

?Commissioners hear concerns from disabled veterans

Written by

Wednesday, 08 October 2008 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 08 October 2008 09:40

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, October 1 with all

members present. The minutes of previous meetings, all claims, and payroll requests were approved unanimously.

In a sometimes heated exchange, the Commissioners heard concerns from disabled veterans and drivers for the

veterans service over the federally mandated requirement for the county to provide IRS Form 1099 to any individual

who is paid in excess of \$600 per year for services or expenses. Misinformation and a general lack of understanding

regarding IRS guidelines for offsetting payments reported on the Form 1099 and how that procedure would impact

Social Security and disability payments for drivers was at the heart of the veterans' and drivers' concerns. After

several futile attempts by different Commissioners and Mike Whelihan, Indiana State Adjutant for the Disabled

American Veterans (DAV), to explain that the Form 1099 along with accompanying expense records would not

impact the drivers' eligibility to receive those entitlements, County Attorney, Thomas Scifres, explained the federal

law and the manner in which the drivers could record and submit their expenses to the IRS in a clear and calming

manner that seemed to soothe much of the angst exhibited by the veterans and the drivers.

"Issuing 1099's is a matter of federal law and the county has been written up by the Indiana State Board of

Accounts for not doing so in the past." explained Scifres, "As County Attorney, I cannot advise the Commissioners

to break the law."

In a related issue, Whelihan was on the agenda to explain the DAV van purchase program being considered by

Washington County. In summary, the program would allow the county to purchase a new Ford Taurus with a sticker

price of over \$27,000 for \$16,000. The van would then be turned over to the Veterans' Administration (VA). The

VA would own the vehicle and pay all expenses such as fuel, maintenance, insurance, etc.; the county would provide

drivers. The vehicle could only be used to transport veterans to and from appointments to receive VA services such

as hospital care, doctor appointments, etc. At the end of approximately six years, the vehicle would become the

property of the county to use in whatever manner would be deemed prudent.

According to Commissioner Lana Sullivan, the VA program would not replace the existing program of individual

drivers using their own cars and vans but would be an enhancement.

The Commissioners voted unanimously to have Whelihan purchase a vehicle for Washington County. Whelihan

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explained that he will pool all the purchases from around the state and place the order in November with expected delivery in June of 2009. The county will be expected to send the Indiana DAV payment for the vehicle no later than January 2009. Currently, the DAV has 58 vehicles in the program around the state.

Commissioner Goering made a motion to recommend to the County Council an increase to the line item budget for Veterans Affairs citing a concern that with the purchase of the new van, that line item will be insufficient. The motion died for lack of a second.

In other business, Judge Robert Bennett informed the Commissioners that during the ongoing repairs on the county courthouse, additional weather damage has been discovered in areas not under consideration in the original assessments or bids. Providing detailed pictures of the damage and explanation of the problems encountered was Dennis Bolton of BJB, Inc. After asking several questions of both Bennett and Bolton, the Commissioners unanimously voted to amend the contract to include an additional \$32,000 worth of repairs deemed to be emergency in nature.

The Commissioners voted unanimously to set Wednesday, October 22, as the date for a public auction for the purpose of disposing of surplus supplies and equipment, to be held at the County Highway Department beginning at 5pm.

Local Attorney, Mark Clark, addressed the Commissioners and gave a thumbnail explanation of an electronic data storage system being used in Orange County. After his explanation, Clark suggested that representatives from the Board of Commissioners and the County Council accompany him and others involved in the county court system to visit with their counterparts in Orange County for the purpose of examining their system and possibly considering the implementation of a similar system in Washington County. The Commissioners agreed to the fact finding trip.

The Commissioners voted unanimously to appoint Dr .Ronald Kearsner to a vacancy on the County Health Board.

In a final piece of business, the Commissioners voted unanimously to adopt a policy that would earmark 75 percent of all CEDIT revenues for road paving. The remaining 25 percent would be used for non-infrastructure economic development activities.

With no further business to conduct, the Commissioners adjourned until their next regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, October 15.