

PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
January 22, 2026

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), Cory Filley (CF), Gale Garner (GG), Brad Harth (BH) and Paul Brockman (PB). Auditor Kristinia Hammack and Sheriff David Faulkenberg were also present. There was no *Attorney* or *News Representative* present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

DE made the motion to accept as amended, seconded by GG. Motion carried 6-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a) None

JONATHAN BLAKE, RJL SOLUTIONS

- a) Monthly update
- The Perry County website has been refreshed and updated to match the County's new brand that was rolled out in December.
 - Last week, the new Perry County Economic Development Corporation social media was rolled out. Under that name, RJL will be posting two or three times per week about what is going on in the County. RJL is inviting businesses to reach out, and will be doing business highlights. They will be doing special posts as projects come up and are moving forward.
 - A copy of the Insight Indiana business article regarding the Ships for America Act was sent to the Commissioners and Council. This is in relation to the conversation that they had with Senator Young in Jeffersonville, IN on December 1st.
 - The community survey is still out, with 376 responses being received. This is available through a link on the website.
 - They are continuing community relationships, working with Council of Aging, the 4-H Fairgrounds, the CVB, and engaging with the Indiana Healthy Communities program for Perry County. In addition, RJL will be working with the Perry County Redevelopment Commission to provide some training, due to new members on that board. Blake wants to provide the Redevelopment some updates on the Webb Wheel project, current economic development initiatives, and talk through opportunity zones which is through the Economic Development Administration under the US government.
 - Blake sent a report of activity of some legislation that is going on in the State House, especially regarding LIT (Local Income Tax) and property taxes. RJL will continue to provide those updates as the session moves forward.
- b) Tax Abatement Policy
- Blake stated that he handed out the Tax Abatement Policy and Procedure before the meeting. He wanted to formally present this at the meeting, and was not looking for any action to be taken. Blake highlighted what this policy would do.
- The policy itself sets out the minimum application requirements that the County would expect anybody who is seeking tax abatements in the future to follow.
 - Establish a tax abatement committee. As currently written, that committee would consist of two members of the County Council, one member of the Commissioners, one member of the Plan Commission, the LEDO, and the Superintendent of Schools. This is similar to how tax abatement committees are formed in other communities. The tax abatement committee would be the first stop for a request. They would review the request, and ultimately make a recommendation to the County Council. Kelli asked if the make-up of this committee is by State Statute, and Blake responded no.
 - The policy discourages speculative development. This would be someone who builds a facility, but does not have a user in mind.

- It sets forth various factors for consideration, but not limited to, number of fulltime jobs created, the number of fulltime jobs retained, hiring employees who reside in Perry County, and then attracting target businesses or industries. Depending on how these businesses or industries align would determine if they would get a seven-year real property abatement or a ten-year property abatement. A lower investment threshold would determine the abatement period.
- Indiana Code 6-1.1-12.1-14 does authorize the governing body, which would be the County Council, to impose a fee of not more than 15% of the abatement or the property tax liability that would be collected by a taxpayer each year of a deduction. That fee would be similar to a payment in lieu of taxes. This imposed fee, with the developer's consent, would then be set aside in a fund that then can be used for further economic development initiatives. This could be planning, infrastructure upgrades, or signage. It has to be used towards economic development.

Kelli asked if this has to be used on this specific project or any economic development project, and Blake responded that it does not, but it would be worked out with the developer or the taxpayer at the time they are going through the process of the tax abatement. The Statute states very clearly that the taxpayer has to consent to that. At the end of the day, the intent of this is to support further economic development initiatives, long range planning, and infrastructure investment.

Blake stated this is an option for the County to consider, and can be included in this Tax Abatement Policy.

BH asked Blake if this policy would be to keep the County from giving away the farm to someone who is going to come in the County, take the tax abatement, and be gone in five years. Blake responded that is exactly what this policy is intended to do. It is intended to set guard rails so that the County knows what it is getting. Blake added that one of the provisions in the policy is that the developer has to enter into an agreement with the County that spells out exactly what their investment is going to be. They have to provide this information on the SB1 and SB1 PPP forms, which are State forms, but the agreement between the County and the taxpayer provides an additional layer of protection. The agreement provides those guardrails as well as the teeth that the County needs if the developer does not follow through with the investment they provided. This policy has claw back provisions that allows the County to rethink the abatement or eliminate it.

BH asked if the policy allows for any flexibility, and Blake responded that it does.

DAVID FAULKENBERG, SHERIFF

a) Deputy Resignation

Faulkenberg stated that he received another resignation a while back, and they are working on that; they have kept it open for applicants for the jail positions as well as the deputy's positions. He has received some applications, and will be screening them in the near future and presenting them to the Merit board.

Hammack asked how many jailer positions are open, and Faulkenberg responded one fulltime position, and he also would like to get some part-time people.

KIM ROBERTSON, HEALTH DEPARTMENT SANITARIAN

a) Robertson requested a carryover for the appropriations from the 2025 budget that was already approved. It is money that she did not get to spend. Robertson spoke to Michelle Matern with the State, who is the Southern Regional Director, who stated that would have to be okayed by the Council, but is a common thing to do to just roll it over. Hammack asked if the rollover would be calendar year through December 31st? Robertson will ask to be sure.

Hammack stated that this is basically like an encumbrance of the HFI (Health Indiana First), and Robertson stated that it is already budgeted in areas.

Robertson was told by the State that this is a non-reverting fund, so they do not want it back, the State wants it spent on how it was intended to be spent. DE asked what is the amount she is wanting to carryover, and Robertson stated there are a few line items. She had budgeted for an assistant last year, and he quit. It took a full year to train him. She knew at that point that there would not be enough funding to get another person for the next year. Robertson did not find it

appropriate to spend a year training somebody that they would not be able to keep. She has \$36,000 for that position. There are some possibilities for that which she can bring back to the Council at a later date. She is seeking to transfer these amounts to the same line items, just for the next year.

DE made a motion to approve the transfer of the 2025 leftover budget to the 2026 same line items, seconded by PB. Motion carried 6-0.

RANDY COLE, COMMISSIONER PRESIDENT

a) Highway Structure

Cole stated that the Commissioners are looking at how they would restructure the Highway department. Cole gave a background as to how they arrived at looking at this. Commissioners and Council have received calls regarding the condition of their roads, grass not being mowed, and all kind of different things.

The Commissioners have found that one of the issues is all the comp time that is generated, for instance with snow removal, that has to be used up, and then all of a sudden, the employees are not available to do the work when it is required doing roads.

Cole stated that the Commissioners will be asking to take some of the salary money that has not been spent on truck drivers and operators, in order to pay overtime. The Auditor is going to put a fund together where the County can do that. As the Highway personnel accumulate this overtime, they are not forced into taking days off.

Cole stated that one of the questions always was, if the pay what they make at the Highway department is not comparable to other areas, for instance the truck driver job, this will help to increase their pay.

Cole stated that in Perry County, there are 735 road segments in the county.

Each one of those roads have different, unique challenges. The County is hilly, with water that comes out of the side of the hill. It has a lot of sandstone. There are a lot of challenges on a regular basis on trying to keep these roads in condition.

Cole stated that the County invested in Vialytics approximately a year ago. This was done to be able to rate the County roads without being subjective. It appears to be like an iPhone and it rates the roads and tells the condition of that road.

That needs to be implemented so that the County does not find itself paving a road that is in pretty good shape while others are not being paved. This would require a road maintenance plan, and the County needs to put this together.

Another area that needs to be developed is a process with the county gravel roads, as they do not seem to last as long as what one would assume they would last.

Cole stated the County needs a ditching plan and a mowing plan.

Steve Howell of the County Highway department stated that Cole misspoke about a few things. Howell stated that with the Vialytics program that was purchased, it cannot be used to update the road plans. Howell spoke with Pat Connor at LTAP (Local Technical Assistance Program) and asked if the County can use Vialytics to update the roads? Connor's response was no, you cannot. Connor told Howell that it is a good plan, and it is good to have, but it will not update the roads.

Howell added that the County has to send guys to classes this year. They have been to classes in the past to learn to score the roads, and rate the roads.

Certificates will now be issued, and if the County does not have individuals with those certificates by July, then the County would not be eligible for Community Crossings.

Kelli stated that when the Council goes to their conferences, like the AIC conference, there was a whole segment on Vialytics and how the County should be using it. AIC is promoting it. Howell responded that Connor stated it is a great program, but it cannot be used to update the roads. Kelli asked if Howell was speaking for Community Crossings? RC responded that is where it really comes to play. It comes to play in two fashions. The County needs to know what roads need to be paved, as it is not 100% Community Crossings money as local dollars are used as well. At the same time, road ratings are required to qualify for Community Crossings. Kelli stated that is what that software gives, and Cole confirmed this. Howell stated that Connor feels it is a great program, but the County cannot use it to update its asset management plan, which has to be updated every two years; all the roads have to be rated every two years. Howell added that every year, it is updated on what the County paved. Every two years the roads have to be driven. Personnel have to be sent to classes, and their certificates have to be sent to INDOT before the County can apply for

Community Crossings. Cole asked that they have to manually drive every road to make a determination? Howell responded yes. GG asked if Vialytics is just a tool to be used with the personnel? Howell responded correct. RC stated that this was the first time he had heard that, as it is being used. A lot of the roads have been driven with only a few that have not been. Hammack asked is the County not driving the roads while using Vialytics? Would that not count? RC responded that what Howell is saying is that they are requiring it to be manually. RC stated it takes a picture every thirteen feet, and Howell responded that Vialytics puts a rating on every one of those. With Community Crossings, an overall rating has to be put down. RC confirmed that Vialytics does not give an overall rating, only on each segment. Howell stated that there has to be an overall rating for the whole length of the road. One rating is put on the application. Kelli stated she believes that a good average can be gotten when looking at the segments.

BH asked if Vialytics will identify the roads that the County needs to rate, or does the County need to rate all of the roads regardless? Howell responded rate all the paved roads; drive them and rate them.

Kelli stated that she drove over the newly paved roads so that Howell would have an updated list of what was bad and then what is now newly paved, so that it updated the score.

Cole stated he is going to look it up and bring it up to the State because this seems redundant to force someone to do that. Cole added that the program does a fantastic job. Kelli added that the State agencies are telling counties to buy that, with Howell stating he can send the emails from INDOT stating all of this. RC stated that a multiple group of counties use this program.

Howell stated that for gravel roads, he has looked on LTAP and Purdue's website. They have done studies in Indiana, all over the United States, and all over the world. Gravel roads have been a worldwide complaint, and it is not just in Perry County. Howell added that what is being done in Perry County is the same as what everybody in the United States is doing to maintain gravel roads. They have to be graded when able to do so, and then put rock on them. Howell stated that some of the rock that was put on the roads was too heavy, and his department had to go move some of that rock.

Howell stated that the last three weekends he has driven the County gravel roads when he heard complaints about them. Howell did not find some roads to be bad, and wondered what people were complaining about. Some people expect a gravel road to be like a paved road. When it rains, it will be sloppy on top.

BH stated he had driven some of the gravel roads the day prior, and he did not feel the gravel was excessive and too heavy. Howell informed him that the highway employees spent three days spreading out what was laid by Mulzer Crushed Stone. Cole stated that if it is a Mulzer Crushed Stone issue, then they need to be contacted. Howell stated that it was freezing when Mulzer Crushed Stone was trying to spread, and had to open the tailgate wider, so one spot was close to two feet deep. Howell added that was not Mulzer's fault, it was just the weather conditions. When it is below freezing, the rock turns into one big rock in the back of the truck. The Highway department cannot do it, and Mulzer's cannot do it.

Cole stated that the road work needs to be done when the weather is nicer rather than winter time. Soft roads will remain soft no matter how much gravel is put on them. Cole added that there are binding agents for gravel roads. He feels this is crucial to have. A binding agent will keep the water out, and keep the gravel solid. Cole stated that the County may have to do some chip and seal over the gravel roads. The hills are another challenge. There are a lot of peculiarities to road building. Cole added that Howell spends a lot of time sending his employees out to put more rock on grade and then more rock on grade; the County is not getting any long term use out of the gravel road without having to go back out and revisit an issue. If there is a way to make it more of a solid surface, a bound together limestone road, then Cole thinks that would help. BH asked the expenses per mile of this kind of a binding agent? Howell responded that \$60,000 per mile is the cheapest he has been able to find, and this is just for the chemical itself. It does not include the application and the grinding of the road. Cole asked if that is a chloride? Howell responded no, chloride draws moisture. Cole stated that is what is used to bind the stone together. Magnesium Chloride and Calcium Chloride are the two things used. An issue with it is that runoff in the ditches can occur. Cole added that if that is a relatively cheap

binder, you might have to put something on top of it so the water cannot go through it and percolate out into the ditches.

BH asked once a road is treated, what is the average length of how long the binder lasts, knowing there are variations based on grade and such? Howell responded that it all depends on weather condition. Cole stated he does not know.

Cole stated that the County has to be proactive with the roads. With 735 different segments, the County needs a plan on how it is going to address the roads financially.

Cole stated that the County did not receive Community Crossings funding this year. He reached out to the State and asked why, and was told that the application had a couple of road segment errors which were not mapped correctly and the estimates did not match the road names. Cole added that the County applied for one million dollars and got nothing. Howell stated he had spoken to Kathy McKalip with INDOT, who stated two-thirds of the funding was cut with several counties not getting awarded. Howell added that he has done the Community Crossings for ten years, and received everything he asked for nine years until this year. Howell stated that Cole picked the roads for this year, not him. Howell stated the Cole was told that INDOT is looking for east/west connector roads between the State roads, which run north/south. They want to be able to evacuate this county as quickly as they can if it would have an emergency evacuation. They are looking for the east/west connectors, and the County did not have that this year; it had four dead end sections on the application. The main roads that the County had rated sixes and sevens, which is not what they are looking for. Howell stated she spoke to Kathy Mcalip regarding the incorrect road name, and she told Howell that typically when a county is selected, if there is one mistake, he had to call and get new estimates and get that changed. INDOT's map did not match Howell's map. In addition, the scope of work on the application was exactly correct. Howell stated that there was a problem with the software not saving information that was input. Cole stated that when talking with INDOT, this was the first time they have heard of a problem with the software. McKalip stated if there is a problem, to call them and they would look into it at the time, and to not wait until the last day to submit it. Cole added he spoke to the County's State Legislature group about this, and was told that anyone with an error, INDOT tossed out the application.

Kelli asked if the County can reapply for any additional that is left over mid-year, and RC responded that it is done. The County was rejected on the first round and it was taken away. The County could apply in July 2026 for 2027 funding.

RC stated that Vialytics picked out the roads that needed to be paved, which were lower rated roads, however, what the County has on its spreadsheet, they are higher rated. RC added that you either believe the rating on the spreadsheet or the rating on Vialytics.

PB asked that it is his understanding that Community Crossings can be used to gravel and improve the gravel roads, and asked if that was Cole's understanding as well? Cole responded that he did not know. Howell responded that the first year Community Crossings was available, gravel roads could not be applied for. Counties gave their input on this, and within a couple of years gravel roads could be applied for. Howell had spoken to two different contractors who had dealt with other counties who had applied for gravel roads. One county had a section of road that was paved at one end, gravel in the middle, and paved at the other end. That county applied for the whole road, and was awarded for the one section on one end that was paved, nothing for the gravel, and nothing for the other end. The two contractors told Howell that the best bet is not to apply for gravel roads, as there could be problems getting awarded. PB stated he called INDOT, and gravel roads should be available and it could be applied for, with also stating that they were not going to guarantee anything without reviewing applications.

PB stated he appreciates what the Highway department has done, as well as Mulzer Crushed Stone has done, as the last four to six weeks, the County gravel roads have improved. The base on the County roads is there on most of them, where a year ago it was non-existent. Between the Highway department and Mulzer Crushed Stone, there has been a whole lot of success, as he has not received any phone calls in a month regarding the condition of the roads.

RC stated that what the Commissioners want to do is hire a professional engineer. The State of Indiana will pay \$40,000 towards a licensed engineer. With that person on staff, then a road plan would be put together, as well as a maintenance plan, and look at different opportunities on how the County can better manage

and keep the maintenance up on the County roads. Cole added that professional engineers that are licensed are not cheap. However, if the County can not seem to get ahead of the game, that doesn't work either. BH asked if the \$40,000 is reoccurring year to year, and RC responded yes. With having an engineer on staff, if the county needs any other bridges or any other engineering work, they do it as part of their job. GG asked if that would help on applying for grants if you have an engineer on staff, and Cole responded his expectation is that the grants, Community Crossings or whatever, whomever is sitting in that seat will be the responsible individual, and that conversation if the County has errors and things like that, would be on their shoulders. Howell responded that to apply for Community Crossing, and he was sure an engineer would forget this, but you have to be ERC to have access to that. Any of the Federal money, bridge inspections or any of that, you have to have ERC's. That has to be an employee of the LPA (Local Participating Agency).

Cole stated that with this individual, the County can get a ditching plan, and it would fall on that professional. The Commissioners will make sure that individual has some background in road construction, so the County can see if that would make a difference.

BH stated an engineer sounds expensive, with Cole responding that it is expensive. BH stated that the County would be adding an employee that is at a higher rate than just about anybody else. Cole stated that the Commissioners were going to propose to take the salary of two positions that are open at the Highway department that have already been budgeted, which is \$86,000. The State of Indiana provides \$40,000, and then the County can tap into its bridge money, Cum Bridge, and pay for part of this as well. Cole added that it will not impact the budget at all.

Currently there is an Operating Manager position, which is right below the Highway Superintendent, and two foremen. Of the foreman, one is an Operating Manager and one is a foreman. They would be raised up to the higher salaries, being paid the same. The Commissioners were proposing moving Howell to the Operating Manager, which then makes him eligible for overtime. With the salary the Commissioners were proposing, and by looking at Crawford County for 2024, the actual Superintendent and Howell would be paid \$11,0000 more than that person made, and would be paid just slightly more than Spencer County was paid, at what the Commissioners were proposing for the Operator's salary. Perry County is paying comparable to what the two adjoining counties are paying for their Highway Superintendent. BH responded that the Highway would have two fewer employees to do the work, and Cole responded it would have two fewer people and one engineer. Cole added that if Mulzer Crushed Stone can deliver to the roads, then some truck driving should be freed up.

BH asked Cole how much would have to be taken out of Cum Bridge, and Cole responded they used round numbers so \$25,000. It would have to be calculated out as the County pays 11.2% for pension and then health insurance.

DE asked if the County currently hires an engineer when it replaces a bridge? Cole stated Bernard & Lochmueller does the bridges, and Howell responded no, Durholz Excavating builds the County bridges. The County does not hire an engineer. Howell stated that a 40-foot bridge costs \$100,000 to build. If the County would go through the Federal system, it is a six-year process. There has to be environmental impact studies, permits, etc. which takes six years to get everything done. Durholz comes in, and in three months, the County has a bridge, an overbuilt bridge for approximately \$100,000. DE asked how the County gets a process allowed? Howell responded that Lochmueller Group inspects them when they are complete, will determine that they are suitable for a certain amount of weight, and approves them. Durholz usually puts in bigger beams than what is required, as well as a beam in the middle. Durholz has been doing this for fifty years.

Howell stated that he and Cole have not discussed, but he was told he would be getting a demotion and a \$3 an hour pay cut. He already had a 5% pay cut, and is not interested in another \$3 an hour pay cut. Howell stated he is dedicated to the people in Perry County in taking care of the roads, and he is not going to let the Commissioners run him off.

Cole stated that the Commissioners are looking for an alternative, and if everyone is comfortable with the condition of the roads, then just let it go as it is.

Cole stated that the Commissioners are looking at what can be developed as far as a way an issue can be reported. That way, it is officially reported.

BH asked if the County needs to hire an engineer? The County has individuals in this business, who have worked for the County for a lot of years, and have some experience. BH added that he knows none of these employees are really thrilled about plans and things like that from talking with them. They are his constituents, so he spoke up for them as much as he could.

BH stated that currently the Highway department is short on employees, similar to what the Sheriff department was a few months ago. Having an engineer and having two less employees is not going to be two less employees. The Highway department may have a smaller number of employees there, and it has been voiced to him this is a possibility. The employees who have been at the Highway department for years feel a little bit maligned, do not feel they are respected, plus concerned that Howell is not respected enough. BH added that the County has a responsibility to taxpayers; the part that has not been talked about yet is the County has a responsibility to maintain a highway department where there is not a toxic environment. Currently, the environment has gotten toxic, and it centers around personnel. BH's concern is that the County is reaching for an engineer to solve a problem that the County does not necessarily have to hire an engineer for. BH asked if the Commissioners can tone this down without reaching for an engineer, and cutting two employees? Cole responded that right now, the County gets into the summertime, and because of the way the Highway department comp policy worked, even when there were more highway employees, they were using up their comp hours. Number one, they have other things they want to do, and number two, they have to use them up. Therefore, Howell does not have a crew. Cole added that when the weather is nice, that is when roads need to be built. Howell stated that with the crew he currently has, a lot of them are farmers who depend on that time off to be able to plant their crops in the spring and harvest in the fall. It works well for farmers. Howell added that to work for the Highway, an individual has to have a CDL, which they could make three times as much money somewhere else. BH stated that if the Highway loses the people that it does have, then the Highway department will have a bigger hole, which is his concern. BH did not have an answer to this situation.

Howell stated that he is not against the County getting an engineer, but he is doing things that a Superintendent should not have to do.

BH reiterated that he is concerned that the County is digging a hole with its employees, and it needs to stop digging.

