

ROLL CALL

Harry Baumgartner, Jr.	John Potter
Tyson Brooks	Tim Rohr
Rick Elwell	John Schuhmacher
Jarrold Hahn	Melissa Woodworth
Bill Horan	

Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director

On May 1, 2025, Tyson Brooks called the meeting of the Area Plan Commission to order at 7:00 p.m., and nine members were present for the roll call. Vicki Andrews and Geoff Lance were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Jarrold Hahn moved to approve the minutes with changes from the January 9, 2025, meeting. Tim Rohr seconded the motion, which carried 9-0.

OLD ITEMS:**NEW ITEMS:**

A 25-05-05 JEFFERSON TWP. SE/4 31-28N-12E David L Runkle Jr & Shaunda L Runkle request approval for rezoning to A-R. The property is located at 6126 N 100 E, Ossian, IN 46777, and is currently zoned A-1.

David Runkle presented the rezoning request. There was some board discussion on the differences in the zoning types and what was allowed and not allowed as permitted uses. Mr. Runkle discussed the proposed layout and the number of lots he'd like to see. Jarrold Hahn asked if any engineering work had been done, to which Mr. Runkle said he was waiting until rezoning happened due to the cost of engineering work. Tim Rohr asked if there would be a requirement for home sizes. There was a board discussion on home size, drive access, and possible drainage issues.

Tyson Brooks opened the floor for public comment and questions. Tyler Karns presented the board with a signed letter opposing the rezoning request, which included 17 signatures. Courtney Springer said she doesn't want to see multiple homes go up and to please consider the neighbors who live on the surrounding properties. Donna Ternet said she moved to a rural area and hopes it stays rural. Andrew Wallace explained that they built up their rural property and hoped all the properties would remain rural. Mike Dillon said that he doesn't want to see a housing addition. He voiced concern about long-term pump stations and maintenance. Mr. Dillon mentioned the water table and the worries that if it dropped, everyone around there would need to dig a new well. Allen Shumate said he had nothing against Mr. Runkle but that the traffic was already bad enough with the Norwell traffic, and more homes weren't needed, which would increase that traffic. Dennis Bobay asked if this proposed development would happen and what would stop others from doing the same thing. He said that zoning needs to hold its weight and not continuously change. Brian Kistler said he's probably been around that area the longest. He said initially, when Mr. Runkle approached him about the rezoning, he thought it was his ground and let him do what he wanted. Mr. Kistler then said, after talking with surrounding neighbors, he's had a change of heart and that it should be done, and no longer supported the petition. William Anaya explained to the board that, as a veteran who doesn't like to be around

many others, he opposed this project and didn't want to see more homes go in. Shanda Runkle said that if everyone wants it to stay the same, they can all go in and pay the taxes.

Tyson Brooks closed the public comment part of the petition. Mr. Brooks invited Mr. Runkle back up to the microphone for additional questions. Mr. Runkle said it appeared that all the neighbors he talked to changed their minds. There was a board discussion on the water table, which Jarrod Hahn said was a DNR question. There was also discussion on traffic studies and no traffic counts for that specific road. Tim Rohr noted that, having lived on that road, the traffic was terrible, and there were lengthy backups. John Potter said that if we ok this, it doesn't mean the project will happen for sure. Mr. Brooks said the decision is with the County Commissioners, and the Area Plan Commission recommends a motion. There was discussion on approvals with commitments, which the Commissioners would have final approval. Mr. Hahn suggested fewer lots to help keep the same feel for the area.

John Potter motioned to send a Do Pass Recommendation with a five-lot limit to the County Commissioners. Harry Baumgartner, Jr, seconded this motion. The vote was 4 to 5, with John Potter, Bill Horan, Harry Baumgartner, Jr., and John Schuhmacher in favor. The motion failed.

Jarrold Hahn motioned to send a Do Pass Recommendation with a three-lot limit to the County Commissioners. Harry Baumgartner, Jr, seconded this motion. The vote was 5 to 4, with Jarrod Hahn, Tyson Brooks, Rick Elwell, Harry Baumgartner, Jr., and John Schuhmacher in favor. The motion failed.

Jarrold Hahn motioned to send the County Commissioners a Do Not Pass Recommendation. Melissa Woodworth seconded this motion. The vote was 5 to 4, with Jarrod Hahn, Tim Rohr, Tyson Brooks, Rick Elwell, and Melissa Woodworth in favor. The motion failed.

Bill Horan motioned to send a Do Pass Recommendation with a four-lot limit to the County Commissioners. John Potter seconded this motion. The vote was 4 to 5, with John Potter, Bill Horan, Harry Baumgartner, Jr., and John Schuhmacher in favor. The motion failed.

Bill Horan motioned to send a No Recommendation to the County Commissioners. Jarrod Hahn seconded this motion. The vote was 9 to 0, with all in favor. The motion passed.

A 25-05-06 HARRISON TWP. NE/4 9-26N-12E Jackson Family Trust requests approval for a proposed gas station and convenience store. The property is located at the southwest corner of SR 1 and Harvest Road, Bluffton, IN 46714, and is zoned I-1.

Rob Sweet represented the development plan on behalf of the Jackson Family Trust and Casey's. He explained the project details and asked the board if there were any questions. There was a discussion on the drive, and it would be private when built; however, it would be built to city standards if it ever became a public road. The stormwater detention for the site was also discussed. Tyson Brooks opened the floor for public comment and questions. Bart Frauhiger said this will be a nice addition to the south end of town, and the project makes sense. Megan Dunham asked if this would also be for semi-trucks or a typical gas station. Mr. Sweet explained that there wasn't room for the large diesel lanes so that it would be a standard gas station and convenience store. Mr. Brooks closed the floor for public comment. The board discussed the hours of operation for the gas station and whether the city could be on site while the drive is being installed.

Motion to Approve: Jarrod Hahn
Second: John Schuhmacher
Vote: 9-0

OTHER BUSINESS:**V2023-021: Rodger Watson, 7666 S 200 E, Bluffton (Junk Accumulation)**

Michael Lautzenheiser gave the board an update on the violation and how the property owner continues to improve and often provides the office with updates. He suggested giving them additional time to continue their work.

Motion to continue to the July 3, 2025, meeting: Jarrod Hahn
Second: John Schuhmacher
Vote: 9-0

Proposed Ordinance Amendments

Michael Lautzenheiser recapped the formatting and definition updates proposed at the next meeting for a vote, along with the permitted use table updates. He said the goal is to have definitions that match and are easy to see if a word will be in the definition section. He talked about the proposed noise ordinance, and there was some discussion. Lastly, he discussed the major subdivision onsite restrictions regarding the stormwater section. Melissa Woodworth said this is a needed change. Megan Dunham said that it was good and much needed as well.

WELLS COUNTY VISION 2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROGRESS:

Michael Lautzenheiser started the conversation regarding the Master Plan Rough Draft. He said that Markle and Zanesville already have one in place and that the goal is to bring everyone else, including the county, up to the same spot. Jarrod Hahn asked that the word frequency image in the documents be explained. Tyson Brooks asked who was on the steering committee, and it was answered that two individuals from each community are on the committee. Melissa Woodworth said that he saw the survey being offered on multiple platforms. Mr. Lautzenheiser thanked all who participated in the survey as well. Mr. Brooks opened the floor to public comment. Mike Grant from Markle asked that they be included in fear that they will get lost in the future if they are not.

Brandon Harnish asked that the existing solar ordinance be changed to match the vision plan by eliminating large-scale solar. Jarrod Hahn said that since it was brought up, he felt there were three options regarding the solar ordinance. First, leave it alone; second, take a stand and do not allow it altogether as a permitted use; lastly, sit down and have an adult conversation on energy needs after reading a letter that was asked to be added to the Plan Commission website. He said we don't want to try to outthink the energy companies. Rick Elwell explained the increase in electricity once the city's current contract is up, saying there isn't the capacity, and the grid is in a rough shape. Michelle Bowman said she received news last week that the solar company pulled out of the project in the northern part of the county, but that she was still fighting for the southern part. She said that option 2 was what the county needed regarding Mr. Hahn's three options. There was discussion on different types of energy production. Tabby Fate noted that she was still against solar coming in because it was all around her home. Megan Dunham said that we need to look at the long-term and short-term. She said solar ground will not return to farm ground and asked about other energy sources. Bart Frauhiger liked the idea of forming a committee, with everyone working together and getting guidance from different areas. He said he knows the board cares about the community and is doing well. Brooke Cushing wants to live

in the county and not be surrounded by solar. She talked about good-quality farm ground and said putting solar panels there doesn't make sense. Tyson Brooks said that we value everyone's opinion and should remember how the board voted last time.

REVITALIZATION & TRAILS UPDATES

Michael Lautzenheiser referred to the opinion letter for this update.

HOUSING STUDY UPDATE

Michael Lautzenheiser referred to the opinion letter for this update.

ADVISORY:

The June 12, 2025, meeting of the Wells County Area Plan Commission.

ADJOURN:

Jarrold Hahn moved to adjourn the meeting, which Tim Rohr seconded. May 1, 2025, the Area Plan Commission meeting was adjourned at 10:06 p.m.


Tyson Brooks, President

ATTEST: 
Michael Lautzenheiser Jr., Secretary