Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session June 1, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, June 1, 2026, at 5:00 PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Those 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 minutes from May 18, 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 #11 in the amount of $339,512.54 and 174 claims totaling $1,072,896.88. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 54 inmates, 20 pretrial Superior, 21 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 and 10 DOC. Jeremy from Superior reported to the Sheriff that repair on the cleanout has been delayed due to an equipment malfunction. Chief Deputy Sheriff AJ Campbell gave an update on the animal shelter. 40% of animals surrendered at the shelter are from county residents. There were 8 applications received for the director vacancy, Kyle Morphew was hired. Morphew was currently employed at the animal shelter, which left an opening. Sephanie Steinbrenner was hired to fill that vacancy. Preventing the spread of disease at the shelter would require all animals to be vaccinated that are housed at the shelter. The service would cost $5,000 annually, which the friends of the shelter would incur the cost. Community cats is a program that allows cats to be captured, sterilized and re-released back into the community. The City and County are working on an Ordinance to enact that program. Morphew is resuming online adoptions and public walk-ins. The animal shelter committee will meet on July 13th to discuss the 2027 budget. Commissioner Stringer inquired about the County being able to respond to calls in the County. Campbell responded that it is being added to the proposed Ordinance. Commissioner Gerber asked if other counties are being consulted on policies, Campbell said they are. Holliday presented two bodycam renewals, one for cameras and one for service. He is not replacing the in-car cameras currently; there are no issues with them. The 5-year renewing contracts are $6,681 for the equipment and $16,393 for services annually. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Motorola bodycam contracts, subject to legal review. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Sheriff Holliday is renewing the SRO agreements with Northern Wells and Southern Wells Community Schools; they are two-year agreements. The Sheriff was instructed to submit the agreements to the Commissioners for review.

Highway Supervisor: Matt Witt updated the Commissioners on ongoing projects. The County Home Road project has had the final inspection and recommendation for an acceptance letter. The crews are working on ditch grading on Meridian Road so new drive pipes can be installed. They are still patching in preparation for chip and seal. Witt expressed interest in creating an equestrian traffic ordinance and plating buggies. Commissioner Gerber asked if bagging would be in the ordinance. Witt did not think bagging is included in other area Ordinances. The four-post lift has been delivered. All open positions have been filled in the Highway department. One right-of-way was presented to the Commissioners for

approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the right-of-way document. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre presented two utility permits and a road cut permit for review. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve two utility permits and one road cut permit. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. To address some drainage issues in Liberty Center, Whitacre would like to mill and resurface the side streets in that area. It was suggested that Whitacre reach out to the Regional Sewer District to inquire if the drainage problems had anything to do with the sewer system. 200W over Rock Creek will be closed starting on June 8th for the Bridge 71 project which is anticipated to remain closed through October 2026. Bridge 54 is on schedule and progressing. A railroad safety grant is open for applications; Whitacre would like to apply for a sensor installation on 700N. The sensor is subscription based and would require an annual subscription.

Bi-County Services: Tim Ramsey presented his annual financial update and a request for funding for Bi-County Services to the Board of Commissioners. Tim stated that Bi-County's biggest challenge is staffing and retention, staffing levels have been impacted by a Medicare funding freeze. 59 Wells County residents are served by Bi-County. Ramsey requested the same funding amount of $47,678.00 for 2027. Adams County Commissioners and Council have approved the contribution amount. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the 2027 funding of $47,678.00 for Bi-County Services. Motion carried 2-0-1 by roll call vote.

Storm Ready Accreditation: Dustin Norman, BWS meteorologist, presented a "Storm Ready" designation from the National Weather Service for Wells County. EMA Director John Petro applied for the designation by demonstrating that the county was storm preparedness ready. Petro provided plans for an emergency operations center, severe storm training and annual preparedness exercises. Flood insurance premiums will be positively impacted by the new rating.

Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan & Wells County Courthouse and Annex Emergency Action Plan: EMA Director John Petro presented the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Included in the base plan are the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The CEMP shall be reviewed annually for possible revision and updated at least every three years. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (Misc. 2026-03). Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Also presented to the Commissioners was a Wells County Courthouse and Annex Emergency Action Plan. The objective of the plan is to provide a safe working environment for employees working in the Wells County Courthouse and Annex. Included in the plan were emergency action plans for tornadoes, floods, blizzards, medical emergencies, fire, suspicious packages or mail, bomb threats, active shooters, hostage situations, chemical spills, gas leaks and unusual odors, electrical power outages, and earthquakes. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the Wells County Courthouse and Annex Emergency Action Plan (Misc. 2026-04). Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Grant Approval Request: EMA Director John Petro requested permission to apply for a non-matching grant, not to exceed $150,000. No information was given regarding the grantor agency or what would be purchased with the funding received. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve and sign the request for grant application form. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Community Correction Cars: The Commissioners discussed two Community Corrections cars that are not in use. Discussed was using Purple Wave Auctions to list the vehicles. It was suggested that the Highway Supervisor move the cars to the Highway Department for further inspection.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:57PM. The motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

Wells County Commissioners

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President, Jeff Stringer Vice President, Michael K Vanover

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Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____

Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor