

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session July 20, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, July 20, 2026, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were Commissioners, Michael Vanover and Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer, and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioner Jeff Stringer was absent.

Minutes: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the minutes as presented from July 6, 2026, regular session. Motion carried 2-0.

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #15 in the amount of \$339,376.44 and 216 claims totaling \$786,719.57. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Sheriff: Sheriff Holliday reported 57 inmates, 21 pretrial Superior, 25 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 DOC and 7 DOC. Holliday reported that the Memorandum of Understanding, previously approved by the Commissioners, has been approved by the Norwell School Board.

Highway Supervisor: Supervisor Matt Witt updated the Commissioners on current projects. Issues with the distributor have paused chip and seal but should be resuming on Wednesday. Meridian road is progressing and the crews are patching in preparation for chip and seal. Witt discussed damage that has occurred with some roadways by agricultural equipment and/or semi-trucks. The hot weather has made the roads tacky, and the weight of the trucks is peeling off some of the layers. Witt is working on understanding what future standards look like so he can plan for it from a maintenance standpoint. The Commissioners thanked Witt for bringing the issue to their attention.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre presented seven permits for review and approval, six from Bright Speed and one from Heartland REMC. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover, to approve seven permits submitted by Bright Speed and Heartland REMC. Motion carried 2-0. Whitacre updated the Commissioners on ongoing and upcoming projects. Whitacre presented an agreement with USI for design and permitting assistance for the replacement of a small structure on CR 1000 S over Rock Creek. This will be the 2026 CCMG project, due September 2026. The total project cost is \$82,000. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the Authorization to Proceed agreement with USI Consultants. Motion carried 2-0. Pavement markings have begun, 1000N and Marzane Rd. have been completed. 300W, Jeff Rd., Hoosier Highway, and County Home Road are scheduled for this week. Bridge 54 and Bridge 71 are in process and on schedule.

Veterans Office Update: Veterans Officer Joe McFarren updated the Commissioners on the Veterans Office. Highlights to date in 2026 include 59 new claims for assistance, 530 veteran case communications, 288 walk-in clients assisted, and 385 forms completed. Over \$20 million in annual veterans' compensation assistance is disbursed to Wells County veterans. The Veterans' office has relocated to a larger room in the Annex, which is working much better for them.

CADA Annual Report: CADA President Heather Baumgartner presented the 2026 grant distributions for Citizens Against Drug Abuse (CADA). Funds for the grants are collected through the "Drug Free

Community Fund”; a total of \$20,114.61 was collected in 2025 for distribution in 2026. Total grant requests for the 2026 period were \$24,525.90. The grants are divided into four categories: Administration, Education/Prevention, Treatment/Intervention, and Judicial. \$5,028.65 being distributed for Other/Admin, \$5,028.65 being distributed to Education/Prevention, \$5,028.65 being distributed to Treatment/Intervention, and \$5,028.63 being distributed to Judicial. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the CADA grant requests for 2026. Motion carried 2-0.

Annex Generator Quotes: Six generator quotes were received by the Health Department to replace the Annex Generator. Currently the single-phase generator operates all functions of the Annex except the elevator and HVAC. Two of the six quotes received were for a three-phase system that would operate the elevator and HVAC. Ryan Bennett discussed differences between the quotes and recommended the Gensolar Power quote for a Generac generator at a cost of \$31,830. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the purchase of the Generac Industrial generator for \$31,830. Motion carried 2-0.

Grant Approval Request: EMA Director John Petro requested permission to apply for a non-matching grant, not to exceed \$12,000. The grant is a Safety-First Norfolk Southern grant that will assist in replacing outdated emergency and amateur radio communication equipment. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve and allow the Vice President to sign the request for grant application form. Motion carried 2-0.

Emergency Management Donation Fund: An Ordinance to create an Emergency Management Donation fund was presented to the Commissioners. The fund will allow for donations to be used for disaster and/or emergency preparedness and coordination of response under the control and authority of the Wells County Emergency Management Department. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Ordinance 2026-07 creating a non-reverting Emergency Management Agency Donation fund. Motion carried 2-0.

Historical Society Donation Request: Jim Sturgeon, President of the Wells County Historical Society and Lynne Elliott, Board member, addressed the Commissioners regarding 2027 financial support. The request was for \$16,500 in funding for 2027. Utilities and insurance are the two main expenses for the historical society. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the donative agreement for the Wells County Historical Society for 2027 in the amount of \$16,500. Motion carried 2-0.

Markle Fish & Game Club Park Donation Request: Mike Grant, Markle Park Operations Manager, and Lisa Federspiel, addressed the Commissioners regarding financial support. The request was for \$10,000 in funding for the period of August 1, 2026, through May 15, 2027. The funding requested will assist with renovations of the pool house for Markle Park. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the donative agreement for Markle Fish & Game Club Park in the amount of \$10,000 to be paid out of the LIT Economic Development fund, capital development. Motion carried 2-0.

Poka-Bache Task Force Donation Request: Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., Secretary of the Poka-Bache board, addressed the Commissioners regarding 2027 financial support. The request was for \$553 in funding for 2027. The funds will help with anticipated expenses. A motion was made by Blake Gerber,

seconded by Michael Vanover to approve the donative agreement for the Poka-Bache Task Force for 2027 in the amount of \$553. Motion carried 2-0.

Bluffton Cemetery Board: Cemetery board members, Rob Moon, Scott Gilliam, and Cari Whicker address the Commissioners regarding cemetery funding for 2027. The request was for \$18,000 in the Commissioners budget for mowing and upkeep expenses for 2027. The 2026 budgeted amount is \$15,000. Requested from the LIT Economic Development budget was \$50,000 for 2027 which is the current budgeted amount. The \$50,000 would be used for restoration projects yet to be determined. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve \$20,000 for mowing and upkeep in the Commissioner budget and \$50,000 for restoration projects in the LIT Economic Development budget for 2027. Motion carried 2-0.

Opioid Settlement Reporting: The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) must submit an annual comprehensive report of the use of all opioid settlement funds, including funds received by the local units of government, to the Indiana General Assembly. All local government units that received funds from the National Opioid Settlement are required to report any settlement funds spent between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, to FSSA. This information will be included in the final report. Each entity is responsible for delegating one representative to complete the electronic form on behalf of their community. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to delegate Auditor, Lisa McCormick, to complete and submit the Opioid report. Motion carried 2-0.

Courthouse Concrete Quotes: Two quotes were submitted for concrete work at the Wells County Courthouse. The requested quotes are for sidewalk demo and repair, 100' in total. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to accept the low quote from SS Building Company for \$12,300. Motion carried 2-0.

Attorney Storer: Attorney Storer addressed the Commissioners regarding four parcels near the old highway garage that are owned by the Wells County Commissioners. In preparation for disposition of the parcels, Attorney Storer was requesting approval to move forward with title searches and preliminary tasks prior to further action on the parcels. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow Attorney Storer to move forward. Motion carried 2-0.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:05 PM, the motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover. Motion carried 2-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor