On September 3, 2026, at 6:00 p.m., Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr. called the Housing Matters meeting to order. Representatives from the Area Plan Commission, Wells County Commissioners, Common Council of Bluffton, Ossian Town Board, Poneto Town Board, Uniondale Town Board, Vera Cruz Town Board, Zanesville Town Board, Markle Town Board, and the public were present. The official sign-in sheets will follow.

PRESENTATION:

Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., opened the Housing Matters meeting by presenting the purpose of the meeting required by HB 1001, the goal, and how to accomplish it. He reviewed the 9 points listed below. The full presentation slideshow will be included following the minutes.

The 9 points introduced were:

- #1 – Higher Density
- #2 – Other Housing Types
- #3 – Adaptive Reuse
- #4 – Allowable Floor Area Ratio
- #5 – Waiving or Eliminating Regulations
- #6 – Impact Fees
- #7 – Streamlining
- #8 – Property Tax Abatements
- #9 – Donating Vacant Land

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., opened the floor for any public comment.

Sarah Reed asked about streamlining. Mr. Lautzenheiser spoke about the NE IN PEC (Northeast Indiana Permitting Excellence Coalition), which helps streamline the process, and how most communities in NE IN have similar timelines.

Berry Steffen provided information about low incoming housing needs and the issues that arise from insufficient low-income housing availability.

Issac Stoller asked about EDUs and allowing them in R-1 zoning. He felt that there should be discussion about how it's an underused tool in Wells County. There was discussion on the appraiser vs. lender side for financing.

BREAKOUT SESSION:

The comments from the 5 breakout areas listed below will be included in the packet following the minutes.

- #1 – Should Local Government Lower Ordinance Requirements To Increase Housing Development?
- #2 – What Ideas Do You Have For How To Increase Housing Development?
- #3 – Should Local Government Create Financial Incentives To Promote Housing Development?
- #4 – What Types Of Housing Should We Focus On?
- #5 – What Housing Issues Are You Experiencing?

ADJOURN:
The meeting ended at 7:15 pm.

Michael Lautzenheiser Jr., Director

ATTEST:
Suzanne Gentis, Administrative Assistant

HEA 1001

Wells County Public Hearing

Public Hearing Purpose

HEA 1001 requires all governmental units to hold a public hearing

GOAL: Increasing Housing Development

HOW: Is up to each jurisdiction

Starting Point: 9 Housing Related Subject Matters

Item #1 - Higher Density

Providing for **higher density** development for duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes in areas designated for single-family homes

- Should we combine our urban residential zoning districts? **(R1, R2, & R3)**
- We already have minimized lot sizes - **No minimum**
- We already have reduced setbacks - **5 feet**

Item #2 - Other Housing Types

Constructing **other housing types** such as accessory dwelling units, manufactured homes, and modular homes.

- We allow accessory dwelling units - **Except R1**
- Should we increase opportunities for manufactured housing? **Type 1 (double Wides), Type 2 larger single wides, or Type 3 smaller single wides**
- Modular Home Growth? **Should we look at more opportunities to develop modular homes in our community**

Item #3 - Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse of commercial buildings for residential use not zoned for residential uses.

- We promote mixed use development in our downtown areas **- only on upper floors**
- Should we look at redeveloping other existing commercial structures into residential opportunities **- with or without rezoning**

Item #4 - Allowable Floor Area Ratio

Increasing the **allowable floor area ratio** in multi-family housing areas

- We do not regulate this

Item #5 - **Waiving** or **Eliminating Regulations**:

Waiving or **Eliminating Regulations**:

- Garage size and placement - **sizes restricted in R1, R2 & R3 - Setbacks reduced already**
- Steeper roof pitch - **We do not regulate**
- Minimum lot size - **We already removed this**
- Greater Setbacks - **We already reduced these to 5 feet**
- Off-street parking **- We already reduced this**
- Design standards that restrict or prohibit code compliant products - **We don’t have design standards**
- Property height limitations - **We have height limitations & Have granted modifications for them recently**

Item #6 - Impact Fees:

Reviewing **impact fee** zones.

- We do not have impact fee zones

Item #7 - Streamlining:

Streamlining permitting processes by 15 days or more

- Should we look to reduce needs for public meeting / public hearing reviews?
- Should we look at ways to improve City / Town sign off timelines?
- Should we allow projects to occur by right?
- Should we change filing requirements to facilitate faster reviews?

Item 8: Property Tax Abatements

Using **property tax abatements** to enable higher density and mixed income communities

- Should we use property tax abatements to promote these?
- Should we look at other financial incentives for these types of projects?

Item 9: Donating Vacant Land

Donating vacant land for affordable housing

- Should local government units actively pursue ownership of vacant land to donate to affordable housing projects?
- Should local not-for-profits actively pursue ownership of vacant land to donate to affordable housing projects?

Other Thoughts

Do we look at rezoning or extending utilities to areas near our towns to help promote and remove hurdles for urban style residential development?

Public Comment

- What do you think is the biggest hurdle keeping more **housing development** from happening in Wells County?

- What changes can we make to make an impact on **housing development?**

- **State your name and address prior to making your public comment**

Next Steps

- We will be submitting this meeting’s write up to the state for compliance with HEA 1001
- We will take these items we discussed today under advisement to consider in a future ordinance amendment

Breakout Sessions

- WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR HOW TO INCREASE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?
- SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENT LOWER ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS TO INCREASE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?
- SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?
- WHAT TYPES OF HOUSING SHOULD WE FOCUS ON?
- WHAT HOUSING ISSUES ARE YOU EXPERIENCING?

APC Contact Info

Phone:	(260) 824-6407
Fax:	(260) 824-6415
Email:	wcapc@wellscounty.org
Address:	223 W. Washington St Bluffton, IN 46714

September 3, 2026, Housing Meeting Sign-In

*Please **PRINT** your name and address.

Name	Address
Michael Karafin	5958 S. Market St, Poneto, IN 46781
Tyson B[illegible]	7741 E. 200 N. Craigville, 46731
Doug Sundling	705 Riverview Dr. Bluffton
Scott Mentzer	428 E South St Bluffton
Isaac Stoller	2377 N. Spruce Dr. Bluffton IN 46714
Brandy Fiechter	Bluffton IN
Blake Gerber	Bluffton IN
Dave Schoeff	Town of Ossian
Jim Bowman	48 Hi Lo Dr Bluffton
Issac Zent	2090 W Scott St, Zanesville
Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr.	Area Plan Commission Office
Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr.	Area Plan Commission Office

September 3, 2026, Housing Meeting Sign-In

*Please **PRINT** your name and address.

Name	Address
Denise Werling	2406 W. Harbourside Dr, Ft. Wayne IN 46814
Erik Werling	" " "
Jonathan Snyder	News-Banner
Jarrod Hahn	Area Plan
Geoffrey M. Lance	Uniondale
Rick Johnson	Habitat for Humanity Adams/Wells County
Julie Rupp	2914 N 450 E, Craigville, IN 46731 (Rupp Real Estate)
[illegible] Steffen	1214 Jefferson St. Bluffton
Joni Donaghy-Myers	7181 N. St Rd 1 Ossian
Preston Wright	19 Sunrise Way, Bluffton
Lacey Pastore	723 Elm Dr. Bluffton
Stephen Pastore	723 Elm Dr. Bluffton
Josh Barkley	

September 3, 2026, Housing Meeting Sign-In

*Please **PRINT** your name and address.

Name	Address
David Barlag Century21	1311 Vance Ave 46805 Fort Wayne
Mike Grant - Town of Markle	154 E. Morse St. Markle, In
MICK CUPP	127 OAK FOREST
Ronald Neuenschwander	2436 Summerwood Ct. Bluffton
Barry Steffen	590 Channing Way Bluffton
John Schumacher	BOX 352 ZANESVILLE, IN.
Eileen Schumacher	Box 352 Zanesville, IN
Harry Baumgartner	2710 SE Mulberry ST VC
LeAnn Gerber	2840 SW SYCAMORE BLUFFTON
Sarah Reed	1703 Western Ave, Bluffton

WELLS COUNTY
HOUSING MATTERS MEETING
Public Hearing per - HEA 1001 "Housing Matters"

SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENT CREATE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

No to
Financial
Incentives
- No way!

I think it might spur development if some of the cost was off-set. Maybe directly to the homebuyer vs. to a developer.

Yes,

Lower property taxes
Lower our electric, Water + Sewage
costs + gas

yes! yes!

Local Gove should not
Creat financial incentives
for development over a single
Use 1 Lot Build.

No Local gov should not incentive

Develop options for young families
to take advantage of financing options
that are unique to Bluffton

No Incentives –
Tax Dollars –

Not Sure that is
a Sure / definite as
there might be good
options ~~I~~ I am Not
aware of.

Financial incentives should be created, but only for rental housing with 50% or more of units renting affordably at 50% or less of area median.

Only if there are grants that can find it.

CREATE PROPERTY TAX
INCENTIVE FOR 501 C3
ORGANIZATIONS THAT
~~[illegible]~~ CONVERT RENTALS
INTO OWNER OCCUPIED
UNITS

No financial Incentives.

Government should Let the market do its own thing

yes

No

Hell No!!

Just told me today she makes
48000 a year and her healthcare,
utilities and rent and a simple
$300 car payment with 2 children
is impossible as a single mom,
she has zero debt only her
car so she has to get a part
time job AWAY more from
her children to put food on
her table. so yes!

Absolutely because
this is why people are
begging for living quarters
more comunal living people
CANNOT afford to live
alone or single family
I my self would do this
For my futer in building
because people need help! 1 person

WELLS COUNTY
HOUSING MATTERS MEETING
Public Hearing per - HEA 1001 "Housing Matters"

SHOULD LOCAL GOVERNMENT LOWER ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS TO INCREASE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?

Do <u>not</u> lower requirements.
That is not fair to
those that followed
established requirements.

Maybe? I'm afraid it might cause problems if lowered too much.

No

I don't want to be able
to reach out my window &
touch the Lane next to me.

Limbo

How Low Can You Go?

Make sure the permitting fees for development are affordable - especially compared to surrounding counties.

The new federal Road to Housing act essentially redefines modular housing as HUD-code manufactured housing. As HUD develops new rules for this housing, Wells County should make the most of the opportunity.

- Leave it alone
- case by case

I think that recently lowered requirements should make more housing options available without further lowering ordinances/requirements. We don't want to lower them so much that we develop "slums"!!

RI ADUS SHOULD
BE CONSIDERED
THOUGHTFULLY!

You have to be careful so that the quality meets the standards for long term maintenance.

If we reduce turn around space fire departments can't use the space safely.

Use caution!

YES

R1 could include duplexes by right
and ADUs by approval.

R2 and R3 perhaps could be combined.

Possibly yes.
Would there be a way
to Abuse or twist the
Changes and make it
a Negative?

Yes

- Gov. regulation adds too much cost & other overhead to new building.

yes, eliminate public Hearings
For Development plans

Please do not Do
this

NeveR

NO

WELLS COUNTY
HOUSING MATTERS MEETING
Public Hearing per - HEA 1001 "Housing Matters"

WHAT HOUSING ISSUES ARE YOU EXPERIENCING?

Low income
Old mobile home in need of repairs but no money to do so.

I don't have housing issues, but HUD's CHAS data* show that 3.6 % of Wells County homeowners and 15.6 % of renters have very low incomes (< 50% of median) combined with severe housing problems. We should not build only luxury housing.

* www.huduser.gov

My neighborhood is becoming a rental paradise – run down – people don't have pride in their living space Lowering property values

HOMES DON'T HIT
MARKET!
RENTAL GROUPS
PURCHASE BEFORE
PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS CAN
PURCHASE

Not me - but I hear this a lot that homes for sale get gobbled up by Companies who want to rent them keeping people from owning a home. - Can more people live in a home vs. restrictions on how many can live in a rental - if so that might keep people from finding space.

Affordable Housing

Finding Housing
I Can AFFORD.

No Inventory in Both
Single family and apartments.

Zaneville

- No Water Utility

Dealing with people
who live in them

I just built a home and the neighbor built his 10 ft fencce right on the property line and the came over an TOLD me I'm not allowed to ~~be~~ put trees & Bushes up againt or with in 4 feet from fence →

~~so~~ beause eventully roots, and a storm will Ruin his $125 K

$125,000 investment. I had
al ready Paid $900 to
dig holes and purchase
trees + bushas + Rock to
Do so. holes wen in
Before his
fence went on property
line — I'm about peace
in all ways but now what
I just lost $900 in hole

WELLS COUNTY
HOUSING MATTERS MEETING
Public Hearing per - HEA 1001 "Housing Matters"

WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR HOW TO INCREASE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT?

Design a subdivision that uses manufactured (not mobile) modular homes.

Indiana's Residential Ifrastrucer Fund
to finance New utily development
or ready existing Infrastructure.
This would allow wells to Better
direct future Growth/Redevelopment
Several Nearby Communities have
utilized this Loan Fund/Structure.

Make the development more affordable:

~~infrastructure~~ Example.

C-900 instead of ductile iron

for water main.

Continue cleaning up our city

Lower rents! It's rediculos!

Approve it. Many times builders Developers etc jump through hoops Just to have City or County officals Say No because people dont want it in their back yard

Stop Listening to the INMBYs

Promote and explain what ADU's are + encourage development.

- Could also help people afford homes with Airbnb

Eliminate Public Hearings For Development Plans. Only use Public hearings For Rezonings

INCREASE QUALITY OF LIFE — THIS WILL INCREASE DEMAND TO DEVELOP

- Municipal / County incentives
  - Non-Profit involvement in affordable Housing
  - Availability of land / lots.

Solicit proposals for housing development in small communities already served with utilities, e.g. VeraCruz or Tocsin.

WELLS COUNTY
HOUSING MATTERS MEETING
Public Hearing per - HEA 1001 "Housing Matters"

WHAT TYPES OF HOUSING SHOULD WE FOCUS ON?

This is touchy –

With low income we bring lots of other issues (school issues, food stamps. support etc....) are we inviting this? Now I believe we need "affordable" housing – can we help habitat where they have requirements – What is affordable – What is a affordable mortgage payment? There is SO much more to consider

Zanesville

- Apartments
- Senior Housing

Afforadable Single family dwellings
(- Far too many rental properties)

Focus on creating housing opportunities for households earning less than 50% of area median.

AFFordable for Low +
middle Low income.
Seems to be a gap
there between $225K and
$300K Approx.

SINGLE FAMILY
OWNER OCCUPIED

Single family units

- it feels crowded as it is. or

multi story apartments. 3 stories tall

Small affordable

single family

NOT RENTALS

~~Bird houses~~

Sigle Family Owner occupied

Non Covenent Additions

Sub $200 K

Apartments.

Small 1,000 - 1,400 sq ft. Single family.

YES Low price of RENT

2710 SE Mulberry ST

Bluffton IN 46714

Low income!

But not tiny apartments
with no luxeries.
Many of us worked hard all
our adult lifes + deserve
nice low income places

Single family homes....

→ Begging to be able to house older family members or adult children to have apartments or small home on my property to help them start in life or end their lives nursing homes take all their savings!

Single family owner occupied dwellings. Place caps on rental properties

Please Please

at least 1 apartment

or small living home

to help lower the cost

of living. But also

have VERY tight rules

becaus it could get messy

For neibors →

Also allow homes to build living quarters and apartments more than one on a property to rent out in stead of everyone lying about it and saying its inlaw suites or boat barns so more TAXES can come in Because this stuff/lies is all cash