

Wells County Commissioners
Regular Session April 6, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, April 6, 2026, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Michael Vanover, and Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and Auditor Lisa McCormick.

Minutes: A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the minutes from March 16, 2026, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #7 in the amount of \$330,720.02 and 216 claims totaling \$1,598,028.88. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 52 inmates, 9 pretrial Superior, 28 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 DOC and 13 DOC. Holliday reported the parking lot light pole that was damaged is being repaired.

Highway Supervisor: Matt Witt updated the Commissioners on current projects. Witt has a meeting on April 13th with INDOT to review the final records for the County Home Road project. Pipe replacements and ditch grades are in process for Meridian Road. Highway employees are grading gravel roads and cleaning bridge deck areas. The department is 41% complete with stone placement on gravel roads. Witt is working on the 2027 work plan. A winter operations SOP was distributed for Commissioner review. Commissioner Vanover requested an adjustment in wording for the Orange travel watch. His request was to use the same wording as the red travel warning, which is, "Commissioner decision after consulting with EMA, Sheriff, and Highway". The Winter Operation SOP will be discussed further at the April 20th meeting. Witt informed the Commissioners of a vibratory plate compactor that he has purchased for \$6,895.00.

Highway Engineer: Five utility permits were presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover, to accept and sign the five utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. Whitacre presented bid results for CCMG 2026-01 Harrison 1059. Milestone Contractors had the lowest bid of \$495,921.78, which was below the Engineers' estimate. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the bid from Milestone Contractors for \$495,921.78. Motion carried 3-0. An LPA Contractor agreement was presented to the Commissioners for approval. The agreement is with Milestone Contractors for the CCMG 2026-01 Harrison 1059 project. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the LPA Contractor agreement with Milestone Contractors for \$495,921.78. Motion carried 3-0. Whitacre presented bid results for Bridge 41. Hoosier Pride Excavating was the low bidder of \$126,380.00, which was above the Engineers' estimate. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the bid from Hoosier Pride Excavating for \$126,380.00. Motion carried 3-0. An agreement for excavation services was presented to the Commissioners for approval. The agreement is with Hoosier Pride Excavating for \$126,380. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the agreement for Bridge 41 with Hoosier Pride Excavating. Motion carried 3-0. Whitacre discussed a possible federal aid project, Bridge 90, the structure is of narrow width and in poor condition. Whitacre would like to use this bridge for the next federal aid project. Bridge 54 is progressing on schedule.

INDOT 5311 Deobligation of Funds: Executive Director, Betsy Collier presented a letter of deobligation of Federal and State Transit funds. These funds total \$23,166 and will be reprogrammed for future program use. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and allow the President to sign the Deobligation letter. Motion carried 3-0.

EMA Volunteer Program: EMA Director, John Petro, discussed creating an EMA Volunteer program for traffic control and any natural disaster that might occur in Wells County. The Commissioners suggested a volunteer policy, to be researched by the County Attorney for further discussion. Petro would like to purchase two vehicles from Community Corrections to utilize in the volunteer program. Petro also discussed out of date radios that need updating. Petro is asking County Council for the funds at their next meeting, \$36,411 for 5 Triband Kenwood Radios.

Health Department Ordinance: Ryan Bennett presented a Health Department Ordinance for food establishment and/or bed and breakfast establishment. The Commissioners would like more time to absorb the document and will revisit during the April 20th meeting.

Street Fair Plaza Request: Bluffton Free Street Fair requested use of the Courthouse Plaza for September 20-27, 2026. The Certificate of Insurance will be submitted after issuance in July. Nathan Stauffer was representing the Street Fair Board. Also requested was a donation of \$1,500. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow the Bluffton Free Street Fair Association use of the Plaza September 20-27, 2026, approve and sign the agreement for services for \$1,500 for 2026. Motion carried 3-0.

Community Corrections Advisory Board Appointment: An application was submitted to the Commissioners to fill the Public Defender appointment on the Community Corrections Advisory Board. The Commissioners tabled the application to get more involvement.

Wright Insurance: Brandon Wright and Danica Dunwiddie representing the Wright Insurance Company, presented a renewal proposal for the County liability insurance. Four renewal options were presented and discussed. Option one would increase the premium by 8.34%, keeping the same coverage with Selective. Option two increased Civil Rights deductible to \$15,000 per occurrence, which increased the premium 4.45%, with Selective. Option three kept the same coverage but introduced a new carrier, Chubb, which increased the premium 4.77%. Option four increased the Civil Rights deductible to \$15,000 per occurrence with a new carrier, Chubb, which increased the premium by .88%. The coverage period is May 1, 2026 – May 1, 2027. The Commissioners discussed that more than one Civil Rights claim would nullify any savings gained by the increased deductible. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Option 3 of the proposal which keeps current coverage, using Bliss/Chubb as the carrier. Motion carried 3-0. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow the President to sign the document. Motion carried 3-0.

Annex Office Space: Veterans Service Office Joe McFarren addressed the Commissioners regarding recently vacated office space in the Annex. To effectively assist veterans, McFarren needs more space so he can interview them privately. He can accommodate that with the larger space. The Commissioners have no issue with the Veterans office moving forward with the larger space. Flooring will need to be replaced and the room painted, prior to the move.

Health Board Appointments: Two health board applications have been received to fill two board openings on the Health Department board. Both appointments will fill existing terms ending on

December 31, 2027. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to appoint Dr. Kyle Reed and Perry Scott Johnson to the Health Department Board. Motion carried 3-0.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:41PM. Motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor