

## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

### REGULAR SESSION

August 5, 2025

Wells County Council met in regular session Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Steve Huggins, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert and County Auditor, Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the minutes from July 8, 2025, regular session. Motion carried 7-0

**Additional Appropriations:** A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the additional appropriations in the General Fund for Superior Court, and the 2019 Court Interpreter Grant. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the additional appropriations in the Cumulative Capital Fund. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the additional appropriations in the Auditor's Ineligible Deductions Fund. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the additional appropriations in the 20.205 Durable Pavement Markings Grant Fund. Motion carried 7-0.

The Additional Appropriation for the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund was tabled until the September 2, 2025, meeting.

**Transfers:** A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Vicki Andrews, to approve the transfer in the General Fund for the Commissioners. Motion carried 7-0.

**Review of 2025 Estimated Property Tax Levy Limits and Property Tax Credits/Circuit Breakers:** Per IC 6-1.1-17-3.6 the County Council at the first meeting in August of each year shall review the estimated property tax levy limits and the estimated reductions due to property tax credits/circuit breakers for each taxing unit in the county. Recommendations made by the council shall be distributed to all taxing units. Council members reviewed the reports that were provided by the Department of Local Government Finance and did not see any significant changes in the levy limits; the reports showed increases from the growth quotient of 4%. A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Scott Elzey to notify all taxing units within the county that no recommendation is being made on the estimated 2026 property tax levy limits or the 2026 estimated reductions due to property tax credits/circuit breakers. Motion carried 7-0.

**Innkeepers Update:** Audry Dudley, Tourism Coordinator, updated the County Council on tourism in Wells County. Dudley reported to County Council that Innkeeper Tax collections through May are \$27,438.93, which is a 32% decrease in revenue over past years. Bluffton NOW!, Music on the Plaza, Markle Chamber of Commerce Summer Sounds, Creative Arts Council Anne of Green Gables, Ossian Parks & Recreation Summer Concert Series, Wells County 4-H Fair, Wells County Trails, and Bluffton Parks Department Chicks Run were grant recipients in 2025. Dudley stated with the loss in revenue they will budget conservatively for 2026.

**Wells County Foundation Revitalization Project:** Brandon Harnish updated the County Council on the proposed Revitalization project. Harnish informed the County Council that the Wells County Foundation has committed funding for the project. Seth Whicker reiterated that the foundation has committed funding to the land trust. PAGO USA service fees of \$90,000 are proposed be paid out of the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund. In the initial proposal, the Wells County Foundation would commit \$3,000,000 for the project with the City of Bluffton and Wells County each extending a \$1 million line of credit. The line of credit will be for a five-year term to be repaid at a rate of 5% interest. Harnish associated the promissory note with other forms of incentives for public services, in this case Wells County would be repaid. Whicker is encouraging the Wells County Foundation to have a public forum for comments. The line of credit promissory note and the Joint Resolution approving a loan of funds to the Wells County Community Foundation proposals will be revisited in the September 2<sup>nd</sup> County Council meeting.

**Amended 2025 Wells County Salary Ordinance:** An updated 2025 Salary Ordinance was presented to the County Council for approval. The updates include an updated wage for the Highway Supervisor and a change of the Community Correction Director. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve Ordinance 2025-06 Wells County Salary Ordinance. Motion carried 7-0.

**Library Board Appointment:** Two applications were received for the County Council appointment to the Wells County Library Board. The appointment is for a four-year term beginning on August 16, 2025, through August 15, 2029. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Vicki Andrews to appoint Dayle Mentzer to the Wells County Library board. Motion carried 7-0.

**LIT Property Tax Credit Allocations:** County Council had a discussion on Local Income Tax Credits and redistributing those credits into the LIT PSAP and LIT EMS categories. Presented to the County Council was a proposed LIT Notice To Taxpayers that eliminated the remaining .14 property tax credits, redirecting .07 of the credits into PSAP and the remaining .07 credits into EMS services. Each credit has a value of \$90,954.87. The .07 credits into LIT PSAP and LIT EMS would total \$636,684.09 for each allocation. A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to publish the Notice to Taxpayers for the proposed Local Income Tax Ordinance 2025-07 to eliminate property tax credits of .14 with .07 going into LIT PSAP and .07 going into LIT EMS with a public hearing to be held on September 2, 2025, at 7PM. Motion carried 7-0.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Council adjourned at 7:41 PM. The motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Scott Elzey. Motion carried 7-0.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

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President, Seth Whicker

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Vice President, Vicki Andrews

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Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor