

Wells County Commissioners
Regular Session March 2, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 2, 2026, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Michael Vanover was absent.

Minutes: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from February 2, 2026, as presented. Motion carried 2-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #5 in the amount of \$334,512.93 and 167 claims totaling \$515,900.82. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 50 inmates, 16 pretrial Superior, 27 pretrial Circuit, 1 F6 DOC and 4 DOC. Holliday discussed creating a plan regarding cast iron pipe replacement at the jail.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Matt Witt informed the Commissioners on ongoing projects. On February 23rd, the highway was called out regarding a downed utility pole. Highway employees are clearing brush from the rights-of-way, grading gravel roads, and getting educated in drainage training. Three trucks are undergoing repairs. Witt received a quote for a box broom to load on the skid loader, Bobcat quoted \$6,586.00 for a 72" sweeper bucket. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Bobcat quote of \$6,586.00 for the 72" sweeper bucket. Motion carried 2-0. Witt advertised for sealed competitive bids for an 18,000 lb. capacity four post automotive lift. One bid was received from Gasoline Equipment Petroleum Contractors for \$48,048, delivered and installed. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the bid from Gasoline Equipment Petroleum contractors for \$48,048.00. Motion carried 2-0. Five rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the five rights-of-way. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Highway Engineer: Engineer Nate Whitacre presented one utility permit for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the utility permit. Motion carried 2-0. Whitacre informed the Commissioners that he was requesting an additional appropriation from County Council in the Highway Garage fund, the appropriation will pay for the dirt loader, bobcat box broom and a pair of mobile lifts. Bridge 54 construction is continuing and on schedule. The CCMG 2026 grant request for bids has been published and bid opening is on March 18th at the county highway garage.

AED Pediatric Pads: Lynn Blevins, Public Health Nurse, addressed the Commissioners regarding AED pediatric pads that have expired in January. Eight sets of pads will cost \$762.00. Blevins requested funding for the pads. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to pay for the AED pads from Commissioner funds. Motion carried 2-0.

Flood Safety Awareness: County Surveyor Jarrod Hahn presented a proclamation to the Board of Commissioners to proclaim March 8-14, 2026, as "Flood Safety Awareness Week". Some facts regarding floods; 6 inches of fast-moving flood water can knock an adult off their feet; 12 inches can carry off a small car. 90% of deaths during a flood are caused by drowning, half of which are caused by driving a

motor vehicle into flood waters. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to proclaim March 8-14, 2026, as Flood Safety Awareness Week. Motion carried 2-0.

250th 4th of July Celebration: City Council member Rick Ellwell and Mayor Scott Mentzer addressed the Commissioners to request a donation of \$12,000 to help supplement the 250th 4th of July celebration. The donation would supplement the fireworks display, event infrastructure, family and community programming, security and public safety, and insurance and administrative costs. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the donative agreement with the City of Bluffton for \$12,000 for the 250th 4th of July celebration. Motion carried 2-0.

Veteran Officer Accreditation Standards: Cambria Sparks, Department of Veterans Affairs, spoke to the Commissioners regarding mandatory standards for accreditation of veterans' service officers. Sparks updated the Commissioners on mandatory office hours, office space standards, technology, claims management system compliance, training and testing requirements, online training, federal training, and performance indicators. The Department of Veterans Affairs had no issues with Wells County's current structure or standards.

Veregy Energy Optimizations: Rick Anderson, account executive with Veregy Energy Optimizations, spoke to the Commissioners regarding an energy assessment. The assessment would highlight possible energy improvements, and county building energy improvements. The Commissioners would like to have all three Commissioners present before opting in or out of the assessment.

Grant Application Request: EMA Director John Petro requested approval to apply for a Duke Energy grant. He requested permission to apply for \$10,000 for weather radios to be distributed to the public. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and allow the President to sign the grant application request form. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Behavior and Resource Center: Neil Ainslie reported to the Commissioners that the Wells County Behavior and Resource Center will vacate the Annex by March 13th.

Miscellaneous: Commissioner Stringer read a statement of remembrance for Dr. Bartholomew Hott, prepared by Commissioner Vanover.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:56 PM, motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor