

PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
April 24, 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 was also present. There was no *Attorney*, *Sheriff* or *News Representative* present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

a) Jim Carter and Robert Foust

Carter stated that Foust, along with his wife, are new to the area and joined the Animal Welfare Board. Foust has a very good background in animals and has a degree.

Carter stated that at the Animal Welfare Board meeting, the situation of the cats in Cannelton was discussed. Carter believes the City Council of Cannelton will be coming to the Council and Commissioners to get help, especially when it comes to dealing with the public if the situation comes to where cats have to be put down. Carter stated Animal Welfare is going to need Council and Commissioners help.

Carter stated a big problem is that there has never been proper animal enforcement in the county. Charlie Baumeister has been working with all the entities in the County to establish a plan for efficient enforcement as well as funding for the Animal Welfare Board with issues that will be dealt with this summer.

Foust stated he has a background in wildlife conservation, and is currently working on his Masters in Animal Science and Behavior. He hopes to bring some insight into the Animal Welfare Board as well as the cat situation in Cannelton.

CHARLIE BAUMEISTER & LACEY PAYNE, CLERK'S OFFICE

a) Part-time Assistant resignation/vacancy

Baumeister stated he is reapproaching the Council regarding the vacancy in his office.

First Deputy Lacey Payne gave a detailed synopsis of what duties are performed in the Clerk's office on a daily basis, and why the Clerk's office would benefit to keep a part-time person.

Baumeister stated that in 2020, the Clerk's office had six full-time employees. Former Clerks decided to reduce the number in the office. 2022 was five full-time and one part-time, and 2025 is four full-time. Baumeister stated that by hiring more police officers, it has increased the work in the Clerk's office by Prosecutors filing more charges. Baumeister gave data regarding this.

Baumeister stated that the Child Support Program reimburses back to the County a certain dollar amount per day per employee, which goes into the General fund. In the last quarter of 2024, a little over \$2,500 came in that was put in the General fund.

Baumeister stated the part-time position was funded for 2025, with 50% out of the General fund, and 50% out of the Clerks Perpetual fund. He is requesting that the Council give him the okay to advertise this part-time position and hire someone. Baumeister further stated that at budget time, he will use more money out of the Clerks Perpetual fund for this position, if necessary, as he knows things are going to be tight. He is willing to do whatever it takes to bring this part-time position back to his office.

Kelli asked Baumeister if the Clerks Perpetual fund can be used for other people in the office towards their salary? Baumeister responded most of the Clerks he has spoken to use this money for their part-time, as that fund's purpose is for records keeping. Kelli responded that it sounded like everybody is doing some of that. Kelli stated she feels it is available to be used for other salary because they

are all doing record keeping. Baumeister stated that according to the attorneys from the Clerk's Association, no, they frown on that.

Kelli stated that currently there are four fulltime people, including Baumeister.

Payne stated earlier that when someone leaves the office, being on vacation or out sick, that only leaves two people. Kelli asked where is the other person?

Baumeister stated that would be his position, and currently 100% of his time is focusing on election. Although there is not an election this year, the County has a lot of makeup and cleaning up to do in regards to the election. Kelli asked Baumeister if he does not do any of the other duties? Baumeister responded he has been shown how to do it, but most of his time is spent on election.

Kelli stated she is not against looking at a temporary person to come in and get trained to help with elections next year. However, for right now, she personally can not agree with the position even though there is the fee-based fund, those are funds that the County could potentially use to help take some expense off the General fund.

BH asked Baumeister what is the retention in his office, as he has very freshman kind of people helping him out, with Payne being the senior employee with three years. BH does not want to lose any more people in that office. BH asked if the public is being served well in the Clerk's office, and Baumeister responded yes, he believes so.

CF made a motion to approve the part-time position in the Clerk's office for 2025, seconded by BH. BH stated he is concerned for employee retention, serving the public, and morale, in hopes that once the members of the office get trained well that at another point it can be relooked at. Kelli asked Baumeister if this is something he will tell this new person that they will have a job until the end of the year? Baumeister stated that will be negotiated and he will tell that person up front. He is not going to mislead anyone to take a job part-time and wait until December 31st to say it was not in the budget. This person will know ahead of time. Baumeister stated it might be a little harder to find someone, but he is willing to go that way. Motion defeated 3-3-1 (PB abstained).

TARA LUCAS, HEALTH NURSE SUPERVISOR

a) Updated Job Descriptions

Lucas stated that after receiving the bad news regarding the grant funding abruptly was cut for the Immunization Coordinator, plus with the person in this position was retiring at the end of June, the result of this caused some reorganizing and restructuring within their office.

Lucas sent the Council an email regarding some job duty changes. Some of these changes came about simply because HFI (Health First Indiana) came about.

Lucas feels there are important pieces of a job description that need to be included or taken out if it is known that position is not doing that duty.

The requested changes reflect both job duties that have shifted simply from job title changes, and some requested changes from picking up the duties of not replacing the Immunization Coordinator.

Lucas stated that these job descriptions are shared with their State leadership often, as they are always interested in how Health Departments are structured.

Lucas stated that in the March Health Board meeting, these changes were approved by the Health Board. DE stated that in essence, that office absorbed that position, and Lucas responded that they are going to try to.

DE made a motion to accept the job descriptions with the changes, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

SAMANTHA HURST, PROSECUTOR

a) Assistant resignation/vacancy

Parker Hudson, Deputy Prosecutor, appeared on behalf of Hurst. Hudson stated that due to the vacancy of the Office Manager, he is seeking permission to post and fill this position. It has already been budgeted and appropriated.

Kelli stated that the Council received a letter from Prosecutor Hurst as to what this job does and the day-to-day operations. Kelli read aloud some of those duties.

SG asked that this position is fully funded by the County, and Hudson responded yes. Hammack stated with the absence of this position, it has caused an increased workload on her office.

GG made a motion to fill the position, seconded by BH. Motion carried 7-0.

CINDY TAYLOR AND RANDY COLE, PERRY COUNTY VISITORS' BUREAU

a) Employee Discussion

Randy Cole appeared to give some background on the Innkeepers Tax. He stated the way it works is that it is collected on any stay within the County, being a hotel or cabin where a person resides there longer than thirty days. This generates approximately \$200,000 depending on how the rooms are being rented out. Cole stated that with the system in the past, the County collects the money and appoints a Commission. The Commission received from the Treasurer the money. What had been happening was they would take a large sum of money from the Commission to a non-profit, and then at that point they would go on and conduct their Convention and Visitors business. Cole stated he attended one of these meetings, and was asked to leave after the Commission ended. His thought at the time is that Innkeepers tax dollars are being used, but then it is somewhat being shielded from the public as far as what is actually happening.

Cole stated that the group decided, in order to be transparent, that they would operate simply as the Commission, and this would carry out all their duties. It would be a County entity, as that is actually how the money flows through. Cole was asked if it would be possible for the Director to be a County employee? Cole's response was yes, they would have to get clearance from the Council to do something like that, but as long as they fund it including benefits, the Council would probably consider it.

Cole told the Commission there are three ways to hire a Director:

1. Hire as an independent contractor where they work under contract
2. Hire a temp worker through an organization that provides an employee
3. Hire as a County employee

Cindy Taylor stated that the entity is no longer the Perry County Visitor Bureau, Inc. It is now the Perry County Convention, Recreation and Visitors Promotion Commission. Taylor stated the non-for-profit has been deactivated.

Taylor stated she is the Secretary of the Commission, and they are asking to have the Director position as a County employee. Taylor provided Kelli with what the salary would be, and what would be reimbursed to the County, but does not want to put that amount out to the public at this time. Taylor reiterated that the Commission will be paying the salary and the benefits.

Taylor stated the Commission has been offered an office at the Armony Annex, which will save the Commission \$10,000 each year. Currently they are still under a lease agreement with the City until April 2026.

Taylor stated that if the Director is a County employee, as it would bring the openness to this Board and these funds. Taylor added that since 2000, when the not-for-profit was established, no one knows where these funds went or what they went for.

Kelli stated she likes the transparency of this position being a County employee, if she could be sure there would be no added expense to the County, and all expenses would always be paid by the Commission. Kelli stated she has an issue due to the revenue fluctuates. From 2014 through 2024, Innkeepers Tax brought in was \$2,535,680.

