

## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session May 18, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in a regular session on Monday, May 18, 2026, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those in attendance were Commissioners, Jeff Stringer, Michael Vanover, and Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes from May 4, 2026, regular session. Motion carried 3-0.

**Payroll and Claims:** A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #10 in the amount of \$333,403.11 and 216 claims totaling \$768,618.45. Motion carried 3-0.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 45 inmates, 8 pretrial Superior, 24 pretrial Circuit, 1 F6 and 10 DOC. Holliday spoke with Jeremy, the Superior representative, regarding the exterior cleanout, Brickley will do the work. The larger drainage project will be bid out; Commissioner Stringer will have a bid packet created for that project.

**Highway Supervisor:** Matt Witt reported on current projects. County Home Road final records are in process with INDOT. A property owner would like to purchase excess land regarding the Hoosier Highway project. INDOT owns the property, Witt referred them to INDOT. The highway crews are ditch grading on Meridian Road so new drive pipes can be installed. Roads are getting patched in preparation for chip and seal. The first layer of dust stay has been applied. Witt is completing vehicle inspections and performing repairs as needed. Five rights-of-way were presented to the Commissioners for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and sign the five rights-of-way. Motion carried 3-0. IMI has received a contract and would like to move our stone from the Bluffton quarry to the Montpelier quarry. An increase from \$16.75 to \$19.00 is also on the table. Commissioner Stringer found that unacceptable, we have a contract. Witt suggested using millings from the Hoosier Highway project to chip and seal a pad at the highway, stockpiling stone in the slow season for the busy season. Stringer did not like the idea of handling the stone twice.

**Highway Engineer:** Four utility permits were presented for Commissioner approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the four utility permits. Motion carried 3-0. A revised Interlocal Agreement for Harrison 1059 (CCMG 2026-01) was presented to the Commissioners for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the revised Interlocal Agreement with the City of Bluffton for Harrison 1059. Motion carried 3-0. Whitacre updated the Commissioners on Bridge 54, deck work is progressing and concrete boxes have been set south of the bridge.

**Library Update:** Library board member Joe McFarren and Matt Yergler updated the Commissioners on current library programs. The winter reading program runs through the month of February. The community goal was to read 500,000 pages. A total of 657,400 pages were read by 913 participants. Summer reading starts on June 1<sup>st</sup> and runs through July 31<sup>st</sup>. A kickoff party will be on June 2<sup>nd</sup>; the theme is Unearth a Story. All prizes are funded by the Friends of the Library through donations and fundraising. Mini golf and family fun night were great fundraising opportunities with 400 participants raising \$5,271 in programming support.

**Economic Development Update:** Economic Development Director, Jessica Beste, updated the Commissioners on current and future opportunities. Discussed were goals regarding housing and workforce development. Beste explained that housing availability is tied to workforce growth and retention. The Area Median Income for Wells County is \$76,864, of which, half of our households earn at or above the median and half earn less. 42.9% of households are at or above the AMI, 38.3% fall between 30%-60% of AMI. The 30%-60% gap is the workforce housing gap, which are essential workers. 11.1% of households are below 30% of AMI and rely on rentals. Beste commented that there are very few rentals available and newer quality rentals are often above fair market levels. Beste would like to investigate and keep eyes on the data and decide what Wells County wants to look like.

**Regional Sewer District:** The Regional Sewer District would like to hire an assistant for staff support. The Regional Sewer District would like Wells County to offer health insurance for that employee. Wells County can only offer insurance for Wells County employees. An option would be to establish an interlocal agreement, like the Solid Waste Interlocal agreement, which allows Wells County to pay wages and benefits for the employees. The Solid Waste District reimburses Wells County for those wages and benefits semiannually. Attorney Storer would like a job description as well as proposed wage and benefit information from the Regional Sewer District. Commissioner Stringer and Gerber suggested that LA Brown reach out to other Regional Sewer District's concerning employment practices and similar instances.

**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; suggested was an appropriation reduction to free those funds for the 2027 budget process. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve an appropriation reduction request to be submitted to County Council for \$600,000. Motion carried 3-0.

**Miscellaneous:** Commissioner Gerber gave a reminder for the Mayors and Commissioners July luncheon. Also discussed was a rezoning request for 300 N and SR 1. Gerber would like to be proactive instead of reactive regarding this rezoning. An existing road study proposes that the intersection will need a light, Gerber would like the Commissioners to propose a plan.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:07PM. The motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber. Motion carried 3-0.

**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