

County moves to health reimbursement account

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Carroll County Commissioners met in special session Monday morning with Carroll County native and insurance agent Cindy Finkenbinder and a room full of county employees eager to hear what plan would be chosen for them as of Feb. 1. After an hour and a half of questions, concerns, answers and comments, the option for a dual-option plan of a health reimbursement account (HRA) and a more traditional co-pay account were chosen unanimously after commissioner Bill Brown moved to approve the measure. George Mears provided the second. Brown said he favored the HRA because the cost to employees was less per month than the other plans presented.

Brown's sentiment was shared by at least one department head.

"We need to do the minimum hurt to the employees because there is no guarantee of a two percent raise in the (unapproved) 2008 budget," sheriff Tony Burns said.

Burns recommended any excess balance of the county contribution to the employees' accounts, \$1,500, be rolled over to the employees' accounts next year to lower the amount of their deductible. That suggestion became part of the approved motion.

During the discussion, concern was registered that the service was not bid out for competitive quotations. Mindy Anderson of Employee Benefit Solutions of Indiana Inc. asked several times if a request for proposals for competitive bids was sent out to get the best price for the service for the

county. Anderson said she owned land in Carroll County and was a taxpayer with a vested interest in the matter.

"The county is not open to bids from other agents?" Anderson pointedly asked at least four times without receiving a definitive answer.

"The county council is pressuring the commissioners to make a change now," auditor Beth Myers explained.

Anderson said the \$800,000 the county will spend on health insurance in 2008 "might produce other ideas from different agents." She said it was highly unusual that a county does not bid out health insurance.

"If we could find something that's cheaper, we aren't going to look at it?" asked former sheriff Dennis Randle.

Commissioners' president Loren Hylton replied commissioners would

like to "get onboard with the council" to be able to provide quotes before the 2009 budget is developed in July. He said the council was invited to "previous meetings about health insurance" and did not attend. Myers noted there were no council members present at the Monday morning meeting.

[Hylton clarified in a *Comet* interview after the meeting former council president Rob Baker was invited to attend the discussions and did not participate. He said Monday's meeting was advertised as an open meeting and the expectation was for council members to be present. When asked if a bid process would be on the commissioners' agenda, Hylton said he would "try" to get it on the agenda. He explained the decision was one for all of the commissioners.]

"It's good to shop around," Burns

said, recommending a bid process in April. "It's good consumerism."

In a telephone *Comet* interview Monday afternoon, Anderson said she called the auditor's office on Friday and asked to be put on the agenda. However, that request was denied. Anderson spoke from her seat during the meeting.

"I don't think I got straight answers today," she said. "I think their minds were made up before I arrived."

"The bidding process exists to make sure everything that can be done is done for the insured," she continued. "The process needs to be followed."

"You don't take the path of least resistance with \$800,000 of county money," she added. "I'm not saying there is something better out there."

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Report provides roadmap to guide EDC

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

When you can no longer see the forest for the trees, it might be better to choose a different vantage point instead of revving up the chainsaw.

Sometimes county leaders seek advice from objective outside sources to gain insight on their own county's economic potential. Suggestions from a fresh angle can help define strengths and provide focus to achieve local goals.

Marketing consultants Bob St. Claire and Dick Heupel encouraged a gathering of approximately 55 at the Wabash

& Erie Canal Interpretive Center in Delphi to harness the county's strengths and act quickly to improve its struggling marketing image. The Strategic Directions report was the last they were contracted to provide the county.

Heupel and St. Claire reviewed economic and demographic information, prepared and reviewed the county's current situation with Carroll County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and considered a wide range of possible strategy points to produce three imperatives to guide EDC to improve and diversify

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DCSC track renovations exceed bids

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

Delphi Community School Corporation had its fair share of fiscal ups and downs in 2007. DCSC Board of Trustees approved several measures which helped free up much-needed funds, but as most anyone can attest, sometimes unexpected costs nullify gains.

Among the first items of business during the board's Monday night meeting was a track renovation report from high school athletic director Vince Burpo. He said five change orders were issued during the project which lowered the original bid estimate to around \$641,000 from \$689,000.

Resident Everett Snoeberger asked for a total cost of the project. Burpo said issues that arose during construction raised the total cost to approximately \$890,000.

A discus cage, hurdles, pole vault mats, concrete pads and grass, yet to be purchased, will

cost approximately \$30,000. **Temporary loan approved**

Superintendent Ralph Walker said payments from the county were received late in 2007 and he wanted to be prepared in case it was to happen again in 2008. He expressed concern that the corporation did not receive money from property taxes paid late or not at all by residents, an issue he addressed through a letter to the county auditor last year. He said a tax shortfall of \$114,519.63 was shown for 2007.

