

**WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR SESSION March 4, 2025**

The Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. In attendance were Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Steve Huggins, Brandon Harnish, and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Council member Brian Lambert was absent.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the minutes from February 4, 2025, regular session. Motion carried 6-0.

**Additional Appropriations:** Judge Kenton Kiracofe addressed the County Council requesting a withdrawal of his additional appropriation request for \$15,000 in the General Fund Commissioners budget.

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Additional Appropriation request for Circuit Court in the General fund and the Additional Appropriation request in the Sup Juvenile Probation Service fund. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the Commissioners budget in the General fund. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the LIT Economic Development fund for Community pool funding, allowing for a Wells County seat on the parks board related to any Wells County contributions. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the LIT Economic Development relating to roads and bridges. Motion carried 6-0.

**Equity Protect:** Recorder Rina Stuck informed the County Council about current programs for property owners called Equity Protect and Dox Pop. Dox Pop is a free program that notifies property owners of a document being recorded for one of their deeded properties. Equity Protect helps to prevent property fraud while protecting the rightful landowner. The service is provided through the Wells County Recorders office. The fee for the landowner is \$149 for the first year not including sales tax, \$99.95 not including sales tax for each additional year. Equity Protect prevents anyone from recording a new deed without removing the landowners' claim. Facial recognition is the only way a lien can be removed, with provisions for death. The County Commissioners have granted approval to insert a flyer regarding the service in the 2025 tax bills, a onetime insert. The flyer informs property owners of the Equity Protect and Dox Pop programs. The only cost for the insert would be in printing, which will be absorbed by the Recorder's budget. Council member Steve Huggins felt that more safeguards should be put in place on the local level.

**Economic Development Update:** Jessica Beste, Economic Development Director, updated the County Council regarding January to current economic development happenings. There have been 29 Northeast Indiana leads, of which most were not exclusive to our area. Wells County has a better tax environment, but Beste feels the other locations might have better incentives. Beste is working on grant opportunities for various community organizations. A comprehensive sight evaluation study has identified several potentially shovel ready sites for development. There are two expansion projects in the works, of which more information will be released soon. A BR&E (Business, Retention and Expansion) day is scheduled, as well as a lunch and learn, and a small-town tour for site consultants. Beste will bring workforce and wage numbers for our area for her next update.

**Miscellaneous:** Coroner Cliff Thomas addressed the County Council regarding on-call pay for part time Coroner Deputies. The current approved rate for on-call pay is \$100 per call. The County Council suggested Thomas have a meeting with Auditor McCormick to put together additional options for rates of pay for the next County Council meeting on April 8, 2025.

**Adjourned:** The 8:17PM motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Vicki Andrews to adjourn. Motion carried 6-0.

#### **WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL**

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President, Seth Whicker

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Vice President, Vicki Andrews

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Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor