## Wells County Commissioners

### Regular Session November 2, 2026

The Wells County Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, November 2, 2026, at 5:00PM in the Commissioner's Room of the Wells County Carnegie Annex, Bluffton, IN. Physically present at the meeting were Commissioners, Michael Vanover, Blake Gerber, Auditor Lisa McCormick, and County Attorney Ted Storer. 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 the minutes from October 16, 2023, regular session. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Payroll and Claims:** A motion was made by Jeff Stringer, seconded by Blake Gerber to approve Payroll #22 in the amount of $330,232.13 and 212 claims totaling $1,449,2112.39. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Wells County Sheriff:** Sheriff Holliday reported 58 inmates, 18 pretrial Superior, 25 pretrial Circuit, 0 F6 DOC and 13 DOC. Sheriff Holliday reported that the 2026 Annual Jail Inspection had been emailed to the Commissioners, Council, and Judges.

**Wells County Highway Supervisor:** Matt Witt updated the Commissioners on projects. During the October 19th Commissioner meeting a Norfolk Southern 5% payment agreement for $350,206 regarding the closure of three highway-railroad grade crossings was approved. The closure project has been completed and Norfolk Southern agrees to contribute directly to Wells County within 120 days after Wells County executes and INDOT consents to the letter agreement. Witt reported that the agreement is with INDOT Chief of legal, INDOT has not consented to the letter agreement at this time. More updates will be presented when they are available. Road patching is complete for the year. Meridian Road from 1000N to 1200N has had tree clearing completed, the road has been widened, ditches and shoulders are being set, and pipes have been started. Witt presented a Purple Wave auction agreement to the Commissioners. He stated that Attorney Storer had reviewed the document, of which Storer suggested language modifications to the agreement. Witt estimated that the auction will be held in February and that any county owned equipment could be listed in the auction. Buyers' fees pay for Purple Wave to administer the auction. Bid documents were submitted for an upfit for one of their trucks. Two bids were received, Kalida being the low bid of $183,000. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to accept the bid from Kalida for $183,000 for the upfit and allow Michael Vanover to sign the bid document. Motion carried by roll call vote 3-0.

**Plaza Request:** Tim McCormick, representing the Christmas Light Committee, addressed the Commissioners requesting approval to use the Courthouse restrooms and plaza on November 27th for a Christmas event. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to permit plaza and restroom usage on November 27, 2026. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Library Update:** Joe McFarren updated the Commissioners on recent Library activities. The library currently has 12,989 active library cardholders, which equates to 48% of the eligible Wells County population age 4 and older. 98,586 patron visits were logged through September, physical circulation is at 70% of 2025 totals, electronic circulation is at 75%, OverDrive and Kanopy use is at 84% of the 2025

totals. Meeting room use is at 73%, study room reservations are at 74%, book-a-librarian reservations are at 63%, and notary services completed is at 75% of last year's numbers. November 10, 2026, the library is scheduled to launch Evergreen Indiana, both library locations will be closed to the public on Monday, November 9 for final implementation work.

**Bluffton NOW! Funding Request:** Michael Lautzenheiser, Jr., representing Bluffton NOW!, requested $10,000 for a downtown pathways project. This is phase two of the Downtown Pathways project and will add improved sidewalks, seating, public art, lighting, and security enhancements. This project continues Bluffton NOW!'s effort to revitalize downtown Bluffton and create vibrant spaces. The requested $10,000 will be matching funds to qualify for an IHCDA CreatINg Places grant. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the $10,000 request and provide the funds from LIT Economic Development. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**Purdue Extension Contracted Employee Agreement:** Bill Horan presented the annual Extension Contractual Services Agreement between Purdue University and Wells County to the Commissioners. The contracted amount of $135,000.00 listed in the agreement has been approved by County Council in the Extension budget for 2027. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the Extension contractual services agreement between Purdue University and the Government of Wells County, Indiana for 2027 and allow the Vice President to sign. Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote.

**EMA/Highway Storage Agreement & Car Usage Plan:** EMA Director John Petro presented a memorandum of understanding between the Wells County Emergency Management Agency and the Highway Department for storage of equipment. The agreement states that the Highway Department agrees that the EMA may store the EMA equipment at the County Maintenance Garage. The Highway Department shall designate the areas of the County Maintenance Garage where the EMA equipment may be stored, subject to the operational needs of the Highway Department. Initially, there shall be no budgetary requirement or cost to the EMA for its use of the County Maintenance Garage. The EMA Director and Highway Supervisor have previously approved and signed the document. A motion was made by Blake Gerber, seconded by Jeff Stringer to approve the MOU Wells County Emergency Management Agency and Highway Department equipment storage agreement (Misc. 2026-06). Motion carried 3-0 by roll call vote. Commissioner Stringer would like more time to study the vehicle usage and response plan, it was tabled until the November 16, 2026, meeting.

**Miscellaneous Business:** Attorney Storer reminded the Commissioners that a lay member appointment to the Health board will expire at year end. Under the current statute a lay member may only be appointed by County Council. Guidelines for appointments allow for a City recommendation or a Commissioner appointment, which cannot be a lay member. Statute allows for a registered pharmacist licensed under IC 25-26, a dentist licensed under IC 25-14, a hospital administrator, a social worker, an attorney with expertise in health matters, a school superintendent, a veterinarian licensed under IC 25-38.1, a professional engineer registered under IC 25-31, an environmental scientist, a physician assistant licensed under IC 25-27.5, or a public health professional, including an epidemiologist. Attorney Storer asked the Commissioners if they would like him to touch base with the City of Bluffton Mayor for possible board member recommendation(s). The Commissioners instructed Attorney Storer to contact the Mayor and discuss it further during the November 16th meeting.

**Public Comment:** Roger Thornton addressed the Commissioners regarding Flock cameras. He stated that during his time as a City Common Councilmember he voted yes for Flock cameras in the City. He is

a supporter of Flock cameras and appreciates the support it gives to Police and community safety concerns.
Tom Doepker opposes Flock cameras and would like to see them removed.
Sheriff Holliday spoke in support of Flock cameras and his decision to implement them for Wells County.

**Adjourned:** Wells County Commissioners adjourned at 5:52PM. 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, Michael K Vanover Vice President, Blake Gerber

_____ Attest: _____
Member, Jeff Stringer Lisa McCormick, Wells County Auditor