Cole asked if the County needs to look at contractors, as the current employees want comp time, they do not want overtime. They are doing their farming when the weather is good; when the sun shines, they have to get in the fields. Cole asked does the County start looking at contractors to provide some of these services? Does the County have to look at wage increases to get people in here? Is the County going to have to continue the comp time because the only people who will work for the County are those that have other interests? Cole stated these are the questions because how is the County going to deal with the road situation? CF asked if the County could not work with Workforce One and the high schools to identify students that the County can send to get their CDL training for a contracted amount of time? Cole responded the County can. It went through this process where if the County gets the individual through school and train, they have to work for the County for a specific period of time, or they have to give some money back to the County.

BH reiterated that at this time, and having a concern for the taxpayer, it sounded like the roads right now are in a pretty good position. The Highway department has been responsive is what he heard. BH stated that right now the County does not have an emergency. There is a fiscal constraint associated with monies that the County is not getting, that it used to get. His question again, is now the time to hire an engineer? BH believes in the long run, yes, he thinks the plan is good, and could augment the employees that the County has at the Highway department, however, he is not sure that right now given the fiscal constraints and the competition for scarce resources, in addition to the environment at the Highway department due to communication that has been poor. Does the County want to do this right now with the added expense and the effect it is going to have on Highway department employees? Cole asked if not now, then when? What triggers the hiring of an engineer and setting it up? BH responded 2028, whenever the County gets more money, but not right now. The County is going to be struggling to keep up with what it has already promised.

BH asked Howell that if the Council tabled this discussion, would he be more willing to help with a general flexible plan that meets the criteria that Cole is trying to get with an engineer? Howell responded yes, there needs to be better communication both ways.

BH asked PB if he thought that the County could live with the status quo with Mulzer Crushed Stone helping out for a couple of years until the County can get a relief valve on the revenues that this County needs? PB responded that the County had an emergency situation with the roads where last winter, they were not really passable in a lot of places. PB stated that he feels that Cole is on the right track, and BH agreed with that, however, it is the timing as well as the environment out at the Highway department where the County needs to keep as many people as it possibly can.

CF stated that to him it looks like the issues were identified throughout 2025. As they were issued, they were dealt with, things identified with Vialytics, the contract with Mulzer Crushed Stone, and getting all the pieces in the right place. CF does not think that financially this is the right time. BH stated that the County could move towards Cole's goals, hiring an engineer in the future if the County has the financing. Cole responded that the Council needs to tell the Commissioners when that seems appropriate. Putting together a professional road plan is critical if the County ever wants to have a quality road system. Once the plan is put together, Cole does not know if the County will be able to afford it, but at some point, the County is going to have to develop a plan and not guess at it. Cole stated there has to be a standard for a County road. Howell will drive down a road and it looks fine to him. Whatever Howell determines how that is put together, the engineer and everyone is good with that, then that is the county road standard for the gravel road. Right now, there is no standard. CF stated that Howell mentioned that he is willing to come up with one, create one, and work with the Commissioners to create one.

BH reiterated that he would consider in 2028 if the money is there. Kelli asked Cole if the Commissioners could contract an engineer to come in and put together a plan instead of hiring one? Cole responding that would entail money, and the County evidently does not have any.

The Commissioners have a meeting with Howell on Thursday, January 29th, and hope to get some plan worked out. Kelli asked that the Council be kept informed.

MINUTES

a) 12.18.2025

DE made a motion to approve, seconded by CF. Motion carried 6-0.

b) 01.05.2026

BH made a motion to approve, seconded by PB. Motion carried 6-0.

KRISTINIA HAMMACK, AUDITOR

a) Distribution of monies from "timber sales"

Hammack had provide the Council with all the documentation. The timber sales that the County received on January 6, 2026, was in the amount of \$34,603.81. Per House bill 1424, the Council determines the distribution amount to the volunteer fire departments in these townships. There is a minimum amount, which is \$1,000, and is at the County discretion. Kelli stated that the County can give these fire departments a minimum of \$1,000, or up to 24% of the total, and Hammack confirmed this. DE stated he thinks that is what the County needs to do. Kelli stated she is in favor of the higher amount; instead of the \$1,000 for the fire departments, give them \$2,471.71.

Kelli stated that the following will receive money:

- Anderson Township Volunteer Fire Department
- Cannelton Fire Department
- Central Perry Fire Department
- Tell City Fire Department
- Troy Volunteer Fire Department
- Rome Volunteer Fire Department
- Perry County EMA Fire Rescue

CF made a motion to distribute the \$2,471.71, seconded by DE. Motion carried 6-0.

b) Update on Dormant Funds

Hammack is wanting to get the Fund report cleaned up, where it is accurate and know that they are usable funds; they are monies that the County is able to spend

and know what it can be spent for. On the list of funds provided to the Council, all of the funds listed have been inactive since 2019 or before. Hammack added that there are a couple of grants that are on the list. All of these funds have had no activity for at least two years.

Hammack reached out to the State Board of Accounts (SBOA), and when a fund has had no activity for two years, it can be declared dormant, and move it to the general fund based on Indiana Code 63-1-8-5. Per a phone call followed up by an email, it is basically at the County discretion on how it handles this. Hammack added that once a grant is closed, it is done. She believes that some of these grants are from 2021 and 2022. When they are closed out, a new fund is created for the new grant. When transitioning from one grant to the next grant, some of the monies were forgotten about. By State Statute, the County can move this money to the General fund, as it meets the dormant status. There are identical grants where one is closed and another is opened, possibly move the amounts to the new grant. Kelli asked if that would mess up the reporting if it is moved, and then the agency would state that they did not have that much money in the grant to expend? CF stated that all those monies should go to the General fund.

The Home Rule funds are individual funds that are set up by the county, and are no longer being used. The Council is able to move these to the General fund if they should so choose. These are the 4000 numbers.

Hammack provided the IC codes that explain what all of the funds are that are not Home Rule funds.

Hammack stated that transfers do not have to be advertised, only approved by the Council. BH stated he believed all of the dormant funds should be swept out, close them down, and transfer to the General fund.

CF made a motion to transfer the funds from the fifteen dormant accounts to the General fund in the amount of \$141,432.84, seconded by BH. Motion carried 6-0.

c) Transfers

- **Cash Transfer**

Community Corrections Department

From: 1122 Project Income Fund \$ 352.75

To: 9160 Community Corrections Fund \$ 352.75

DE made a motion to approve, seconded by GG. Motion carried 6-0.

- **Appropriation Transfer**

Community Corrections Department

From: 1122.12200.00000.0232 Retirement \$ 352.75

To: 9160.12200.00000.0232 Retirement \$ 352.75

CF made the motion to approve, seconded by BH. Motion carried 6-0.

- **Cash Transfer**

From: 4923 Animal Shelter Fund \$3,868.73

To: 1180 Animal Shelter Restricted \$3,868.73

CF asked if this fund was on the dormant roll previously discussed to move to General, and Hammack stated that she felt this is a fund that got lost. Another fund was created when the County started receiving rent money. Hammack stated she feels this is Animal Shelter money from when they shut down originally. Hammack added that it falls under the dormant status, so the Council can do whatever they wish to do.

Hammack reminded the Council that the County is paying the full contract amount, \$60,000, out of this fund. BH felt that this could be transferred into the Animal Shelter fund.

DE made a motion to approve, seconded by PB. Motion carried 6-0.

d) 2026 Temporary Loan Transfer

From: 4800 Capital Projects Fund \$100,000.00

To: 1138 Cumulative Capital Development \$100,000.00

Hammack stated that the County has to do a temporary loan transfer to get through spring settlement. This fund does not have the reserve to handle the expenses that the County has at the beginning of the year. Hammack is confident that the County will be able to pay this back in spring settlement.

CF made a motion to approve the \$100,000.00 transfer, seconded by BH. Motion carried 6-0.

COUNTY COUNCIL

a) Annual review of Rules of Decorum

Kelli stated that the Resolution shall remain in full force and effect until further actin by the Council. With having new Council members, she felt that the Council should do this again. Kelli added that it did not change from the previous year. This resolution is posted on the boards outside of the Courthouse meeting room, with an arrow on each door directing to the bulletin boards.

PB made a motion to approve seconded by BH. Motin carried 6-0.

b) Internal Control and Personnel Policies Handbook acknowledgement
These acknowledgements need to be completed by Friday, January 23, 2026.

c) Sheriff Salary Matrix Ordinance

BH stated that the Council has come up with a matrix for payment to the deputies. The County lost a lot of deputies back when Alan Malone was still the Sheriff. Malone and Dickenson brought concerns to the Council's attention regarding the emotional and physical stress the deputies are under, and conditions of vehicles. BH stated that these individuals have to go through a stress that other County employees do not go through. The individuals have additional skills and risk their own personal safety. This organization is very concerned about public safety. When Faulkenberg became Sheriff, BH along with GG and Kelli sat down with him to discuss how to move forward. Faulkenberg presented a program that was based on years of service, rank, and additional training certifications that a deputy can receive which allows them to come back to the County and train other deputies in the force without the expense having to go to the trainings. This program would give the deputies a small bump in salary based on those skills the deputies are willing to go out and get. Also suggested was to work within a framework that essentially Tell City had started. Tell City Police Department assisted with getting this program together. Attorney Rod Acchiardo and Wagner, Irwin & Scheele, who is the County's HR consultant, were consulted to ensure that the program met all the employment laws. The matrix is now in place and is a compliant document. Deputy retention is the goal.

BH stated that with the limited funds that the County has available, and the stress that was caused to all employees when the stipend was not able to be reissued, the Council is going out on a limb, trying to maintain the public safety through the compensation for deputies, and essentially use funds that may not recyclable, that will not show up again.

Kelli agreed with BH that the Council is going to have to make this a priority within the budget. If this matrix is passed, it has to be a priority, as there will be no going back.

Faulkenberg discussed the components of the matrix, and presented what the current deputies have as far as skill sets and years of service. If someone should decide at a later date that they no longer want to do the duties that was piled on them, then they would be reduced down and the pay bump would be removed. In addition, should someone leave the department and return, that individual's time would start fresh as year number one.

CF stated that the County is looking for a large sum of money for this, and did not want the public to think any of the deputies are getting rich; it is not the case.

Kelli read Ordinance OCC26-2 by title: An Ordinance adopting County of Perry, Indiana, Sheriff Salary Schedule and Compensation Policy.

BH made a motion to approve, seconded by GG. Motion carried 6-0.

d) Attorney Contract

Kelli stated thar Rod Acchiardo was out of town and was not able to send her the updated contract. It is the exact same as last year except Acchiardo would like to request a \$40 a month increase. This would be \$6,000 per year, from the previous contract being \$5,460 per year. Kelli stated this increase would require an additional appropriation, as the Council budgeted only what they had for 2025. Hammack asked if Acchiardo's contract states he is required to be at the Council meetings? DE responded the contract states that he will make a good faith effort to attend the monthly meetings or special meetings. Hammack stated that she believes his old contract stated he is to attend meetings.

CF made a motion of intent to increase to the \$500 per month, \$6,000 annual, seconded by PB. Motion carried 5-0 (GG absent).

Hammack spoke as the Chief Financial Officer of the County. Hammack stated it is really hard as an office manager and an elected official to run an office. With several offices dealing with what they are dealing with, it is hard to swallow sitting through October in the budget and having to cut so much. Telling everyone that these are things that the Council hates to do, things they do not want to do, but County employees other than on the Court side are making less in 2026 than they were in 2025. This is the truth

of the matter. Hammack stated that there are entities within this County that the Council was not able to fund. While she commended the Council on what they have done for the Sheriff's department, however, the things that have been done in the last four months to where the County will find the money, looking at tools for other offices that are not necessary; they are wants. Hammack feels that the County should let the elected officials and the departments have a say, and more teamwork between the Commissioners, the Council, the other elected officials, and department heads.

Hammack stated that there was not even a discussion with an attorney asking for more money, and she has not seen his presence much. There was just a motion to give him more money. Yet the County employees that work every day and serve the public, the Council does not even bat an eye.

BH stated that there was a prior discussion in the meeting regarding hiring an engineer and rearranging things, and the Council spoke to that issue. The Council is doing what it can. BH added with the attorney situation, he was hesitant to approve it, but the Council has to have an attorney, as well as employees. BH was not discounting that. He does not feel that the Council is able to say no to the attorney. BH stated he understand that the County employees think they got a pay cut regardless of whether you call a stipend a bonus or not. The Council is aware of it, they struggle with it, but would still make the same decision. BH understood Hammack's concern.

e) Indiana Region 15 Internal Appointment

This is an internal appointment from the Council.

CF made a motion to appoint Kelli, seconded by PB. Motion carried 5-0.

f) Kelli stated that the County Council and the Commissioners have a joint work session Monday, January 26, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. with the Hospital Board and the Hospital Admin, in the Perry County Memorial Hospital education training room to discuss EMS. With it being a work session, there will be no public comments, but will be open to the public. They intend to livestream this work session.

g) Steve Howell stated he had two more operators quit, and asked the Council for approval to advertise those positions.

BH made a motion to approve, seconded by PB. Motion carried 5-0.

h) The next County Council meeting will be on Thursday, February 26, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m. CST.

At the time to adjourn, Howell asked to speak in regards to his operator openings, and no motion to adjourn was made.

Minutes approved this 26th day of February, 2026.

President, Perry County Council

Minutes reviewed by:

Kristinia L. Hammack, Perry County Auditor

Minutes prepared by:

Leisa M. Ecker, Deputy Auditor