

## WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

### BUDGET SESSION August 28, 2025

The Wells County Council met in budget session Thursday, August 28, 2025, at 8:00AM 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 Auditor Lisa McCormick.

#### OPENING

The first budget meeting for the 2026 Budget Year started with Council Members meeting with all Elected Officials and Department Head to review their 2026 budget requests.

**Commissioners:** Commissioner Blake Gerber presented a budget request of \$4,152,891 for the Commissioner's general fund budget and a request of \$2,174,400 for the LIT Economic Development Fund. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Commissioner Gerber discussed increased wage requests for the Public Defenders, and an increase in the Social Security line in the General fund. LIT Economic Development had increases in Roads and Bridges and Capital Development. The County Council requested a reduction in the Animal Shelter line from \$140,000 to \$40,000.

**Solid Waste District:** District President Blake Gerber presented a budget request of \$123,519. This amount is reimbursed to the county 100%. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Highway and LR&S:** Highway Engineer Nate Whitacre presented a total Highway budget request of \$5,267,921, LR&S Budget request of \$656,000, and Cumulative Bridge request of \$470,000. A 4% increase in wages was requested. Whitacre introduced wage adjustments for a clearer pay separation between roles within the department. The separation would give the mechanics, operators, and sign manager an additional 2% increase over the requested 4%, the road foreman wages would increase an additional 6% over the requested 4% overall increase. Laborers and drivers would not receive an additional increase over the 4% that is requested.

**Surveyor:** Jarrod Hahn presented the Surveyor budget request of \$154,494, the Drainage Board request of \$23,110, and the Corner Perpetuation request of \$34,000. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Health:** Sahara Wall presented a Health Department budget request of \$191,148, Local Public Health Services Fund budget request of \$176,353, and Local Health Maintenance budget request of \$39,836, and a Local Health Dept. Trust Budget of \$47,065. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Recorder:** Rina Stuck presented the Recorders general fund budget request of \$99,123. The Identification Security Protection budget request was \$4,000. The Recorder's Perpetuation Fund budget request was \$24,938 for part time clerical assistance. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Treasurer:** Pam Gregory presented a budget request of \$168,538. A 5% increase in wages was requested. Gregory discussed increased revenue regarding interest on investments. Interest earned in 2025 to date is approximately \$500,000 she stated.

**Court House:** Bobbie Studebaker presented a budget request of \$344,842. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**IT Department:** Roger Richardson submitted a budget request for \$232,276. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Extension Office:** Bill Horan presented a budget request of \$279,788. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Veteran:** Dewey Randall submitted a budget request of \$51,985. A 4% increase in wages was requested.

**EMA:** John Petro presented a budget request of \$212,098 for his general fund budget and \$9,100 for the LEPC Fund budget. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Council requested a reduction in the Vehicle line of \$80,000.

**Area Plan & GIS:** Mike Lautzenheiser Jr. presented his Plan Commission budget request of \$198,427 and his GIS budget request of \$48,425. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Soil & Water:** Eric Johnson presented the budget request of \$47,107. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Prosecuting Attorney:** Colin Andrews presented his general fund budget request of \$726,166, his Pre-Trial Deferral fund budget request of \$21,471, and his Pre-Trial Diversion Budget request of \$1,125. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Andrews is proposing moving one IV-D employee, who is currently being paid half of their wages from IV-D incentive, to being paid wholly out of the general fund. General fund dollars that are spent on IV-D can be reimbursed back to the General fund at 66%, if reported as such. Currently two employees are getting a stipend of \$750 annually for additional duties, Andrews requested increasing the amount to \$2,500 annually for each employee.

**Superior Court:** Judge Andrew Antrim presented his budget request of \$209,798. A 5% increase in wages was requested. The largest percentage increases in his budget were for translation services and psychiatric services, which he stated is becoming an ever-increasing issue.

**Circuit Court:** Judge Kent Kiracofe presented his general fund budget request of \$1,015,530, the Supp Public Defender Fund budget request of \$15,000, Jury Pay Fund budget request of \$5,000, Adult Probation Fund budget of \$119,203, Juvenile Probation fund budget of \$7,220, the Urinalysis fund budget of \$8,000, and the Substance/Indigent Fund budget request of \$650. A 5% increase in wages was requested. The Juvenile Public Defender line increased substantially in that budget; Kiracofe thought the requested amount seemed a bit high. Judge Kiracofe will research the amount and reply to the County Council to confirm the amount.

**Community Corrections:** Community Corrections Director Madison Hake presented a general fund budget request of \$97,523, a Project Income budget request of \$151,518, a Community Corrections Grant II budget request of \$220,535 and the Misdemeanor Fund budget request of \$17,103. A 3% increase in wages was requested. After the submission of the Community Corrections budget to the County Council, DOC reduced the Grant II amount to \$151,535. The County Council will revisit the Community Corrections budget after the Community Corrections Advisory board approves of the updated 2026 Community Corrections budget(s).

**Sheriff:** Sheriff Scott Holliday presented the general fund Sheriff's department budget request of \$2,515,680, the Jail budget request of \$1,994,834, and LIT Public Safety budget request of \$563,171.

**Clerk:** Beth Davis presented her Clerk's office budget request of \$364,915. The requested Election Board budget was \$94,192; the Perpetuation Fund budget was \$35,000. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

**Statewide 911:** Mike Miller presented the Statewide 911 budget request of \$475,000.

**Auditor:** Lisa McCormick presented her general fund budget request of \$248,765, Auditor's Ineligible Deduction fund budget request of \$8,000, Plat Book Fund budget request of \$13,970, and the County Elected Official Training Fund budget request of \$7,500. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

**Innkeepers Tax Collection Fund:** Audry Dudley presented the Innkeepers Tax budget request of \$70,000.

**County Council:** County Council presented a budget request of \$55,469, LIT Correctional/Rehab Facility budget request of \$342,063 which covers the jail bond payment, Rainy Day had a budget request of \$250,000, the Cumulative Capital Development Fund budget request of \$652,000 which covers the Highway bond payment, LIT dedicated to PSAP budget request for \$500,000, and LIT dedicated to EMS budget request for \$351,220. A 0% increase in wages was requested.

The most requested increases to 2026 budgets were wages.

The Assessor will appear before the County Council during the September 2<sup>nd</sup> regular meeting. The Coroner will appear before the County Council during the September 3<sup>rd</sup> budget meeting.

The next scheduled budget meeting will be on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 6:00PM followed by a meeting on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00PM, and Wednesday September 10<sup>th</sup> at 6PM, all meetings are only if needed.

**Recess:** The meeting recessed at 12:58 until Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6PM.

#### **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