



**MINUTES
MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS'
FEBRUARY 12, 2020
NAT U HILL III MEETING ROOM
COURTHOUSE
BLOOMINGTON, IN**

The Monroe County Commissioners met in a regular meeting on February 12, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. with the following members present: Julie Thomas, President; Lee Jones, Vice President; and Penny Githens, Commissioner. Also present: Jordan Miller, Payroll Administrator; Jeff Cockerill, Attorney; Angie Purdie, Commissioners' Administrator; Lisa Ridge, Highway Director; and Anita Freeman, Deputy Auditor.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Thomas

II. COMMISSIONERS' PUBLIC STATEMENT

Statement read by Thomas

III. PUBLIC COMMENT – FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA, LIMITED TO 3 MINUTES

Good morning Commissioners. **Jim Shelton** with the Chamber. On behalf of the Chamber and on behalf of the business community we want to congratulate you on you being notified of the award of \$1.66 million grant for a bridge project. We especially want to recognize your rock star Highway Director, Ms. Ridge. I understand this represents \$26 million that we have reached during her four years. I've had the privilege to work with her on the Redevelopment Commission and I know she does have an excellent relationship with INDOT and she's an incredibly persistent lady. So congratulations to you and to your staff and thank you very much. Keep up the good work.

(Thomas) Yeah thank you. We echo those kudos to Ms. Ridge. Thank you so much. Thanks for bringing that up.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jones made motion to approve. Githens seconded.

- **FEBRUARY 5, 2020**

Motion carried by voice vote.

V. APPROVAL OF CLAIMS DOCKET

- **ACCOUNTS PAYABLE – FEBRUARY 12, 2020**
- **PAYROLL – FEBRUARY 14, 2020**

Jones made motion to approve. Githens seconded.

(Miller) Total for Accounts Payable - \$4,449,709.95

- \$3,456,678.92 – LIT Distribution
- \$152,549.16 – Surplus Tax Overpayments
- \$128,395.75 – Stone Belt 1st Quarter Payment

Total for Payroll - \$1,524,509.55

- \$1,076,397.01 – Direct costs
- \$448,112.54 – Indirect costs

After call for public comment, motion carried by voice vote.

VI. REPORTS

- **TRAFFIC/ROAD UPDATE**

- Old Dutch Church Road will be closed beginning February 24th for bridge replacement. Closure expected to be up to 120 days, weather permitting.
- IPEP awarded Monroe County \$9,300.78 to promote Work Zone Safety Awareness.

(Thomas) Ms. Ridge would you talk a little bit about the grant that Mr. Shelton referenced please?

(Ridge) Sure. INDOT does calls for projects. This call is actually for fiscal year 2025, which sounds way far out there but we will immediately start the preliminary design work and right of way so that we'll be shovel ready come July 2024, when that money comes available. We submitted a bridge on Rockport Rd just south of Bolin Lane. There is also a curve to the approach of this bridge, so we submitted to align that curve as part of that project. The total project I believe is around \$2.1 million and we reached a little over \$1.6 million for construction. When you receive it for construction you will also receive 80/20 funding for the design, right of way, construction inspection and any utility that's associated with the project. We will actually start the process of hiring a design firm and going through the INDOT process to get that started. I am very competitive and I believe they awarded around \$120 million for projects throughout the State.

(Thomas) Great thank you so much. Congratulations. We are so proud of you and your staff and all the hard work and the consistent effort to bring in funding for these much needed projects. So thank you.

(Githens) It also provides good jobs locally.

(Ridge) Yeah the construction business is very busy right now. We'll see it for the next 3 to 4 years just for our department of what we've got going on.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. MOVE TO APPROVE: RESOLUTION 2020-04; REGARDING EXPANSION OF THE MONROE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT; BENTON TWP.

FUND NAME: N/A

FUND NUMBER: N/A

AMOUNT: N/A

Jones made motion to approve. Githens seconded.

(Cockerill) This is the third such resolution we've done. I think 2 or 3 years ago Indian Creek was added to the fire protection district and at that time we had some concerns about exhaustion essentially of the people in those units when it came to getting the mail in cards, signing them, turning them back in. So we came up with an alternative method knowing that the expansion of that fire protection district was going to occur. We have done this kind of resolution for both Van Buren Township and Bloomington Township and so we were approved by Benton Township I think we had a pretty good map on how to proceed forward. It is essentially the same idea, I think there is one change due to the population density of Benton being so much lower than the rest we went with the 20% of the 'free holders' as they are called in the statute so we're keeping with that language to do this and excluding the minimum of 500 because of the population density there because 500 would be about 50% of the free holders in the area. Again, this is to trigger a public hearing for the Commissioners to look at this item. So this is laying the frame work for them to bring that petition to you guys and if you guys feel comfortable enough that the township residents want this as well.

(Thomas) And just for clarification the reason that this is coming before us now is because the fire district has to expand to contiguous areas and therefore we had to wait for the Bloomington piece.

(Cockerill) I think that's part of it. I think another part of the consideration, and I know there's some people from the fire protection district here and they're more than welcome to correct me if I'm wrong, is that when they expand they didn't want to expand in such a way where they were taking on more than they could chew so they want to add in a timely manner but also in a manner that they can handle to provide the fire protection services necessary.

(Thomas) Makes sense. We have Ms. Bright here who's the trustee at Benton so if you would like to speak on this.

Thank you. My name is **Michelle Bright** and I am the Benton Township Trustee here in Monroe County. I'm here today, with my Board Chair Joe Husk, asking you for your support for Benton Township starting the process of joining the Monroe Fire Protection District with the goal of becoming a permanent member in January 2022.

Benton Township is the largest township in Indiana as a result of the merger of Marion and Benton Townships in 1947. We have a population of just over 3,800 residents with a current certified assessed valuation of over \$253 million. We have one fire station centrally located in Benton Township that is fully equipped with a variety of vehicles and equipment including a fire engine, tanker, rescue, brush truck, medical squad, support vehicle, utility vehicle and boat. Benton Township contracts with the Benton Township of Monroe County Volunteer Fire Fighters, which is a separate 501 (c) 3 corporation for volunteers. By nature of being a volunteer organization our fire fighters are not able to guarantee a response for fire and emergency calls due to other work and family commitments. In addition our roster like many others across the state has shrunk over the last several years and recruiting new volunteers has been a challenge. To supplement our volunteer response Benton Township has contracted with neighboring career fire department Bloomington Township for the last forty years. Our contract insures full time personnel will respond to all emergency calls 24 hrs a day 7 days a week to our township. However starting next year contracting with Bloomington Township is no longer an option since last fall they were approved to merge with the fire district. As with many other township fire departments across the state we are rapidly approaching a critical situation in which our expenses to both run a volunteer department and to contract for back up services exceeds our maximum revenue sources. Last year we had to dip into our cash reserves in order to cover our minimum expenses and we're only able to do that for a limited time. Even contracting with the district or hiring our own paid staff is significantly more than what we can sustainably afford at our current tax levels.

The Benton Township Board and Trustee has been aware of our precarious position for the last 5 years. During that time we've worked diligently to find a long term option to ensure our residents have the highest quality fire and emergency services for the lowest cost. After researching dozens of options and hiring an outside consultant we concluded that the best way to provide fire and emergency services for our residents is to join The Monroe Fire Protection District. There are several benefits of us joining the fire district, our high assessed valuation allows us to generate a significant revenue stream and with the districts proposed tax rate we anticipate that we would be able to generate enough funding to support the hiring of Benton Township's first full time personnel who will be at our station ready to respond 24hrs a day 7 days a week. Having full time personnel will significantly improve response times for a majority of our taxpayers shaving minutes off of current response times, saving lives and property when the unthinkable happens. With the addition of full time staffing we would likely see a reduction in homeowner's insurance premiums within a large portion of Benton Township but of course that's dependent on each agency and policy.

In addition having additional personnel means we would be able to contribute to Monroe County emergency services as a whole by decreasing our reliance on neighboring stations when we have an emergency and allowing them to stay in their district to serve their constituents. We would also be able to increase our ability to support other departments by responding to nearby areas such as Salt Creek, Bloomington and Washington Townships when they need help. By spreading the cost of services over a larger number of people we hope to minimize the tax impact from having full time personnel and ultimately reduce administrative and operating costs by streamlining services. This consolidation also benefits our volunteer firefighters opening up career positions for those who are interested, expanding the number of personnel

on the scene to help, streamlining communication and training with other departments and being able to save money by bulk purchasing. We believe that there's broad support for this consolidation and the board, taxpayers and volunteer firefighters are excited about moving forward and we hope you are as well.

(Joe Husk) I just want to add the Board is unanimous in their support of this.

(Thomas) That's great to know. Do you have the dates set yet for your public meetings?

(Bright) Monday, March 23rd, Tuesday, March 24th and Thursday, March 26th, 6:30pm at the Unionville Senior Center, 7616 E SR 45, Unionville, IN 47468.

(Thomas) And that would be the building adjacent to the current fire building, correct?

(Bright) That is correct.

(Thomas) I saw you changed your sign for the district, thought it was pretty neat when I saw that when I was driving by yesterday.

(Bright) The volunteers did that.

(Thomas) It's just outside of Unionville. March 23rd, 24th and 26th at 6:30 at the building adjacent to the fire station. And Mr. Cockerill at the end of that last meeting on the 26th then if we have 50 residents who file a remonstrance –

(Cockerill) That would trigger a hearing separate from the statutorily required hearing. So there then would be 2 hearings as opposed to just the statutorily required hearing.

(Thomas) Ok. So we are on track given that we have the dates for their meeting to have the hearing on this before the end of the year.

(Cockerill) Oh, yeah. I think if they have theirs in March I think you're looking at late April early May to that public hearing.

(Jones) I'm very pleased to see this happening. It would be nice to get all the townships into it.

(Githens) I've been out to meetings with your township board, would you explain to the public why you have a boat?

(Bright) We cover a significant portion of Lake Lemon so there is a need for water rescue, emergency medical situations on boats, boats getting into accidents that type of thing.

(Jones) Do you use it often?

(Bright) Not very often but it's one of those things when you need it you need it.

(Thomas) Absolutely.

(Githens) Also I was at a meeting recently where I was asked about the fire district thing that we're approving and they asked why we go through this process and I wanted people to know that we really want to hear from residents and make sure that this is what they want. I appreciate the fact that you're going to a lot of work to make this happen.

(Bright) It's important, but thank you.

(Thomas) Really glad to see this moving forward and I appreciate the support of the board as well. Thank you both and I also want to give a shout out to the Monroe Fire District for all of their hard work as well because this is not just 'hey join us, it's no problem, no big deal' there's a lot that has to happen and I really appreciate the hard work of every one, the board, Chief Dillard, thank you for helping make this happen.

After call for public comment, motion carried by voice vote.

**B. MOVE TO APPROVE: RATIFICATION OF PARTNERSHIP WITH CITY PARKS
DEPARTMENT; SHARPS CONTAINERS.**

FUND NAME: N/A

FUND NUMBER: N/A

AMOUNT: N/A

Jones made motion to approve. Githens seconded.

Good morning. **Penny Caudill**, Monroe County Health Department. This request is ratification I came to you before the work session last week. This is an agreement with the Health Department and City of Bloomington Parks & Rec Department to put up as a pilot project some sharps containers in 3 of the city parks to make disposal more accessible to people and hopefully to keep the areas safer and cleaner by providing receptacles that are safe and appropriate for people to dispose of needles, whether they are diabetic, whether they use them for an illicit drug, whether they have given a shot to their pet, that it will be there for whatever need they have.

(Githens) Are we also moving forward with sharps disposal at Karst Farm Park?

(Caudill) Yes. We have met with them and we have those on order I believe.

Jim Shelton again with the Chamber. As we said at the work session last week we support this, the business community certainly supports it. One of the most important parts of a good business environment is people feeling safe. Our employees need to be safe and feel safe. Our customers and potential customers need to feel and be safe. So this is an important thing its part of what you all have been doing to try to deal with this problem. As a diabetic person myself I don't usually stick myself when I'm out and about but I have a sharps container and I

know how they work and how important they are. Please approve this and thank you to Ms. Caudill for her effort.

After call for public comment, motion carried by voice vote.

VIII. APPOINTMENTS

- **NONE**

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Accepting applications for all boards and commissions. Plat Committee currently has two openings. For more information about the boards and commissions you may go to www.co.monroe.in.us.
- All Monroe County Government Offices will be closed Monday, February 17, 2020 in observance of President's Day.
- Next Commissioners' Meeting: February 19, 2020, 10am in the Nat U Hill meeting room, 3rd floor of the courthouse.

(Thomas) I also want to take a moment to point out something that is on county website right on the home page at the bottom. I encourage our county residents, anyone who drinks water from Lake Monroe which would be anyone in this county, to please check out what's happening, what the plans are from the US Forest Service. They are planning to log 4,375 acres, multiple burnings of 13,500 acres and to build 16.4 miles of logging roads and apply herbicides on 1,970 acres on ridges, slopes and valleys in the Hoosier National Forest. Most of this is in Jackson County, and you would think Jackson County needs to do something about that. Problem is this is in the watershed for Lake Monroe. They have not completed a specific study to tell us what the environmental impact is. We have requested this, we have been denied this. If something happens then how do you fix it and we are very concerned. If you go to our website at the bottom of the page it says 'Breaking News' click on the link and you will see contact information for the Regional Forester in Wisconsin, the Governor, our Senators and State Representative and ask them to find a different location to do this that is not in somebody's drinking water supply. This is dire, this is important and we cannot stress enough how important is that folks take the time to get familiar with this, you can make a call, you can send a letter. We encourage everyone in Monroe County to speak up because time is running short. We've all done a lot of work to try to stop this. We have been writing letters, we are objectors of file on this which is important and we're going to fight this with everything we have but we need the community to step up and we would appreciate it if everybody would just make some calls. The most important call being to the regional forester and I would also say to Senator Mike Braun. Those are the two if you only have time to make two phone calls make those two. We would really appreciate your help and spreading the word, get it on social media and help us out.

(Githens) I wanted to thank the Chamber for the article they did in today's Biznet on the 2020 Census I appreciate that. We do need to make sure we count as many local people as we can. So every effort is appreciated.

(Jones) I would also like to thank the Monroe County Environmental Commission which has spearheaded the whole movement to try to do something about this logging that is occurring. They have worked incredibly hard on it and has been as effective as could be hoped for.

(Thomas) They've really done a lot of work and made this happen so I appreciate all of their time and attention. It's made a huge difference I'm glad we have that group and their dedication.

(Githens) I think in the original study for the logging it identified two other areas that could be logged as well that would not impact our drinking water and so that needs to be pointed out too that we're not saying don't do anything, we just want to make sure our drinking water is safe.

(Thomas) There's 60,000 other acres available which are not going to affect surface water drinking supply. They have a lot of other options and to choose this one I think is foolish and dangerous and that's why it's important to keep fighting.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The minutes of the February 12, 2020 Board of Commissioners' meeting were approved on, February 19, 2020.

Monroe County Commissioners

Ayes:

Nays:


Julie Thomas, President

Julie Thomas, President

not Present
Lee Jones, Vice President

Lee Jones, Vice President


Penny Githens

Penny Githens

Attest:


Catherine Smith, Auditor



MONROE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORK SESSION AGENDA
MONROE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
JUDGE NAT U. HILL III MEETING ROOM
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA
February 12, 2020

1. Drew Myers – Planner

- a. 2020-07 Rupert Rezone –
Back next week's formal meeting.

2. Lisa Surface - Assessor

- a. Mid-West presort agreement for the mailing of 2020 Form 11's
Approved. Ratify next week.

3. Legal Department

Jeff Cockerill:

- a. YSB renewing contract with ASiware. \$350/month plus monthly fee based amount of data being stored.
Jones made motion to approve. Githens seconded.
Approved. Ratify next week.

Dave Schilling:

- a. Tax Sale Properties that were not sold in 2019 tax sale are being compiled with aerial photos for Commissioners to determine the best avenues for each parcel.

4. Angela Purdie – Commissioners' Administrator

- a. YSB - RQAW allowance Authorization \$2,887.50 for exhaust and thermostat placement in the freezer room.
Jones made motion to approve. Githens seconded.
Approved. Ratify next week

- b. 4th quarter Rural Transit Grant Reimbursement needing Commissioners approval and signature.

Massive Logging and Burning Project Proposed for Hoosier National Forest in the Lake Monroe Watershed. Your Phone Calls Can Stop This Project.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is moving forward with a plan to log 4,375 acres, repeatedly burn 13,500 acres, build 16.4 miles of logging roads, and apply herbicides on 1,970 acres all concentrated on ridges, slopes, and valleys in the Hoosier National Forest that drain into Monroe Reservoir. We urgently need your help in contacting the officials listed below to stop this ill-advised project and compel the USFS to consider alternatives.

Take Action Today

Contact each of the following officials and ASK THEM TO REJECT the current logging and burning plan in Houston South. You can make specific points if you wish. The USFS has:

- Ignored scientific information and concerns of the local community, including the City of Bloomington and Monroe County who depend on Lake Monroe as the sole source of drinking water.
- Failed to consider the Lake Monroe watershed and municipal water supply in planning for the project.
- Minimized or ignored the project's impact on recreation and local business owners. Point out impact on the horse-riding community.
- Failed to include 13,000 acres of burning into their carbon emissions estimates.
- Failed to consider cumulative effects of this project alongside other sources of contamination of Lake Monroe's water quality.
- Refused to consider alternative areas for the project, even though there are more than 60,000 acres available for this type of project that lie outside watersheds supplying municipal drinking water.

Regional Forester Robert Lueckel
626 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 297-3765
rlueckel@fs.fed.us

Governor Eric Holcomb
Office of the Governor
Indiana Statehouse
Indianapolis, IN 46204
(317) 232-4567

Senator Mike Braun
374 Russell Senate Office
Building
Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-4814

Senator Todd Young
185 Dirksen Senate Office
Building
Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-5623

Representative Trey Hollingsworth
1641 Longworth House Office
Building
Washington DC 20515
(202) 225-5315

Our Concerns

This proposed "Houston South Vegetation Management and Restoration Project" risks increasing sediment runoff into the South Fork of Salt Creek which is already polluting Monroe Reservoir, the sole drinking water supply for 120,000 people in Monroe and surrounding counties, with too much sediment

and nutrient input. It will impact recreation and local economies dependent upon the Lake. It will cause repeated closures and reroutes of the Knobstone Trail as well as popular horseback riding trails. The project will kill or harm at least eight species of federally or state listed bats and other birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles that are state endangered or listed as "species of special concern" in Indiana.

Impacts from the Proposed Management Project

Threatens Water Quality

Because Houston South is located in the Lake Monroe watershed, implementing the proposed management plan threatens the drinking water supply for 140,000 people. Lake Monroe already suffers from excess nutrients, sediment, and algae. The Indiana Department of Management has issued Recreational Advisories due to algae build up for the past seven years. The Lake is already listed as impaired due to algae by the EPA.

Drinking water authorities spend millions of dollars to treat algae and sediment laden lake water to safely provide drinking water to the public. When water clarity spikes, these costs are increased by hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Houston South project area contains many steep slopes with highly erodible soils, and the silt load from burning and logging will exacerbate these problems. The Clean Water Act prohibits new pollutant loads when an impairment is present.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) says that Best Management Practices (BMP's) will prevent water pollution, but monitoring of other logging sites shows this is often not true. A literature review indicates that in general the effectiveness of BMPs for sediment range from 53 to 94% efficient during harvest and up to 1 year after harvesting. Fishing on Lake Monroe has already suffered from decreased water clarity, drawing fishermen away from the lake to more desirable sites.

Endangers Wildlife

In its present unlogged and unburned condition, the Houston South project area supports eight species of bats that are federally endangered or threatened, under consideration for this listing or state endangered or "species of special concern" (rare or range limited in Indiana). These are:

- Gray bat and Indiana bat (federally endangered)
- Northern long-eared bat (federally threatened)
- Little brown bat and Tricolored bat (state endangered; federal listing under review)
- Evening bat (state endangered)
- Eastern red bat and Hoary bat (state species of special concern)

Indiana state counts indicate that White-Nose Syndrome, a disease that attacks cave-hibernating bats, has killed hundreds of thousands of Indiana bats and 90% or more of Northern long-eared, Little brown, and Tri-colored bats since it arrived in Indiana in 2009. By burning and logging during the summer, the project will cut down, burn up, and engulf in smoke maternity roosting trees for these bats, killing the mothers and their pups.

Other animals that will likely be burned up or adversely affected by the logging and road construction include the state endangered Timber Rattlesnake and Cerulean Warbler and Species of Special Concern that live or nest on or near the forest floor such as Eastern Box Turtle, Smoky and Pygmy Shrew, Rough Green Snake, Worm Eating Warbler, Black and White Warbler, and Hooded Warbler.



An Eastern box turtle shows signs of damage and injury from fire. Photo courtesy of Joanna Gibson, Environmental Scientist.

Compromises Forest Health and Increase Invasive Species

The USFS claims that this timber harvest is required to regenerate early successional oak and hickory forests. However, the age class distribution table for the HNF indicates that about 10% of the HNF is in the 0-25 year age class while less than 5% is in the >100 year old classes.³ Findings from the 2018 Purdue Climate Change study indicate that climate conditions will be more favorable for oak in the coming decades, suggesting that oak saplings will thrive without the intervention of logging, burning, and pesticide applications. The proposed road building and logging operations will accelerate the spread of non-native invasive plant species such as stilt grass. Contaminating thousands of acres with stilt grass cannot be good for forest health and a reasonable tradeoff.

Jeopardizes Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is one of the fastest growing components of Indiana's tourism industry generating some \$15.7 billion in annual consumer spending and creating 143,000 jobs in Indiana according to the Outdoor Industry Association. This project will consume a significant part of the most popular horseback riding area in the HNF and force repeated closures of other horseback riding trails. The project will force closures or reroutes of the Knobstone Trail, the state's longest and most famous backpacking trail, as well as the Fork Ridge and other hiking trails. Volunteers helped construct and maintain the Knobstone and many of the horse trails, but the volunteer pool is likely to dry up if trails are destroyed by logging or repeatedly closed due to burning. Several miles of the project are directly adjacent to the southern border of the Charles Deam Wilderness. This logging project will diminish the outdoor recreational experiences within the largest concentration of national and state forest public lands and the only federal wilderness area in the lower midwest (Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois) where wild land for such experiences is extremely limited.

Exacerbates Climate Change

While admitting their logging activities will contribute to carbon emissions, USFS has not considered how burning 13,000 acres will contribute to greenhouse gas problem. Since their latest 2006 Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), global climate change predictions have become much more dire. The Houston South proposal does not even reference the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published in 2018 that emphasizes the importance of reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon sequestration in the next 12 years. USFS claims they will be contributing only small amounts of carbon through their project activities. The USFS has failed to consider the cumulative impacts of their actions. Nor have considered alternatives that contribute less or have a positive impact on carbon sequestration.

Alternatives

The USFS is required to consider alternatives to the proposed action at Houston South. The USFS has not demonstrated that they considered the impacts on municipal water supplies in selecting the Houston South location. Some 63,000 acres of the HNF have the same management prescription ("Management Area 2.8" under the HNF Management Plan) as Houston South, but lie within watersheds that are not used for municipal drinking water. In spite of numerous objections, other than taking "no action," the USFS has not considered any alternatives to this drastic plan.