

LAWRENCE COUNTY BOARD MEETING MARCH 15, 2023

The Lawrence County Board met in regular session at the Lawrence County Courthouse in Lawrenceville. Board Chairman Jim Brewer called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. Pastor Charlie Ash with Fountain Fellowship offered an opening word of prayer, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

Roll Call was ordered with the following board members present: Tom Robinson (District 1), David Burgett (District 2), Jordan Feutz (District 3), Judy Phipps (District 4), Board Chairman Jim Brewer (District 5), Grant McDonald (District 6), and Mark Jones (District 7).

County officials present were Will C. Gibson (County Clerk), Trenton Masterson (County Sheriff), and Brady Waldrop (State's Attorney).

A motion was made by Tom Robinson to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2023 county board meeting. Grant McDonald seconded the motion with approval by all, motion carried.

A setback variance was presented for consideration by Tom Robinson on behalf of Davis Farms. Some grain bins on the property were to be torn down to allow for the rebuilding of some new ones. It was determined that the placement of the new bins would require a setback variance due to their proximity to the roadway on Pinkstaff Lane. Mr. Robinson made a motion for the approval of the variance. Jordan Feutz seconded the motion with approval by all on a roll call vote.

Tom Robinson brought into discussion a proposal of an upgrade to the courthouse telephone system. Corey McDonald (Kemper Technology Group) and Jenny Holden (Level 365) gave an overview of the proposed telephone system and its superior capabilities to the current county telephone system format. Mr. Robinson mentioned that the monthly cost of the telephone services will be comparable to what the county is currently paying Sparklight for telephone service. It was noted that the overall upfront cost to get the system up and running is an ongoing point of discussion and will be brought before the full board for approval at a future meeting.

The Lawrence County C.E.O. program students, with their facilitator, Dawn Brewer, were in attendance to talk to the county board about their activities. It was noted that the group has conducted tours of forty (40) businesses in and around Lawrence County and has heard from twenty (20) speakers. It was also mentioned that the students who participate in C.E.O. receive not only high school credit but also a level of college course credit as well. It was also announced that the annual trade show for the group will be held at Red Hill High School on Wednesday, April 26th from 4pm to 7pm.

Tara Buerster with the University of Illinois Extension attended the board meeting with some 4H students. Ms. Buerster expressed an ongoing initiative for the expansion of the availability of high speed internet in rural areas that the U of I Extension is making an effort to help spearhead. Board Chairman Jim Brewer signed a commitment letter on behalf of the county to levy \$60,000.00 on the property tax levy with the money collected to help fund the extension.

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Jacob Janssen and Kevin Kern with Snedeker Risk Management were on hand to offer an update on the county insurance. Mr. Janssen mentioned that on April 27th an annual required harassment training will be conducted for county employees. Mr. Kern mentioned that an effort is being made to put together a seminar during the summer, with a tentative date set for June 27th, that will allow for entities insured through Snedeker to come together and hear a presentation to bring everyone up to date on all insurance related matters. It was also announced that Lawrence County Memorial Hospital has been confirmed to continue as a preferred provider under the county employee health insurance plan.

Judy Phipps made a motion for the approval of highway claims in the amount of \$143,139.73. Tom Robinson seconded the motion with approval by all on a roll call vote.

Judy Phipps made a motion to approve the February treasurer's report. Jordan Feutz seconded the motion with approval by all, motion carried.

Judy Phipps made a motion for the approval of purchases and claims in the amount of 454,166.76. Grant McDonald seconded the motion with approval by all on a roll call vote.

Mark Jones made a motion for the approval of the monthly department reports to be put on file with the county clerk. Judy Phipps seconded the motion with approval by all, motion carried.

Chairman Brewer announced that the board would take up the matter regarding a proposed cannabis ordinance to give the county the ability to regulate any cannabis dispensaries that might look to open for business in Lawrence County. Tom Robinson made a motion to amend the current ordinance verbiage to specify that the required distance from any nearby church be reduced from 500 feet to 250 feet, with the distance being calculated from property line to property line. The verbiage would also specify that the board will have the ability to consider variances to the required distances in situations where it might be deemed applicable. Jordan Feutz seconded the motion. The measure failed to pass by way of a roll call vote. Board members Robinson, Feutz, and Burgett each cast a 'yes' vote to approve the amendment and to adopt the ordinance, while board members McDonald, Jones, and Phipps each cast a 'no' vote. In order to break the tie of 3 'yes' votes to 3 'no' votes, Chairman Brewer voted 'no'. With that, the measure failed to pass by a tally of 4 'no' votes to 3 'yes' votes.

Judy Phipps made a motion for an amendment of the cannabis ordinance draft that effectively will keep the verbiage regarding 500 feet from any church but will also add a statement that indicates that measurements will be from property line to property line. Mrs. Phipps clarified that her motion essentially is to add verbiage that indicates property line to property line for all specified distance measurements. The motion was seconded by Grant McDonald. The measure passed on a roll call vote with 4 'yes' votes (McDonald, Jones, Burgett, Phipps) to 2 'no' votes (Robinson, Feutz).

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State's Attorney Brady Waldrop asked the board to opt into a settlement agreement pertinent to the ongoing litigation regarding opioids. On a motion by Mark Jones, seconded by Tom Robinson, with approval by all, the board agreed to have the county opt in with the settlement.

County Clerk Will Gibson asked for a motion on Resolution 23-6 to permit for the transfer of title on two (2) properties in Lawrence Township that were effectively deeded to the county as trustee due to unpaid property taxes with the top bids being submitted by Situs Cultivation on one property and by Fountain Investments on the other. Judy Phipps made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Tom Robinson and approved by all on a roll call vote.

Chairman Brewer announced that the courthouse will be closed on Friday, April 7th in observation of Good Friday.

Chairman Brewer announced that the next regular county board meeting will be on Wednesday, April 19, 2023 at 4:00pm.

On a motion by Tom Robinson, seconded by Judy Phipps, the meeting was adjourned.