it. The Commissioner's are giving up control of \$200,000.00 for the next ten years or until these two bodies meet again and change that.

Meeks said you would have to vote every year to put \$200,000.00 into rainy day. You can't commit 9 years from now for \$200,000.00. This vote if you want to do it in 2024, in January 2024 or whenever you want to put it in, the commissioner's would vote at their meeting and council would vote at their meeting to put in \$200,000.00.

Mike Wickersham said if we voted to put \$200,000.00 out of windfarm into economic development fund, we would do that every year as well. Council would then give up control of \$200,000.00.

Dave said I'm not even worried about control.

Mike Wickersham said that's what it's about. It's there and you can't spend it without voting to spend it.

Meeks said you can't commit \$200,000.00 more than today. So, if you say today I want to put \$200,000.00 in.

Tom Chalfant said I thought we could go three years?

Meeks said I would vote every year. That's what you need to do. If your going to do it for three years then you need a resolution.

Dave said I do know a lot of counties in the state of Indiana are going through the same thing. Madison County, they're putting in about \$175,000 a month. They're up to about \$5.6 million. They're a bigger county and a lot more dollars, so they're trying to grow that just because of the short falls they have had in the past.

Gary Girton said I have leanings toward putting money aside but when it comes back to spending windfarm money, we've spent a ton of windfarm money. We spent \$1.75 million on the courthouse, for the heating that we would not have had any money for if it hadn't been for that, it

would have had to come from somewhere else. We've spent money on ambulances, police cars and a number of other things. I'm not saying we don't need to be concerned about the rainy-day because we do.

Dave said we wouldn't have had the money on the courthouse HVAC system if we didn't have the windfarms and we wouldn't have had enough in rainy-day to cover it.

Bev said what are the parameters that rainy-day can cover?

Meeks said pretty much anything but the council decides.

Dave said it's pretty much emergencies.

Meeks said it doesn't have to be, it can be anything. I don't think you guys have ever used it for anything that wasn't dire.

Dave said we have used it in the past but I don't remember.

Meeks said very sparingly.

Gary Friend said not much.

Meeks said especially since you've had the windfarm, you haven't used it since you've had the windfarm money. Prior to that there was a massive shortfall.

Gary Friend said what your saying is that just because that is our attitude at the county, it's not the law. The law is you can spend it for about anything.

Meeks said right.

Todd asked can those funds be put in any higher interest rate vehicle than other types of funds.

Laura said it's up to the treasure.

Meeks said yes, but there are laws about what you can and can't put it in. There's a list and I think they're doing a pretty good job of trying to get the highest interest rate.

Todd said a lot of the money market rates at the local banks right now are at 4.5%.

Gary Friend said the council can't put anymore than 10% of the budget in a years' time out of general. It could be \$200,000.00 from general one year and \$200,000 from windfarm another year. Like Meeks said it's a yearly vote. I guess what we're talking about today is a long-term plan of possibilities.

Mike Wickersham said I think that gives, as county government rotates that gives new people in county government the opportunity to have an opinion on that and moving it that way. Maybe it

is prudent to wait and see what county general does, see what salary does and at the end of the year if we do 50/50 or we need to do it all out of windfarm, we do it all out of windfarm. In the meantime, we have the windfarm funds there if we absolutely need them we can spend them. We've spent about \$4 million on the county as a whole since 2019.

Dave said I'm sure we have.

Mike Wickersham said highway's, ditches.

Gary Friend said is that including Losantville, in that \$4 million.

Mike Wickersham said I think that's include in what we've spend on cities and towns, that wouldn't be county only. We've spent about \$2.5 million on cities and towns.

Dave said for me it's just to make sure where ever the monies come from, we need to get that rainy-day fund up to a reasonable amount.

Mike Wickersham asked what percentage is that? The rainy-day fund of our budget.

Dave said our budget is about \$18 million.

Gary Friend said that's grants and what not in there, it's about property tax income.

Dave said it's still monies we're responsible for.

Gary Friend said yes, but when I was talking 10%, it's not of the complete total budget because that comes from other sources. I think the budget for the county that would be included in what I was discussing is somewhere between \$6 and \$7 million.

Mike said do you have a guideline there or you just want it to be \$3 million.

Dave said previously Gary and I talked about it when we were both on council about our insurance. The stop loss is around \$3 million, it's probably hire than that now. That's what we were mainly concerned about.

Mike Wickersham said based upon projected economic development payments from the wind and solar farms \$200,000.00 is a lot of money but it's not a big percentage of what we're going to recoup over the next 10 years. I'm not sure we need to take a vote, we have a proposal but we don't have any motion or second and I think if we're going to wait until January of 2024 then I think we just keep it in our sites and have it on our agenda at the beginning of the year.

Dave said that works for me as long as we don't lose sight of it again.

Farmland Ambulance

Gary Friend said I've been in contact with Duane and Melvin and I've actually called Butler Building, which they haven't given me anything back. Doing the research to build a new

facility, I talked to Randy too. We're probably looking at \$250,000 to \$350,000.00 today. We would need like a 30 x 40 engineered building, two bays for ambulances and one for a day room. Duane would like to have an in wall that is expandable if we ever put full service over there for contractual reasons, they could put bedrooms on the end of it. The lot allows a 41 x 81 to set on it, however on the east end of that lot it looks like there is a little bit of flood plain, 30 feet, it's still enough to move it to the west. That's a proposal, it's a proposal I'd ask to look at if Commissioner's and Council decide that this is the route we are going to take. Or do we want to not own the building and look at somebody who would like to build a building and then we the county lease it back off them. We just need to decide where we're going to go from here forward. Melvin's here because I asked him if he had time to come if there were any questions from the council. It is my understanding that he has had to move the grass rigs in and out and watch out for pharmaceuticals in the ambulance during the freeze. The fire chief has said he would never get rid of the ambulance in Farmland but it is not in a convenient position for them. I also asked Melvin if they're was anything we could do, EDIT funds or something to help with an expansion there and keep all emergency services on one side and he indicates that, they are land locked for something like that. I think we need to get a consensus between Commissioner's and Council, do we want own a building, do we want to lease a building, do we want to have the carwash remodeled. Where I stand on it there are some buildings you should never own and some buildings you probably should own. I think an ambulance building is one that would be acceptable to own. I don't like the idea of counties just buying a building because it's there and then trying to find something to use it for, this is not that.

Dave said can we hear from Melvin?

Gary Friend said sure.

Melvin Nott said just like what happened, we moved the ambulance out because the weather got really nice and the next day is when we had however many grass fires around the county. So, it worked for us but then that next Sunday it turned really cold. I called Duane on Sunday and hey, we're going to have to do it. I'd feel really bad if I put an ambulance outside. It's in a building, it's in a barn, so it's not heated. I'd feel really bad if there was something someone needed for heart medicine and it was frozen if that ambulance needed to go out at 8:00 am that next morning. We moved some trucks around and put the ambulance back inside. It's still there because it's staying in that threshold cold enough. It's back in the building, it's not, like I said we love the service, everybody in our town loves the service. That whole area, the service is way faster then it's ever been. It's just an inconvenience more than anything. Once it gets nice and stays nice, then it's outside, it's in a barn. At that point it's not an inconvenience, they guys are in the fire station.

Dave asked are you okay, the people of Farmland about us potentially building a building on that site.

Melvin said I think everybody's, the town, it was an old house we bought tore it down and ended up with the land and never been able to sell the empty lot and that was kind of suggested by the board so me and Gary got together and pretty much said we'd give that back to the county if that's what we wanted. I know the lease with the old car wash didn't look to promising to me for

the county. I don't think theirs any residents, their going to get use to that stuff, I mean they live right next to a train track. You move in and the first month you hear it at night, then you don't ever hear it again. It would be the same thing. Now they leave at midnight, it's not like the siren's going to wake them up. Your close enough to the highway, if you live in that area you're going to hear the ambulance come through anyway. I don't think noise should ever be an issue when talking about emergency services. It's a good neighborhood.

Todd asked if we don't build a building, who does? Who would we lease it from?

Mike Wickersham said we've got a resident that proposed building us a was it a one bay or was it a two bay?

Tom Chalfant said one bay.

Mike Wickersham said one bay to start with a day room?

Tom Chalfant said they would have three rooms, a day room, bedrooms and rest room.

Mike Wickersham said they proposed a lease to us that really was, we might as well own the building if we were going to lease it. The lease payment wasn't so stiff, but we had all the other incidentals that a landlord typically takes care of. So, we sent it back to them and asked them if they wanted to consider a different lease and I've not heard back from them. I trust no one else has either.

Tom Chalfant said I talked to Danny, he wasn't aware the lease that Bob Cook sent out.

Mike Wickersham asked have you heard back Meeks?

