

Commissioner Chairman, Brian Hauptert, called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. with all members present. Minutes of the 1/26 meeting were approved as written, moved by Lester Templin, second by Darle Dawes, and passed. Commissioners reviewed and signed the Accounts Payable Voucher Register and reviewed the Treasurer's December report and the Jail/Judicial Center custodian hours. Les moved to approve payment of a claim for repairs to the base radio in the North Manchester Police Department, second by Darle, and passed. The payment of \$587.69 will come from E-911 equipment repair funds. Upon the recommendation of Plan Commissioner, Chad Dilling, Darle moved to re-appoint Morris Milliner to the Plan Commission Board and the Board of Zoning Appeals, second by Les, and passed. Both terms run from 1/1/04 thru 12/31/07. Responding to an employee request for a refund on health insurance premiums retroactive to May 2003, Commissioners feel the county makes insurance coverage available and pays a large portion of the premium, but the employee is responsible for keeping track of their coverage. Courthouse custodian, Ron Harris, reports the 1998 tractor used for snow removal and mowing has blown a rod and repairs will run \$300. for parts, plus labor costs. It would be out of service a minimum of one week. He could buy a used 2001 tractor for \$2400.00, with delivery today. Due to inclement weather, with more expected, Commissioners opted to buy rather than repair, and will ask for an additional appropriation to cover the emergency purchase, at the 2/23 Co. Council meeting.

Larry Rice, Co. Highway Dept. He reports construction wages for the Treaty Creek retaining wall project were set at a Construction Labor hearing last Friday. Due to a concern about a possible conflict of interest on a quote for right-of way access on the DNR project on CR 950 S and CR 300 W, Commissioners withheld approval until they talk with Butler, Fairman & Seufert representatives.

Leroy Striker, Sheriff: Leroy thinks the county should consider fees before agreeing the City of Wabash may use the Reverse 911 phone system for notifying property owners of potential health hazards when sewer lines are overtaxed by high water. The current proposal is for the city to pay one half of the annual phone service costs. Striker reports the recording unit of the radio system isn't working properly. It's been serviced twice recently, and needs a memory upgrade every two to three days, rather than ten to fifteen days as it should. Leroy could buy a new unit for \$5,000. to \$6,000.00, and would propose using 911 funds for the purchase. Les asked for more than one estimate, and a cost comparison between repairing the current unit and buying a new unit. At times last week the jail population reached 108, and some inmates slept on army cots. Bed mattresses are on order, as some need replaced. Sheriff Striker says Barry Hicks is back on the job as of 1/29/. His doctor gave written notice that Barry is able to perform his duties. Striker says Hicks may seek reinstatement of 14 sick days.

Health Department: Health officer, Dr. J. Dean Gifford, and Health Board president, Dr. Jeffrey Pyle, recommended approval of Jennifer Swango as the Co. Environmental Sanitarian, retroactive to 1/1/04. Dr. Gifford had reviewed all applications, and felt Jennifer best fit the needs. The Health Board accepted his recommendation. At the request of Dr. Gifford, she has been performing some of the duties, with state guidance and training, since Mr. Omstead resigned. Her pay has been set at an entry level, lower than the 2004 budgeted amount. Darle moved approval of the appointment at the suggested wage, retroactive to 1/1/04, second by Les, with the understanding Council has final approval, and passed. The board and Dr. Gifford also recommend part time nurse, Lori Foust, be given full time status. The workload has skyrocketed due to homeland security issues. Co. Health nurse, Jane Skeans, paid for Lori to have full time status last year from state grant money, but she needs to use it for educational programs. Newly implemented changes will save up to \$5,000. in expenses, and the department could charge fees for services, as most surrounding counties do, to generate income. Dr's. Pyle and Gifford ask that wages for a second full time nurse come from the Health budget. Dr Pyle says his figures based on income and tax rate, indicate the budget had a year end balance of about \$100,000. in excess of the 2003 budget. He feels county tax payers are being taxed more for health department services, than the department is receiving. Les said the Council would make the decision about wage changes, and moved to pass the request to the Council, second by Darle, and passed.

Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD): Joe Updike, Barry Eppley and Adam Jones report Wabash Co. is one of five counties in the state to receive dollar for dollar match grants thru the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) for local projects, to date, about \$27,000.00. Some funds will go to local contractors, and some will supplement Adam's wages. Commissioners agreed the county will be the governing body for processing the wage funds. The Auditor will likely receive the funds on a quarterly basis. Updike says the new farm bill puts more money towards conservation than ever in history, and Wabash Co. will reap some of those benefits. They invited Commissioners to their annual meeting Feb. 18th at the REMC building. With no further business, the meeting recessed.

Brian K. Hauptert, Chairman

Darle V. Dawes

Lester D. Templin

ATTEST:

Carol Stefanatos, Auditor