

**Hancock County Board of Commissioners & County Council
Meet for a Special Meeting on April 20, 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. Councilmember President William Bolander, Councilmember Jim Shelby, Councilmember Kent Fisk and Councilmember Robin Lowder, County Attorney Scott Benkie, Auditor Debra Carnes and Financial Administrator Mary Bowmer were present. Councilmember Keely Butrum joined by phone. Vice President Jeannine Gray joined by phone for some of the meeting.

Commissioner Jessup said the Hancock County Board of Commissioners were still in session from the 8AM meeting. Councilmember Bolander called to order the April 20, 2021 County Council meeting at 12:05 Noon.

Discussion

- Commissioner Jessup said a joint meeting with County Council was called to discuss the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) and form an action plan. Commissioners would like to form a Steering Committee to discuss ideas, guidelines and information as it becomes available. \$15,160,000 is the expected amount to be received and a great deal can be done for Hancock County. He clarified this is Federal dollars, so there will be a lot of red tape involved so it is important guidelines and thought processes be discussed.
- Councilmember Shelby said County Council has identified 5 areas to discuss. 1) Senior Services 2) Fill the shortfall in revenues caused by COVID 3) Assist not-for-profits affected by COVID 4) Infrastructure for sewer and water, etc. 5) Possibly pay employees' salaries and/or raises in the next two years and during that time build reserves that would have been spent so this will be sustainable.
- Commissioner Jessup said 1) Senior Services may not be as bad as originally thought. Gary Pool is assisting Senior Services to work through the RFP process. Long term, it does not look like IndyGo will have as much control as original thought. 2) Revenue shortfall, while we experienced loss, there was a windfall and we survived well. The board would like to quantify it, and if captured, set it aside for a different use, besides just putting it in the bank in a balance. 3) Not-for-profits, we all agree we would like to focus quite a bit on those, they have done a lot for the community over the last year and half. They did an outstanding job with limited funds and would like to focus on this heavily. 4) Infrastructure we would like to focus on this heavily. This could lead us to some solutions we have been looking for a number of years. 5) Pay raises, Greg will have convince Commissioners of sustainability. We do not want to give out money if it is not sustainable.
- Councilmember Fisk said he would like to write everybody in the county a check and get rid of the money. But we can't do that and we can't lower the tax rate for a specific amount of time. We are setup with guidelines and thinking about things that best affects everyone in the community. We have spent time going after commercial, but our county is still 70% agriculture and we need to support both sides. Councilmember Fisk said he would suggest a facility to support large events, yearlong shows and vocational training. One large show last year filled the local hotels. We have one of the largest non-profits in the county for over 150 years. Our county has no vocational training; we do not teach cooking, welding or masonry. Graduates need tools provided so they do not continue being dependents. He would like to see the money go to something everyone could benefit from. Councilmember Fisk said he is hesitant to spend money on infrastructure where there is already a lot of money being spent

on infrastructure. He is not excited about spending the money on salaries. To think about the ability for children to graduate from high school and get a skill; it could be the only skill they have the rest of their future. John Deere approached all the agriculture associations and said we need 150 mechanics.

- Financial Consultant Gregg Guerrettaz asked if that was one or two projects and asked was it a facility at the fairgrounds. Councilmember Fisk clarified a facility the Ag Association would build and yes at the fairgrounds is an option. The structure would serve two purposes.
- Councilmember Lowder said we really need Consultant Guerrettaz to guide us, because they are very specific on what can and can not be done. Consultant Guerrettaz said 1) is create the ordinance. County Attorney Benkie said he would have this ready by the end of the week. Consultant Guerrettaz said 2) is reference 603; 3) is guidance is coming. Commissioners are required to publish a plan on what we are trying to achieve here is with the joint Commissioner/Council plan. The plan will address how the money will be spent. This will be the initial step the state board of accounts will look at. Consultant Guerrettaz suggested entertaining the idea of putting together a sewer district, because they county could invest in water/sewer infrastructure grants through the State of Indiana indirectly. He surveyed the four major projects in the TIF district and is compiling information. Commissioner Huber said this would have AV, continuing growth and revenue. Consultant Guerrettaz said his goal is growing this county in an economic smart growth way the next 15 years. Councilmember Fisk asked if the next infrastructure bill would have money for projects like this. Consultant Guerrettaz said per the State of Indiana yes, not guaranteed but anticipated. We have till December 31, 2024 to spend the money. Commissioner Jessup said that is to completed projects paid and delivered. Consultant Guerrettaz clarified Auditor Carnes can not prepay for anything.
- Commissioner Spalding would like to involve local folks in the Steering Committee. Councilmember Lowder agreed, she said agreed with Commissioner Jessup there is a feeling on the eastside that the county has ignored them. Councilmember Shelby said if it meets with everyone's approval; he, Councilmember Butrum and Commissioner Jessup could get together weekly. Commissioner Huber said things may need to get completed that are now ready to pursue, to free up money elsewhere. It may not be putting the money into the projects you want to see completed, but it will free up money to allow other things move forward.
- Commissioner Jessup said we need to get a three person Steering Committee started to compile broad ideas and bring everything together to present back to the boards. Commissioner Huber thought it was a good idea. Commissioner Spalding thinks it is a good idea and it needs to get started as soon as possible. Councilmember Fisk said if this concerns sewers, he is the only one with experience in this area. Commissioner Jessup said his knowledge could be utilized on a case by case basis. Commissioner Huber would like the projects to benefit the community for decades not just 5 years.
- Commissioner Huber made a motion to create the ARP Steering Committee a three member board with one Commissioner appointee and two Hancock County Council appointments. Commissioner Spalding seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**
- Commissioner Huber made a motion to appoint John Jessup to be the Commissioners representative to the ARP Steering Committee. Commissioner Spalding seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**
- Councilmember Lowder made a motion to appoint Jim Shelby and Keely Butrum to the ARP Steering Committee. Councilmember Fisk seconded. **Motion carried 5-0.**
- Commissioner Jessup said Commissioners had a presentation from Rhonda Cook, Esq. (Deputy Director, Chief Federal/State Policy Officer) on TIF's with creative ideas.

Commissioners feel it would be beneficial for her to present to RDC and County Council in a joint meeting. Councilmember Shelby said the bottom line is the elected officials should be directing the RDC's strategic planning. Commissioner Huber said it had strategic ideas for the TIF. Councilmembers agreed it would be beneficial. Consultant Guerrettaz recommended they also meet with the school corporations involved in the current TIF area and analyze their 10 year plan. There might be something extra that could be done for the schools. Commissioner Huber added law enforcement and fire departments need to be involved. Randy Sorrell (Director of Hancock County Economic Development Council) felt the TIF presentation would be beneficial. Councilmember Shelby asked if there was a current up to date summary project list. Consultant Guerrettaz said he went over the list with Highway Engineer Gary Pool and made some technical corrections.

Council Adjourned 1:23 PM

Councilmember Fisk made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Lowder seconded. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Approved this day:

William Bolander

Mary Noe

James Shelby

Robin Lowder

Kent Fisk

Keely Butrum

Jeannine Gray

Attest: _____
Debra Carnes, Hancock County Auditor

The Hancock County Board of Commissioners meeting adjourned at 1:24 PM.

Hancock County Commissioners

Commissioner John Jessup, President

Commissioner Marc Huber, Vice-President

Commissioner Bill Spalding

Attest: _____

Debra Carnes, Hancock County Auditor