

https://www.perrytribune.com/news/article_b2a18257-478e-5e3c-9e61-6a607f134310.html

Coffey describes upcoming construction to commissioners

By DOUG CLIFFORD Tribune Reporter Apr 17, 2019



From left: Dave Rupe and Casey Coffey present their plan for the County Home Farmland.
Doug Clifford/Perry County Tribune

NEW LEXINGTON — The Perry County Board of Commissioners had a busy morning for their weekly public meeting on Thursday, April 11. A total of eight presentations made their way onto the day's agenda.

The first order of business was the opening of sealed bids by Perry County Engineer Kent Cannon. The first bid was for the county's yearlong supply for aggregate. Two bids were heard. Maysville Materials and Shelley entered bids. The commissioners took both bids under advisement.

Next were two bids for bituminous products used to seal roads. Marathon and Asphalt Materials both submitted bids that the commissioners took under advisement.

Following the hearing of bids, David Couch, Superintendent at the Perry County Board of Developmental Disabilities (PCBDD), brought plans for the new PCBDD facility. Cost of the new facility is estimated at \$2,000,000. Along with County Auditor, Couch requested a Resolution of Intent (new bond) to be made by the commissioners.

Couch also informed the commissioners that PCBDD would like to have permission to seek bids in order to sell a van they no longer need. The handicapped accessible van has approximately 75,000 miles on it.

The commissioners also heard a brief report from Kelly Green for an update on Northern Perry County Water and Sewage. Green reported that one of his employees would be leaving the next day to pursue a position in Bremen. He told the commissioners that he would like to hire two full-time employees to handle the increased workload that is showing no signs of slowing down. The commissioners said they would look into the matter of hiring additional staff for Northern Perry Water.

Lesha Farias and Brent Runge representing the Perry County Think Tank on Poverty followed Green on the agenda. The pair presented an outline titled "Think Tank Broadband Project" that covered the steps they would like to see the commissioners pursue in order to secure countywide broadband service for Perry County.

Runge described Broadband as a utility, not an entertainment venue, and said it should be regulated by PUCO. Farias and Runge asked the commissioners to pursue SB 225 and HB 378, two bills that have fallen by the wayside because neither have sponsors at the Statehouse. Both bills pertain to state broadband legislation.

They closed their presentation by asking the commissioners to build a plan to bring broadband to Perry County. The commissioners replied that David Hansen was their point man on this issue. A potential meeting with Hansen and the Think Tank on Poverty group was discussed as the allotted time for Farias and Runge expired.

Judge Dean Wilson spoke to the commissioners about the upcoming Perry County's Driver Reinstatement Clinic where citizens with suspended driver's licenses could re-attain their license without paying reinstatement fees. Judge Wilson reported some suspended drivers face fees as high as \$7,000 to regain their driver's license. For someone needing a driver's license to gain employment, paying a heavy fee to do so leads to a situation Judge Wilson described as a "dog chasing its tail."

He asked the commissioners to close off the front steps of the Courthouse for the Friday, April 26 Perry County Driver's Reinstatement Clinic. This will allow the clinic's registration area to be much less crowded according to

the Judge. The commissioners agreed to do so as long as all the offices in that part of the Courthouse are notified ahead of time.

Jim Snider, a local farmer, approached the commissioners about the lease he has on the County Home Farmland area across from the fairgrounds. The commissioners informed Snider they would grant a one year lease allowing him to farm the same amount of the land this year as he did in 2018. They next informed him the lease would be different next year based on the information they had received from Casey Coffey just prior to Snider's allotted time.

Coffey, the Superintendent of New Lexington Schools, presented the commissioners with a bold expansion plan for the County Home Farmland project currently underway by the school system. The area is being utilized as classroom for the farm of the future by New Lexington Schools. A new player in the project approached Coffey with an entirely new plan that could make the area the envy of schools all over the country.

Coffey reported the U.S Fish & Wildlife Department (USF&W) wants to become a major player in developing the area. Part of that plan is developing 50-foot wide buffer zones between crops and eliminating invasive plants and trees. Buffer zones slow water runoff as well as create wildlife habitat.

Coffey said the USF&W official was especially anxious to become part of the plan, saying "we need this project because it is the perfect storm for us." The official was referring to the nearly non-existent role USF&W has in this part of Ohio. Most of their projects are centered in Northeast Ohio.

Commissioner Jim O' Brien was very impressed with the potential this area has for the future. "This has always been a farm for study plan. What better way to teach kids future farming practices is there than this project," stated O' Brien.

Coffey and New Lexington Schools Director of Operations, Dave Rupe, addressed the commissioners midway through the morning session. Judge Wilson's presentation was the final one for the day.

The commissioners adjourned the meeting at noon.

Email at dclifford@perrytribune.com