

REGULAR MEETING DUBOIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

January 5, 2026

The regular monthly meeting of the Dubois County Commissioners was held in the Commissioners / Council Room of the Courthouse Annex in Jasper, Indiana, beginning at 8:00 a.m. (EST) on January 5, 2026. Present were Commissioner Chad A. Blessinger, Commissioner Nick Hostetter and Commissioner Serice Stenftenagel. Also present were County Auditor Sandra L. Morton, Highway Superintendent Donnie Lueken, Highway Engineer Levi Leffert, and County Attorney Gregory S. Schnarr. A quorum was declared present and the meeting was opened for business by President Blessinger. Minutes of the December 15, 2025, meeting of the Commissioners had been previously distributed to the Commissioners and were approved as presented. The minutes were then signed. Incomes for the month of December 2025 were as follows: Recorder \$21,645.06; Health Department \$85,178.23; Auditor \$70.00; Clerk \$23,939.38. Claims against the County were examined and those found to be just, due and owing were allowed and those found to be not due and owing were disallowed, all as more fully set forth in the Claims and Allowance Docket of the County.

RE: REORGANIZATION OF THE BOARD

This being the first meeting of the calendar year, the first order of business was the selection of officers for the Board of Commissioners for 2026. The Board Attorney Gregory S. Schnarr conducted the election. Thereupon, on separate nominations and motions, the following were elected as officers of the Commissioners for 2026: President – Chad A Blessinger; Vice President – Nickolas Hostetter.

RE: HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Highway Superintendent Donnie Lueken presented the following report of Highway projects:

Score Sheet for Gravel Road Conversion Re-evaluation – Lueken will be conducting a re-evaluation of the proposed conversion projects to update their conversion scores. He will report on the evaluations and any changes in the project order. Five roads are on the list: 650 S, Kings Ridge Road, 900 E, 625 W, 850 W, and another portion of 850 W.

Surplus Inventory – Lueken requested declaring the following items as surplus:

- Sharp Calculator
- Black & Decker 3/8" Drill
- Dewalt ½" Impact
- Dewalt 18-Volt Circular Saw
- Dewalt Concrete Vibrator
- Swivel Tractor Creeper Seat

A motion was made to declare the items as surplus, was duly seconded, and carried unanimously.

Excavator Operator for Bid - Lueken would like to post an employment bid sheet for an Excavator Operator for any employee interested after the existing operator retires in the spring.

Holland Dumpster Site – Lueken is working with a person about 2 possible locations in Holland to place the dumpster site.

RE: HIGHWAY ENGINEER'S REPORT

Highway Engineer Levi Leffert presented the following report of Highway projects:

Paving Projects – CCMG 2026-01 – Leffert presented a contract from INDOT for \$1,000,000 for the 2026-01 Community Crossings grant. The funds will cover approximately 80% of the cost to pave Club Road, St. Anthony Road N, and 550 W. Leffert requested approval and permission to sign on behalf of the County. A motion was made to approve the request and to grant permission to sign the document. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

The CCMG 2026-01 paving projects were advertised for bidding on December 30, 2025, and will be advertised again on January 6, 2026. Paving contractors interested in submitting a bid can reach out to the Highway Department to request the bidding documents. Sealed bids will be received until 9:00 a.m. EST on January 20, 2026, and will be opened publicly and read aloud.

Precast Concrete Box Culvert (St. Anthony Road N) – St. Anthony Road N will be closed beginning today (January 5, 2026) for a precast concrete box culvert installation. The closure will take place approximately 0.6 miles north of Santine Road and is anticipated to reopen on Friday, January 9, 2026, barring any unforeseen circumstances.

Upcoming Bridge Projects – Replace beams and deck on Bridge 116 located on CR 820E, approximately 0.8 miles north of Schnellville Road. The date is to be determined.

Bridge Safety Improvement Project – Federal Grant – Leffert has an interview on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, with the INDOT scoring committee to present the County's submitted safety improvement application. This application proposes adding guardrails and end treatments to various bridges throughout the County. If selected, the county could be awarded up to \$3,789,000.

NACE National Conference – The National Association of County Engineers (NACE) National Conference will be held in Arlington, Texas from April 12-15, 2026. Leffert applied for and received a \$2,000 scholarship to represent Indiana at the conference. The Commissioners permitted Leffert to attend the conference.

RE: 2026 APPOINTMENTS - SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT BOARD

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A motion was made to appoint the three commissioners to the Solid Waste Management District Board for 2026 as required by Indiana Code. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

RE: SURPLUS EQUIPMENT

Auditor Morton presented the following list of items to be declared surplus:

Treasurer’s Office	Sharp S2850 Calculator
CASA	IPhone 6S
Prosecutor’s Office	4- Surface Pro Tablets
	Sharp Calculator
	Surface Pro Keyboard

RE: DEPARTMENT HEAD MEETING

A Department Head meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, 2026, beginning at 8:00 a.m. The meeting will be held in the Courthouse Annex conference room. All department heads are encouraged to attend or send a representative.

RE: PHONE AUDIT

Auditor Morton presented the Telco Audit report for 2025. Matrix Integration reviewed the county phone system charges per the TelecomCare Agreement. The cost for 33 SIP trunks, e911 services for all buildings and floor locations at each multi-level building, taxes, and fees is \$800.64 per month. The breakdown is \$24.27 per SIP trunk, including services, taxes, and fees. This is the best pricing currently available. They did not recommend any changes to the current configuration.

RE: OPIOID RESTRICTED FUND - DRUG TEST APPROPRIATION

Community Corrections requested using \$11,000 from the restricted opioid fund for drug testing. The consensus was to approve the request pending approval of the additional appropriation by the County Council.

RE: CASS TOWNSHIP – SOLAR MORATORIUM REQUEST

Cass Township Trustee James Meyer presented a letter formally requesting a moratorium on the construction of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in Cass Township. The Cass Township Advisory Board has significant concerns regarding the long-term impact of this facility on our local community. The primary objectives in requesting this pause are as follows:

- Public Safety and Emergency Response
- Financial Responsibility
- Ordinances and Land Use
- Environmental Impact
- Public Discourse

Meyer expressed concerns about the lack of public awareness provided on the project.

Dave Duncan, resident, asked if a committee had been formed to look into changing future ordinances for the County. Commissioner Blessinger stated this has not been established yet. Duncan also requested that the County look into any codes that could be used for police powers that can stop the BESS facility. He provided the Indiana codes to County Attorney Schnarr for review.

Commissioner Blessinger stated that solar had been discussed in public meetings. Now that construction has begun, the public is now aware and is coming forth upset. He would like to look at the County Ordinances and be better prepared in the future. The County could investigate Planning and Zoning.

County Attorney Schnarr stated his interpretation of the solar moratorium was for future solar projects, not the battery energy storage system already taking place. The County’s authority remains limited.

Commissioner Blessinger stated that the County could not place a moratorium on the AES Battery Energy Storage System currently being built due to the County’s lack of zoning ordinances. The permitting approvals have already been met.

RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commissioner Blessinger opened the floor for public comments.

Dave Duncan, resident, provided comments from his discussions with Indiana Homeland Security about approving solar projects. They go by NFPA 855, the Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems. They do not do site approvals. He expressed his concerns for the safety of children if the BESS were to start on fire and feels the County could be liable. He feels it is the responsibility of public officials to protect their citizens.

Randy Bartelt, resident, expressed that extra fire protection would not be needed if the BESS facility is not built. He urged the board to protect the landowners’ rights when they didn’t sign up for solar.

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Clerk Amy Kippenbrock appeared to discuss the possibility of legislation proposing a bill (HB1342) to change the way the Commissioner Districts are drawn. Instead of using highway mileage, legislators are discussing possibly using population. Clerk Kippenbrock will continue to monitor this bill during the Indiana Assembly session.

RE: FUTURE MEETING

The next regular meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 8:00 a.m., immediately following the Board of Finance meeting, in the Commissioner/Council Room of the Courthouse Annex.