

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session October 20, 2025

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, October 20, 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, 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 October 6, 2025, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #21 in the amount of \$294,273.49 and 212 claims totaling \$2,279,473.17. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 60 inmates, 20 pretrial Superior, 28 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 DOC and 9 DOC. Holliday reported that kitchen repairs should be completed within the week. Commissioner Stringer suggested creating a master plan for future repairs and updates.

Highway Supervisor: Highway Supervisor Matt Witt presented a Commercial Driver's License policy for Commissioner review. The purpose of the policy is to establish guidelines for current and prospective employees who are required to hold a CDL to perform their job duties. The policy outlines the purpose of the policy, a summary of the policy, definition of CDL, and program guidelines. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the CDL policy as presented (Misc. 2025-04). Motion carried 3-0. Witt presented a Cintas uniform contract for review. Cintas would provide high-visibility rental clothing and facility services for the Highway department. The agreement is for 24 months, which has been negotiated down from 5 years. Following a brief discussion, it was determined that more modifications are needed. Witt will discuss changes to the contract with Attorney Storer and submit it back to Cintas. Witt also brought up for discussion a uniform allowance policy for highway personnel. Commissioner Stringer would like to tighten up the uniform policy for all departments. After conversations with other departments, the subject will be revisited. For winter operations preparedness Witt had his crews run their winter routes. Route completion times were between 5.5 to 6 hours. Witt realizes, with snow, they will take longer but was pleased with the results. November 3rd is a bid opening for an asphalt distributor truck. Eight rights-of-way documents were presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the eight rights-of-way documents, contingent on landowners' signatures. Motion carried 3-0.

Highway Engineer: A utility permit was presented for Commissioner approval for Pearce Services on behalf of Frontier. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the utility permit. Motion carried 3-0. Nate Witacre presented updates to the commissioners on ongoing projects. CCMG 2025-01, River Road over Bill's Creek, application requires a letter of financial commitment. The local match, estimated at \$119,867.65, will come from the Highway fund. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the letter of financial commitment for CCMG 2025-01. Motion carried 3-0. A pre-construction meeting for Bridge 54 was held at the highway department, clearing the ROW will begin in November with demo starting in December. Bridge 71 is scheduled for the November INDOT letting. CR 500W (Rock Creek) has the road base and grade work complete and will be ready for chipseal next season. Bridge 65 replacement had grade work and

paving last week and will get guardrail, deck grooving, and sod this week. Whitacre requested quotes for CR 450E pavement markings, he will share quotes when they are received.

Opioid Committee Update: Commissioner Vanover updated the Commissioners on the Opioid Committee who had met and organized the board. Stephen Pastore, assistant chief probation officer, was appointed as the board chair. During the first quarter of 2026 the board will accept applications, of which, all recommendations will come to the Commissioners for final approval. Vanover stressed that entities must prove accountability for the funds that are awarded to them for projects.

Animal Shelter: Commissioner Stringer met with Mayor Mentzer regarding the Animal Shelter, striving to equally share cost and management. Stringer expressed the desire for county involvement in the hiring of a director. An Animal Control Ordinance will be created to add County response as well as a three-member board to oversee shelter operations.

Vacate Property: A public hearing will be held by the Commissioners on November 3rd regarding a vacation petition for a Murray property.

Easement Request from Utility: There was a brief discussion regarding an easement request from the Utility. The subject was tabled until November 3rd.

2026 Sheriff Salary Contract: The Sheriff Salary contract for 2026 was presented to the Commissioners for approval. Sheriff Holliday had already approved and signed the contract. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the 2026 Sheriff's salary contract (Misc. 2025-03), for \$128,750. Motion carried 3-0. This contract will be presented to the County Council on November 4, 2025.

Board Applications: Board appointments will be advertised for terms that end on December 31, 2025. Those boards include the Local Alcoholic Beverage board, Area Plan Commission board, cemetery board, Community Corrections Advisory board, Health department board, Huntington City/Town Public Library board, Property Tax Board of Appeals, Rockcreek Conservancy board, tourism commission, and the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission board. Applications will be accepted through November 24, appointments will be reviewed during the December 1st Commissioner meeting.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:55PM, 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