

THE MORGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MET IN A REGULAR SESSION ON MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 2025 AT 9:30 A.M. (THIS MEETING WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 6, 2025 AND WAS CANCELLED DUE TO A SNOWSTORM

MEMBERS PRESENT WERE DON ADAMS, BRYAN COLLIER, AND KENNY HALE. DEB VERLEY, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT; JOSH MESSMER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR; AND ANNE COWGUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY, WERE ALSO PRESENT.

PLEDGE

READING – *Don Adams*
MOMENT OF SILENCE

REORGANIZATION

Bryan Collier made a motion to nominate Kenny Hale to serve as Chairman for 2025. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Bryan Collier made a motion to close nominations. Motion carried 3-0.

MINUTES

Don Adams made a motion to approve the December 16, 2024 minutes. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

CLAIMS

Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the December 6, and 20, 2024, and January 3, 2025 payroll claims, and December 13, 2024 longevity of \$916,298.73, \$864,823.21, \$972,702.55, and 190,050.00; PERF \$80,274.32, \$75,871.96, \$85,424.96 and \$18,816.00; FICA \$66,631.25, \$62,695.17, \$70,651.53 and \$14,538.79; and monthly claims of \$5,780,393.11. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

TREASURER & CLERK REPORTS

Kenny Hale acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report for November and Clerk Report for December.

UNOFFICIAL DETOUR – LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING

Justin Schneck, Morgan County Highway Department Engineer, stated that INDOT has a small structure replacement planned on State Road 252 between Sedwick and Whetstine Roads. They are not allowed to set a state detour on local road routes. In anticipation of this project, Mr. Schneck expects traffic not to follow the state detour and use local roads. Mr. Schneck stated that they will monitor the route before and after construction for damage. If there is damage, INDOT will work with the county for reimbursement to fix it. Don Adams made a motion to approve the Letter of Understanding. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

GRANT APPLICATION – *Court Services*

Miranda Beauchamp, Morgan County Court Services, requested approval of a 2025/2026 Juvenile Community Corrections Grant not to exceed \$185,000. The grant is used for the Community Corrections Advisory Board and programs to address the needs of the juvenile delinquency justice population. The grant provides a juvenile intake officer/juvenile community corrections coordinator who oversees county-wide juvenile detentions and makes recommendations for the processing of juvenile delinquency charges. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the grant application. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Bryan Collier submitted a Conflict of Interest form to disclose his interest in Sycamore Services, as he leases property to them. Don Adams made a motion to approve the Conflict of Interest form. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 2-0-1. Bryan Collier abstained.

ANNUAL CERTIFICATION

Kenny Hale stated that per IC 36-1-21-6 and 36-1-20.2-16, an annual certification is required each year regarding nepotism and contracts from elected officials. Bryan Collier made a motion to accept the annual certifications. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

ANNUAL CONTRACTS

Humane Society 6 month - \$82,353 (base) \$9,000 (emergency) - Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

Sycamore Services - \$54,000 and DBA Morgan County CONNECT - \$47,000 – Kenny Hale made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 2-0-1. Bryan Collier abstained.

Morgan County Fair & 4-H - \$150,000 – Don Adams made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0. Bryan Collier stated that if they could spend more money on projects like 4-H, maybe they could spend less in the future on jails.

CICOA - \$11,000 - Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

Hilldale Cemetery - \$2,500 – Don Adams made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Serving Our Community Inc. DBA Chaplain Services - \$40,000 – Don Adams made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Morgan County Soil & Water Conservation District - \$66,100.00 – Doug Peine, SWCD Chairman, was present to thank the Commissioners for their support. Mr. Peine stated that they have a cover crop program that is showing results. Lisa MacPhee, SWCD, stated that the funding is instrumental in allowing the district to do a lot of different projects and engage all ages of the public in addition to providing resources. They provide technical assistance and guidance to landowners who want to implement conservations practices. They have ag outreach events and workshops, have participated in summer youth camp programs, classroom lessons, Weed Wrangles, fairs, festivals, hosted field days, provided financial opportunities, and educational outreach with mailings and newspaper articles. They have funding for a part time contractual employee this year, a new seed drill, and a grant program. They are staying on top of the ash pond closures at Eagle Valley and Ms. MacPhee invited the Board of Commissioners to attend their meetings. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

