Wells County Council
Wells County Commissioners
Joint Special Session October 6, 2026

The Wells County Council and Wells County Commissioners met in a joint special session on Tuesday, October 6, 2026, following the regularly scheduled County Council meeting in the Wells County Carnegie Annex meeting room, Bluffton, IN. Present was Commissioner Blake Gerber, Council members, Seth Whicker, Vicki Andrews, Todd Mahnensmith, Steve Huggins, Scott Elzey, Brandon Harnish, Brian Lambert, and County Auditor Lisa McCormick. Commissioners Jeff Stringer and Michael Vanover were absent.

Economic Development Update: Jessica Beste, Economic Development Director, updated County Council and Commissioners on where Wells County is going and where we want to go next. A general list of housing developments in process was distributed for Bluffton, Ossian, and Markle. The focus is on Business Growth & Investment, Incentive & Investment Options, Workforce Development, Housing, and Community. Some business expansion and investments include Trusted Manufacturing, Almco Steel, Dauch, and Shearer's. Each business investment brings added employees. Stressed was that we need shovel ready sites, such as sewer and wastewater. If a lead is proposed that is not shovel ready the board will have to be ready to act on that site and to move quickly. Beste and the Chamber of Commerce have joined forces to bring post-secondary training to Wells County. They are exploring training that meets the needs of local employers. Trainings that are available currently are Operational Excellence: Practical Strategies for Manufacturing Mangers, Industrial Maintenance Technician Class, and Blueprint Reading & Precision Measurement. Housing is one of the most important pieces of economic development. As employment opportunities grow, we must ensure that there are places to live. Beste gave community updates for Ossian, Bluffton, and Markle. In Ossian, advancing downtown housing and retail opportunities are important steps for future demand. Beste feels Ossian needs more strategic planning and support in Parks and Recreation. In Bluffton, sewer, wastewater, and electrical infrastructure improvements support long-term vitality and investments for the community. The new pool, housing additions, and new downtown business development are ever evolving. In Markle, redevelopment efforts and housing bring more business opportunities. Wells County Economic Development continues to focus on business retention and expansion, workforce training, housing development, land marketing, incentive conversations, and community partnerships. Tourism is vital to Wells County continued growth, every trip to Wells County should be something to remember.

Adjourned: The Special Session adjourned at 8:56pm.

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

WELLS COUNTY COUNCIL

_____ _____
President, Seth Whicker Vice President, Vicki Andrews

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Attest: Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor