

**Hancock County Board of Commissioners & County Council  
Met for a Special Meeting on March 16, 2021**

Commissioners and Council met for a special session. Those present were Board of Commissioners President John Jessup, Commissioner Vice President Marc Huber, Commissioner Bill Spalding. Councilmembers President William Bolander, James Shelby, Kent Fisk, Vice President Jeannine Gray, Mary Noe, Robin Lowder and Keely Butrum. County Attorney Scott Benkie, Auditor Debra Carnes and Financial Administrator Mary Bowmer were present.

Commissioner Jessup called to order the March 16, 2021 Hancock County Commissioners Board meeting at 12:00 Noon. Councilmember Bolander called to order the March 16, 2021 County Council meeting at 12:00 Noon.

*President Bolander opened the meeting with the “Pledge of Allegiance” followed by a moment of silence.*

**Senior Services Funding Discussed**

- Commissioner Jessup said Hancock County Senior Services may use IndyGo as their administrator for federal dollars going forward unless we RFP a private entity moving forward. Councilmember Bolander asked if IndyGo would take over our existing vans. Commissioner Jessup said that has not been answered yet; probably not on day one, but at some point, the investment this county made in this program over the last 15 years would be depleted by IndyGo. I’m sure the fleet wouldn’t be kept up-to-date as it is now. Currently, we have a brand new fleet, that both of these boards worked very hard to get. Councilmember Bolander agreed Senior Services would be depleted and inefficient. Councilmember Shelby asked if this was a done deal and do we have a contingency? Commissioner Jessup said the only contingency would be to do our own program. If we are going to receive federal dollars, it must pass through IndyGo. Councilmember Gray asked are there any other options other than IndyGo. Commissioner Jessup said we could fund it as a County Program or if there was a private entity that wanted to provide those services, a not-for-profit. It would fall under the COVID money we will be receiving as a use that the money could be used for. But that money has to be used by 2024, so we are creating a program that wouldn’t be sustainable past 2024. Opting out of the Federal dollars, doesn’t mean we couldn’t opt back in in the future. We could fund our own program for the next 3½ years and see how things work out with IndyGo. Councilmember Bolander asked how much it would cost to fund this program. Commissioner Jessup said he thought \$375,000. Councilmember Noe said it is an important program and she hopes the County can continue with it, the best way we can. She said whatever Commissioners decide is the best avenue, she would be behind it. Commissioner Huber said the bad thing now is moving forward it will be funded through IndyGo and that is the big question. Councilmember Lowder pointed out sometimes it is hard to opt back in a program later. Councilmember Butrum asked is IndyGo asking for our transportation assets. Commissioner Jessup said that is unclear. Councilmember Noe was concerned with the westside developing quickly. Would IndyGo take care of it and what about the eastside. Commissioner Jessup said he didn’t feel the eastside would get the same services. Councilmember Shelby questioned if we ran this, would it be a department of county government run as a not-for-profit? Commissioner Jessup said there is still an avenue for a not-for-profit to be set up to run Senior Services. But we then would RFP for services and pay for contracted services. Councilmember Butrum asked what the next steps are to invest to keep Senior Services. Commissioner Jessup said this unclear. Councilmember Butrum added, I think Commissioner Jessup is saying even if we couldn’t promise permanent sustainability,

that for some interim period because of CARES Act money, we could plan for it, if we wanted to keep our own program. Councilmember Shelby said that would be a question for our Financial Consultant. Commissioner Jessup said he thinks the best option is to use stimulus money to keep it viable until 2024, while Council figures out a way to make it sustainable.

- Susan Derengowski introduced herself, she is the Executive Director for Hancock County Senior Services and Hancock Area Rural Transient (HART). She clarified these are two entities. The transportation is run as HART. The first step in this, is Hancock County has to agree to be the pass through (or subrecipient) and IndyGo will want to talk to Hancock County soon. They will go over the match that the county will be required to make. The match is currently done in the rural program and we come up with the match. The Federal money requires a 50% match and state funds are 100% match. The state funds can be used to match the Federal funds. Then Hancock County will participate with IndyGo to create an RFP for transportation services. In this system, Hancock County would have to come up with the RFP. As a provider HART would bid on these services. Councilmember Shelby asked how much money Hancock County would need to raise, that she previously raised. Susan said the current situation using 2019 would be \$193,000. Councilmember Gray asked how do you raise your funds? Susan said United Way dollars, Title 2B dollars, Medicaid, donations and fund raisers make up the difference. She was not sure about the Federal and state dollars if the county went off on their own. Councilmember Gray asked what is your preference? Susan said they would like to continue providing public transportation to Hancock County. Susan requested a member of Council and a member from Commissioners participate in a meeting with IndyGo and perhaps the County Attorney. Councilmember Shelby said we could go along with IndyGo's process and allow us time to understand the process and what the ramifications are. Commissioner Huber said his concern is if we get to the RFP process, we've agreed to be the administrators. Once we agree to be the administrators, we are taking the money. Commissioner Spalding we need to find that out on the phone call. Commissioners and Councilmembers thanked Susan.
- Councilmember Shelby said we need to be on the call, sounds like that is the way we want to go, should we start the process of looking at details. The County Attorney and Financial Consultant need to look into this and see what the underlying issues are or maybe we don't understand it. Commissioners agreed we don't understand.

#### **Human Resource Consultant**

- Commissioner Jessup said Auditor Debra Carnes just hired a Benefits Coordinator and Commissioners would like for her settle in before they start looking into a HR Consultant.

#### **Funding for Solid Waste Management Director**

- Commissioner Jessup said 8-10 years ago HCSWMD & Shelby County SWMD shared the Education Director and contracted with CGS. Hancock & Shelby paid 50%-50% for a contract employee. Two years ago Shelby County stopped using that contract, which put CGS in a position where they had an employee being paid only half of the time. CGS was bought out and decided they are not going to provide this service to Hancock County. We are faced with hiring a county employee to do these functions of the Solid Waste Management District and the Education or the opportunity to keep Dede Allender on a contract basis. Through earlier discussions today with the Surveyor, she talked to Dede and has functions she could work on as well. So the cost could be split up between two departments. Councilmember Gray asked if she worked out of the extension office. Commissioner Jessup said yes. Councilmember Gray asked we aren't talking a lot of money, are we? Commissioner Jessup

said we fund about \$2,000 a month, about \$24,000 a year for the part-time position, so it would be \$64,000 annually. Dede would do Solid Waste Management District and functions for the Surveyor's office. It would be up to Council how they wanted to allocate that in the budget percentage wise to each department. Councilmember Fisk said it would be about a \$40,000 increase. Commissioner Jessup said even if you increase Solid Waste District \$40,000, Hancock County would still have the least expensive Solid Waste District in the state of Indiana. Councilmember Noe asked if Dede had certifications or qualifications specific to that position. Councilmember Lowder said it is more of the experience she brings to that position. Councilmember Noe said if you put out the \$60,000 as a potential salary looking at the county as a whole and what the elected officials make and their top people in their office make with the knowledge they bring to the table how is that going to fit and is that going to cause an issue for us. Commissioner Huber said she will be a sub-contractor with no insurance or benefits, she will pay her own taxes. Councilmember Noe said it's a contractual service not an employee. Councilmember Lowder said she has done this for a really long time. She goes into the schools and teaches. Councilmember Gray said she is really good at it. Commissioner Jessup said we do this as an employee, but she does not need the insurance. Commissioner Huber said Surveyor Bodkin sent over about 14 things Dede could assist with in her office for compliance, education, MS4 documentation, prioritization and annual reports. The Surveyor would be asking for an additional employee if she doesn't receive help. Councilmember Fisk said they could carry Dede through July. Commissioner Jessup asked if it was Council's consensus that Commissioners enter into the contract with Dede to provide services. Councilmember Bolander asked for this to be on the next agenda for April 14<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Huber summarized it's \$30,000 for 2021 and an additional budget item for 2022.

