

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session April 21, 2025

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday April 21, 2025, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Michael Vanover was absent.

Minutes: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from the April 7, 2025, regular session. Motion carried 2-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #8 in the amount of \$300,868.96 and 230 claims totaling \$1,032,891.03. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 64 inmates, 16 pretrial Superior, 40 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 and 4 DOC. Sheriff Holliday presented a conveyance of equipment agreement to the Commissioners. The agreement is between Wells County and the Indiana Supreme Court, Office of Judicial Administration, Indiana Office of Court Technology. The purpose of the agreement is to enable the Office of Court Technology to grant and convey to Wells County a Palm & 10 Print livescan device for capturing fingerprints and palm prints. Also included in the equipment is a booking cabinet, software, and printer. The Sheriff is responsible for maintenance fees, there is no cost for the machine. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Conveyance of Equipment Agreement. Motion carried 2-0. Sheriff Holliday updated the Commissioners on the kitchen pipe issues. Salas O'Brien has provided prints for bidding documents. The kitchen area is one project, the exterior lines are another project. Stringer will involve Engineer Whitacre in the creation of the bid documents.

Walker Hughes Renewal: Walker Hughes Agent, Dan Lipp, presented a renewal proposal for County liability insurance. Selective Insurance, increasing 12.5% to \$118,871 annually, covers the property and Inland Marine items. Bliss McKnight, increasing 11.4% to \$253,362 annually, covers multiclass liability, wrongful acts, and commercial auto. The proposed rate for cyber increases 1% to \$14,999.85 annually. The total premium for all policies effective 5/1/2025-5/1/2026 is \$387,232.85 which is up 11.3% overall. Increased deductibles were introduced for collision coverage and property deductible coverage. Increasing the collision to \$2,500 from the current \$1,000 would reduce the annual premium by \$6,593. Increasing the property deductible to \$50,000 from \$25,000 would reduce the annual premium by \$11,538. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to increase the collision deductible to \$2,500 per occurrence. Motion carried 2-0. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept the renewal policies presented by Walker Hughes. Motion carried 2-0. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow the President to sign the statement of renewals. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Highway: Shawn Bonar reported on current projects. Maintenance on stone roads, ditch cleaning, and finishing up road conversions are current employee tasks. Dust control sign ups will continue until April 28th. Bonar stated that E & B has completed the open graded asphalt layer, binder and intermediate asphalt for Local Trax. On approximately April 21st Adams Street, 200S, New Hoosier Highway and old Hoosier Highway will be closed for approximately four weeks to tie the new roads together. Bridge 51 is on schedule and is expected to reopen on May 1st. Bridge 106 is on schedule with an expected completion date of November 7th. Highway garage issues include man door not closing,

louvers opening with all doors closed, HVAC is making clicking noises, water still enters under several overhead doors, the fence gate has been damaged two times due to high winds. Bonar is researching the fence gate issue. Jeff Stringer has discussed HVAC issues with PCI, they will issue a PO. Stringer anticipates PCI will state the louvers are working as designed. The 2024 highway annual report was presented to the Commissioners for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the 2024 Highway Annual Report. Motion carried 2-0. Also presented was a bid tab for a riding lawn mower for the highway department. Bobcat was the low bid. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the purchase of a Bobcat ZT3500 for \$7,950. Motion carried 2-0.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre presented a utility permit for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Utility Permit for CR 75E north of US 224. Motion carried 2-0. Plans for construction for CR 500W realignment (Rock Creek) were approved and submitted back to Rock Creek Quarry. A bid opening was held on April 14th for Meridian Road CCMG 2025-1. Two bids were received and were both under the engineers' estimate. Brooks Construction was the lowest bid of \$360,822.76. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the contract with Brooks Construction. Motion carried 2-0. Final tracing plans are being finalized for Bridge 54, Title Block signatures are required for the cover sheet. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to sign the title block for the cover sheet. Motion carried 2-0.

Plaza Request: Bluffton Free Street Fair requested use of the Courthouse Plaza for September 14-21, 2025. The Certificate of Insurance will be submitted after issuance in July. Nathan Stauffer was representing the Street Fair Board. Also requested was a donation of \$1,500. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to allow the Bluffton Free Street Fair Association use of the Plaza September 14-21, 2025, approve and sign the agreement for services for \$1,500 for 2025. Motion carried 2-0.

Family Centered Services: Lisa Antrim, Interim Director of Family Centered Services, addressed the Commissioners regarding 2026 annual funding. An agreement for services was presented for Commissioner review. Funding stays in Wells County, and historically the Wells County donation has been used for youth serving programs. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the 2026 \$20,000 annual funding request for Family Centered Services. Motion carried 2-0.

Timberline Estates Secondary Plat: Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. addressed the Commissioners requesting approval for a secondary subdivision plat for Timberline Estates. Eight lots with private drives and private wells are included. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the secondary subdivision plat for Timberline Estates. Motion carried 2-0.

Murray Cemetery Restoration: Cemetery board members Cari Whicker and Chris Pease addressed the Commissioners regarding the proposed Murray Cemetery restoration. The Commissioners appropriated \$50,000 for cemetery restorations in 2025. A proposal was presented outlining how those funds would be spent. The restoration would be completed between May and October 2025. Pease stated that the cemetery board will give monthly updates to the Commissioners during the restoration. The Commissioners were excited about the increased communication and attention to procedure within the cemetery board. The Commissioners instructed Attorney Storer to work with the cemetery board to create an appropriate contract to present back to the Commissioners for approval.

Bluffton Easement Agreement: An easement agreement with the City of Bluffton was presented for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the easement agreement between Wells County and the City of Bluffton. Motion carried 2-0.

Right-of-Way: One right-of-way document was presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept and sign the right-of-way document. Motion carried 2-0.

Adjourned: 5:46PM, a motion was made by Blake Gerber to adjourn, seconded by Jeff Stringer. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Commissioners

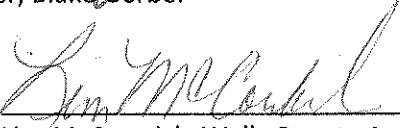


President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest:



Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor