? The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Wednesday, November 5 with all members present. The minutes of all previous meetings along with the payroll and claims were approved unanimously.

The Commissioners heard from Washington County Emergency Management Director, Christy Vernon regarding updates to the county's Emergency Preparedness Plan as it pertains to severe wind storms and winter storms.

Vernon provided, as per a previous request by the Commissioners, drafts of the proposed updates. Vernon told the Commissioners that the drafts were based on templates provided by the state.

Commissioner Byron Green expressed concerns that the plans should focus more on local response rather than the state and national response.

Green went on to question Vernon regarding what he called a "Salem oriented" plan failing to take into consideration that many residents in outlying communities may not be able to get to Salem to receive emergency assistance when disaster strikes. Vernon said that those considerations are not in the plan but there are shelters designated in Campbellsburg, Pekin, and Fredericksburg.

Green clarified his concerns by asking if emergency contact information is available to all county residents. Vernon said that the current protocol is for residents to contact her and then she would contact people at the shelters. Green continued to press the issue by asking if contact information could be made available at the various firehouses around the county. Vernon said that option could be a possibility.

Parts of Vernon's answers seemed to be contradictory to the information in the drafts she provided to the Commissioners. Commissioner Lana Sullivan noted that on page 38 of the severe wind plan, "you have every fire department–you have all three schools–you have the motel, the Salvation Army, and the Ministerial Association. And it says that the emergency support function of these places is for temporary shelter."

Green then asked Vernon if this information is going to be provided to every resident in Washington County. Vernon's response was, "No, but all the entities listed in the plan will have the information (once they agree to be a part of the plan)."

In other business, the Commissioners heard from Lori Carr of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce regarding plans for Christmas on the Square, scheduled for Saturday, December 6, from 6 p.m. 9:30 p.m. Carr gave the Commissioners the general plan for the evening which includes a showing of the animated movie, Christopher the Christmas Tree, by local author, George Bowers. Carr also informed the Commissioners of plans to decorate a tree on the square to resemble the cartoon character.

Sullivan told Carr that she has received several requests to have the courthouse holiday lights turned on over the Thanksgiving holiday to welcome out-of-town guests as opposed to the lights be turned on for the first time on December 6. It was agreed to have the courthouse lit during Thanksgiving and then turn off the lights to be relit as part of the festivities on December 6.

The Commissioners accepted a bid for three new 2008 Ford pickup trucks from Eddie Gilstrap Motors in the amount of $63,552. This action was taken by the Commissioners after receiving notice from John Jones Motors that the bid for three new 2008 Chevrolet trucks that the Commissioners accepted last month would have to be withdrawn because the trucks were no longer available. A representative for Eddie Gilstrap Motors informed the Commissioners that the three trucks being bid were on the lot in Salem.

After lengthy discussion, the Commissioners accepted a bid for a new 100 horsepower tractor with brush cutter. The winning bid, in the amount of $83,587, came from Jacobi Tractor Sales. The winning bid was the lowest of three received. A fourth bid was received, but not opened since it was submitted after the bid deadline of 10am, November 5.

Sullivan informed the other Commissioners that a verbal agreement with a property owner has been reached which will facilitate the moving of Wheeler Hollow Road because of erosion damage from the Muscatatuck River. The Commissioners instructed County Attorney, Tom Scifres to draw up a legal document to acquire the land at no cost to the county.

Commissioner Mike Goering gave an update on the truck bypass stating that construction contracts should be let in 2009 and that land acquisition is on schedule.

In response to a question posed by County Council member, Jim Nice, Goering said that the county will have no obligation for the cost of clearing the land or the moving of utilities for the bypass.

Goering also stated that the Solid Waste Board is moving towards becoming a totally independent entity by July 1, 2009 with the ability to set its own tax rate.

The Commissioners approved a plan to bring the county's personnel policy regarding sick days more closely in line with the corresponding policy for City of Salem workers effective November 1, 2008.

The Commissioner appointed John Williams to the Tourism Board and approved a proclamation supporting a committee to promote participation in the 2010 census unanimously.

Nice asked the Commissioners if a decision has been made regarding health insurance for elected officials. Sullivan indicated the answer would depend on the cost of the plan.

With no further business to conduct, the Commissioners adjourned until their next regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, November 19.