Meeks said Andy Wagner came back to me and asked why doesn't the county buy it. I told Gary Friend, that is not a real conducive place to build. We're going to spend just as much money. The lot is the better option.

Tom Chalfant said my problem with the lot is, that we moved to Farmland to cover Union Township and now we're on the north side of town. If there were a call and we're north of the tracks from Modoc, it could be a little bit of a problem.

Mike Wickersham said about everywhere would be.

Melvin said we have to do that every year. Every year we have to go across the railroad tracks, they never close all of them at the same time.

Tom Chalfant said if theirs a train, Union Township is south of the tracks, we wanted to try and have better coverage for Union Township.

Melvin said it's still faster waiting on a train then coming from Winchester.

Gary Friend asked can Duane come and talk about the ambulance service.

Duane said I just want a place to put an ambulance over there. If the railroad was an issue we could always send one from Winchester. It's 8 to 10 minutes longer but if for some reason that trains going to be there sitting and causing a problem, we could send one from Winchester.

Gary Friend said the good thing is out Jackson Street, your 2 or 3 miles form 500 and you can go under. Your still closer than waiting for one from Winchester.

Dave said Union City has the same problem, the fire department and ambulance service is on the south side of town and most of the residents are on the north side of the tracks.

Gary Friend so, I can continue to look and get information on a solid firm number to build there. Maybe Tom can contact Danny.

Tom Chalfant said you guys don't want to use the car wash. There's a reason we don't want that.

Gary Friend said personally I don't like it. I asked Melvin and Duane. I like coming out and two blocks your choosing the highways. I don't like the car wash because you would have to raise the roof. Is there enough room to put a building on the back side?

Tom Chalfant said yes. It goes all the way to the alley. There is room to put two bays behind there with access in and out behind the alley.

Gary Friend said I want to give the option, I wouldn't say no if that's the way we went, just to get this moving.

Tom Chalfant said I think he would build to suit for \$1000.00 per month. I think that's what he would do for us.

Mike Wickersham said the original lease said \$1000.00 per month. But there's an issue of committing that long too, isn't there Meeks?

Meeks said here's what my email said. It has to be subject to the annual appropriation of the County Council. If you go over three years you have to have special approval for it.

Mike Wickersham asked special approval from who?

Meeks said County Council and Commissioner's. Here's what I said. If it's \$1000 per month then the utility costs are probably okay but then there was you pay all real estate taxes, you would pay all repair and maintenance and all insurance costs.

Tom Chalfant said I think he would take that over as the landlord, when I talked to him. He would just give us a regular rental agreement for \$1000.00 a month and he would take care of the

rest of it. I told him there could be a possibility that we could give him some kind of a credit on the taxes.

Meeks said I think it's exempt from taxes if it's governmental. Property taxes your exempt.

Gary Friend said you can pass that exemption through?

Meeks said I'd have to check but there used to be a law that says that if you are leasing to a governmental entity. I don't know if they've changed that.

Gary Friend said I'm not set on building a brand new one. If a \$1000.00 lease is presented to us, its hard say no to 20 years' worth of leasing and not own the building.

Mike Wickersham said can't we go back to Danny and ask him to give us a lease we can live with and then if you want to go to Butler Building and see what they can do. I think for your part, we want two bays, day room, rest room.

Duane said two rest rooms would be better because if we get toned out and both need to go to the bathroom before jumping in the ambulance and go, that just shortens the time of getting in the ambulance and going. And just enough storage for oxygen tanks, medical supplies and cleaning supplies.

Gary Friend said I guess we have a consensus that we are going to move forward on taking care of this.

Mike Wickersham said I think that's a good idea and I also think before you go after Butler or anybody. I think we need Duane to lay out what he wants. I don't want to come back with this is what we're going to do and then Duane say well I need more than that. Like storage space, I didn't think about that. We've got a plan, Jake gave us that. It's a pretty big plan.

Jake said that was a plan that Reid was doing for remote sites. Danny Stamper from Carroll Electric.

Mike Wickersham said it's got 4 bedrooms, a small storage area, a corridor, a custodian room, two toilets, a laundry, a mechanical room and then a day room and two bays with storage with electrical and behind the bays. I think we could probably shrink this plan somewhat. I want to make sure it has what Duane thinks we need.

Gary Girton said the thing for me is. We anticipate being over there and a full staff site, 24 hours a day. That's what we need to plan on in these plans.

Duane said I don't see that in the next year or two but down the road it could be.

Gary Girton said I understand but if we are going to spend the money to invest to me in a facility, then we want it to meet our needs then we need to think about that option. If we're

really looking that way. I know you would be in favor of that immediately if everything would fall in place. I think we need to plan for that.

Tom Chalfant do we know how many people live in the area that would be covered by a Farmland ambulance service?

Duane said 400 West is the cut off.

Melvin said it's basically 1/3 of the county. The only other thing I would like to shine a light on this. I know the town talked about building on that lot. The lot would be given to you guys. Now does that change if someone else builds on it and you guys lease. I know your talking about the car wash, but in talking about the other.

Meeks said we won't get the lot from the town and give it to somebody. It gets right down to we are either going to build it or do the car wash.

Gary Friend said it would be hard to beat \$1000.00 a month lease. We're already at \$500.00 now.

Courthouse Security

Mike Wickersham said courthouse security. Who put this on here.

Meeks said Missy did.

Mike Wickersham said there is a security committee that Judge Arnett chairs.

Laura said I did get notified that the Judges weren't happy because they weren't notified that we were discussing this tonight.

Meeks said a judge wasn't happy.

Mike Wickersham said we won't discuss it tonight.

Desk for Commissioner/Council room

Gary Friend said I brought this to the meeting. They are \$7823.80 per unit to expand this out. So, when we do have this kind of meeting or a budget meeting there's a lot more room needed and it would look a lot more professional then adding white tables.

Mike Wickersham said we don't need it for the Commissioner's. There is only three of us, plus the attorney plus the Auditor. You have seven plus attorney plus Laura so the need would be if the Council doesn't want to sit as close as they sit.

Gary Friend said it is in the Council's decision. One option is using that one as one, buy one and have a different presentation style.

Mike Wickersham said we do have a lesser cost one. They are glued on library style panels as opposed to hard wood.

Gary Friend said the Council should discuss this as to whether this is something they want to do. The Commissioner's have plenty of room.

Mike Wickersham said there are also tables available with applied picture frame molding instead of solid wood raised panels at a price of \$6,536.00. So, they are \$1300.00 less each and they would be different.

Tom Chalfant said I hate to spend \$12 to \$15 thousand on two tables.

Gary Friend said they weren't that much last time I brought it up.

Laura said a year ago they were \$6,787.00 apiece. Now it's \$7,823.00 apiece. It's about \$1100.00 more.

Todd said I say don't do it. It's so much money for so little.

Mike Stine said I don't see what's wrong with the way it is.

Tom Chalfant said I agree.

Bev said part of the problem is there isn't a place for Meeks up here either. I think there is a need. I don't think there is a need for two tables. I think we could get along with one table added on.

Meeks said I would say, I was at the County Council in Delaware County a month ago and they have a podium. You could take that table and put it over here and put a podium for people to present from. All you would need at that point would be a podium and you would get two more chairs.

Gary Friend said this is symmetrical and that would throw us out. I don't like that. I would say two or nothing for me.

Tom Chalfant said could we rearrange these differently.

Gary Friend said a lot of the time with Council it's so tight, there's no elbow room. You can't spread any papers out. For me now I've got plenty of room. As a Commissioner I want to see it symmetrical. I don't want to see it oblong.

Dave said I personally like the idea of another desk like that one and a podium. I think we could get by with a lot less money. We need to make a decision. We will put that on our next agenda.

Gary Friend said I would like it sent back for Commissioner's approval that it has symmetry.

Dave said that's the only way I would want it.

Mike Wickersham asked is there anything else to come before the meeting tonight? Any citizen comments? I'd entertain a motion to adjourn for the Commissioner's.

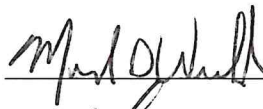
Adjournment


Gary Friend made a motion to adjourn. Mike Wickersham seconded. All aye votes. Motion carried.


Dave said we didn't bring the council to order.

Reviewed and signed this 5th 6 day of June, 2023.

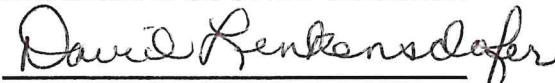
RANDOLPH COUNTY COMMISSIONERS







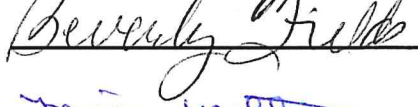



RANDOLPH COUNTY COUNCIL


















ATTEST:



Laura J Martin, Auditor of Randolph County