Kelli asked if there is a job description for this position, and Taylor responded yes.

Auditor Hammack asked if this would be paid directly out of the Innkeepers fund? Taylor responded that is the way she understood it, the Commission would have to reimburse the County. Discussion regarding how payment to the County would be made.

Kelli stated she does not know how claims would be handled, with Hammack stating the County is self-insured. The first \$60,000 per bellybutton has to be paid for. Kelli asked Taylor if the Commission has the ability within their reserve funds or in their account to pay the claims? GG stated the health insurance is his concern.

On another note, Taylor stated the Board does not even know who pays this tax and who does not; they are not allowed to know. The Director, or whoever signs the contract, and the Treasurer are the only two people who know.

Hammack asked Taylor if there is a budget for the Commission, and she responded yes. It was sent to the Council for 2025; however, this was when it was a not-for-profit.

Hammack stated that with respect to HR, there has to be a job description, and it has to be approved. There has to be sustainable revenue to show that it is going to be able to be fundable. With this being the Council’s decision, Hammack stated that there has to be numbers showing how it is going to be funded, how it is going to be paid for. Taylor stated she provided this information, with Hammack responding Taylor does not know if the Commission can fund the insurance. Taylor stated that with their funds, there is no way they can above the premiums. Hammack asked that Taylor is saying that the County General fund would pay the claims, with Taylor responding it does for all other County employees. Hammack stated that the \$60,000 per bellybutton would be an added expense for the County. In addition, the County just added Solid Waste employees this year, which was budgeted out of General.

SG stated he is the Treasurer of the Commission, and that they are sustainable. BH asked Cole if there was any discussion of revisiting the Health Insurance to see if the County is up to date? RC stated that the problem with the County’s health insurance is that there is only one plan, and the County should have a Cafeteria Plan, where the employees can pick and choose what they want and what they do not want. This impacts the salaries across the board substantially due to the big dollars the County pays out in health claims. The first \$1,000 the employee pays, then it is 80/20 up to \$2,500, and then the County picks up the remainder of the \$60,000. The County’s reinsurance kicks in at the point. RC stated this needs to be looked at. RC discussed further the County insurance. Regarding the Director position, RC stated that with this not being an elected position, and if the Council acted upon this, and if found later it could not support this position, it could be eliminated. This is an at-will employee.

Died for lack of motion.

MINUTES

a) 03.27.2025

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

KRISTINIA HAMMACK, AUDITOR

a) 2026 Budget Planning and Wage Committee

Hammack stated that in regard to the budget, it is already April and there are a lot of changes that are still in the process. She feels that if the Council would have more work sessions, and have more time to think and plan before the budget session, it would eliminate issues like the County is currently facing, with it being an overlook of the revenue being brought in by the jail from EDIT dollars. Hammack also mentioned to the Personnel Policy Committee feels it is a good idea to create a Wage Committee. Hammack feels that a good budget cannot be put together in three days.

b) Transfer Request

- Cash Transfer
FROM: 8136 Criminal Justice Grant Fund \$ 53.50
TO: 2502 Pre-Trial Diversion Fund \$ 53.50
Hammack stated that some things were paid out of the wrong fund, and this is to correct those errors.

DE made a motion to approve the transfer, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

- Cash Transfer
FROM: 8136 Criminal Justice Grant Fund \$ 30.00
TO: 1000 General Fund \$ 30.00

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

- Cash Transfer
FROM: 8136 Criminal Justice Grant Fund \$ 402.01
TO: 2502 Pre-Trial Diversion Fund \$ 402.01

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

- Cash Transfer
FROM: 8136 Criminal Justice Grant Fund \$1,996.20
TO: 2502 Pre-Trial Diversion Fund \$1,996.20

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

c) Additional Appropriation Request:

- General Fund – Circuit Court; Stipend Bonus
#1000.11208.00000.0232 \$2,171.00

Hammack stated this is to cover the increase in raises. Hammack stated that the Council approved the budget in 2024, then in January 2025, the Council approved the mandate from Judge Lucy Goffinet to give the raises as she requested at budget time. Additional appropriations could not be done until after the AFR was complete. If these addition appropriations are not made, then towards the end of the year, it will run out.

Kelli stated that the Council does not have to approve this, as it was a mandate. Hammack responded correct, the Council only has to approve the appropriation.

Kelli wanted to ensure this stipend amount covered everyone, and Hammack confirmed this.

- General Fund-Circuit Court; Social Security
#1000.12100.00000.0232 \$ 166.44
- General Fund-Circuit Court; Retirement
#1000.12200.00000.0232 \$ 187.48
- Supplemental Adult Probation-Circuit Court; Probation Officer
#2100.12900.00000.0232 \$ 9,797.00
- Supplemental Adult Probation-Circuit Court; Probation Secretary
#2100.13000.00000.0232 \$ 1,099.00
- Supplemental Adult Probation-Circuit Court; Retirement
#2100.12200.00000.0232 \$ 1,098.94

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

- Pauper Public Defender-Circuit Court; Attorney
#8961.31104.00000.0232 \$ 79,199.02
Hammack stated this is for the fourth quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025.

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

- IV-E Public Defender-Circuit Court-Attorney
#8960.31104.00000.0232 \$ 984.54

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

- Community Crossing-Highway; County Road Improvements
#9141.44501.00000.0534 \$247,490.00
Hammack stated this is for the Community Crossing matching for road improvements.

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

COUNTY COUNCIL

- a) Ordinance to Establish EMS Capital Equipment Replacement Fund
Kelli read aloud the Ordinance.

DE made a motion to approve the Ordinance, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

- b) Discuss purchasing computers for Council members
CF stated that the Council are County employees, having access to records, emails, and County software. He feels that with the Council having this access, along with downloading to a computer, that the computer should be a County computer. In addition, if the County IT is working on issues with a computer, it should be a County computer.

CF stated he has a Mac Book, and it does not speak well with the County software. Before he purchases a new computer, he thought he would see if the Council could get laptops for each Council member. The computer would stay with the title, not the person.

CF was given a quote by An Island for refurbished laptops for \$341 each. That would be \$2,387.

DE stated that would be a good asset, however, he has a problem with doing this right now with the way the County’s funds are. PB stated he would pay for his own, with DE stating he would also. GG stated that he feels it is a good idea, however, in light of where the County is right now, not to have the County pay for it.

Discussion regarding using a VPN to connect to the server and not having a computer to access at the Courthouse. Connecting to the server runs slow.

Kelli stated that she is concerned using a personal computer

- c) Open Board Appointments
 - 1. Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals
Kelli stated at the meeting there were some questions because of a statute that goes by the last two primaries that you voted in, the party affiliation,

and as long as they were the same, there is no problem. However, if they are different, that is not addressed in the statute. Council Attorney suggested reaching out to the Attorney General for an opinion. Kelli did do that. She received a call back from the Deputy Attorney General stating that they really do not give opinions to local governments, and to State agencies only. However, he did look into it and his opinion, not an Attorney General opinion, is that it really does not address that. Kelli sent this information to the Council Attorney, and his response was statutory language is ambiguous for those who split their vote as independents.

Kelli looked up the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals, and they had three people put in for it, two withdrew, leaving one which is Kourtney Casebolt, who would be labeled as an Independent. The three already appointed to the Board are Kelli, who is Republican, and Ms. Jackson and Ms. Dixon who had one of each, which would make them Independent. Ms. Casebolt would be considered an Independent based on voting history, so no more Independents could be appointed if she is put on the Board. BH asked if the designation of Independent is a party or a lack of party? Kelli responded she believes it is a party, as it was on the ballot last year. Kelli is assuming this. BH stated he assumed that an Independent has no party affiliation whatsoever. Kelli asked if that were the case, would they have a party affiliation or be disqualified? She does not know. Kelli stated she can reach out to the Council Attorney or the Attorney General regarding this.

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

2. Animal Welfare Committee

This was just approved to advertised at the last meeting. Possibly by the next meeting, the time will be up for letters of interest.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m. CST.

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

Minutes approved this 22nd day of May, 2025.

President, Perry County Council

Minutes reviewed by:
Kristinia L. Hammack, Perry County Auditor
Minutes prepared by:
Leisa M. Ecker, Deputy Auditor