

## The future of the county ambulance service

### Townships explore funding – moving toward a solution

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

No one in Carroll County seems content the ambulance service was reduced to two ambulances for 2009 due to financial constraints. Several township trustees and advisory board members continue to explore the viability of partially funding the lost portion of the ambulance service to remedy the situation. They met last Wednesday night with ambulance service director Mike Durr to hear facts, figures, discuss options and to develop a plan to proceed.

Durr provided an historical perspective when he explained the ambulance service was a volunteer service until 2004 when the county

began to fully subsidize the service. E-911 director Jay Dee Cree added more information Friday that in 1985 a director was hired for the service who was a paramedic. A chase vehicle was purchased in 1986 in which the director responded to emergencies. He said ambulances basically carried emergency medical technicians who assisted the paramedic.

"When we went to two ambulances in the county, it became a critical situation," Durr said.

The group decided in January to pursue the concept of donating money to the county to subsidize the service to provide more and/or enhanced services to residents. Burlington Township Trustee Al Jackson reported to the Wednesday



Jackson

worksheets of proposed numbers for audience members to understand the amount of money needed to fund alternative levels of service.

According to 2008 annual reports published in the *Comet* by all townships, the total combined amount available in general funds as of Jan. 1, 2009, was

\$1,189,303.87; available in all firefighting funds was \$1,231,246.58; and available in cumulative fire funds was \$476,710.74. (It should be noted that Deer Creek Township had not submitted a completed annual report for publication, however supplied numbers for this article.)

The group suggested a fair way to assess what each township should contribute to support two additional chase vehicles was to determine the number of residents in each township and figure the percentage to pay based on residency. Jackson volunteered to report that data at the next meeting. He said the goal was to develop a pricing structure that everyone could agree upon.

Durr said the ambulance service owned enough equipment for another two chase vehicles but lacked the funding for expenses, which would include personnel. He said the ambulance service makes roughly 1,400 actual transports per year.

Durr said the First Responders volunteer program "could make big difference" in service delivery. First Responders volunteers would arrive at the emergency and assist until an ambulance arrives. Durr said although those individuals would not be able to provide medications or procedures, they could begin CPR and evaluate the emergency situation.

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## Tippy River clean up could prove too costly for county

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

A proposed Tippecanoe River clean-up project in Carroll County may have hit a financial snag which could hang the project out to dry. The county may need to supplement the project financially with money that does not exist.

According to Soil and Water District Conservationist Joe O'Donnell, the county received emergency watershed protection funds for 75 percent of the estimated \$488,000 project cost. The county would be responsible for 25 percent, or roughly \$122,000 to match the grant funds. O'Donnell said the plan to secure a second grant for the match amount failed. He said he was hopeful work done by county workers to remove debris taken from the river to the banks would be acceptable match to the funders.

"I can't guarantee there

won't be any impact on the county budget," O'Donnell said. "But we are looking at the deadline to proceed."

O'Donnell said bids to contractors were due March 16 and the project was scheduled to be completed by mid-May.

### Highway department

Highway engineer Paul Coutts distributed an inspection report from the Troyer Group about SR25 relinquishments from INDOT when the Hoosier Heartland Highway (HHH) is completed. He described the report as a "leverage point for negotiations with the state" about bringing roads and bridges up to state standard prior to the county assumption of responsibility for them.

Former highway superintendent Ron Francis as a representative of Butler Fairman & Seufert presented commissioners with a shovel used in the October HHH groundbreaking ceremony. Commissioners also received a framed photo to commemorate the day in appreciation of their support.

### The Andersons

Dale Theis and plant manager Kevin McCelfry expressed gratitude for county efforts in fighting the recent cob fire at the Delphi plant location.

"We want to extend our thanks and appreciation," Theis said. "It was a tremendous outpouring from the community."

"We are proud to be a part of this community," he added.

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### Face time!

It was a new look for some old faces as council members, along with council secretary, auditor Beth Myers, began a new tradition Tuesday morning as they sat at the meeting table and faced the audience. The change was announced in January and instigated by new council president Ann Brown. Seated, from left to right, are Myers, Ron Slavens, Brown, Nancy Cripe, Marion Huffer, Jerry Hendress, Scott Ayres and Carl Abbott. Comet photo by Debbie Lowe

## Council powerless in TIF decision

By Debbie Lowe  
Staff writer

Although they are responsible for funding county services and programs using taxpayer dollars, Carroll County Council members learned at their Tuesday morning meeting they may have little say in whether a new tax increment financing (TIF) district is formed in the county. They also learned the Carroll County Redevelopment Commission is considering a new TIF district at the location of the former Gray's Turkey Farm on US421 south of Delphi.

Redevelopment attorney Barry Emerson explained the steps used to form a TIF district. The explanation was requested by the council at the January meeting.

He said a declaratory resolution would be passed by the commission, which would be reviewed by the county area plan commission. APC would determine if a commercial site would conform and comply with land use.

County commissioners would then approve or disapprove the district formation. Upon their approval the redevelopment commission would adopt a confirmatory plan which would become a resolution.

"So, we have no say so," council member Carl Abbott stated.

Emerson answered in the affirmative. He said the council could be asked to support a bond to pay for infrastructure to the site, i.e. water and sewage. Emerson

said the process could, but did not have to include the council.

"More than likely, the council would be involved in that way," Emerson said.

Emerson said if the current TIF district, which included the land IPC occupies, was dissolved, the additional tax money generated from the improvements to the land and the buildings would not equate to additional county funding. He explained it would be used to reduce property taxpayers' overall tax obligation.

"There is no new money," he said.

Council members noted businesses in TIF districts receive taxpayer funded services, such as police, fire and ambulance, but do not contribute additional tax dollars as they grow to help fund those services. Emerson said when the current TIF district was established in 1992, it was regarded to "be the seed that would generate economic growth."

Ron Slavens noted although the redevelopment commission pays a bond payment of roughly \$500,000 a year and is due to retire the bond in 2011, it receives \$675,000 each year and has a surplus of more than \$1 million. He complained the county is unable to use any surplus for emergency services.

Emerson said Slavens' statement is true. He said commission members have no plan to use the surplus tax-generated dollars for any project.

"When are TIF districts established?" Scott Ayres asked.

"You would want to establish the TIF

district and then make improvements," Emerson explained.

Emerson urged council members to keep an open mind about a potential new TIF district.

"I think it's premature to start thinking about how you can oppose this," Emerson said.

### Financial report

President Ann Brown announced at the January meeting, each month a council member will review the financial reports provided by the county auditor prior to the meeting and report to the group. Slavens provided the February report.

He said income from the ambulance service was the same this year in January as last year. However, Carroll Manor received approximately \$4,000 less this year than last.

Slavens said it is imperative for the council to monitor all funds monthly to understand exactly how county finances are faring. As an example, he explained county revenue loss from interest income is roughly \$36,000 this year, however that could be due to timing of reports rather than actual figures.

"We need to do planning to make sure all expenses are covered," Slavens advised.

### Highway department

Highway engineer Paul Coutts was given permission to hire a truck driver to replace one who was on disability last

See Council page 5A

## Special meeting set to establish fire territory

Comet staff report

The Delphi City Council will hold a special public meeting Thursday, Feb. 19, at 7 p.m. at the city building. The first reading of the proposed ordinance to establish a fire prevention territory with Tippecanoe, Madison and Deer Creek townships will be held.

The city council will conduct a public hearing next Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m. at the Stone Barn about the fire prevention territory and could adopt the ordinance at that time.



Mailing label goes here

## Camden to seek funding for revitalization

Comet staff report

A public hearing on a downtown revitalization project in Camden preceded Thursday night's Camden Town Council meeting.

The project will encompass Main Street from Church to Ohio streets and a half block north on Monroe, Water and Church streets.

Seven engineering firms submitted proposals, said council president Pete Wagoner. Of the seven, two firms will be interviewed.

"We're pleased we got as many as we did," he said.

To fund the project the town will pursue a Community Development Planning Block Grant in the amount

of \$29,700 with the town's match as \$3,300.

Ken Smith was authorized to seek other grant funds on behalf of the town.

In order to qualify for revitalization, the area had to be declared a slum and blight area by adopting Resolution 2009-A.

A second public hearing preceded the meeting on the Indiana Housing Rehabilitation Project. Mark McCarty of Star Development said that all the work has been done and the state inspector came and caught a few mistakes that have already been corrected.

Due to the continued success of this project, the council agreed to pursue another Indiana Housing grant for the fall.



Wagoner



Smith

### Hoosier Heartland Highway

A meeting was held earlier in the day in Delphi by the Indiana Department of Transportation concerning the Hoosier Heartland Highway. Wagoner said that the time frame remains the same with a 2013 completion date for the entire project. Land acquisition and building of bridges have begun in Carroll County.

Wagoner said that plans are still being modified for the interchange with CR 75.

"It seems like they are moving forward, but there are still a lot of things to work out," he added.

### Carroll County EDC

Carroll County Economic Development Executive Director Daryl Smith complimented Camden "for pursuing whatever avenues needed for the betterment of Camden."

Smith recognized council member Richard Fite, who is one of Camden's three representatives on the EDC. The other two are Bob McCain and Bob Overman.

Smith told about the two sites that the EDC has options on.

"We have added value to those sites and are marketing them in that way," he said.

Smith said that EDC would like to pursue a third option site with railroad access and the CR 75 interchange site would be a consideration.

There are not many sites in the state with both rail and four-lane access. Smith said this combination could be desirable for a heavy industrial enterprise.

Wagoner reiterated the town's desire to work with the EDC.

Smith explained that tax incremental financing (TIF) districts could be a tool to get infrastructure improvements. See Camden page 5A

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