

## ?Board of Commissioners quiz contractors about bids for restoration work on county courthouse

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 27 August 2008 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 27 August 2008 15:09

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? The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday afternoon, August 20, with all members present. The Commissioners unanimously approved the minutes of previous meetings and all claims.

Judge Robert Bennett addressed the Commissioners and introduced representatives from two construction companies specializing in restoration of historic buildings. Dennis Bolton of BJB Architectural Metal Services, Inc. and Tom Johnson of Keystone Restorations went into depth explaining to the Commissioners what their inspections revealed about damage to the bell tower of the courthouse and the recommended work to correct the problems.

All three Commissioners examined the bids and asked probing questions regarding the differences and similarities contained in the two bids. In summary, both companies plan to remove the aged and damaged mortar from around the sandstone masonry of the bell tower and replace the mortar with new, yet historically accurate, mortar and waterproof the exterior of the tower. The bid from Keystone Restorations included a step of applying urethane sealant to the mortar. Differences also were noted in how each contractor would actually get up to the bell tower and do the work. BJB stated that their procedure called for workers to rappel down from the open area above the clock face to do the work while Keystone plans to use a large crane/lift vehicle and work from buckets. According to Commissioner Lana Sullivan, the difference in the two bids is in excess of \$56,000, BJB being the lower bid. The Commissioners asked for and received references from each contractor and plan to verify those as soon as possible. Regardless of which contractor is awarded the contract, work is expected to begin during the first week of September and completed some four to six weeks later.

In other business, the Commissioners received an update on the archeological dig taking place east of Salem on Highway 56 at the intersection of the proposed truck bypass. According to Jackson, his excavation team has unearthed wall foundations of Native American houses. Jackson informed the Commissioners that mechanical excavation will begin shortly in which large swatches of dirt will be removed in two inch increments down to the level where no artifacts have been found using hand digging. Jackson said that he is comfortable that his team and found all

significant artifacts in the road right of way but that the vast majority of the 600-800 year old settlement lies to the north of Highway 56 and does not impede the right of way.

The Commissioners voted unanimously to change the business hours for offices at the county courthouse. Effective, Monday, September 15, the new hours will be 8am until 4pm, Monday through Friday.

Commissioner Byron Green asked Washington County Highway Superintendent, Rick Graves, how many miles of road his department has prepared for repaving next spring and summer. Grave told Green that no roads have been prepared for repaving because there is no money in the budget for paving next year. "We will have to be satisfied with spot paving and patching next year." said Graves.

When asked how much salt the Highway Department was planning to purchase for this winter, Graves informed the Commissioners that he has thus far been unable to find a supplier of salt. Furthermore, Graves indicated that his conversations with counterparts in other counties and the Indiana Department of Transportation makes him believe that no one has been successful in securing salt for this winter. "I don't seem to get any kind of an explanation as to why the suppliers do not have salt in stock." explained Graves.

Sullivan informed the Commissioners that she has done some preliminary research into a federal program that would allow Washington County to save significant money used in the

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transporting of military veterans to receive Veteran Administration (VA) benefits such as medical care. According to Sullivan, the federal government's program would allow the county to purchase a new van for \$15,000 and the operating costs of the vehicle would be paid for by the VA. Sullivan indicated that she would be forwarding her research on to the person in charge of veteran affairs in Washington County for additional research.

The Commissioners received information that the Washington County Assessor was requesting money to pay overtime to employees who have worked extended hours recently in efforts to get the necessary information compiled to send out tax bills. Sullivan indicated that the line item for overtime pay is in the red and suggested that Assessor Jason Cockerill ask the County Council for additional funding.

In response to a question by Green about a \$30,000 claim for a culvert in the Cumulative Bridge Fund, Commissioner Mike Goering said that the money was actually used for paving. According to Goering, historically, money has always been transferred from other accounts for the purpose of paving. Goering then went into a lengthy explanation of why it is allowable to make such transfers.

With no further business to conduct, the Board of Commissioners adjourned until their next meeting on Monday, August 25, at 5pm.???