

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session May 19, 2025

The Wells County Commissioners met in a regular session on Monday, May 19, 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 the May 5, 2025, regular session and May 5, 2025, executive session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #10 in the amount of \$305,314.14 and 188 claims totaling \$419,614.54. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 66 inmates, 17 pretrial Superior, 39 pretrial Circuit, 2 F6 and 9 DOC. Sheriff Holliday invited quotes from three vendors for the kitchen drainage project, two responded back that they would not be submitting a bid, Holliday received a bid back from the third vendor. Commissioner Stringer questioned the scope of the project that was originally bid out. Stringer suggested getting a recommendation on expanding the scope. Reservations with the current scope included not wanting to replace cast iron with cast iron and is the electrical in the same condition. Holliday will report back during the June 2nd meeting regarding Stringer's recommendations.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre updated the Commissioners on current projects. INDOT funding for CCMG 2025-1 (Meridian Road) should be received within a month. Whitacre requested Commissioner signatures on the title block for the title sheet for Bridge 71. Final tracings are due in July, BF&S is submitting to INDOT in June. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve signatures on the title block for the title sheet for Bridge 71. Motion carried 3-0. CR 300W has some failing pavement in need of repair. Whitacre requested pricing from E&B paving, who have crews in the area, Whitacre thought the price was high and is working on ways to decrease the cost. Whitacre met with INODT regarding two intersection improvement projects on 300W, US 224 intersection and SR 218 intersection. Regarding US 224 he could see an issue with alignment, but was hesitant to add another four-way stop. SR 218 he didn't think had sight distance issues. These intersections were flagged by INDOT because of accidents. One right-of-way was presented for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the right-of-way. Motion carried 3-0.

Library Update: Library board member Joe McFarren updated the Commissioners on current library programs. The winter reading program runs through the month of February. The community goal was to read 500,000 pages to donate 125 books to the local Kate's Kart program at Bluffton Regional Medical Center. A total of 671,328 pages were read in total. Summer reading starts on May 27th and runs until July 31st. A kickoff party will be on June 3rd. Prizes include Chamber bucks, a 1-day pool pass for teens, a pizza of the month gift card and a \$100 Amazon gift card. Patrons can also donate a book to Kate's Kart in lieu of their initial 500-page prize. A mini golf fundraiser raised \$2,716 for additional programming expenses. All prizes are funded by the Friends of the Library through donations and fundraising.

Election Pay: Clerk Beth Davis came before Commissioners requesting support for a resolution passed by the Election board regarding pay for early voting and election day workers. In the resolution election

day inspectors would receive \$300, election day judges would receive \$200, election day judges that pick up and return equipment would receive \$220, election day ballot counters will be paid \$16/hour, election day drivers that pick up equipment will be paid \$150 each for a total of 4 workers, early voting poll workers, either in the courthouse or satellite locations, will be paid \$16/hour with meal allowance, \$13 if the meal is catered. The Commissioners expressed support for the pay resolution.

RSD Funding Request: Ryan Lefeld and Lewis Brown, representing the Regional Sewer District, discussed local matching funds for the Tocsin sewer project. The requested funding was \$250,000, which would require a letter of financial support from the Commissioners. If grant funding is not approved by the grantor agency, Wells County funding would not be necessary. The project timeline includes grant submission in June 2025, a priority list will be distributed in July 2025, October 2025 will have financing packages available. Commissioner Gerber is in support of funding but defers to the other members for the amount, Commissioner Vanover is in support of \$200,000 in local funding. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover, to commit up to \$200,000 in local funding for the Wells County Regional Sewer District Tocsin sewer project. Motion carried 3-0.

Council on Aging: Terri Stacy, Council on Aging representative, presented the 1st Quarter 2025 claim for reimbursement totaling \$166,371.00. Also presented was a 5339-capital claim for two new minivans totaling \$120,700.00. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and allow the President to sign the 1st Quarter 2025 claim for \$166,371.00 and the 5339-capital claim for the two new minivans for \$120,700.00. Motion carried 3-0.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment: Mike Lautzenheiser Jr. presented an APC unanimous no recommended amendment to the Wells County Zoning Ordinance. The requested zoning changes were from Agricultural-1 Zoned District to an Agricultural Residential-1 Zoned District for the development of a major subdivision. The current zoning allows for 6 sell offs, which have been exhausted. The Commissioner options are to approve the petition, deny the petition, or no action for 90 days which will deny the petition by default. The petitioner, David Runkel and MLS Engineering representative Brett Miller spoke on behalf of the petition. Miller stated that more information, such as retention and drainage, would be presented in more detail if zoning was approved. One concern for the opposition was if Ossian would be able to handle the additional waste, of which, Runkel and Miller stated that Ossian had verified that their system would be able to handle it. Tyler Karns spoke in opposition to an exception in the rezoning ordinance. He presented to the APC a list of signatures also in opposition to the zoning amendment. Andrew Wallace thought there should be more up-front research prior to the rezoning petition. He is not in favor of more traffic, feels this should remain a rural area, and is worried about drainage. Courtney Springer is not in favor of more development; this is a quiet place to raise children and does not want this built in her back yard. Michelle Bowman spoke on behalf of her father, Don Milholland who owns property west of the proposed area, stating that this area was a wetland originally and a wildlife habitat. Michael Lautzenheiser Jr. gave options to the Commissioners such as setting commitments on lot amounts and other standards. The Commissioners would like to revisit the rezoning Ordinance Amendment during the June 16th meeting.

Contract for Cemetery Restoration: Attorney Storer presented an independent contractor agreement for cemetery monument restoration for Commissioner review. The agreement is between Wells County and Bell Ringer Restoration, LLC. The restoration is for the Murray Cemetery located at CR 400N in Lancaster Township. A quote presented on April 9, 2025, by Bell Ringer Restoration for the first eleven rows of the Cemetery equals \$50,000. All work on the project must be completed by October 31, 2025. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the independent

contractor agreement for cemetery monument restoration and allow the President to sign the agreement. Motion carried 3-0.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:06PM. The motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor