

PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 27, 2025

The Perry County Council met on the above date at 5:00 p.m. as was duly advertised. Council members in attendance were Kelli Harding (Kelli), David Etienne (DE), Stan Goffinet (SG), Paul Brockman (PB), Gale Garner (GG), Cory Filley (CF) and Brad Harth (BH). Auditor Kristinia Hammack, Attorney Rod Acchiardo, and Chief Deputy Eric Dickenson were also present. There was no *News Representative* present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

DE made the motion to accept as modified, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a) None

NATHAN HELD, INDIANA 15 REGIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- a) Held stated that Indiana 15 is a six county Regional Planning Commission, established under State Statute, as well as a designated Economic Development District through the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. In addition, Indiana 15 is also the rural planning organization through INDOT for this six-county region.
Held gave updates on what Indiana 15 has worked on in 2024.
See attached (bottom of page 4).

GREG HENDERSHOT, PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR

- a) Assistant resignation/vacancy
Hendershot appeared seeking the Council's permission to hire an assistant. Kelli asked if March through November is the mowing season, and Hendershot confirmed this. Kelli asked what this assistant is doing November through February? Hendershot stated they are working on all the equipment, getting it ready for Spring. In addition, they still have work orders to be done and the parks have to be maintained, with the spraying and mowing being the only thing that is not being done.
Kelli mentioned that she and Hendershot have spoken previously regarding the maintenance duties that he performs, which is something totally separate than the Parks and Recreation job. Hendershot explained how the Parks and Recreation job and the Maintenance job got combined.
Hendershot stated that with the hours the assistant works, being 36 hours Monday through Friday, plus Saturday and Sunday morning and evening to open and close Eagles Bluff Park, for the biggest part of the year, this person is working seven days per week.
Kelli stated she has not spoken to the Sheriff, but asked Dickenson if maybe Eagles Bluff is something that a deputy could lock up? Hendershot stated that this has been tried in the past, and the problem they run into a lot of times is the place has to be cleaned up. Also, there are times when you closing, there are cars at the top and the occupants are not able to be found; either they are back on the trails or have parked their vehicle there and left with someone. The person locking up must locate the individuals, as you cannot lock the cars up on the top. Hendershot stated that the parking lot lights are not utilized due to closing at night.
Kelli asked Hendershot that if he did not have maintenance duties, could he do the Parks and Recreation by himself if the County had a maintenance person?
Hendershot responded it is hard to go back on a trail where you are cutting up a tree that has fallen across the trail, and if something happens to you, no one will know until you do not show up for dinner, or someone walking down the trail finds you.
Kelli asked Hendershot if the County should bid out some of the mowing during the summer months, knowing that they would consistently be there to show up? Hendershot stated there was a time when mowing was contracted out, which was prior to him taking the position. Kelli stated she was trying to think of options that would help Hendershot have consistent help. Hendershot responded to raise

the pay for that position. At \$15 something per hour, it is hard to get someone who wants to work seven days a week. Kelli stated that with Social Security and Pension, it is like \$39,533. Also, considering this County cost of just the single plan for insurance, it is \$17,906 for premiums a year, and \$26,642 for the family plans. If someone takes the fulltime job, with taking a single plan, it would be \$51,657 plus medical claims, and the other would be \$60,393. Of course, this is not the take home pay.

CF asked Hendershot what is the reason for locking up Eagles Bluff at night, and he responded several years ago they did not. It is dark and isolated up there, and a lot of criminal mischief took place. CF asked if a possible camera or two would help take away the need for locking up, and Hendershot stated the County would have to start burning parking lots lights every night.

SG stated he believes that Hendershot needs someone, especially coming into the mowing season. SG further stated that possibly next budget season something could be done to get this position a little more.

SG made a motion to replace the fulltime assistant, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

TARA LUCAS, PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE SUPERVISOR

a) Immunization update

Lucas stated that the VFC Immunization grant, which stands for Vaccines for Children, funds the Health Department's Immunization Coordinator, which is one fulltime employee, and it funds partial salary for Lucas, another Public Health Nurse, and their Registrar. This grant funds the after hours, not County time, that is spent doing behind the scenes immunization work.

Lucas stated that in October, 2024, when the Health First Indiana (HFI) budget was presented to the Council, a proposal was made that if that grant ends, as the grant ends on June 30th, can those salaries be moved to Health First Indiana funding. Lucas stated the Council did approve that.

Lucas informed the Council that the Immunization Coordinator is going to retire on June 30th. While trying to be a good steward of funding, that position's job duties will be absorbed by others in the Health Department. Lucas stated she had made a request to the Personnel Policy Committee to change some job descriptions to reflect absorbing this job, with approval by the Health Board to do this. This was supposed to free up some money in Health First Indiana for the latter part of the year by not paying the Immunization Coordinator salary.

On Tuesday, March 25, 2025, the Health Department was made aware that the VFC Immunization grant funding was gone as of midnight.

Lucas requested utilizing the funding that the department would have spent on the Immunization Coordinator's salary for the second half of this year, Lucas would like to use that now to pay the salary and fringe, plus the partial salary that they are no longer receiving from the Immunization grant. There is some wiggle room within Health First Indiana where if an amount is off a few dollars, it can be moved. There will be no effect on County General.

Lucas is requesting to use HFI dollars to continue the Immunization grant duties and keep employing and paying the employees.

DE asked that as of next year, the Immunization grant is gone, and Lucas responded it is gone as of midnight on Tuesday, March 25th. Lucas feels that the title of the grant on the State level was VFC Immunization Grant Covid Immunization, and that is what hurt the funding of it. Lucas further stated that if persons do not understate what a VFC Immunization Grant provides children, and just see it as Covid Immunization money, she feels this is what got it tangled up.

GG made a motion to allow the \$25,000 in HFI funding to be utilized for salaries, seconded by BH. Motion carried 7-0.

ERIC DICKENSON, SHERIFF CHIEF DEPUTY

a) 2026 CHIRP Grant

Dickenson appeared to ask permission to apply for fiscal year 2026 the Comprehensive Highway Injury Reduction Program (CHIRP). This is recognized as Operation Pullover, as it was commonly called. This particular grant provides funding to units of local government to support traffic safety projects that are proven to reduce fatalities and severe injuries. In 2023, the Council was approached regarding this as the County fatalities were setting at five for the year. Council gave permission at that time to apply for this particular grant and at the end of 2024, that number was reduced by two.

Dickenson stated that the priority areas will be the click delivery project, which is a project that looks for seat belt restraint violations. Another priority is the driving under the influence task force, as it is known that driving under the influence is a real problem when it comes to fatalities by reducing the number of drunk drivers, even through education, and for high visibility enforcement. The final priority is the Stop Arm Violation Enforcement Project (SAVE). The CHIRP grant does require a 20% match, and Dickenson feels the County will be selected for an amount somewhat close to what it received this past year, which is \$17,000. The Sheriff's Department would like to continue to take the match amount from Inmate Housing. If the grant is similar to last year, the match amount would be approximately \$4,900, which is slightly more than 20%. The reasoning behind this is Dickenson not wanting the County to be faced with taking tax money to pay for this project. Dickenson stated he accounted for 28% due to SSI and retirement.

PB made a motion to approve the 2026 CHIRP Grant, seconded by DE. Motion carried 7-0.

MINUTES

a) 02.27.2025

SG made a motion to approve, seconded by DE. Motion carried 7-0.

KRISTINIA HAMMACK, AUDITOR

a) Transfer Request

- Cash Transfer

FROM: 1000 General Fund \$148,491.43

TO: 1187 Interest Income Fund \$148,491.43

Hammack stated this is the interest that has been earned so far in 2025.

Going forward, this will go directly into this fund and not into General.

DE made a motion to approve the transfer, and all future interest to go into this fund, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

b) Additional Appropriation Request:

- General Fund – Planning and Zoning; Office Supplies

#1000.21100.00000.0101 \$ 275.00

Hammack stated there was no budget set for Planning and Zoning.

CF made a motion to approve, seconded by SG. Motion carried 7-0.

- General Fund – Planning and Zoning; Board Members

#1000.11102.00000.0101 \$ 810.00

Hammack stated that the Board members are going to be paid as County employees to be covered under the County's Liability Insurance and Workers Comp. Some of this \$810 will be divided between Social Security and the wages.

DE made a motion for the stipend per permit, seconded by PB. Motion carried 7-0.

- Inmate Housing Fund – Sheriff's Office; Social Security

#4929.12100.00000.0005 \$1,308.69

DE made a motion to approve, seconded by BH. Motion carried 7-0.

- Inmate Housing Fund – Sheriff's Office; Retirement

#4929.12200.00000.0005 \$ 3,609.58

PB made a motion to approve, seconded by SG. Motion carried 7-0.

COUNTY COUNCIL

a) Open Board Appointments

- Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals

Kelli stated she was made aware of Statute 36-1-8-10 for Political Affiliation of Board Appointments. There is some question as this Statute talks about the last two recent primaries, and that is how you determine what someone's political affiliation is. Kelli stated she has found online where it stated the last primary, but this statute states the last two primaries. It also has some stipulation that if somebody was appointed prior to June 30th, 2023, it does not apply. CF reached out to the Perry County Clerk to obtain voting records to determine what party individuals belong to based on the statute.

Kelli stated there are three current members and the Council is looking for two additional. CF checked on the three current members and the three applicants, and the result was that only one person matched for their last

two primaries. Kelli stated that there are two current members that have different primaries, and the other three are all different for the last two primaries. The Council does not know what they do as the Statute does not clearly define what to do or how to determine what party affiliation if the last two primaries are different.

Attorney Rod Acchiardo spoke regarding individuals that were appointed after June 30, 2023, to a board that has part of its appointment to the board is condition upon political affiliation of that person being appointed. If they were appointed before June 30, 2023, then this statute does not even apply. The statute only applied to individuals that the Council is trying to appoint. Kelli interjected that this is an annual appointment, so the board gets reappointed every year.

Acchiardo believes that that the State just wants verification that if someone states that they are a Republican or a Democrat, they are voting in the primaries consistent with that pronouncement. If there is somebody that is skipping around and every primary they are voting under a different affiliation, then how can you trust what affiliation they claim to be?

Acchiardo further stated that the State is not wanting somebody to try to gain the system, meaning voting a certain primary, having really no philosophical affiliation to that particular party's platform, but trying to use that as a means of gaining influence in a particular board. This is essentially where they are going with this statute. This is Acchiardo's quick read on this statute. This is not saying this is the law, not saying that this is something you have to go by. Acchiardo further stated that statutory interpretation is very tricky. If asked if you can deviate from this, Acchiardo stated you probably can. How is it going to fall in the end if somebody challenges this legally? He responded who knows, it could go against you.

Acchiardo stated the Attorney General's office does issue advisory opinions on things like this. Kelli asked if this is something they should reach out to them and check before the Council does this? Acchiardo asked what is the urgency on this, is there an urgency?

SG stated he would like to table this until next month, with review of the candidates, and just to sort it out. Acchiardo agreed that he felt that this could be tabled and check to see what this is, with Kelli interjecting with the Attorney General. Acchiardo further stated it is a matter of statutory interpretation. Kelli will reach out to the Attorney General's office.

CF stated that there are multiple boards, this statute is not just for the PTABOA Board, but about all boards with an affiliation requirement.

Kelli asked Acchiardo if this should be considered going forward, and he responded going forward should be okay for future appointments.

SG made a motion to table, seconded by PB. Motion carried 7-0.

- Zoning Appeals Board

Hammack stated this is an internal appointment, so that someone on the Council would need to be appointed to this board.

CF made a motion to appoint PB, seconded by DE. Motion carried 7-0.

- Animal Welfare Committee

Kelli stated the Council has received a resignation letter from Rebecca Thorn, so this will need to be posted on the County website. Hammack stated it is already posted. Kelli stated that the Council will accept letters of interest for this.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m. CST.

GG made a motion to adjourn, seconded by SG. Motion carried 7-0.

Minutes approved this 24th day of April, 2025.

President, Perry County Council

Minutes reviewed by:

Kristinia L. Hammack, Perry County Auditor

Minutes prepared by:

Leisa M. Ecker, Deputy Auditor