Martin County

THE MARTIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION
January 6, 2026
MINUTES

The Martin County Board of Commissioners convened in a regular session on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, in the Commissioners' Room at the Courthouse located at 129 Main Street, Shoals, Indiana. Commissioners present were Paul R. George, Retha Warner, and Aaron Summers. Also present were Attorney David Lett and Auditor Michelle Norris.

The meeting was called to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 5:30 p.m.

RE: REORGANIZATION

The Board proceeded with the annual reorganization for 2026. Commissioner Summers made a motion to appoint Commissioner Paul R. George as President for 2026, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed. Commissioner Summers made a motion to appoint Commissioner Retha Warner as Vice President for 2026, seconded by President George. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: APPROVAL OF MINUTES & CLAIMS

The minutes from the regular meeting of December 22, 2025, were approved with a motion made by Commissioner Warner, seconded by Commissioner Summers. All in favor, motion passed. A motion was made by Commissioner Warner to approve the claims and allowances, seconded by Commissioner Summers. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: ASSESSOR – CYCLICAL REASSESSMENT, NEW CONSTRUCTION, AND ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS BID

Attorney David Lett opened the bid packet received for cyclical reassessment, new construction, and annual adjustments; one bid was received from EF Properties LLC. Assessor Carolyn McGuire noted long-time contractor, Reller's Southern Indiana, had stepped back from residential work to focus on commercial and industrial assessments. Jeff Tracy, representing EF Properties LLC, addressed the Board, outlining his experience since 1999, including serving as Director of Assessment in Marion County through 2009, teaching continuing education for assessors, conducting sales ratio studies in Indiana since 2002, and performing valuation work across multiple states. Mr. Tracy stated he has assisted Reller's in commercial and industrial assessments for Lawrence County since 2023 and took on additional residential work in Lawrence County in 2024. Mr. Tracy expressed readiness to continue services in Martin County under state standards.

Attorney David Lett stated the contract is the state-prescribed form for a four-year term commencing May 1, 2026, at $74,900 per year, totaling $299,600. Attorney Lett requested two weeks to review the contract. Commissioner Summers made a motion to table the EF Properties LLC bid until Attorney Lett completes his legal review, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed. Mr. Tracy added that the per-parcel rate mirrors the prior contract, the total reflects the County's increased parcel count. Mr. Tracy stated he is willing to begin preliminary work earlier than May with payment following the contract schedule.

RE: HIGHWAY – 2026 COMMUNITY CROSSINGS AWARD

Highway Superintendent Scott Seals requested award of the 2026 Community Crossings paving contract. Attorney Lett stated he has reviewed the contract and award letters to the contractor and INDOT and has no legal objections, identifying Calcar Paving as the recommended awardee. Commissioner Summers made a motion to accept Calcar Paving for the 2026 Community Crossings, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed. Attorney Lett stated the awarded contract amount is $758,107.25. Superintendent Seals noted one road was rejected by the State for this round and will be resubmitted in a future cycle.

RE: HIGHWAY UPDATES

Superintendent Seals stated he will be having a meeting with HWC and Force Construction next week regarding Brickyard Bridge. Superintendent Seals reported tractor parts, ordered mid-Summer, still have an uncertain delivery date but he is hoping the parts will be received this month. Superintendent Seals reported there is one dump truck down. The department has been doing pothole patching and gravel placement. Commissioner Summers relayed appreciation from a resident on Burns Lane regarding work performed by the department. Superintendent Seals and the Board discussed organizing surplus equipment for an online auction to increase participation and returns, noting past on-site auctions were less effective.

Monty Gregory requested attention to developing potholes near Mount Calvary Road near the city/county line, noting freezing risk could exacerbate roadway damage. Superintendent Scott Seals agreed to add the location to the maintenance list.

RE: WHEEL TAX REVENUE AND ROAD PLANNING

Mary Smith raised questions regarding planning and public communication for wheel tax revenues, expected to begin arriving as early as February. President George stated there has been ongoing coordination with Superintendent Seals and Commissioners Summers and Warner to develop district-based priority road lists, emphasizing that wheel tax funds are restricted to road and bridge maintenance, improvement, or construction and cannot be used for equipment purchases or salaries. Superintendent Seals noted Community Crossings state funding was reduced from $250 million to $100 million, affecting project scope. Commissioner Summers stated they were forced to enact the wheel tax if they wanted any kind of improvement on the roads.

Monty Gregory cautioned that commercial vehicle registrations, due in January, may skew early revenue figures and recommended evaluating mid-year receipts to avoid misinterpretation. President George stated the Commissioners and highway superintendent will evaluate wheel tax funds around mid-year. The Commissioners affirmed a judicious approach to spending and committed to communicating planned projects and progress to the public once a list is finalized. Superintendent Seals and President George both noted that materials and chip-and-seal costs have significantly increased in recent years.

RE: HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT APPOINTMENT (2026)

President George addressed continuation of Highway Superintendent leadership. Commissioner Summers made a motion to retain Scott Seals as Highway Superintendent for 2026, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: EMA DIRECTOR REPORT

EMA Director Andy Ringwald reported on upcoming District 10 activities and noted the county amateur radio club is conducting license testing for prospective ham operators next Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. following their regular meeting. Auditor Norris confirmed submission of a reimbursement request for the Hazard Mitigation Grant for $19,000 in early December. Director Ringwald noted a recent email regarding hours, and match calculations require adjustments due to his EMA role affecting claimable time, and he will review and respond to reconcile the figures while maintaining match compliance.

RE: EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES AND PROCEDURES

Mary Smith reported clarification from the prior night's council meeting regarding executive sessions, stating that no minutes are kept and asked if the Commissioners were the same. Attorney Lett stated the general area of discussion and participants are documented, the time of adjournment is noted, and a statement is made that no business was conducted. President George affirmed that votes cannot be conducted in executive session.

RE: BRIDGE 44

Mary Smith requested resolution in 2026 for Bridge 44, noting prior discussions and her recollection of a motion by the Commissioners two to three years ago to repair the bridge has not been carried out. President George explained the Commissioners did vote three years ago to repair the bridge, but the highway superintendent was not involved in the initial discussion, and they later determined there was not money in the budget for the repair. President George stated a few meetings later, he and former Commissioner Cody Roush voted to seek litigation against the responsible insurance company. Mary Smith asked if paperwork for a claim or a lawsuit has been filed against the insurance company. Attorney Lett reported that no litigation has been filed, describing extended negotiations complicated by multiple insurance adjuster changes and efforts to obtain a determination from the State regarding the bridge's historically relevant status.

Attorney Lett advised that negotiation was prioritized to avoid litigation costs such as depositions and engineering studies. Attorney Lett stated the biggest problem was getting an answer from the State as the bridge is a historically relevant bridge. The State advised that the bridge need not be reinstated exactly as it was, but repairs must be more extensive than simply resetting guardrails. President George stated they are at the point they just want the money for the repair from the responsible party. Commissioner Summers referenced prior engineering consultations and detailed removal processes, and President George cited the most recent quote for repairs at approximately $70,000 from CLR, with the county rejecting an insurance offer under $30,000 as insufficient. Jonah Shaw asked if there was a statute of limitations on this. Attorney Lett stated they are within the statute of limitations. The Board directed Attorney Lett to continue negotiations diligently to secure funds adequate for proper repair.

RE: RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH SALES DISCLOSURE WAIVER POLICY

Attorney Lett presented Resolution 2026-04, establishing the requirement of documentation for waivers of the sales disclosure fee. Attorney Lett stated there is a provision under Indiana statute that if the transfer is for no expense or no sale, among a number of other things, the county auditor and assessor can waive the sales disclosure fee, but it must be documented. Attorney Lett stated Auditor Norris and Assessor McGuire have asked Attorney Lett to prepare the document to support requiring a waiver of sales disclosure form. Commissioner Summers made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-04 considering the sales disclosure waiver, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY

Attorney Lett reported that Community Corrections has requested liability insurance coverage and that the Board of Commissioners determined the county would pay the premium. He presented a quote for a separate policy, not under the regular county policy, through Strawn Insurance in the amount of $3,747 per year, direct billed to the county. Attorney Lett stated the coverage limits include accidental death and dismemberment at $25,000, an aggregate limit of $250,000 per incident, and accident medical and dental expenses totaling $150,000. Commissioners discussed the frequent weekend work of Community Corrections crews and the need for coverage. Commissioner Warner made a motion to approve insurance for Community Corrections at $3,747 per year through Strawn Agency, seconded by Commissioner Summers. All in favor, motion passed. Auditor Norris indicated receipt of related communications for liability and property coverage on 228 Main Street, and Attorney Lett noted the Redevelopment Commission will be discussing that bill at their meeting next Thursday, but coverage has been instituted.

RE: ANNUAL DAYCARE LETTERS

Auditor Norris requested approval to issue the annual letters to county daycares confirming the county does not require business permits or licenses for childcare providers. Auditor Norris stated there are a few childcare providers who request this letter every year. Commissioner Summers made a motion to approve the annual childcare letter stating that childcare providers must comply with all state requirements and that the county has no permitting or licenses required, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: RED FOX CABINETRY — FINAL PAYMENT AUTHORIZATION

Auditor Norris reported completion of the Auditor's office reception desk and trim by Red Fox Cabinetry and requested approval of the final payment of $3,262.50, noting half of the quoted amount had been previously paid. Commissioner Warner made a motion to approve the final payment of $3,262.50 to Red Fox Cabinetry and allow early release of the payment tomorrow, seconded by Commissioner Summers. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: 2026 BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The Commissioners reviewed the list of board appointments for 2026. The approved appointments are as follows:

- SIDC Board: J. David Lett, Jessica Potts, Retha Warner
- Alcohol Beverage Board: Bill Shaw
- Redevelopment Commission: Paul George, Retha Warner, Aaron Summers
- Regional Mental Health Center Advisory Council: Danielle Murphy
- County Attorney: J. David Lett
- Veterans Service Officer: Ryan Persinger
- WestGate Authority: Adam Greene, Jerry Braun, and Dana Strange
- White River Military Coordination Alliance: Dana Strange
- PTABOA Board: Lois Brett, Larry Fellers, Ralph Ausbrooks
- Local Economic Development Commission: Michelle Norris
- Solid Waste: Paul George, Retha Warner, Aaron Summers

A motion was made by Commissioner Summers to approve the above appointments as stated, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed.

- EMA/Civil Defense Director: Andy Ringwald
- EMA/Civil Defense Assistant Directors: Cameron Wolf and Cory Brassine
- Community Corrections Advisory Board: Paul George
- Loogootee Public Library: Beth Buchta (term 1/1/2026 – 12/31/2029)
- County Health Board: Dr. James Poirier (term 1/1/2026 – 12/31/2029)
- County Health Officer: Dr. Larry Sutton (term 1/1/2026 – 12/31/2029)
- Shoals Public Library: Marilyn Reed (term 1/1/2026 – 12/31/2029)

A motion was made by Commissioner Warner to approve the above appointments as stated, seconded by Commissioner Summers. All in favor, motion passed.

- Daviess Martin Park Board: Chris Baugh (appointed in 2025, serving through 2028)
- Four Rivers RC & D Council: Aaron Summers
- South Central Region 8 Workforce Board: Paul George

A motion was made by Commissioner Summers to approve the above appointments as stated, seconded by Commissioner Warner. All in favor, motion passed.

RE: HEALTH DEPARTMENT SAFETY GRANT UPDATE

Auditor Michelle Norris reported that Julia Albright from the Health Department notified her that the department's safety grant application intended to purchase smoke detectors was not approved due to competitive funding. The Commissioners expressed appreciation for the effort and acknowledged the substantial work involved in grant preparation.

RE: ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The Courthouse will be closed on Monday, January 19, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The next regular meeting of the Martin County Board of Commissioners is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:23 pm with a motion made by Commissioner Warner, seconded by Commissioner Summers. All in favor, motion passed.

Paul R. George

Retha Warner

Aaron C. Summers

ATTEST: ______________________________

Michelle Norris, Martin County Auditor