

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session March 17, 2025

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 17, 2025, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Michael Vanover, and Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes from the March 3, 2025, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #6 in the amount of \$297,987.09 and 230 claims totaling \$240,257.72. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 62 inmates, 16 pretrial Superior, 37 pretrial Circuit, 2 F6 DOC and 6 DOC.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on current projects. High winds have caused problems with detour barricades, project managers are repairing and replacing any barricades that were affected. Hoosier Highway has an estimated completion date of May 13, 2025. Bridge 106 is on schedule and has a completion date of November 7, 2025. The deck will be poured this week on Bridge 51, which has a completion date of May 1, 2025. Dust control postcards will be mailed this week, and applications will be accepted through the end of April. Dust control applications will be applied starting the second week of May. The County Home Road project will start on May 10, 2025. Bonar would like to present a power point on an adopt a highway program for the Commissioners to view at the April 7th meeting. The highway garage update included information that the doors have been repaired, and only minor outstanding items are remaining.

Wells County Engineer: Engineer Nate Whitacre informed the Commissioners on projects. REMC is taking a second look at the transformer located at the Highway Garage. Whitacre feels the current transformer is too large for the garage and the billing is reflective of that, in his opinion. If a dropdown in size were appropriate, availability could be a problem. Whitacre feels that this machinery was over-engineered and should be compensated for the removal and resetting of the smaller transformer. Commissioner Stringer agreed that responsibility should fall on the design engineer. CCMG 2025-1 Meridian Road will go to bid with an estimated bid opening date of April 14, 2025. Whitacre hopes to present an approval document to the Commissioners at the April 21, 2025, meeting. The Road Safety Grant for durable pavement markings has field work beginning in April. A draft site plan has been received by Whitacre for review for the CR 500 W realignment (Rock Creek).

Flood Safety Awareness: County Surveyor Jarrod Hahn presented a proclamation to the Board of Commissioners to proclaim March 16-22, 2025, as "Flood Safety Awareness Week". Some facts regarding floods; 6 inches of fast-moving flood water can knock an adult off their feet, 12 inches can carry off a small car. The two main instances for death due to flooding are driving into flood waters and homes that flood when the residents are asleep. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to proclaim March 16-22, 2025, as Flood Safety Awareness Week. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Defender Board: Judge Kiracofe addressed the Commissioners requesting the creation of an Ordinance to create a Public Defender Board. Judge Kiracofe stated that Wells County is one of fifteen counties that do not participate in the Public Defender Board program. The Judge presented a draft of a Public Defender Ordinance as well as grant agreement documents for recovery for public defense expenses in Title IV-E cases and a Title IV-E incentive payment program. The incentive and recovery funds can be opted in via the newly created board or the Commissioners can authorize Judge Kiracofe to sign for Wells County. Reimbursement consists of \$2,000 quarterly the first year, \$1,000 each quarter the following year. The Commissioners will review the request at the April 7, 2025, meeting. If approval is given for the creation of a Public Defender board, the board will consist of a Commissioner appointee, a judge and a member from the Indiana Commission of Court-Appointed Attorneys. A two-year commitment is required before renewal.

Council on Aging: Executive Director Betsy Collier presented a QPA INDOT motor vehicle purchase agreement and a de-obligation letter regarding 2024 operating funds. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve and allow the President to sign the INDOT motor vehicle purchase agreement for two Chrysler Voyager LX Minivans. Motion carried 3-0. 2024 operating funds unspent totaling \$27,030 will roll over into 2025 funding with approval of the 2024 de-obligation letter. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and allow the president to sign the notification of de-obligation of Transit Operating funds for the 2024 Grant. Motion carried 3-0. The Council on Aging is hosting a car show, at which they would like to have a Commissioner choice award. Collier asked for confirmation that at least one Commissioner would attend to present that award. The Commissioners support the award and verify that at least one Commissioner would be in attendance. Currently, Wells County contributes \$40,000 in annual funding to Wells on Wheels. Collier is requesting an increase for the 2026 budget year and for the Commissioners to agree on local funding for the two Chrysler Voyager LX Minivans (\$29,676.80). Commissioner Stringer would like an accounting of where the additional contributions that are requested would be used and discuss at the April 7, 2025, meeting.

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant: EMA Director John Petro received notification of a grant award for building resilient infrastructure and communities. The grant award is \$24,304.00 and has a 25 percent local match commitment of \$8,128.60. Petro was seeking approval to accept the award and specify the funding source for the local match. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the grant award and expend the matching funds from the LIT Public Safety fund. Motion carried 3-0. Petro advised the Commissioners that he was picking up 4 pallets of MRE meals to be distributed to residents in time of emergency.

Right-of-Way: Four rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for approval, the motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and sign the four rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

Interlocal Agreement for Economic Development Services: An interlocal agreement for Economic Development Services was presented to the Commissioners for review. The EDA agreement is between Wells County, Indiana, and the City of Bluffton, Indiana. The term of the EDA agreement shall commence on October 21, 2024, and shall end December 31, 2024, subject to automatic renewal for successive terms of ninety days each until terminated. The Economic Development Director shall remain a full-time employee of the City, while providing services for the County. The County shall pay the City quarterly for actual expenses incurred during the quarter. The City shall submit the invoices on or about March 30, June 30, September 30 and December 31 with sufficient documentation to evidence

the services provided. For the County's contribution to the City's budget, the EDO shall be considered an independent contractor for the County. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Micheal Vanover to approve the Interlocal Agreement for Economic Development Services. Motion carried 3-0.

Stylus: Auditor McCormick received a \$255.00 quote from Stylus Technologies to move a TV from the back of the annex meeting room to the front. The move will allow anyone that uses electronic means of communication during a meeting to be visible on the live stream. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the quote from Sylus Technologies for \$255.00 and pay that expense out of the LIT Economic Development fund. Motion carried 3-0.

Community Corrections Director: Community Corrections Director Blake Poindexter distributed a letter to the Commissioners announcing his retirement. In the letter Poindexter expressed his privilege and pleasure in serving the citizens of Wells County, the Commissioners, staff, and colleagues that he has encountered over the last 35 years. His retirement date will be June 20, 2025. The Commissioners thanked Poindexter for his dedication and years of service and wished him well.

Public Comment: David Dickes, 6698 E 1100 N, Ossian, IN, informed the Commissioners that his road, 1100 N, could not be chip sealed because an absentee landowner would not sign a road conversion petition. Nichole Rider, 6436 E 1100 N, Ossian, IN, was also in attendance regarding 1100 N and a neighbor who has been threatening violence. Rider stated that she drives slowly on 1100 N because of the gravel. The threatening landowner, she stated, damages vehicles, blocks the road, and demonstrates road rage. Rider has contacted the authorities and stated that nothing has been done to correct the problem. Commissioner Stringer will reach out to the absentee landowner to negotiate and suggested Rider contact the Sheriff personally.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:18 PM. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to adjourn. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor