

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET SESSION August 20, 2026

The Wells County Council met in budget session Thursday, August 20, 2026, at 8:00AM in the Wells County Carnegie Annex, 223 W Washington St., Bluffton, IN. Present at the meeting were: Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Steve Huggins, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and Auditor Lisa McCormick. Todd Mahnensmith and Scott Elzey were absent.

OPENING

The first budget meeting for the 2027 Budget Year started with Council Members meeting with all Elected Officials and Department Head to review their 2027 budget requests.

Commissioners: Commissioner Jeff Stringer presented a budget request of \$4,245,480 for the Commissioner's general fund budget and a request of \$1,409,500 for the LIT Economic Development Fund. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Solid Waste District: District President Blake Gerber presented a budget request of \$126,231. This amount is reimbursed to the county 100%. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Highway and LR&S: Highway Engineer Nate Whitacre and Highway Supervisor Matt Witt presented a total Highway budget request of \$5,549,507, LR&S Budget request of \$1,086,000, and Cumulative Bridge request of \$125,000. A 3.5% increase in wages was requested. The Local Road & Street budget was over budgeted in the amount of \$387,509; the Highway needs to replace an aging fleet.

Surveyor: Jarrod Hahn presented the Surveyor budget request of \$154,506, the Drainage Board request of \$21,790, and the Corner Perpetuation request of \$34,000. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Health: Sahara Wall presented a Health Department budget request of \$206,186, Local Public Health Services Fund budget request of \$195,828, and Local Health Maintenance budget request of \$30,278, and a Local Health Dept. Trust Budget of \$37,152. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Assessor: Laura Roberts presented a County Assessor budget request of \$149,121, Sales Disclosure Fee budget request of \$4,900, and a Reassessment budget request for \$311,073. A 3.5% increase in wages was requested.

Recorder: Rina Stuck presented the Recorders general fund budget request of \$103,115. The Identification Security Protection budget request was \$4,000. The Recorder's Perpetuation Fund budget request was \$25,941 for part-time clerical assistance. A 4% increase in wages was requested.

Treasurer: Pam Gregory presented the Treasurer budget request of \$171,584. A 7% increase in wages was requested.

Court House: Mark Double presented the Custodian budget request of \$355,055. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Double made a request for overtime pay in lieu of comp time for when he is called into work after hours.

IT Department: Roger Richardson submitted a budget request for \$240,991. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Coroner: Hilarie Gaskill submitted a budget request for \$83,062. Gaskill also requested giving her salaried deputy on call and autopsy pay on top of the annual wage.

Extension Office: Bill Horan presented a budget request of \$273,562. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Veteran: Joe McFarren submitted a budget request of \$51,815. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

EMA: John Petro presented a budget request of \$114,985 for his general fund budget and \$7,100 for the LEPC Fund budget. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Area Plan & GIS: Mike Lautzenheiser Jr. presented his Plan Commission budget request of \$203,594, a GIS budget request of \$43,925, and a \$40,986 budget request in the Building & Construction Fee fund. A 4.5% increase in wages was requested.

Soil & Water: Eric Johnson presented the budget request of \$46,042. A 3% increase in wages was requested.

Prosecuting Attorney: Colin Andrews presented his general fund budget request of \$749,250, his Pre-Trial Deferral fund budget request of \$21,471, and his Pre-Trial Diversion Budget request of \$17,715. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Currently two employees are getting a stipend of \$750 annually for additional duties, Andrews requested increasing the amount to \$2,500 annually for each employee.

Superior Court: Judge Andrew Antrim presented his budget request of \$214,774. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

Circuit Court: Judge Kent Kiracofe presented his general fund budget request of \$941,577, the Supp Public Defender Fund budget request of \$15,000, the Adult Probation Administrative Fund budget request of \$17,731, the Juvenile Probation Administrative Fund budget request of \$1,770, Jury Pay Fund budget request of \$5,000, Adult Probation Fund budget of \$77,289, Juvenile Probation fund budget of \$7,220, the Urinalysis fund budget of \$14,000, and the Substance/Indigent Fund budget request of \$650. A 3% increase in wages was requested. Additional increases were asked for Secretary and the Circuit Court Bailiff, he is expanding their job descriptions.

Community Corrections: Community Corrections Director Madison Hake presented a general fund budget request of \$78,159, a Project Income budget request of \$78,262, a Community Corrections Grant I budget request of \$205,556 and the Misdemeanor Fund budget request of \$17,103. A 4% increase in wages was requested. After the submission of the Community Corrections budget to the County Council, DOC reduced the Grant I amount to \$147,758. The Community Corrections Advisory board approved an updated 2027 Community Corrections and Project Income budget(s). The Community Corrections I requested budget will be \$147,758; the Project Income requested budget will be \$48,608. The requested reductions will be a result of reducing two full-time positions into two part-time positions.

Sheriff: Sheriff Elect Chip Swindell presented the general fund Sheriff's department budget request of \$2,704,599, the Jail budget request of \$2,006,946, the LIT Public Safety budget request of \$608,171, and the Vehicle Inspection fund request for \$3,000.

Clerk: Beth Davis presented her Clerk's office budget request of \$367,608. The requested Election Board budget was \$68,900; the Perpetuation Fund budget was \$20,000. A 5% increase in wages was requested.

Statewide 911: Mike Miller presented the Statewide 911 budget request for \$450,000.

Auditor: Lisa McCormick presented her general fund budget request of \$256,802, Auditor's Ineligible Deduction fund budget request of \$8,000, Plat Book Fund budget request of \$11,385, and the County Elected Official Training Fund budget request of \$5,000. A 3.5% increase in wages was requested.

Convention, Visitor & Tourism Fund: The Convention, Visitor & Tourism board presented a budget request of \$70,000.

County Council: County Council presented a budget request of \$57,143, LIT Correctional/Rehab Facility budget request of \$339,863 which covers the jail bond payment, Rainy Day had a budget request of \$0.00, the Cumulative Capital Development Fund budget request of \$654,000 which covers the Highway bond payment, LIT dedicated to PSAP budget request for \$650,000, and LIT dedicated to EMS budget request for \$400,000. A 0% increase in wages was requested.

The most requested increases to 2027 budgets were wages.

The next scheduled budget meeting will be on Wednesday, August 26, 2026, at 6:00PM followed by a meeting on Thursday, August 27th at 6:00PM, all meetings are only if needed.

Recess: The meeting recessed at 12:09 until Wednesday, August 26th at 6PM.

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

President, Seth Whicker

Vice President, Vicki Andrews

Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor