

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session May 5, 2025

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday May 5, 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 Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes from April 21, 2025, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #9 in the amount of \$310,331.07 and 222 claims totaling \$1,011,720.42. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 65 inmates, 20 pretrial Superior, 40 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 DOC and 3 DOC. Holliday reported that bids for the kitchen drainage issue are being compiled by vendors. The Sheriff will report back with more information.

Wells County Highway: Highway Supervisor Shawn Bonar updated the Commissioners on new and ongoing projects. The highway employees are patching roads that are on the seal list for 2025. Employees are cleaning ditches and sewing seeds on the front slopes of road conversions. Dust control will start on Wednesday May 7th and 8th. The Local Trax project is getting connections to new roads and the road(s) will be closed for another couple of weeks. Bridge 51 is on schedule with an anticipated road opening on May 8th. Bridge 106 is on schedule with an expected completion date of November 7th. Bonar submitted his resignation; his last working day will be May 15th. He was thankful for the opportunity to serve Wells County. The Commissioners wished him well and thanked him for his time as the Highway Supervisor.

Highway Engineer: Engineer Nate Whitacre reported that CCMG 2025-1, Meridian Road, paperwork has been submitted to INDOT, and we are awaiting funds. Bridge 71, CR 200W over Rock Creek, contract has been sent to Commissioner Stringer for his signature. During the road conversion for CR 800E, south of CR 750N, a new 6 ft. X 3 ft concrete box has replaced three small parallel pipes for better flow. Four rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the four rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

Community Corrections Advisory Board Recommendation: Judge Kent Kiracofe presented a motion that was approved by the Community Corrections Advisory board regarding an Interim Director. The motion read "The Advisory Board hereby appoints the Assistant Chief Probation Officer, beginning June 21, 2025, to serve as Interim Director of Community Corrections for a period of 90 days or until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Advisory Board, whichever is later. This interim appointment is subject to approval by the County Executive Body as required by statute. The Advisory Board will review this interim appointment and determine next steps at that time." Commissioner Gerber was in favor of the interim appointment but would also like to review applications for further insight. Commissioner Vanover had questions regarding the appointment. One question was whether both full-time positions could be done effectively. Judge Kiracofe felt the functions overlap between departments and with some shifting of responsibilities could be done effectively. Local Control was also referenced by

Vanover, Judge Kiracofe stated there would still be a Commissioner appointed Community Corrections Advisory Board as well as financial oversight for that department. Judge Kiracofe felt the timing for the assessment by an Interim Director would be ideal. The Advisory Boards option for an Interim Director would incur no cost to Wells County for this assessment. Commissioner Stringer was supportive of hearing all options and a clear plan moving forward. The subject was tabled until the May 19th meeting for further discussion.

BRIC Grant: Emergency Management Director John Petro updated the Commissioners regarding the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant (BRIC). He had previously reported to the Commissioners regarding this matching grant that would provide funds to develop the countywide pre-disaster mitigation plan. FEMA has recently announced a decision to shift the agency’s priority from pre-disaster mitigation activities to disaster response and recovery measures exclusively. If funding had not already been received, it would not be coming. Wells County had not yet received the funds.

RSD Funding Request: Ryan Lefeld and Lewis Brown, representing the Regional Sewer District, discussed local matching funds for the Tocsin sewer project. At the April 21st meeting the Commissioners were concerned about the capacity of the City of Bluffton’s Wastewater treatment plant. A report, compiled by Director of Utilities Jon Oman, stated that there is enough capacity. The RSD is working on the grant paperwork and think shovels could be in the ground by December 2026. Commissioner Stringer asked to table the discussion until the May 19th meeting.

Council on Aging: Executive Director Betsy Collier emailed the Commissioners the 2026 INDOT 5311 Operating Grant to review. Collier stated that the Wells County annual contribution listed in the grant is currently \$40,000. Suggested was an additional contribution of \$29,676.80 for the match required for the purchase of two vans. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the 2026 Grant agreement with a \$40,000 annual contribution. Motion carried 3-0. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover and allow President Jeff Stringer to execute the grant documents when presented. Motion carried 3-0.

Timekeeping: Two proposals were presented to the Commissioners for a timekeeping system. Both vendors are integrated with the current financial system. Costs for each system were: Right Touch - \$25,500 startup costs, annual costs of \$15,000. Attendance on Demand – \$44,500 startup costs, annual costs of \$13,080. Auditor McCormick and Commissioner Stringer preferred some options available with Right Stuff. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve moving forward with the Right Stuff timekeeping system. Motion carried 3-0.

Adjourned: Michael Vanover motioned; Blake Gerber seconded to adjourn at 6:13PM.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor