

**Wells County Commissioners**  
**Regular Session May 4, 2026**

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, May 4, 2026, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Physically in attendance were Commissioners, Michael Vanover, and Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Jeff Stringer participated in the meeting by electronic means of communication, Zoom, which allowed Stringer to simultaneously attend and observe the meeting. All votes taken during the meeting were taken by roll call vote.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the minutes from April 20, 2026, regular session. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Payroll and Claims:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Payroll #9 in the amount of \$341,225.96 and 173 claims totaling \$873,987.86. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 49 inmates, 12 pretrial Superior, 23 pretrial Circuit, 1 F6 DOC and 8 DOC.

**Wells County Highway:** Highway Supervisor Matt Witt updated the Commissioners on new and ongoing projects. County Home Road notice of termination was received from INDOT on April 22, 2026. The highway is ditch grading on Meridian road for installation of new drive pipes. Grading of gravel roads is complete. Training on the force feed loader is ongoing. Vehicle inspections for the highway fleet have started, updates will follow. Witt presented a revision for the uniform policy for Commissioner review. The revision included the option of wearing shorts during the period of May through September, when the type of work being performed allows it, without compromising safety standards. The allowable shorts will be provided by the County's uniform rental provider. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the updated uniform policy. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. One right-of-way was presented for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the right-of-way. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. County fleet repairs have been put on hold, pending the delivery of the lift.

**Highway Engineer:** Engineer Nate Whitacre presented two utility permits for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the two utility permits. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Whitacre presented a project update to the Commissioners on Bridge 54, which is on schedule.

**Family Centered Services:** Becky Ellis, Director of Family Centered Services, addressed the Commissioners regarding 2027 financial support. The support stays in Wells County, historically the Wells County donation has been used for youth serving programs. Ellis was requesting \$20,000 in financial funding for 2027, the same as the 2026 request. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the donative agreement for Family Centered Services for 2027 in the amount of \$20,000. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Plaza Request:** Hunter Copeland, representing Bluffton NOW, addressed the Commissioners requesting approval to use the plaza for upcoming events. A concert series and family movie nights were the events for the requested dates. June 4, June 8, June 25, July 4, July 13, July 16, August 6, and August 10,

2026, were the requested dates. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to permit plaza usage for the requested dates. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Council on Aging:** Betsy Collier, Council on Aging Executive Director, presented the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2026 claim for reimbursement totaling \$169,808. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve, and allow the Vice President to sign the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2026 claim for \$169,808. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Collier presented the 2027 INDOT 5311 grant application totaling \$870,516 for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and allow the appropriate officials to sign the 2027 INDOT 5311 grant application documents. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Also presented was a resolution authorizing the filing of the application for the 5311 2027 grant. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and allow the Auditor to sign the authorizing resolution 2026-04. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Appropriation Reduction:** The Commissioners budgeted \$1,000,000 in LIT Economic Development for payment in 2026 to the City of Bluffton for the pool (\$800,000) and to the Regional Sewer District (\$200,000). Those funds were paid out in 2025; Auditor McCormick suggested an appropriation reduction to free those funds for the 2027 budget process. The subject was tabled until the May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Adjourned:** Blake Gerber motioned; Jeff Stringer seconded to adjourn at 5:27PM.

### Wells County Commissioners

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President, Jeff Stringer

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Vice President, Michael Vanover

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Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor