

**PERRY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**July 23, 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), Gale Garner (GG), Brad Harth (BH), Roger Peter (RP) and Paul Brockman (PB). Cory Filley (CF) was not present. Auditor Kristinia Hammack was also present. There was no *Sheriff, Attorney or News Representative* present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**a) Clerk Joan Hess:**

Clerk Joan Hess informed the County Council that she was here under public comments, as she had requested to be on the agenda, but was removed again.

- Hess stated that the Clerk's Office will be getting an intern at the start of this coming school year. Though the intern will be limited on duties, they can assist with answering the phone, filing and clerical duties. The hours are yet to be determined but will be during the school day and set by the school.
- Hess requested a part-time position for the remainder of 2026 to be paid for out of the Clerk's Perpetuation Fund. Hess added that there is about \$100,000 in the Clerk's Record Perpetuation Fund available. Hess requested this part-time position to be 25 hours a week at the rate of \$19.38 an hour.

KH asked if this person was to assist with election, and if it was possible to get someone trained? Hess answered that she is hopeful. KH asked if Record Perpetuation needs to be their full-time job, if it is paid out of the Clerk's Perpetuation Fund. Hess answered that the majority of all that is done in the Clerk's Office is considered maintaining records. KH requested Hess to get approval in writing just to protect the county. Auditor Hammack stated the cash balance in the Clerk's Record Perpetuation Fund is \$111,983.40 with \$10,147.64 left to expend from the 2026 budget. This leaves an estimated available balance of around \$100,000, as Hess said. BH stated that he has had conversations with Judge Lucy Goffinet where she had voiced her concerns about things slipping on the court's side, with the Clerk's office being short staffed. GG stated if the monies in the Clerk's Perpetuation Fund can be used for this purpose, he is in support of it. DE stated that he agreed with what GG stated.

BH made the motion for the approval of advertising for a part-time deputy to be paid out of the Clerk's Perpetuation Fund at the rate of \$19.38 up to 25 hours a week, seconded by GG. Motion carried 7-0.

**b) Mary Kay Elder:**

Mary Kay Elder stated that she spoke to the Commissioners at their meeting earlier that week and now is here to the County Council. Elder stated that based on her research, unless the First Deputy can conclusively prove that they were fired for whistleblowing or civil rights discrimination, an elected Clerk in Indiana holds the statutory upper hand. Also, in most scenarios, the threat of a lawsuit is a leverage tactic. Elder added Indiana law firmly protects an elected official's right to choose their own Chief/First Deputy. Elder stated that with the County Council considering paying the fired First Deputy out, she feels a can of worms is being opened. Elder asked if anyone gets fired and if they threaten a lawsuit is the county going to pay them out? Elder felt the County Council should reconsider.

**DRUG COURT COMMITTEE**

**a) Restricted Opioid Funds:**

KH stated that if everyone had a chance to watch the Commissioners Meeting this past Tuesday, the Drug Court Committee made a very impactful presentation. Judge Goffinet also sent an email providing information on the Drug Court Program. KH stated that what they are asking for is \$103,328 from the Restricted Opioid Fund to be set aside for the Drug Court Program, due to legislation cutting

\$11.3 million from Community Corrections budget. KH advised the information that Judge Goffinet shared at the Commissioners meeting, that Community Corrections currently has some project income and if awarded the \$103,328 from the Opioid Restricted Fund, the program can be funded for two years. This funding will give them two years to look for alternative funding. During this time, the plan is to work with RJL Solutions and look for grant opportunities. Also, it had been relayed from State Representative Steve Bartels that he doesn't believe this was supposed to happen. It is hopeful that during these 2 years it will be corrected. In this meeting, the Restricted Opioid funds were discussed that the Drug Court Program is an eligible use of these funds. Drug Court is an evidence-based program that addresses an individual's mental health needs and is an alternative to prison. Judge Goffinet also stated that a Commissioner and a County Council member sit on the Drug Court Advisory Board, and all funding passes through the Auditor's Office and Commissioners.

BH added that he has been looking at intentionally evidence-based ways to use the opioid restricted funds based on the guidelines and it is hard to find anything that matches as well as Drug Court does. BH added that he cannot see a better use for the Opioid Restricted funds as the Drug Court Program.

GG stated he was glad the county has the Opioid Restricted funds available to keep the program going.

KH stated Opioid is not an annual or ongoing funding the county receives. The county needs to be diligent in looking for other options for future funding. BH stated that it is his understanding that this request is for the current Opioid Restricted funds (\$103,328), and if the county get any additional funds, it can be used for other projects. KH stated that that is her understanding as well.

KH stated that she feels the appropriate way to do this is to set up a new fund Restricted for Drug Court Program and transfer the \$103,328 from the Restricted Opioid Fund. Auditor Hammack stated that an Ordinance will be needed to set up that new fund. BH stated he is sure the Drug Court Committee would like this better than just air-marking the funds with a resolution.

BH made the motion to take the \$103,328 that is currently in the Opioid Restricted Fund and set up a Restricted Fund for the Drug Court Program, seconded by DE. Motion carried 7-0.

### **TRACY SCHROEDER, RECORDER**

#### **a) Recorders Record Perpetuation Fund Sworn Statement:**

Recorder Tracy Schroeder stated that she prepared a Sworn Statement for 2027 in the amount of \$5,025.00 to pay for their office supplies and other services and charges, which before 2020 were paid out of the County General Fund.

Indiana Code 36-2-7-10.2 states that a County Recorder may prepare a Sworn Statement for approval by the County Council. If the Sworn Statement is approved by the County Council, the Recorder may use the Recorder's Perpetuation Fund to pay for the previous stated items that were previously funded by the County General Fund. With the Sworn Statement, the Recorder is swearing that there is a sufficient balance in the Recorder's Perpetuation Fund to pay for the office supplies and other services and charges in addition to paying the expenses that the Recorder's Perpetuation Fund was designated, which is the preservation of records, and the improvement of record keeping systems and equipment.

Recorder Schroeder informed the County Council that the former Recorder submitted the first sworn statement back in 2019 for the 2020 calendar year, and submitted one annually, and will continue to do so in the future.

The Recorder's Perpetuation Fund also pays for two part-time employees who are back indexing, which is in the Recorder's office plan to complete in approximately 3 years. Schroeder stated that she emailed information on the number of documents yet to be completed and an example of the difficulty it is in reading and deciphering of these old documents. Schroeder stated there is light at the end of the tunnel, for at least the indexing part, as this project was started back in 1999 when the recording process went digital and was no longer typed into books. Recorder Schroeder asked the County Councils blessing to complete the first stage of this very difficult and lengthy project.

- Schroeder informed the County Council that in July of 2025 the 2nd deputy position in the Recorder's Office was unexpectedly cut to part-time with only 24 hours a week. This has put a strain on our office. Schroeder stated that due to this cut to part-time the office is falling behind on the auditing of the back

indexing project, which is the auditing. Schroeder added at times the office has had to close for lunch due to only one person working.

Schroeder stated that for the 2027 budget request this part-time position will be increased to at least 28 hours per week. In the Recorder's Office, they try to have two people in the office as much as possible to provide the customer service that the taxpayers deserve.

Schroeder stated that the only money that the recorder uses from the general fund is for the salaries of the Recorder and two deputies. Schroeder added that over the last 4.5 years, the Recorder's office has deposited \$188,381 into the general fund from the recording fees.

KH questioned if the part-time position Schroeder is requesting to be increased to 28 hours is for the 2027 budget. Schroeder answered that was correct, she was just giving heads up. GG added to make a note in the budget request that the increase is adding 4 hours a week.

Schroeder reiterated that she was asking for the County Council's approval of the 2027 Sworn Statement and all part-time positions.

BH made the motion to approve the Sworn Statement presented, seconded by PB. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **WARREN TAYLOR, CORONER**

##### **a) Request to fill a vacancy:**

Coroner Warren Taylor informed the County Council that Coroner's Deputy resigned, so he is requesting to advertise and fill this vacancy.

GG made the motion to approve the Coroner to fill the vacancy, seconded by DE. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **KRISTINIA HAMMACK, AUDITOR**

##### **a) Request to fill a vacancy:**

Auditor Hammack informed the County Council that her First Deputy, who oversaw the duties of Payroll/HR Administration, resigned. Leisa Ecker, who was the Lead Tax Deputy, is stepping into the role as First Deputy/Payroll/HR Administration Deputy. Hammack added, with Leisa Ecker stepping into this role, it created an opening for the Lead Tax Deputy. Nichole Senn will be stepping into this position. The Auditor's Office has a vacancy in the position of the Tax Billing/Inventory Deputy.

Hammack stated she had discussions with Council members, Kelli Harding and Brad Harth at their request, to look and see if she could reduce expenses in wages and benefits.

Hammack asked to advertise an opening in the Auditor's Office for a Part-Time Tax Billing/Inventory Deputy. Hammack stated she is requesting this part-time position to be up to 29 hours a week at the rate of \$19.75 per hour. Hammack would like to see what qualified applications are received and is hopeful a suitable applicant is found. If a suitable applicant is found, a 30–60-day trial is requested to see if part-time is manageable.

Hammack shared that the change from a full-time to a part-time will save \$6,634 in wages and taxes, and a minimum of \$18,690 in benefits annually. In total, that is a minimum annual savings of \$25,324 with the county being self-insured.

Hammack stated that after the new part-time deputy's 30–60-day review, once it is known if this change is going to work, a request for an increase in pay for the Full-Time Lead Tax Deputy will be brought to the County Council. The reason for this request is due to the increasing workload and responsibility for this position. Hammack informed the County Council that the pay for this position is currently \$19.75 an hour. The request will be an increase to \$21.54, which is \$1.79 more an hour, \$3,258 more a year.

Hammack recapped that her request to post for a part-time deputy instead of a full-time is contingent on a minimum 30-day trial and a pay increase for the Full-time Lead Tax Deputy.

Hammack stated that in 2022; 7 full-time employees did what 5 employees have done the past 3.5 years. Now we as a team in the Auditor's Office are willing to try to get the same job done with 4 full-time and 1 part-time. Hammack added this change comes with some fear and anxiety, but she and her team are willing to give this request a try.

DE asked if the decrease from 7 full-time employees to 5 full-time employees was made possible due to the purchasing of software. Hammack responded that the

purchase of the digital claims program with our LOW financial software and the implementation of a time-and-attendance software have shown to be both cost and time efficient savings for the county. These implementations have also allowed the Auditor's Office to be more efficient in our duty of auditing.

GG stated that the hope is Hammack will have a suitable applicant interested in part-time. Hammack agreed.

BH added that Hammack is trying and the Council would like to see as much consolidation in offices as possible to assist with the upcoming budget challenges they face.

BH made the motion to approve advertising for a part-time deputy in the Auditor's Office at the rate of \$19.75 per hour for 29 hours a week, seconded by PB. Motion carried 7-0.

**b) Additional Appropriation Request:**

Pauper Public Defender Fund—Circuit Court; Attorney

#8961.31104.00000.0232      \$32,409.11

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

IV-E Public Defender Fund—Circuit Court; Attorney

#8960.31104.00000.0232      \$898.96

PB made the motion to approve, seconded by BH. Motion carried 7-0.

**c) Clerk Appropriation Transfer Request:**

FROM: 1000.32100.00000.0062      Postage      \$277.42

TO: 1000.32100.00000.0001      Postage      \$277.42

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

FROM: 1000.24400.00000.0001      Copy Paper and Toner      \$355.50

TO: 1000.36200.00000.0062      Equipment Repair      \$355.50

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

**d) SBOA Invoice for 2025 Federal Audit:**

Auditor Hammack stated that she has received an invoice in the amount of \$3,388 from the State Board of Accounts for the processing of the 2025 Federal Audit of the ARPA funds. The ARPA committee budgeted funds to pay for audits, but those monies have been exhausted from previous years' audits. Hammack asked the County Council where they would like to pay this invoice from, so she can advertise additional appropriation for next month's meeting. KH stated a motion of intent is needed today.

BH made the motion of intent to pay the 2025 Federal Audit for \$3,388 out of the General Fund, seconded by PB. Motion carried 7-0.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**a) Budget Preparation-Department Meet Dates:**

KH stated she was looking at Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> from 4pm-6pm for the departments to present budget requests for 2027. The Auditor's Office will work with departments scheduling presentations every 15 minutes on these dates.

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

**b) Budget Preparation-Private Groups submitting 2027 budget requests:**

KH stated that last year the Council cut budgets from private groups due to the changes in property tax revenue. KH added with the Council not knowing the estimated revenues for 2027 yet, she feels it is premature to have private groups come in and present their request. KH prefers to go forward with the department meetings and their request. Wage increases for employees will then be looked at. If there is revenue left, the Council can invite private groups to come in and present. BH stated he agreed and felt what KH stated needs to be the County Councils priorities. DE, PB, GG stated they agree as well. KH stated no motion needed.

**c) Community Corrections Advisory Board Appointment:**

KH stated that PB has resigned from this board. A council member must serve on this board. BH has spoken of interest.

PB made a motion to appoint Brad Harth to the Community Corrections Board, seconded by DE. Motion carried 6-0-1.

**d) Solid Waste Part-time Vacancy:**

KH stated that John Roach had emailed that there is a part-time vacancy and is requesting permission to fill it. BH stated he has a past employee interested in coming back, so he has someone already lined up.

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

**e) Council President Updates:**

- KH wanted to be sure to inform everyone that the EMA Director, Greg Linne, had sent an email notifying everyone that the courthouse AED has been relocated from the courthouse meeting room out to the courthouse rotunda.
- KH informed everyone that in the last two weeks three lots at the Forrest Canton Sub-Division have been sold, leaving 11 lots remaining. Auditor Hammack will post the map of the available lots on the county website.
- KH wanted to give an update on the new Sheriff department vehicles, that the three new 2026 Dodge Durango's are out on the road.
- KH stated that the Sheriff's Commissary Report was sent via email out to all Council members. KH advised Council members to review the report and if they have any questions, to reach out to Sheriff David Faulkenberg or Sheriff Matron, Katie Williams.

The next regular scheduled County Council Meeting will be on Thursday, August 27, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the Courthouse.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m. CST.

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

Minutes approved this 27<sup>th</sup> day of August 2026.

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President, Perry County Council

*Minutes prepared by:*

*Kristinia L. Hammack, Perry County Auditor*