

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

PUBLIC HEARING REGULAR SESSION 2026 BUDGET ADOPTION October 7, 2025

The Wells County Council met for a Public Hearing, regular session, and 2026 Budget Adoption on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, at 7PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex Building, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Steve Huggins, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

PUBLIC HEARING Local Income Tax Ordinance

Wells County Council held a public hearing regarding the proposed Ordinance for Local Income Tax imposed within Wells County. The proposed ordinance will redistribute current Local Income Tax allocations. Council President Seth Whicker opened the floor for public comment, there were no public comments, the Public Hearing was closed.

REGULAR SESSION

Minutes: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the minutes from August 28, 2025, budget meeting, September 2, 2025, regular session, and September 3, 2025, budget meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

Additional Appropriations: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the Additional Appropriation requests in the General Fund for the Jail, LIT Public Safety fund for Medical Expense, and LIT Correction/Rehab Facility fund. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation requests for LIT Public Safety fund for Local Match, and 97.047 BRIC Grant fund. Motion carried 7-0.

Reduction of Appropriation and Additional Appropriation: A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation in the Highway Administration Department and the Reduction of Appropriation for the Highway Maintenance & Repair Department. Motion carried 7-0.

Transfers: A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve the transfers in Local Road & Street fund and Highway-Maintenance & Repair fund. Motion carried 7-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 61 inmates, 27 pretrial Circuit, 26 pretrial Superior, 5 DOC, and 0 F6. The monthly Officer/Jail report for September was presented to Council members as well as the Quarterly Commissary report. The Sheriff's Pension Review, a new requirement for annual reporting, was presented by Sheriff Holliday to the County Council. \$154,425 in delinquent DOC payments have been received this week. Construction is underway in the kitchen area of the jail; food prep is off site for the time being. Holliday informed Council that the CHIRP grant that has been renewed for \$40,000 for the 2026 grant cycle.

Animal Shelter Discussion: Commissioner Stringer addressed the County Council with an update on the Animal Shelter. He is in discussion with the Mayor of Bluffton regarding resolutions to the current issues. The annual reimbursement from 2023 to 2024 increased \$50,000 due to employee benefits being added, with no mention prior to the billing. Stringer cited lack of County animal enforcement in the current agreement. An updated agreement, a board of three members consisting of one City representative, one county representative, and one citizen with a 3rd party review, as well as more County enforcement were points of importance for Stringer. The 2025 reimbursement is projected to be \$180,000. The intention of the Commissioners is not to defund the Animal Shelter, but to get value from what is funded, Stringer stated.

2026 BUDGET ADOPTION

The 2026 Wells County budget in the amount of \$26,195,534 "Ordinance No. 2025-10"; the 2026 Wells County Solid Waste District budget in the amount of \$277,199 "Ordinance No. 2025-11"; the 2026 Rock Creek Conservancy budget in the amount of \$92,250 "Ordinance No. 2025-12" were presented to the County Council for review and approval. A motion was made by Vicki Andrews, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the 2026 Wells County #2025-10, 2026 Wells County Solid Waste #2025-11, and the 2026 Rockcreek Conservancy #2025-12 budgets. Motion carried 7-0.

Recorder Ordinance & Affidavit: Recorder Rina Stuck presented an Ordinance and Affidavit for expending the part-time wage out of the Recorder's Records Perpetuation Fund. The affidavit attached is signed by the Recorder stating that \$24,938 may be used to supplement the payment of payroll expenses for 2026 for part-time wages. A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Vicki Andrews to approve Ordinance 2025-09 approving the Wells County Recorder's Request to partially fund Recorder's office salaries from the Recorder's Records Perpetuation fund for 2026. Motion carried 7-0.

Ordinance 2025-07 Modifying Local Income Tax Rates for Wells County: An Ordinance modifying local income tax rates for 2026 was presented to County Council for review. The proposed LIT Notice To Taxpayers will eliminate 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 Steve Huggins, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve Ordinance 2025-07 Modifying Local Income Tax Rates for Wells County. Motion carried 7-0.

2026 Meeting Dates: 2026 meeting dates were presented to County Council for review. Due to conflicts, on Wednesday May 6th and Wednesday November 4th it was discussed moving the meeting times for those two dates to 5:30 PM. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brandon Harnish, to approve the 2026 meeting dates for County Council with the modification of times for May 6th and November 4th at 5:30. Motion carried 7-0.

Adjourned: The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 PM.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor