

PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
June 26, 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 *Sheriff, Attorney or News Representative* present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

CF made the motion to accept as presented, seconded by BH. Motion carried 7-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a) None

RJL SOLUTIONS UPDATE

- a) Jonathan Blake appeared to give a brief update of what RJL has been doing for the last couple of weeks.

Blake stated since the last Council meeting, he has met with Gary Greubel at Waupaca. There was good conversation regarding Waupaca's plans, their operations, and their facility. Blake had planned to take a tour on this date, but due to the high temperatures, it is being rescheduled.

Blake also met with the Perry County Chamber, and had a really good conversation with them.

Blake stated that earlier this week, he met with Cannelton Mayor Graves, discussing some of his priorities and things his community needs moving forward.

Blake gave a quick update on Project Falcon, which is the business retention and expansion opportunity. Blake heard back from the site selector that this is the final decision phase; they have everything they need. The County has provided all the information that they have requested and they received their final letter from IEDC. They are waiting on their client to make their decision.

In terms of business recruitment, Blake stated over the last month, there have been four different opportunities from IEDC ranging from a \$25 million investment to an over \$150 million investment. After evaluating those projects, not all were a fit for Perry County. RJL will continue to evaluate projects as they come down through IEDC.

Blake stated that in terms of strategic planning and moving forward, he knows the County has a RFP on the street right now for the Ambulance Service. Blake forwarded this to two of RJL's clients that provide Ambulance Service, and has encouraged them to submit proposals for that.

Blake stated that following the Council meeting in May, he suggested to Council President Harding to develop a Capital Improvement Asset Management Plan. CF had sent out an email regarding this topic as well. RJL has been tasked by the Commissioners to prioritize capital investments in terms of infrastructure, water, sewer and streets.

RJL is going to be developing some recommendations on inventive policies, which is something RJL has identified as a need. As they look at projects that want to come to Perry County, it is important that they are evaluating those on a level playing field.

Blake stated that in his conversation with Cannelton Mayor Graves, they have spoken a lot about blight elimination. There is money through LEI or the Lily Endowment, which \$250 million has been committed for blight funding. RJL will be helping the Mayor as well as the County to identify those priority areas, as well as what projects should be applied for to be funded.

RJL is assisting the Derby Community Association with a grant through the T-Mobile Hometown Grant fund, which is \$50,000. It can be used for any type of community project that is of public good or a public benefit. The Derby Community Association has identified park improvements as their priority. RJL will be assisting them submit that application, which is due June 30, 2025.

Blake stated that earlier in the week, he met with the Redevelopment Commission, and they spoke regarding updates in redevelopment law as well as priorities moving forward, as well as challenges that come up with various redevelopment decisions.

TRACY SCHROEDER, RECORDER

a) Deputy resignation/vacancy

Schroeder stated that she has a deputy who is retiring June 30th, and she is requesting to replace/fill that position.

Schroeder stated the Recorder's office has a large project going on that they have been working on for several years now, which is the back indexing. Back indexing is all of the documents in all of the books of the Recorder have been scanned, and they all have to be indexed, audited, and checked for accuracy and to make sure every document is there. The Recorder's office has been working on this project since 2015, but it has been ongoing since 1999.

Schroeder stated the main goal is to get everything indexed, as there is approximately 20-30 years of auditing to be done. She stated the main goal is to get the indexing done. In another three or four years, this will be done.

Schroeder stated that in order to complete the project, she needs the third person in her office so that they can work on the back indexing, wait on the customers, and do the recordings.

BH stated the back indexing is not State mandated, it is a project that the Recorder's office has taken on for the benefit of the community. BH asked how the salaries are paid for this project, and Schroeder responded that she and the two deputies are paid out of County General. The two part-time are paid out of Recorder's Perpetuation. BH asked if the part-time are dedicated to this project, and Schroeder responded the two part-time index only. The fulltime people do all the auditing and the checking of the books throughout the day. BH asked if the fulltime come in sometimes before and after business hours to work on this, and Schroeder responded yes because it is quiet and no interruptions.

BH asked if all new recordings are being indexed as they come in, and Schroeder responded yes, everything is computerized.

The project is for indexing from 1815 to 1999. BH asked how far back is the current project, and Schroeder responded the scanning is completed. The indexing is back to 1896 on deeds, and they are back to approximately 1925 on the miscellaneous. BH asked if there is a significant number of people who are essentially involved in the legal, transactional, lien checking nature that need that information? Schroeder responded it depends; it is the title searchers who have to go back a minimum of fifty years, with some searches go back 75 to 100 years, which is rare. BH stated that essentially for the purposes of those individuals, except for the double check back 100 years, that portion of the project is completed for that population who would be making those inquiries, and Schroeder confirmed this. BH stated that the remainder of the project is essentially historical and genealogical, and Schroeder confirmed this.

BH asked that if someone came into the Recorder's office looking for genealogical recorders, would they be impeded or denied the ability, and Schroeder responded no. They would have to access the books.

BH asked Schroeder if this position did not get replaced, what implication would it have on her office. Schroeder responded she would not have the staff to help genealogy people when they come in. BH asked if this position would not be replaced, the back indexing project would be pushed out, and Schroeder confirmed this, stating three to five years.

GG asked that to keep things running smoothly in her office, the County would be looking at a fulltime position, and Schroeder confirmed this.

BH stated that the County will be in a belt-tightening mode due to SEA 1. The County will be looking for every opportunity that it can to realize a cost savings with the minimum, detrimental effect on operations and the minimal effect on the public. BH continued asking can the County get by with just a part-time person instead of a fulltime person, if the only implication is that all that happens is it delays the completing of the back indexing project? Schroeder stated that her fulltime person will be having surgery in a month or two, and could be out for a month to six weeks. That would leave only Schroeder in the office to do everything there is to do. The current part-time are strictly back indexing and not trained in the office. Kelli stated that if Schroeder gets a part-time for the office, they would be strictly helping Schroeder.

BH stated that he appreciated the historical and genealogical information that is going to be harder to get ahold of, but from a strictly Courthouse operations and the continuation of business in the community, he sees the least amount of disruption of that service if the Council took the opportunity to do a little budget cut.

Schroeder asked what number of hours the Council is looking at for part-time, and Kelli responded possibly 20 hours per week.

BH made a motion to approve a part-time person for up to 24 hours per week for the Recorder's office, seconded by DE. Motion carried 6-1.

JOAN HESS, CLERK

a) Deputy resignation/vacancy

Hess appeared requesting to fill the vacancy in her office, and this person would become the first deputy. The current interim first deputy will be moving out of the county. She can still serve in the office, but cannot serve as the first deputy.

The other person in her office is not interested in the first deputy position.

Hess stated that currently there are two fulltime employees plus herself in the Clerk's office. This office is currently down a person and a half. This position is needed for the workload, but also that they are in need of a first deputy.

The current staff in the Clerk's office has a total of less than a year's experience.

BH asked Hess if she has had any interest in the position, maybe from someone who has worked there prior, and Hess responded she has talked with people and asked them to get the word out that the Clerk's office would be hiring someone.

So far, no names have been brought to her attention.

Kelli stated she had talked to Hess' staff prior to her starting in the office regarding a potential temporary employee to come in for a short time. This would be someone who has worked in this office at one time who could train them as well as Hess. Hess responded this scenario kind of concerns her, as anyone she has spoken to who was previously in that office would not want to come back, plus if it is not recent since they left, that person would have to get retrained.

Kelli asked if Hess could reach out to the Clerk's Association to possibly send a rotation of people here to help train, with Hess responding she has not done this as of yet.

CF made a motion to approve the first deputy fulltime position, seconded by DE. Motion carried 6-1.

MINUTES

a) 05.22.2025

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

KRISTINIA HAMMACK, AUDITOR

a) Transfer Request

- Appropriation Transfer – MVHR Fund

FROM: 1173.12100.00000.0533	Insurance	\$100,000.00
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TO: 1173.23102.00000.0533	Stone	\$100,000.00
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Discussion on the amount of stone that will be needed this year due to the past winter and all the rain in the spring. Kelli stated she does not have an issue with Howell getting additional stone, it is just taking this amount from the insurance by doing this transfer. She would much rather do an additional appropriation for a portion of this stone or all the stone from the Unrestricted fund or Riverboat.

Kelli further stated that whatever is left in the insurance at the end of the year would go back into the big insurance bucket, which is where the claims are paid from. The County wants to make sure that fund continues to build up, as never knowing when a large claim would come in.

Howell stated that the Highway money is gas tax, at least most of it. Federal Highway and INDOT have both stated that this money is not to be filtered off and taken into the General fund, as they intend that money to be spent on roads and bridges. If this is moved, he has been told by these agencies that the County could possibly lose funding. He is not aware of any county that ever has. Kelli asked that if this has to be used for roads and bridges, why is it an insurance line item to begin with? Howell responded that the Highway has to pay their insurance. Kelli asked if it is not allowed to be in insurance or it is? Howell responded that it can be put in the insurance fund, but it is meant to be used on

roads. If there is extra in the insurance fund, Howell feels that amount should come back to the Highway.

Auditor Hammack explained that the County is self-insured. The County has to pay the first \$60,000 of every belly button; this is for claims, not premiums. Therefore, the County has to build that fund up. If this money is budgeted for insurance, and it is being used for insurance, currently that line item pays the premium. Whatever is left gets moved out of General, Health, and Highway to build the insurance fund. This fund has to be built up to pay the claims. Kelli added the Highway's claims are coming out of the insurance fund.

Howell would like to look at the Highway budget again, as he likes to work within his budget, to see if he can find somewhere else to get funds instead of an additional appropriation.

Died with no motion.

- Appropriation Transfer – General Fund

FROM: 1000.32100.00000.0008 Postage \$500.00

TO: 1000.21100.00000.0008 Office Supplies \$500.00

Hammack stated this request is from the Assessor's office. Last year during budget, their office supplies were lowered. This is a transfer from one line item to another.

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

b) Additional Appropriation Request:

- General – Coroner; Autopsy Fees

#1000.31700.00000.0007 \$15,000.00

Coroner Warren Taylor stated he has had eleven autopsies so far this year. He currently has enough money in his budget for 1 ¾ autopsies. This amount would cover approximately seven or eight more. Taylor provided a handout with information as to when an autopsy is necessary.

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

- Riverboat – County Council; Office Supplies

#1191.21100.00000.0061 \$ 3,868.00

Hammack stated this is to pay An Island to get the Council and Commissioners set up for remote access.

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

- Opioid Unrestricted-County Council; Repairs, Buildings and Fixtures

#1238.36100.00000.0061 \$ 7,979.83

Hammack stated this is for the server at the Detention Center. Kelli stated this is from the Motion of Intent from the previous month's meeting.

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

- Opioid Unrestricted-County Council; Repairs, Buildings and Fixtures

#1238.36100.00000.0061 \$12,923.59

Hammack stated this is the siren for EMA at Rocky Point. Kelli stated this is from the Motion of Intent from the previous month's meeting.

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

- Community Crossings – Highway; County Road Improvements

#9141.44501.00000.0534 \$1,916,941.05

Hammack stated the County has received the funding for the Community Crossings. This appropriation enables this amount to be spent. Kelli asked if this amount is for the grant and the match, and Howell confirmed this.

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

- LIT/EDIT Highway – Highway; County Road Improvements

#4923.44501.00000.0534 \$540,000.00

Howell stated this is what used to be the EDIT. There was a lot of damage from last winter that the Highway department is trying to repair. Most of the Highway LIT money will be going toward this repair. Howell stated that there will not be any additional paving this year except for the Community Crossings.

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

COUNTY COUNCIL

a) Quarterly Department Head Updates

CF stated that at the County Council's conference, they spoke to several other counties who open the door to their department heads to let the Council as well as the community know the department's projects, what is needed, what is not needed, what is going well, and what is not going well. CF will be putting together a schedule for this and will forward to Auditor Hammack. The purpose is to improve communication with the departments and is not intended to micromanage. In addition, they will not be forcing anybody to come, it is just an open-door invitation. Everyone will have their quarterly spot.

- b) Review Resolutions requiring Council approval before applying for grants
Kelli stated this has been talked about before, there was some discussion, and it got put to the side. This is a way for the Council to know if a grant will be applied for and has something reoccurring, or an expense is going to be reoccurring after the grant period, including if something would be purchased. This would make the Council aware of it so that they can plan for the future. Kelli read the Ordinance out loud.

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

- c) I.C. 5-14-1.5-2.9 Indiana Political Subdivisions Required to Livestream, Record, and Archive all Public Meetings beginning July 1, 2025.

Kelli stated this Indiana Code is effective July 1st. Auditor Hammack stated a memo was sent to all of the board appointments that her office has contact information on file. This was a reminder of this code, and advising them to contact the Auditor's office to set up a time to:

- 1) Go over how to run the live stream
- 2) Encouraging boards to look at a recurring date of monthly meetings so they can be scheduled.
- 3) Would like to have all the meetings held here at the Courthouse first, and if an overlap, the second location would be the Armory.

- d) Open Board Appointments

1. Animal Welfare Board

Kelli stated the Council received a letter from Robert Foust. He is a member of an animal sporting club or organization, which is a requirement for this appointment.

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

2. PTABOA Board

Kelli stated the Council has received one letter of interest for this board, which is Tony Hollinden. Kelli stated Hollinden has been a realtor for a long time, and he has a lot of experience. Due to this appointment being politically affiliated by the State, the letter sent in by Hollinden stated he has voted Democrat in the last two primaries. However, per verification with the Clerk's office, Hollinden voted Republican in the last primary. This would be a situation where a person has voted Democrat and Republican in the last two primaries. Kelli stated that there are already three spots filled by Independents.

There is also a letter from Brian Herwig, the Perry County Democrat Central Committee Chair, certifying that Hollinden is a Democrat.

Kelli stated that by going by the last two primaries, the party is not the same. Council Attorney Rod Acchiardo was sent a letter by Kelli, but she is waiting on a response as it was just on that day.

Kelli stated that based on the statute, since the last two primaries were different, the statute reads whenever a law, political subdivision, resolution requires an appointment to be conditioned upon political affiliation to the appointee or the membership to the board, not exceeded the stated number of members from the same political party at the time of appointment, one of the following must apply:

- 1) The two most recent primary elections in Indiana in which the appointee voted were both primary elections held by the party with the appointee's claimed affiliation.
- 2) If the appointee has never voted in a primary election in Indiana, the appointee can be certified as a member of the party by the party's County Chair.

Kelli stated that the problem is the Council has a letter from the Chair, but that is not one of the two requirements that are under the code.

SG stated he feels that the first qualification would disqualify Hollinden as he voted Republican in one primary and Democrat in another.

Kelli stated the issue for the Board is that it can not have more than three of the five the same. Currently there are three Independents, so there can not be any more. BH feels that if they are Independent, then there is no affiliation, so in essence the whole board could be filled with Independents. Kelli stated that this can be asked for verification. The whole issue is that the Statute is not clear.

BH stated that currently the PTABOA Board is short of staff. It can operate without someone, however, someone who is qualified has stepped forward, given a document, and even though it does not qualify for the way the Statute was written, that states that they are a Democrat, and that person has expressed that he is a Democrat. BH feels the Council should look at the intent of the law, which is not to load a board with one political party, and this would not do this. He feels it makes sense to go ahead and appoint Hollinden to the Board. CF agreed with BH, stating that if a party chair can sign a paper and a person can run for an election as part of that party, he feels it would be sufficient for board purposes as well. BH added that by having the document from the party chair, that represents due diligence on the Council's part; the Council has done its best to determine party affiliation.

BH made a motion to appoint Tony Hollinden to the PTABOA Board, seconded by SG. Motion carried 6-1.

- e) Steve Howell, Highway Superintendent, stated that based on the adoption of the Grant Ordinance, he was seeking approval to apply for the second round of Community Crossings. It will not be in July; it will most likely be in August or September.

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

- f) The next meeting is Thursday, July 24, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m. CST.

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

Minutes approved this 24th day of July, 2025.

President, Perry County Council

Minutes reviewed by:

Kristinia L. Hammack, Perry County Auditor

Minutes prepared by:

Leisa M. Ecker, Deputy Auditor