WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION February 4, 2025

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Steve Huggins, Brian Lambert, Brandon Harnish and Deputy Auditor Lisa Eichler.

Minutes: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the minutes from the January 4, 2025, meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General fund for the Jail and the Bullet Proof Vest Partnership Grant. Motion carried 7-0.
A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the Cumulative Bridge fund. Motion carried 7-0.
A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the Wells County CASA Grant fund. Motion carried 7-0.
A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the County Highway Garage fund. Motion carried 7-0.

Library Updates: Sarah MacNeill and Dustin Brown presented an update of statistics for the Wells County Library. Many staff members are working toward different levels of accomplishments and serving on community and professional boards. 2024 stats were overall elevated from 2023. 54% of the potential population have a library card. Circulation material is up by 24%, eMaterial circulation is up 31%, eAudiobooks increased by 36%, eBooks increased by 25%, eMagazines increased by 178%, Hoopla increased by 45%, the public computer use increased by 2%, wireless connections by 21%, Meeting use room is down by 11%, the study room held steady at 1%, supervised visits increased by 34%, reference questions declined by 1%, Programming attendance increased by 29%, book-a-librarian increased by 19%, notary services increased by 5%, and patron count decreased by 3%.

Wells Community Pool: Pool representatives Roger Thornton, Scott Mentzer, and Brandy Fiechter presented history and perspective on the Wells Community pool. The Wells Community pool was built in 1972 and has ongoing issues which makes repair not an option. Wells County has one community pool of which they feel all entities should support. The City of Bluffton has committed $5 million to the project, Harrison Township has committed $250,000, and Lancaster Township has committed $110,000. The Wells County Commissioners have pledged $800,000 in funding for the community pool. Wells Counties portion will be committed to a new pool house. The pool could ultimately be moved further north on the existing property to allow for earlier construction. This would also allow for the relocation of the new pool house allowing the existing pool house to be used as a maintenance building. The additional appropriation request will be presented to the County Council at the March meeting, Seth Whicker stated.

Amended 2025 Wells County Salary Ordinance: An updated 2025 Salary Ordinance was presented to the County Council for approval. The update was a base wage increase for the EMA Director to $62,000 annually. The increase had been previously approved by the County Council. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve Ordinance 2025-01 Wells County 2025-1 Salary

Ordinance. Motion carried 7-0. The newly appointed EMA Director, John Petro, introduced himself and spoke of future projects and aspirations.

Public Comment: John Fennelly addressed the County Council regarding an incident that occurred in May of 2024. During a traffic stop an Indiana State Police officer pulled him from his car. The officer did not specify why he was aggressive with Fennelly. The dog that accompanied the officer bit Fennelly's foot two times. Fennelly was arrested for not identifying himself and resisting arrest, none of which is on video. Fennelly was addressing the Wells County Council to allow funding for 24/7 video surveillance to hold officers accountable. Fennelly stated that he has filed complaints with the Indiana State Police with no response.

Adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 PM. The motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

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President, Seth Whicker Vice President, Vicki Andrews

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Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor