

ROLL CALL

Vicki Andrews	Michael Karafin
Harry Baumgartner Jr.	Geoff Lance
Tyson Brooks	Tim Rohr
Rick Elwell	John Schuhmacher
Jarrold Hahn	Jeff Kemper
Bill Horan	

Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Director
Tim Sipe, Attorney

On November 6, 2025, Tyson Brooks called the meeting of the Area Plan Commission to order at 7:00 pm, and eleven members were present for a roll call. Jeff Kemper was serving as an alternate for Melissa Woodworth.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Tim Rohr moved to approve the minutes with changes from the October 2, 2025, meeting. Vicki Andrews seconded the motion, which carried 9-0-2, with Jeff Kemper and Harry Baumgartner abstaining.

Tim Rohr moved to approve the minutes with changes from the October 14, 2025, special meeting. Vicki Andrews seconded the motion, which carried 10-0-1, with Jeff Kemper abstaining.

OLD ITEMS:

A 25-06-08 JEFFERSON TWP. NE/4 21-28N-12E Hillcrest Development Corporation requests approval for a proposed Gas Station and Convenience Store. The property is located at the NW corner of SR 1 & Wood Creek Drive, Ossian, IN 46777, and is currently zoned B-3.

Rob Sweet, Matt Atkins, and a general manager for Casey's, who would be in charge of this proposed store, represented the petition. Mr. Sweet gave a recap and update on the proposed development plan. He said they took the public's concerns into account and added vinyl fencing to further block light and sound for the surrounding neighbors. He also added that the dumpster enclosure would now be made of masonry block. He discussed the traffic flow and conversations with INDOT. He said that, with the property zoned accordingly and the changes discussed, he asked for approval. There was a board discussion on the stop sign location for traffic leaving the site, as well as an INDOT discussion and soil testing. Further discussion was held, and the traffic study resulted in 2 options: they are going with a stoplight, which would help with other high-traffic areas.

Tyson Brooks opened the public comment portion of this petition. Dawn Thornsberry asked when the traffic study was done since they didn't see the traffic study strips. She also asked why there weren't any shrubs now that there was a fence. Lisa House also asked about the traffic study and how it was done. Her husband found records of a study that was conducted south of Woodcreek Drive. Ms. Thornsberry asked what would happen if nobody went to Casey's and it closed. Mr. Brooks closed the public portion of the petition review.

Tyson Brooks asked about the traffic study. Rob Sweet said it was a mile vision/camera study, and that, since it was a private study, there are no public records for it yet. Casey's General Store paid for the study, not INDOT. Mr. Brooks asked about the shrubs. There was a discussion on the fencing versus the original planned shrubbery and the benefits of the proposed fence. Mr. Sweet also mentioned that if the store failed, it would be sold; however, he didn't see that happening. They haven't closed a store yet and are continuing to expand. Mr. Brooks explained how a development plan worked for approvals, provided they met all the requirements. Michael Lautzenheiser said that it's an IN Case Law requirement to approve the items in the ordinance if they are met. Mr. Lautzenheiser noted that the board hasn't received the updated plans, so that would need to be a condition of approval, along with showing INDOT approval, if the board were to vote.

Condition: Updated site plans and INDOT approval plans

Motion to approve with condition: Jarrod Hahn

Second: Bill Horan

Vote: 11-0

NEW ITEMS:

A 25-11-21 LANCASTER TWP. SW/4 22-27N-12E Helping Hands Crisis Pregnancy Center, Inc. requests approval for a proposed 135'5" x 88' Commercial Building and Parking Lot. The property is located on Commerce Drive, Bluffton, IN 46714, and is currently zoned B-3.

Calvin Tims represented the petition. He reviewed the site layout and the proposed development. There was a discussion on stormwater, Lowe's detention, and an easement for utilities. There were no public comments on this petition. There was a board discussion on easements and establishing those as needed.

Condition: Establish easements as needed for site drainage and utilities.

Motion to approve with condition: Rick Elwell

Second: John Schuhmacher

Vote: 11-0

A 25-11-22 HARRISON TWP. SE/4 5-26N-12E Shawver LLC requests approval for a proposed 20,000 sq ft Building and Parking Lot. The property is located at 812 S Bond St, Bluffton, IN 46714, and is currently zoned I-1.

Bob Gafer represented the petition. He reviewed the site layout, the oversizing for stormwater detention, and the proposed building. He further discussed past flooding incidents and the steps in place to address future flooding concerns. Jarrod Hahn further discussed how the stormwater and the oversizing of the detention area would benefit the area in general, stating that it's unknown how much it will help but that it would.

Tyson Brooks opened the floor for public comment. Ken Miller shared his concern about flooding in that area and the poor condition of the drainage in that part of town. Pat Boyd discussed the 2015 flooding and said drainage is a primary concern for him on this project. There was a discussion with Mr. Miller about a manhole on Jefferson Street. The public comment portion of this petition was closed.

There was a discussion on the stormwater plans and how they would benefit the area. Jarrod Hahn said he appreciated the developer going above and beyond in the stormwater assessment for this property.

Motion to approve: Tim Rohr

Second: Jarrod Hahn

Vote: 11-0

A 25-11-23 LANCASTER TWP. SW/4 27-27N-12E Decatur Dental Services, Inc. requests approval of a proposed 4,148 sq ft Building and Parking Lot. The property is located at 1417 Baker Place, Bluffton, IN 46714, and is currently zoned B-2.

Michael Olinger represented the petition. He explained that they would be doing what they did on the north property not long ago, by building a new office and then demolishing the old one. He said they have site approval in hand and are ready to begin construction once the remaining approvals are in place. There was a discussion on the site layout and tiles in the area. Michael Lautzenheiser said that a screen would be needed due to the residential zoning that neighbors the property.

Tyson Brooks opened the floor for public comment on this petition. Tony Truhune talked about drainage issues in the area and that the swale on the north property was never returned to its original design after construction was finished on the north property. The public comment portion was closed.

There was a discussion about the site's drainage plans for the ponds. Michael Olinger said that C3 would make it right and fix the temp drive/swale issue on the north property.

Motion to approve: Jarrod Hahn

Second: Jeff Kemper

Vote: 11-0

OTHER BUSINESS:

V2024-014: Lewis A West, 6333 S 600 W - 90, Warren (Junk Accumulation)

Michael Lautzenheiser gave a recap on the violation. Lewis West said he is doing his best, but his son continues to trash the property, and it ends in an argument when he asks him to clean up. There was a discussion on the items that needed to be picked up and the work that had been done. Mr. Lewis said he needs the board's help with a list of items still to be completed. There was a discussion on the tires and the race track on the property.

Motion to continue to the January 8th meeting: Geoff Lance

Second: Vicki Andrews

Vote: 10-1 (Michael Karafin)

2026 Attorney Contract

Michael Lautzenheiser reviewed the attorney contract for Tim Sipe for the upcoming year. He said there would be no changes.

Motion to approve: Jarrod Hahn

Second: Michael Karafin

Vote: 11-0

WELLS COUNTY VISION 2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROGRESS:

Michael Lautzenheiser gave an update on the master plan.

REVITALIZATION & TRAILS UPDATES

Michael Lautzenheiser gave an update on the SR 124 Trail, the Poka-Bache roundtable meeting with individuals from the federal and state levels, downtown efforts in both Ossian and Bluffton, upcoming events, and the 2026 Reinvestment Fund for Bluffton.

HOUSING STUDY UPDATE

Michael Lautzenheiser said that the senior apartment project and the family townhome project are both permitted.

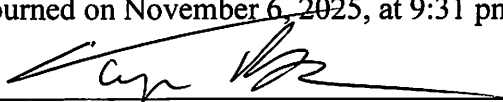
ADVISORY:

Michael Lautzenheiser talked about the Strong Towns video series that the board watched a few years ago and how Bluffton is starting to adopt parts of that plan. He said that more 3rd Places are needed, such as volunteer clubs, social clubs, churches, and local businesses. He said that some long-standing clubs are starting to close down. Geoff Lance noted that some generations might need to be taught how to provide what the community needs to thrive. Rick Elwell said that the community needs to be first. Mr. Lance discussed some of the small things they are starting in Uniondale. Jarrod Hahn mentioned the Southern Wells Archery Club and the requirement for volunteer hours. There was a discussion on volunteerism.

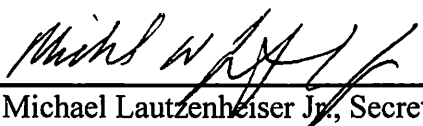
The December 4, 2025, special meeting of the Wells County Area Plan Commission, to be held at the 4-H Expo Building, was confirmed.

ADJOURN:

Vicki Andrews moved to adjourn the meeting, which Tim Rohr seconded. The motion carried 11-0. The Area Plan Commission meeting was adjourned on November 6, 2025, at 9:31 pm.


Tyson Brooks, President

ATTEST:


Michael Lautzenheiser Jr., Secretary