- Councilmember Fisk made a motion to transfer \$30,000 in Food & Beverage for Contractual. Councilmember Gray seconded. **Motion carried 7-0.**

#### **Salaries**

- Councilmember Noe said she and Councilmember Lowder are collecting data from a small source of office holders to get opinions on what they would like to see happen with moving forward on inequities within the offices. Cleaning that up with the office holder and coming up with standards that moving forward is a little clearer as to where the money is coming from and how it will be paid moving forward. We are talking to all offices that are non-safety.
- Councilmember Shelby said he, Councilmember Gray and Councilmember Butrum were asked by the Sheriff's Department to work with the Sheriff's Department and the Merit Board to look at their discords. After several meetings and after looking at other places in the state, as well as Greenfield and the State Police, we agreed what we are doing needs to change. The deputies we hire get an increase for the first 2-3 years and then no more as long as they are here. They get up to \$52,000 or \$53,000, then unless they get rank or cost of living raise, they stay at that level for the rest of their days. Whereas, other agencies add some amount of money to their salary on a per year basis. Councilmember Gray said this is a problem that started years ago, by not being able to keep up with those standards. We are now in a position where it takes about \$125,000 to recruit, hire and train a merit deputy. The Sheriff just lost a couple deputies to go be firefighters and make more money. They were 5-7 year deputies and now he is starting this process again. Deputies can go to doughnut counties and make more money, so it is coming down to the retention of those deputies and the ability to recruit when needed. Councilmember Butrum asked Commissioners if they had any thoughts on the pay levels sent to them, levels of tenure, good, better or indifferent.

- Commissioner Huber said I don't disagree; it's been a long time coming. With that being said, I think its been a long time coming for every county employee. Councilmember Gray said we all agree with that. Commissioner Huber said I don't think we can single out the Sheriff's Department. If we are going to look at peers, we need to look across the board and see what they are making. Councilmember Noe said she talked to Greg Guerrettaz (Financial Consultant) about the non-safety employees and he is going to look at sustainability. Councilmember Gray said there are two different research groups looking into this. Councilmember Noe said they are trying to get input from every level of employment. Councilmember Bolander said each elected official is in charge of their own area and it's hard to standardize some. Councilmember Noe said we are trying to classify jobs in tiers and trying to standardize them. We are trying to come up with some tier identifiers that pulls a particular job into a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3; then they can compare apples to apples.
- Councilmember Shelby said there are two issues, looking at the Sheriff and it is relevant to everyone. There is one process setting up a system and the level we are at; the two are intertwined. Commissioner Jessup said I agree with the need for matrix and generally what I see there. Councilmember Shelby said if we can all agree on the matrix. Commissioner Huber said just the matrix for the Sheriff's Department or countywide? Councilmembers said just for the Sheriff's department. Commissioner Huber said I think the matrix is pretty strong and that's a lot of increases. If that takes anything away from everybody else, I think it needs to be all folded together at one time for what is sustainable and not just for the Sheriff's Department. I think it should all be put out at the same time. Councilmember Shelby said that is exactly right, that is what the Financial Consultant said. Councilmember Gray said that is the plan. Commissioner Jessup said employee retention is a problem across the county and what we run into is making a lot of exceptions annually (10-12) where we rewrite job descriptions so someone can get a much needed raise. We make exceptions to standards and we would like to get away from being put in a position of doing this to retain employees. The Commissioners try to keep insurance rates low, so the benefits keep the employees here and I don't think this is sustainable for here.
- Commissioner Spalding asked how the matrix compared to doughnut counties. Councilmember Gray said they all have different types of matrixes. Councilmember Butrum said it gets us closer. Councilmember Shelby said we are low. Councilmember Butrum said the matrix proposal means the Sheriff's department doesn't make more than Bartholomew County at the entry or at the top with rank, but because we are concerned with building a structure that encourages retention. Whereas now our structure encourages deputies to come and get trained, become valuable and go make a bunch of money somewhere else. The premium over Bartholomew is actually highest between years 5-15, since we know those are the years people are shopping once, they are trained.
- Sheriff Burkhart appreciated the discussion on this and letting him say a few words. When the Bartholomew matrix was presented, we looked at the Greenfield Police they were on standby not sure what they were doing, we looked at the State Police's matrix and felt that's where we should be at and I believe that's where we need to get to. In the committee we compromised and this is where we needed to be. We compared Bartholomew to Hancock County and I realize they are bigger, but we are similar. I understand we need to sustain; I know we have other county agencies we need to worry about. I hear you talk about lateral moves from Treasurer to Auditor's office, I don't have that luxury, I don't have deputies that can laterally move to my office. When we talk about \$125,000 to train a deputy, its expensive. He lost deputies to be firefighters making \$20,000 more and he can't compete with that. Councilmember Shelby asked the Sheriff to hold on, waiting on information from the financial consultant for sustainability.

*Councilmember Gray left the meeting at 1:06 PM.*

#### **Animal Control Discussion**

- Councilmember Shelby informed Commissioners for 2022 budget; we do not want to pay for Animal Control in the incorporated areas. He asked would the Commissioners agree to send a letter to the incorporated areas and inform them we intend to stop paying. Commissioner Huber said this should have been sent a long time ago. He said so what's our fair portion for the unincorporated areas. Councilmember Shelby said I thought it was \$195,000. Commissioner Jessup said we ended up twice that. Councilmember Shelby said his recollection was 50/50 between the unincorporated areas. Commissioner Jessup said we have a hard time quantifying it. Councilmember Noe said could it be as simple as parcel count for the county? Commissioner Jessup said he would be okay with that. There are several ways you could do it, based on CAGIT distribution. If Greenfield gets 36% of every CAGIT dollar. You could do it per call, because it is a service, but when you push for statistics, they went crazy. Councilmember Shelby said don't we owe the municipalities a heads up we will not be paying. Commissioner Jessup said yes.
- Commissioner Huber said a number needs to be sent with the letter to Animal Control, because they will be asking their portion. Commissioner Jessup said he did not think the county should pay more than 40%. Councilmember Shelby thought the number was \$195,000 in 2019. He asked Commissioner Jessup what he thought 2022 should be. Councilmember Noe said she does not want to underfund Animal Control, she suggested using parcel count. Sheriff Burkhardt said if Animal Control money runs out, the Sheriff's department will get calls. Commissioner Spalding suggested looking at what other counties are doing. Commissioner Jessup said he would continue to negotiate with the city.

*Councilmember Fisk left the meeting at 1:31 PM*

#### **Jail Building and Other Buildings**

- Commissioner Jessup asked Council what will you fund? The Commissioners for a number of years, had a general plan of what the Board would like to see happen with the current inventory of buildings. The plans haven't changed, the needs haven't changed, it's all still there. I would like to ask the Council the question, what will you fund? We want to remodel the existing Jail, Community Corrections, move Probation out of the Courthouse and move the Prosecutor. What's our way forward, is it general obligation bonds? The plan has been to use the existing jail to be remodeled for Community Corrections on the main floor and Probation in the basement. This would move Probation out of the Courthouse making more room for the magistrate. Then use Community Corrections for the Prosecutor. Vacate the Prosecutor's office and find a way to get it out of county inventory or in the hands of a not-for-profit to maintain its historic value. Councilmember Bolander asked what kind of money are you talking about. Commissioner Jessup said three \$5M General Obligation bonds. Councilmember Shelby said why wouldn't you build new buildings? Commissioner Jessup said the jail has a fairly new roof on it, new plumbing and we have invested millions of dollars in it over the years, we invested more money in the Community Corrections Building and existing assets. If we build, the cost would be higher and create transportation issues. We are looking at a 15 year solution of remodeling existing buildings. I think 30 years from now our entire County Government campus will make sense out there. I don't think we are there now. Councilmember Noe asked how long constructions would take. Commissioner Jessup said 2½-3 years.

- Wade Kennedy (Director Community Corrections) said he does not need more room. The existing building is good for work release in the future. Logistically he asked why move 3 offices around, when you can do it with 2. Wade stated he does not need additional space; the Sheriff has upgraded everything in the back of the building and it would be a shame to turn it to office space at that point. It is set-up again for a secure Work Release and I would hate to see that money tossed away for someone else. Commissioner Huber questioned there is not a need for more space if you get Work Release back online. At one time, there was a request for additional space. Wade said in his Annual Report to Council, he would like to see that program run at 70-75 people. He would like to see Work Release be more of a privilege, not just a right. Commissioner Jessup said needs have changed over the last few years, but we have enough square footage in existing buildings to meet all the needs. We will do our due diligence if council is behind us to get the projects completed. We will go through the process again in speaking with Wade. If we find his current building meets his needs and square footage needs, then that means the Prosecutor's office moves to existing jail. The bottom line is we have existing buildings that are assets of the county that are paid for and we can remodel cheaper than building new and we can meet everyone's needs in the next couple years. Councilmember Bolander said it would be less expensive to just remodel the jail for Probation and the Prosecutor's office. Commissioner Jessup said we would be happy to look at that.
- Commissioner Huber asked if the Court Magistrate is coming. Judge Marshall is confident the Magistrate is coming and with this a fourth court will be needed. Commissioner Jessup said if Probation moves there is plenty of room for a fourth court. The Judges said if Courts had Clerk's office and Probation area, they would be good for 15 years.
- Councilmember Shelby asked Commissioner Jessup if they wanted to do a study. Commissioner Jessup asked for assurance that Council is in agreement that remodeling is the way to go. We believe we can remodel with 3 \$5M general obligation bonds over the next three years and solve all the problems. I don't want to spend a lot of money on studies, without the support of the Council. Councilmember Noe said I agree. Councilmember Shelby said I have seen estimates for remodeling and they are nowhere near \$15M. Commissioner Huber said hopefully it wouldn't. Councilmember Shelby said things are changing don't you need to talk to the offices. Commissioner Huber said this basically leaves Probation and the Prosecutors office so there is enough room in that old jail for those two offices. Councilmember Shelby said the jail is an asset, should we look at new versus renovation. The jail value was estimated at \$2.3M. Isn't it worthwhile to look at a tradeoff? Commissioner Jessup said it comes down to opinions, so we hire someone to give an opinion. Then we as a Board decide whether to agree with that opinion or not. Then Council comes and says they have a different opinion and Council holds the purse strings. I want to avoid that; we will do our due diligence. Councilmember Noe said which can you accomplish faster to get this ball rolling. I don't want to spend a year on a study, I trust your opinion on those buildings and if you think you can adequately revamp them to get the needs of those 3 departments in there and we already own the buildings, I would give a thumbs up for that. Commissioner Jessup said he would like to see the moment when the current jail is empty that the design is in place and we are ready to start the next project. Councilmember Shelby said isn't the current priority the Prosecutor. Commissioner Jessup said the study will need to be updated. Commissioner Huber asked the Judges opinion on adding 50% to work release in 3-5 years, can you see that changing in the future. Judge Marshall said the number of people in work release has been affected by the meth and heroine problem. Commissioner Huber said his only concern is the current work release does not leave room for future growth. He is not talking about 5 years from now, with future growth you could grow into the current jail.

Councilmember Shelby asked if more bed space would be needed for mental health. Judge Davis said he put in the intent for a behavioral health court and a new protocol within his court. This does not create a need for more room. We will have a plan for each individual person. Judge Marshall said he would prefer to not have bed space for mental health issues. Generally this does not help their mental health condition, as long as they are not a public danger. We are trying to avoid the situation of housing mental health patients. Judge Sirk said they go to recovery houses as much as possible. Commissioner Jessup clarified the need for Work Release bed space has gone down because the need for recovery beds have gone up. Judge Marshall said yes. Councilmember Shelby asked if we needed more space for mental health issues. Sheriff Burkhardt said the goal is intervention to prevent the need for bed space. The Sheriff will know more after a study with the hospital is completed.

- Councilmember Butrum questioned so Commissioner Jessup requested a ballpark budget for renovation. I think what I'm hearing is without knowing if that is an extreme negative to the taxpayer over the next 10 years versus building new buildings, we need to see that in numbers. Councilmember Bolander agreed. Councilmember Butrum said if the jail is \$3.5M and you can sell that and build a \$3.5M building that solves all your problems, that fine. If we take a \$3M building and put \$3M in it and sell it for \$6M later and build a building for \$6M, that's fine. If we have a \$3M building and put \$10M and its worth \$6M in 10 years, maybe that's not fine. Councilmember Noe said that's too much speculation and interjection of what ifs. What I would like to see is the Commissioners pick a path they think would best fit for the county and make recommendations. Then let us give a thumbs up. Commissioner Huber said maybe we need to refresh, there is plenty of square footage. We don't want to spend money on a study. We don't want to waste time. Commissioner Jessup said they can go back and update the proposals for remodeling.

**Adjourned 2:17 PM**

Councilmember Noe made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Butrum seconded. **Motion carried 6-0.**

**Approved this day:**

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William Bolander

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Mary Noe

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James Shelby

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Robin Lowder

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Kent Fisk

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Keely Butrum

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Jeannine Gray

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Debra Carnes, Hancock County Auditor

**The Hancock County Board of Commissioners meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.**

**Hancock County Commissioners**

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Commissioner John Jessup, President

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Commissioner Marc Huber, Vice-President

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Commissioner Bill Spalding

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Debra Carnes, Hancock County Auditor