"We are not seeing money from late tax payments," he said. "We are working on finding out why and what can be done about it."

As a preventative response, the board moved to attain a temporary loan for \$2 million in anticipation of late tax payments. Walker said he hoped to invest the money at a higher interest rate than the loan's rate as he did with a tax anticipation warrant last year.

Walker reported the corporation held a positive balance of approximately \$1.7 million at the end of the year.

Snoeberger said financial experts previously reported the corporation was broke. He asked how the corporation could have so much in reserve. Walker said the expense stream changed during the past year including interest gained from staff cuts.

"It all adds up," Walker said. "Hopefully everybody is pleased."

High school to receive grant

High school principal Barry Stone received permission to

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A big help



Volunteers from the Red Cross and local community help unload supplies for flood victims. Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Inc. delivered two semis carrying more than \$170,000 in food, hygiene, health and cleaning items to Camp Tecumseh's Equestrian Barn on Springboro Road this week. The items are being distributed by the Red Cross. Flood victims can visit the Red Cross shelter at the Monroe St. gym in Delphi for information on how to receive help. *Comet* photo by Kevin Schnepf

The water is down... now the real work is underway

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

According to a data sheet provided by Carroll County Emergency Management Agency Director Dave McDowell, at least 330 Carroll County homes were destroyed and 30 suffered major damage in last week's devastating flood. To be considered "destroyed," a structure had to suffer four or more feet of water in living areas and to be considered to have "major" damage was to exhibit damage visible from the road.

County commissioners Loren Hylton and George Mears, and highway superin-

tendent Ron Francis, met in an emergency session Friday afternoon to hear McDowell's report and to make plans for the county-wide trash removal effort. Commissioner Bill Brown was unable to be reached for notification of the emergency meeting.

One concern was how the county would coordinate the trash retrieval and removal. Francis said the highway department could collect the trash from centralized locations and haul it away, but noted the county trash transfer station could not accommodate the load. He said there was enough money in the highway department budget

to retrieve the refuse using highway department equipment and haul it to neighboring counties with county trucks.

McDowell suggested getting trash-dumpster donations and perhaps renting dumpsters for collections. He said his information was that FEMA would reimburse for the cost.

It was decided residents would be directed to stack trash items at the sides of the roads and the highway department would haul away the refuse. McDowell will solicit dumpsters as well.

The group decided that contractors for deconstruction

and repair would be requested to register with the sheriff's department before providing services. McDowell said this measure would help protect residents from hiring unscrupulous people who target areas hit by massive damage such as is the case in Carroll County.

For clarification and information, McDowell can be reached by calling the EMA office at (765) 564-4243.

Residents are urged to call the sheriff's department at (765) 564-2413 or the area plan office at 564-4468 to consult a list of registered contractors before hiring anyone.

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Community offers help to its own

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

In the aftermath of last week's major flooding, local churches, organizations, individuals and schools have offered relief to those in need.

The **Deacon's Closet**, a clothing and consignment store in the basement of Delphi First Presbyterian Church on Indiana Street across from the library, will be open extended hours, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. The store will also be open this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Pastor Bill McLean said the community responded generously to help stock the store with items for the flood victims.

"People are mucking around out there," McLean said. "They need stuff to muck around in."

Disaster relief also came from **Elmwood Church of Christ** in the form of two semi loads of supplies, including food, baby items, water, blankets, hygiene products and cleaning supplies. The items were sent from the church's disaster relief headquarters in Nashville, Tenn.

The supplies are being distributed by the Red Cross at the Camp Tecumseh Equestrian Center on Springboro Road.

Delphi Wesleyan Church is selling pizzas to raise money for flood relief. Pizzas are \$10 each with a choice of sausage, pepperoni, cheese, or a combination of sausage and pepperoni. Pre-payment is required. All proceeds will go to disaster relief.

The church will call those who placed an order to inform them of when the pizzas will be ready. Purchasers can take the fresh pizzas home and cook them that day or freeze

them for later use.

To place an order, call Charles Fife at (765) 564-6112, the church parsonage at 564-2926, or mail your order along with a check payable to Delphi Wesleyan Church to: 501 N. Washington St., Delphi, IN 46923.

Delphi Lions Club received a \$10,000 grant from its international foundation to assist flood victims in Carroll, White and Tippecanoe counties.

President Darrel Noonkester said he distributed vouchers that can be used for food, medical products and

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