

**PARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND PARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**December 5th, 2023**

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** The Parke County Board of Commissioners and Parke County Council convened in a special meeting at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5th, 2023.
- II. ROLL CALL:** Members present were Jim Meece, President; Dan R Collom, First Vice President; Bruce Hartman, Second Vice President; J. B. Butler; John Pratt; Tom Rohr; Roy Wrightsman; Rick Patton; Mary Anne Wood, Auditor; Leanna Collisi, Deputy Auditor; and Nick Sauter, Commissioners Attorney. Also present were John Martin, Connie Neininger, and Jacob Everett. Not present were Jim Howard and Carmen Martin.

**III. NEW BUSINESS:**

- Jim Meece opened the meeting up by explaining that we need to have some ordinances in place for renewable energy such as wind and solar. He thinks there is no support currently within the county for wind energy but some interest for solar energy. Jim Meece has invited The Center for Infrastructure and Economic Development to give a presentation on renewable energy. Hopefully, The Center will shed some light on the types and content of the ordinances Parke County should put in place for renewable energy. Connie Neininger and Jacob Everett introduced themselves and spoke on different topics surrounding renewable energy. There are several factors to consider when utilizing renewable energy. Cost Competitiveness, Federal and State Policies, Utility Decarbonization and corporations are some major factors to be concerned about. Historically, the government has supported energy policies. Right now there is tons of activity in solar and less in wind. Jacob Everett gave an overview of the trends in types of energy over the past 68 years. There are two different grid operators in the State of Indiana. The development timeline runs 5-6 years. Zoning is about land use not economics. SB390 is a recommendation not a mandate on land rights. Critical mass is needed to make renewable energy viable and no eminent domain is taken when renewable energy is utilized. John Pratt questioned what is meant by diversification of farmland. Connie Neininger explained that farmland can have a dual use called Agrivoltaics, where solar and agriculture are together. When considering ordinances, Setbacks (right-of-ways), screenings(Fencing and Trees), and Vegetation (Seed Mixes) will define the language for the ordinances. Solar takes a critical mass of 1200 acres for 200 Mega watts to be produced. Not all of the land is covered by Solar Panels. Funding projects can be done with an Economic Development Payment (Loss of Opportunity payment) with no strings attached dollars or with a Pilot clause for payment in Lieu of taxes. John Pratt asked how many new jobs will be created with solar? Connie Neininger replied 1 to 2 dozen jobs will be created or an increased assessed values. The lifespan of solar is between 25-30 years and the material parts can be recycled when no longer needed. For instance, technology may improve the solar equipment over the 25-30 year period encouraging upgrades in the solar equipment. The Center can review ordinances before they are put in place for the county.
- Jim Meece gave a summary to the Parke County Council on what the Parke County Commissioners have agreed upon. CVC will continue to support PCI at \$2,000.00 per month as well as \$25,000.00 from the Parke County Commissioners' Board. Bridge repairs are continuing

to be split 50/50 with the Highway Department. The Commissioner's Board agreed to a 5% increase on the fixed costs for Health Insurance with Anthem/VERIS-HMIG. Roy Wrightsman said that appropriations can be moved into the self-insurance fund. That can be a way to fix this deficit. Jim Meece said that the commissioners decided on purchasing a new Chiller that will cost \$139,000.00 in the Spring of 2025. They also approved maintenance on both the AC and Heating units for 2024. Jim Meece said there may be new possibility for new development in areas around Parke County. The State is wanting to encourage builders to come in and develop residential areas. Jim Meece drove 10 o'clock Road, Marshall Road, and Strawberry Road in the morning and they need repaving. There is a total of 15 miles. These roads need to be paved, however, we are approximately ½ million dollars short if this project is to be completed in one year. Jim asked the Council members their thoughts on funding this project. Jim Meece thought we could use ARP funds if we had any available. John Pratt said that Joink has not asked for their funds from the Council which could open up around 1 million dollars. A question was raised if there was an end date for them to claim the disbursement. That could be the money needed to help complete the repaving these roads. The council has committed \$90,000.00 for the WIFI project. (half from Park and Rec and half from ARP). They have also committed to \$100,000.00 for a tax software upgrade. Roy Wrightsman mentioned that they are looking into replacing the Harris System in the future. Jim requested Nick Sauter to draft a letter to Joink to see if they are needing their disbursement. Jim Meece said the Highway Department was working on updating their Standard Operating Procedures since Randy Norman will be leaving us in May 2024. They will be hiring a new Superintendent and an Engineer. Roy Wrightsman said the Ready Grant is due in February which can help in providing half of the cost of redevelopment on the old bank building and the rest can come from the TIFF funds. Nick Sauter noted that the average of two appraisals is the most we can buy the bank property for.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Having no further business to come before the Board and Council, the meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

ATTEST:

Mary Anne Wood  
Mary Anne Wood, Auditor