PERRY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
AND COUNTY COUNCIL
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
September 17, 2026

The Perry County Board of Commissioners and the County Council met at 11:30 a.m., as was duly advertised. Commissioners: President Randy Cole (RC), Vice President Pam Jamniczky (PJ), and Rebecca Thorn (RT) were in attendance. Council President Kelli Harding (Kelli), Vice President David Etienne (DE), Cory Filley (CF), Brad Harth (BH), Roger Peter (RP) and Gale Garner (GG) were in attendance. Second Deputy Auditor Nichole Senn was also present. Auditor Kristinia L. Hammack and Councilman Paul Brockman were absent. There was no *Attorney, News Representative* or *Sheriff* in attendance.

The meeting opened with all present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

BH made a motion to open the meeting, seconded by GG. Motion carried 9-0.

AGENDA

Commissioners:

PJ made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by RT. Motion carried 3-0.

County Council:

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

RC stated that the reason for the Special Meeting was to approve the settlement agreement for the Traci Vinet case.

Commissioners:

PJ made a motion to approve the settlement agreement, seconded by RT. Motion carried 3-0.

County Council:

CF stated that he was uncomfortable making a decision on the settlement agreement based on the facts presented. CF went on to add that he wished they would have received some input from a special attorney. KH asked CF if he ever requested an outside special attorney? CF stated that he had not. GG asked if there was a way to add this into the handbook to keep this from happening again? KH stated that how to handle situations like this are in the handbook. BH added that there was a law passed by legislature this year that he had informed RC about. BH went on to state that the legislature seemed to somewhat address this issue. BH stated that RC had suggested it be brought to the attention of the handbook committee. CF stated that his concern is for the taxpayer dollar as a taxpayer. KH added that considering the risk of what could be paid out according to the attorney, there is a potential of hundreds of thousands of dollars if it reaches federal court.

BH made a motion to approve the settlement agreement, seconded by DE. Motion carried 5-1.

RC stated on behalf of the Perry County Commissioners, they voted to sign this settlement agreement to protect county taxpayers and bring a responsible resolution to this matter. RC added that they want to outline the core reasons for this decision. RC stated that under separations of power, under Indiana law, the Clerk of the Courts holds sole authority over internal department employment. This includes appointing or changing the first deputy. RC also added that the Commissioners and Council have no involvement in these issues or department level decisions and were only made aware of the issue after the actions had occurred. RC went on to add that Ms. Vinet was hired in August 2025, appointed as first deputy and participated in regular employee reviews before her termination in March 2026. RC stated that at the time of her termination, her personnel folder contained no documents or justifications. RC added that the state unemployment office reviewed the case and twice confirmed Ms. Vinet's eligibility for benefits. RC also stated that despite Ms. Vinet offering to return to work, her request was rejected by the Clerk. RC went on to add that defending a federal lawsuit involving the

First and Fourteenth Amendments is highly complex and financially draining. RC also stated that pre-trial defense costs typically range from $50,000 to $250,000 and sometimes up to $500,000 if the case were to become a full federal trial. RC went on to state that in order to shield taxpayers from additional financial burden, the settlement will be funded entirely by existing taxpayer dollars already budgeted for this position within the Clerk's office. RC also added that this position will remain vacant through the remainder of 2026. RC went on to add that by settling now, the county would avoid hundreds of thousands of dollars in high-risk legal fees and would ensure no additional cost to our taxpayers.

Commissioners:
PJ made a motion to adjourn, seconded by RT. Motion carried 3-0.
County Council:
GG made a motion to adjourn, seconded by DE. Motion carried 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 11:42 p.m.

_____
President, Perry County Council

Minutes reviewed by:
Kristinia L. Hammack, Auditor
Minutes prepared by:
Derika L. Roark, Deputy Auditor