

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

REGULAR SESSION May 6, 2025

The Wells County Council met in regular session Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 5:30PM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Steve Huggins, Todd Mahnensmith, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Vicki Andrews was absent.

Minutes: A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the minutes from April 7, 2026, regular session. Motion carried 6-0.

Additional Appropriation: A motion was made by Brian Lambert, seconded by Brandon Harnish to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General fund for the Commissioner budget. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Todd Mahnensmith, seconded by Brian Lambert to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General fund for Soil & Water. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve the Additional Appropriation request in the General fund for Emergency Management. Motion carried 6-0.

A motion was made by Brian Lambert, seconded by Todd Mahnensmith to approve the Additional Appropriation request for the IGIO Seed Grant fund. Motion carried 6-0.

An additional appropriation and Interlocal agreement with the City of Bluffton were presented to County Council for review. The Interlocal agreement is connected to the project that the additional appropriation request is for. The interlocal agreement is with the City of Bluffton for matching funds, of which each entity would be responsible for 50% of the matching funds, not expected to exceed \$50,000. A motion was made by Steve Huggins, seconded by Scott Elzey to approve the additional appropriation for the CCMG 2026-01 Harrison 1059 and the Interlocal Agreement for Harrison 1059 with the City of Bluffton. Motion carried 6-0.

Heartland REMC Broadband CF-1 Compliance: Five CF-1 Compliance forms for Heartland Broadband were presented to County Council for approval. Nick Caley, Heartland REMC representative, was available for comments or questions. A motion was made by Brandon Harnish, seconded by Steve Huggins to approve the five CF-1 Compliance forms for Heartland Broadband. Motion carried 6-0.

MUST Task Force: Council President Seth Whicker discussed the Municipal Unit Strategic Taskforce (MUST). Prior to October 1, 2026, a MUST, made up of one county council representative and a fiscal officer of the city within the county, may establish a local income tax distribution agreement related to the county's maximum LIT tax rate of 2.9%. If an agreement is reached, it must be submitted to the DLGF, which will compile and report the agreements to the Legislative Council by December 1, 2026. A motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Steve Huggins to move forward with the Municipal Unit Strategic Taskforce. Motion carried 6-0.

Assessments: Council President Seth Whicker addressed the Council regarding current assessments. Whicker suggested having a discussion with Assessor Laura Roberts about using AI to clarify property valuations. If explored, it would give another look at assessments and make sure our valuations are credible.

Public Comment: Roger Thornton addressed County Council regarding flock cameras. In previous budget sessions, the Sheriff paid for the flock cameras out of the Commissary fund. Thornton would like County Council to allow the cameras to be paid out of the Sheriff general fund budget. Thornton sees it as a necessary expenditure. The future Sheriff could use the Commissary funds to reduce recidivism, if he chooses. Blake Gerber also addressed County Council regarding a Regional Sewer District request to fund an employee out of the general fund, wages and benefits, to be reimbursed by the Regional Sewer District annually. The RSD has brought this suggestion up to the Commissioners and Gerber wanted to update Council. Council would have to approve an agreement like the Solid Waste District for reimbursement.

Adjourned: The 6:22PM motion was made by Scott Elzey, seconded by Brandon Harnish to adjourn. Motion carried 6-0.

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President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor