

**SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS' MEETING - WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022**  
**ARPA COMMITTEE**

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman and Commissioner, Brian Baird at 1:00 P.M. Ron Deer, Councilman, Jonathan T. Myers, Councilman, Rob Henderson, Councilman, Shena Johnson, County Attorney, and Kevin Walls, Commissioner were present.

**PRESENTATION BY JOHNSON COUNTY REMC**

John Sturm, CEO at JCREMC, and President of JC Fiber, approached the podium and introduced several representatives of the organization: Terry Miller, Head of Finance and Accounting, Nick Stainbrook, Director of Fiber Operations, Lee Ann Wilbur, Board President, Seth Brown, Board Member, Dennis Stewart, Board Member. Mr. Sturm stated he would like to explain their rural project to close the digital divide in Johnson County. He presented a map to the ARPA Committee showing current and future plans for closing the digital divide in Johnson County. He talked about three zones represented on the map stating zone one (1) is complete, they are heavily into zone two (2) and have a good start on zone three (3). Future zones represent the areas they will go next. Mr. Sturm stated their priorities are to close the digital divide for JCREMC members, and then continue with non-members based on funding and financial viability. To date, they have invested over \$12,000,000 in their fiber with approximately \$12,000,000 - \$15,000,000 remaining in order to get to all customers. He stated they have approximately 2,200 rural residents who are eligible for service; to date there are over 1,100 taking the service. He said they estimate an additional 3,500 – 4,000 residences remain unserved in Johnson County. Mr. Sturm asked consideration for \$2,000,000 in ARPA funding for underserved county residences. This rural project is financially challenged averaging just 8 potential consumers per line mile. If granted, funding from ARPA would advance the positive cash flow and breakeven by 1 ½ years. He noted they are still operating on a break-even of more than 15 years in the rural residential project area. Mr. Sturm stated their commitments are to serve residences where DSL is the only current wired option, offer low-income discounts via the federal Affordable Connectivity Plan (ACP) Program – this would offer a \$30 per month discount, operate JCFiber under the same cooperative business model as JCREMC; prices will be set based on cost while using future profits to reduce prices, to commit to work with remote rural entities, and to continue to proactively procure inventory needs and move forward as quickly as supplies and labor will allow. Mr. Sturm stated the benefit to Johnson County would be to create a partnership with JCFiber to close the digital divide, this would put JCFiber on a path to offer more affordable cost of service to consumers, this will create an economic development and tax base opportunity in the rural county areas, and it will create a level playing field of educational, work from home, and other opportunities for all residents of Johnson County. Mr. Sturm concluded his presentation and offered to answer any questions. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily.

**DISCUSSION OF DRAKE ROAD PROJECT**

Kevin Walls, Commissioner and Wes Harrison, Construction Manager, gave an overview of the Drake Road Project. Mr. Walls stated Johnson County has owned the Drake Road property for a while. They are currently looking at putting in a new Health Department and a new Coroner's Office with some flexible space upstairs for future growth. He said to date they have met with three (3) different architects and have made a selection on one (1) architect to engage and move forward with this project. Mr. Walls said this project is in the early stages and there are no

preliminary numbers to disclose. Mr. Harrison stated this project is in the preliminary design stage and the plan is to take it through the semantic design stage in order to understand where we stand cost wise. This will allow us not to exceed what is budgeted. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily. Mrs. Johnson stated as the details of the project evolve they will continue to analyze which category it fits into. This will insure it is in the proper category.

#### **ANIMAL SHELTER ADD-ON**

Mr. Baird stated we are not where this project will end up. However, there needs to be a serious add-on to Animal Control. There has been a greater influx of animals due to COVID. The Animal Shelter has ran out of rescues and room. Mr. Baird said this has created an immediate need for an update to this facility. Mr. Harris will be assisting Mr. Baird on how to move forward with the shelter add-on project. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily.

Mr. Baird explained the information being discussed today is a summary of potential projects using ARPA funds. The next step would be any approved items by this Committee would move forward to the Commissioners for approval and then to Council for appropriation of funds. Mrs. Johnson stated the original ARPA Ordinance would be amended as projects are approved.

#### **NINEVEH AREA PARK PROJECT**

Mr. Baird stated a park in the Nineveh area is greatly needed. Nineveh is part of Johnson County, it is not consolidated and is not a town. There are no parks in this area. Mr. Baird said he has been working with the Heritage Organization on this project. If there should be a park put in this area it would be under the umbrella of Johnson County Parks. He said this is not a high priority project but should be considered at some point because of the great need for a park in this area.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Mr. Baird stated Mental Health concerns have been at the forefront for himself, along with Commissioner West, and Commissioner Walls. Mr. Walls stated he and Mr. Myers had been involved with a group for the last year discussing Mental Health issues in depth with Johnson Memorial Hospital. There is nothing to report at this time, further research is needed. Mr. Myers stated there is a great need in Johnson County for crisis intervention regarding Mental Health. Mr. Myers asked that \$300,000 be penciled in for this crisis intervention team project. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily.

Mr. Henderson left the meeting at 1:44 p.m. due to a prior engagement.

#### **PREMIUM PAY**

Mr. Baird stated many counties have provided there employees with a premium pay. He said many Johnson County employees stayed in the buildings during COVID and worked, putting themselves in harms way. He would like for these employees to be recognized and appreciated for their efforts. Mr. Baird stated he had recently visited the State House and met with Representatives and Senators who recognized Johnson County as one of the few counties that stayed open during COVID and served the public. Mr. Deer stated First Responders who are not County employees, but Township Fire Departments have been overlooked in the ARPA Fund

guidelines. He stated they are the same as Police Officers or any other First Responder that served during this time. Mr. Deer asked for this particular group to be considered when deciding premium pay. He also asked that part-time employees be considered as well. He said there were many part-time employees who were here working alongside full-time employees during COVID. Mr. Walls asked that \$1,000,000 be marked as premium pay dollars for the county employees group. This does not include, line 10, township fire departments that was added to this list. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily.

#### **ROADS INSIDE HOUSING ADDITIONS**

Mr. Baird stated this is a yearly fight and we cannot get funding for this project. There are many housing additions in the county that need help with restoring their roads. He said many of them are a disaster. He stated there is \$3,000,000 marked for this project but this will not come close to covering all needed repairs. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily.

#### **SURVEYOR COUNTY WATERSHEDS PROJECT**

Mr. Walls stated a \$332,000 request (coming from Food & Beverage Fund) was made during last Monday's Council meeting by the Johnson County Surveyor. It was suggested by the President of the Council to approach the ARPA Committee to assist with all or part of these funds. This request is an immediate need in regards to the Johnson County Watershed Project. Mr. Walls stated \$150,000 had been earmarked to assist in this project. Mrs. Johnson suggested the ARPA Committee come up with a recommendation to present to the Commissioners. She also recognized that two of the County Commissioners were present today and a formal motion on the County Watershed Project could be done if they so desired. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily. Mr. Walls recommended some of these projects presented today be formally presented to the Commissioners as an immediate need.

#### **CLARK PLEASANT LIBRARY BUILDING**

Mr. Baird stated this building was for sale and as of today there were no bids. Mr. Baird said he envisions this building being utilized by the County in many different ways. Mr. Walls stated he was aware of several programs within the County that could be relocated into this building. Discussion was held and all questions were answered satisfactorily.

Mrs. Johnson stated each of these items would require further analysis; they are all subject to change based on further analysis.

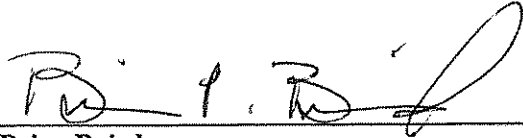
Mr. Walls made a motion to present to the Commissioners for approval the following project requests: JC Fiber project for \$2 million, The Drake Road project for \$5 million, Animal Shelter Add-On project for \$1.25 million, Premium Pay project for \$1 million for county employees only at this time, Mental Health project for \$3 million, Road repairs located inside additions project for \$3 million, and Surveyor's County Watershed project for \$166 thousand. Mr. Myers seconded the motion as presented, which carried unanimously.

Michele Graves, Treasurer, asked the Committee to keep the Treasurer's Office informed with dates and exact amounts to be spent in order for the funds to be readily available.

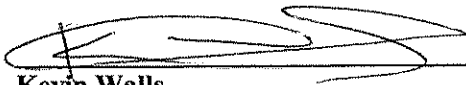
**SPECIAL COMMISSIONERS' MEETING - WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2022**  
**ARPA COMMITTEE**

**AJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mr. Myers moved to adjourn. Mr. Walls seconded the motion, which unanimously carried.



**Brian Baird**

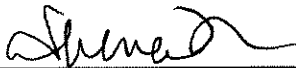


**Kevin Walls**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Jonathon T. Myers**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Rob Henderson**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Ron Deer**



**Shena Johnson**

**Attest:**

**Pamela J. Burton**  
**Auditor**