LETTER OF SUPPORT – AT&T

Josh Messmer stated that this MOU is with an environmental software company that will be used for food and septic inspections. They will not be handwriting reports and will be able to use tablets for inspections. The fee is \$34,500 per year for five years. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the MOU with Inspect2Go. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

LIT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Linda Pruitt stated that before the Auditor's Office can distribute the county's portion of the LIT Economic Development funds, they are to have a Capital Improvement Plan on file. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the plan as presented. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

REORGANIZATION

Bryan Collier noted that they did not elect a vice president. Kenny Hale made a motion to nominate Bryan Collier as Vice President. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT

Justin Schneck stated that this agreement has been revised since the previous meeting. They revised the scope of the project to made a survey and design for two curves, then will perform geotech investigation and pavement analysis for the whole three-mile stretch of the road. Upon completion, the consultant will provide options and cost versus estimated service life of the road. Once they get that data together, they can decide how to move forward. If it's a simple resurface project that they can put together and do in-house to save costs on design fees, they will do that. If it is determined that it is something more in depth, they will add an addendum to this agreement. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

APPOINTMENTS

Plan Commission – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Melanie DePoy, Bill Rumbaugh, Jason Maxwell and Kenny Hale. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

BZA – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint John Chappelow. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Board of Health – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Charles "Bud" Swisher. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

Morgan County Library – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint John Phillips. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

County Attorney – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Anne Cowgur. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

Community Corrections Advisory – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Vickie Kivett, Suzie Lipps, Keith Lashbrook, and Marti Lambert. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Local Alcoholic Beverage Board – Kenny Hale made a motion to reappoint Howard McCormick. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Monroe Township Fire District – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Chris Lambert and Michael Wagner. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Tax Board of Appeals – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Linda Bryant and Jan Stroud. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Regional Workforce Board – Bryan Collier made a motion to appoint Don Adams. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

Economic Development Corp. Board – Kenny Hale made a motion to reappoint Terry Brock and Bryan Collier. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

Redevelopment Commission – Don Adams made a motion to reappoint Jeff Pipkin, Brad Shields, Carole Snyder and Dr. Jake Allen. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

Convention, Visitors and Tourism Commission – Bryan Collier made a motion to reappoint Michelle Keller and Ann Lankford. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

ART COUNCIL UPDATE

Don Adams stated that the pressing element right now is a water feature. The project is moving forward rapidly to a July opening. They are looking at water feature designs that will be placed in Bicentennial Park. Mr. Adams would like to post a plaque that dedicates the feature to those who have served and are serving the Morgan County community. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the proposal. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

TORT CLAIM

Kenny Hale stated that Melissa Voshell submitted a claim for a tree that was trimmed. Eddie Fisher, Morgan County Highway Department Superintendent, stated that the tree was hanging over the road and brushing the tops of vehicles. The road will be paved next year and tree work was done along the road in anticipation of this. Mr. Fisher stated that they had complaints from school buses about the tree. It would be better for the tree to cut the limbs back, but they cut what was in the right of way. Mr. Fisher will follow up, but the tree had to be trimmed. Anne Cowgur stated that the claim should be sent to the insurance company. Bryan Collier made a motion to send the claim to the insurance carrier. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

REQUEST TO USE ADMIN BUILDING

The Morgan County Leadership Academy has requested the use of the Lucille Sadler Room on February 13th. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the request. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

An employee has requested the use of the Sadler Room on June 14th. Don Adams made a motion to approve the request. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

COMMENTS – *Bottom Road*

Kenny Hale stated that there were several people present that asked to speak about the Bottom Road project. Mr. Hale stated that he had spoken with several people via phone and he wanted to let people know that the county is also looking at other properties that are not in the flood plain. Mr. Hale stated that he did not like that the project is planned for the flood plain and on a narrow road.

Debbie Harker, Morgan County resident, stated that they purchased property with the understanding that the two acres was under eminent domain and that no structures would be built because the property is in a flood plain. They have a temporary entrance to the property that will change once the road is straightened. They were told by the former highway department superintendent that there was no reason to change it until the road came through. They are concerned that this structure would be in their front yard and the narrow road cannot handle the truck traffic. The neighborhood has put together a petition expressing their concerns and stating that they are opposed to any structure going on this property. Kenny Hale asked that they turn in

the petition.

Chase Harker, Morgan County resident, stated that the county took control of the property in 2023 with the reasoning that the sharp turns in the road and drainage needed improvements for safety reasons. Mr. Harker stated that the only way to access the property is through the county's property because of a large hill with a steep incline. Large equipment has been parked, dirt has been hauled in, and deer carcasses have been dumped on the county property. It continues to flood and is an eyesore for the neighborhood. It is concerning to Mr. Harker that the county is considering an industrial use for a residential area. IF the project were to move forward, it would devalue the land, pose a safety risk to children, cause noise and light pollution, and make the road dangerous. Mr. Harker asked that they reconsider.

Brent Milhon, Morgan County resident, stated that he would work with the county to utilize the current facility. DNR could step in. Mr. Milhon stated that the county has 12 acres next to the current highway garage. Kenny Hale noted that this property is in the floodway.

LuMar Griggs, Morgan County resident, stated that she has tried to drive through when the road is flooded, and won't do it again. Ms. Griggs asked what is classified as a government building and how far the building would be from the road. Mr. Hale stated that it would depend on the engineering and restrictions. Ms. Griggs asked if they still plan on straighten the road. Mr. Hale stated that they haven't gotten that far yet, it still might happen if they can find another location. Ms. Griggs stated she would love to see the curves straightened and mentioned her concern with salt runoff for wildlife.

Haley Summers, Morgan County resident, stated that it is a quiet area and a structure would cause visibility issues on the corner and she is concerned about school buses and emergency vehicles on the road as well as salt runoff.

Bonnie Lamp, Morgan County resident, stated that she likes the area because there isn't much traffic and she would like the curves straightened and the salt barn project moved to another area if possible.

Bryan Collier noted that straightening the road wasn't as pressing once the previous owner's telephone poles, concrete and other obstacles were removed from the corner.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTY

Bryan Collier complimented the Morgan County Highway Department and emergency personnel that battled the storm. Mr. Collier wanted to point out to the social media naysayers that he measured 11.2" of snow in his yard. He looked up the information of the January 5, 1978 "blizzard" and the benchmark was 10.3 inches. They might not have gotten the snow before or as much after, but Mr. Collier stated that the crews did a phenomenal job. Mr. Collier also thanked the citizens that stayed off the roads so crews could clear the roads.

Eddie Fisher wanted to assure the residents that the Highway Department did their best. Crews came together and worked over 30 hours. Mr. Fisher hoped that people could see that the crews worked together and did their best. There is a process of putting material on the ground and letting it set; if they removed it right after they put it down, it wouldn't melt until summer. The average route is 40 to 50 miles. If they failed, it wasn't because they didn't try. There were only four accidents on county roads.

Bill Mitchell stated that he worked the blizzard of '78 and the current Highway Department is a godsend compared to the five trucks and three pickups they had then.

ADJOURNMENT

Bryan Collier made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

Morgan County Board of Commissioners

Don Adams

Bryan A. Collier

Linda Pruitt, Morgan Co. Auditor

Kenny Hale