

Wells County Commissioners

Regular Session August 17, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, August 17, 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, Blake Gerber, County Attorney Ted Storer and County Auditor Lisa McCormick.

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

Payroll and Claims: A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Payroll #17 in the amount of \$313,110.08 and 220 claims totaling \$969,620.56. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Highway Supervisor: Matt Witt presented an INDOT/LPA contract amendment #3 for Bridge 106, DES#1702735. The amendment provides additional time to complete the project, extending the term to allow for completion of the project. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover, to approve the amended contract for Bridge 106 for an extended completion date of June 30, 2027. Motion carried 3-0. An amended motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow the President to sign the amended contract for Bridge 106. Motion carried 3-0. An Ordinance for Horse Drawn Vehicles was presented to the Commissioners for review. The Ordinance would generate revenue that would be used to ensure the long-term protection and reconstruction of the County highways, which can be significantly damaged by extensive horse-drawn vehicle use. Commissioner Vanover discussed broadening the scope of the Ordinance to include heavy vehicles and farm machinery. Commissioner Stringer spoke on overweight vehicles that damage the roads, and if random scale checks could be conducted by Wells County Sheriff Deputies. Witt had reached out to the state regarding scale checks and if they could be conducted, the state reiterated that yes, qualified personnel could do random scale checks. Wheel tax changes were discussed as viable options in the near future. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve Ordinance 2026-09 for Horse Drawn Vehicles, recommending that overweight vehicles are addressed in a timely manner. Motion carried 2-1. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to waive the second reading of Ordinance 2026-09. The motion was not carried 2-1. Ordinance 2026-09 will be presented to the Commissioners on September 7, 2026, for the second reading. Matt reported that under 10 miles of chip and seal is left to be completed. Dust control has been applied to Meridian Road. CR 600 E that was damaged by agricultural equipment has been sprayed with dust control and ready to be chipped. A new distributor is in use, the new truck chassis has been delivered, and Witt is looking to rent a mill head for the skid loader.

Highway Engineer: Nate Whitacre presented four permits for approval. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover, to approve four permits. Motion carried 3-0. Whitacre spoke in favor of modifying the current wheel tax ordinance to increase funding for road repairs. Whitacre met with the Pavement markings contractor to finalize areas that need corrective action. The project should be completed by month end. Bridge 71 did not progress due to rain, Bridge 54 had the stone subgrade completed, and paving started last week. Pavement markings were not part of the contract for Bridge 54; Whitacre informed the Commissioners that a contract for pavement markings would be forthcoming. A Liberty Center paving project will be starting next week.

Library Update: Library board members Matt Yergler and Joe McFarren updated the Commissioners on library events. Usage and circulation numbers were trending upward in all key areas. Registered in the 2026 Summer Reading Program were 1,470 children, 293 teens, and 550 adults. Children listened to 483,818 minutes, teens read 682,247 pages, and adults read 1,146,779 pages. The season concluded with a pool party which drew an attendance of 1,117 participants. Mid-year statistics showed continued community reliance on library services and facilities. The library is transitioning to Evergreen Indiana, a statewide library resource-sharing consortium that includes more than 130 Indiana libraries. The estimated annual savings of \$80,000 will improve long-term sustainability of the Wells County Public Library. In closing, McFarren stated, 2026 reflects strong community engagement, exceptional summer reading participation, and continued demand for library services.

Food Protection Ordinance Amendment-Environmental Sanitarian, Ryan Bennett, presented a Food Protection Ordinance amendment for review. The Wells County Health Department has developed a proposed Fee Schedule of fees for permits and violations, and desire to adopt a new schedule. The fees and sanctions provided for in Wells County Ordinance 2026-05 are established as set forth in Exhibit A of the proposed Ordinance. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve Ordinance 2026-10 to establish the Wells County Health Department fee schedule. Motion carried 3-0. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to waive the second reading of Ordinance 2026-10. Motion carried 3-0.

Council on Aging: Betsy Collier presented the 2nd Quarter 2026 5311 claim for reimbursement. The claim totaled \$131,576.00. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and allow the President to sign the 2nd Quarter 2026 reimbursement claim. Motion carried 3-0. Betsy Collier also presented the Wells on Wheels 5339 Capital 2026 claim for reimbursement. The claim totaled \$217,353.00. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to approve, and allow the President to sign the Wells on Wheels 5339 Capital 2026 reimbursement claim. Motion carried 3-0

2027 Holiday Schedule: The 2027 Holiday schedule was presented to the Commissioners for their review and comment. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve the 2027 Holiday Schedule as presented. Motion carried 3-0.

Holiday Closings: Auditor Lisa McCormick requested approval for closure of Wells County offices (Courthouse, Annex and County Extension) from Noon – 2 PM for a Thanksgiving luncheon for Wells County employees at the 4-H park on Tuesday, November 24th. Also requested was to close Wells County Offices (Courthouse, Annex and County Extension) at 2 PM on Wednesday, December 23rd for a Holiday gathering on the 3rd floor of the Courthouse for employees. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to allow the November 24, 2026, Noon – 2pm Thanksgiving luncheon allowing the second hour paid and the December 23, 2026, 2pm Christmas gathering with dismissal following the gathering with pay. Motion carried 3-0.

Opioid Funding: Commissioner Vanover requested, on behalf of the Opioid Committee, approval to open a funding cycle for Opioid funding requests. The requested cycle was from October 1st through October 31, 2026. The balance of the Opioid funds is \$31,419.96 in the Opioid Restricted fund and \$65,089.32 in the Opioid Unrestricted fund. A motion was made by Michael Vanover, seconded by Blake Gerber to open a funding cycle for Opioid funding requests from October 1 through October 31, 2026. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment: AJ Springer addressed the Commissioners regarding the Regional Sewer District's Tocsin project. The project has been awarded but the construction company has not started the project. It is behind schedule; although the Regional Sewer District has started billing customers. Springer requested that the Commissioners reach out to the Regional Sewer District regarding when construction will begin.

Attorney Storer informed the Commissioners that an alley vacate petition will be upcoming. In all likelihood the public hearing on the petition will be held at the start of the meeting on October 5, 2026.

Adjourned: Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 6:12PM. The motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Michael Vanover to adjourn. Motion carried 3-0.

Wells County Commissioners

President, Jeff Stringer

Vice President, Michael K Vanover

Member, Blake Gerber

Attest: _____
Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor