

THE MORGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MET IN A REGULAR SESSION ON MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025 AT 9:30 A.M.

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

PLEDGE

PRAYER – *Kenny Hale*

MINUTES

Don Adams made a motion to approve the March 17, 2025 minutes. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

CLAIMS

Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the March 14 and 28, 2025 payroll claims of \$905,244.64 and \$903,329.33; PERF \$80,230.53 and \$81,095.55; FICA \$65,425.47 and \$65,314.09; and monthly claims of \$2,100,639.61. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

ORDINANCE 2025-3 – Rezone

Laura Parker, Morgan County Plan Commission Director, was present to request a rezone of property owned by Clay Jones and Pamela Coffey-Jones on State Road 42 in Brown Township from Ag to R1. The Plan Commission approved the rezone with a 6-0 favorable recommendation. Don Adams made a motion to approve the rezone. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

JAIL INSPECTION/REPORT

Dave Rogers, Morgan County Jail Commander, stated that the annual jail inspection was completed with no issues. It was noted that plumbing is becoming an issue within the building, but the facility passed inspection with no problem. Mr. Rogers also submitted an annual Report of Services which goes to the state, Circuit Court, Commissioners and Council. Mr. Rogers noted that the overall intake has reduced over the past seven years. The average population is 208-212. Don Adams noted that they are dealing with a lot of health issues in the jail and commended Commander Rogers and the staff for the way they are dealing with these issues. Mr. Rogers stated that mental health is something they deal with every day. They have partnerships that provide services. Bryan Collier stated that the Community Corrections project saves the community thousands of dollars.

ASSIGNMENT AGREEMENT – Heritage Health Solutions

Mr. Rogers stated that when they changed operations to in-house services, there were individual contracts to provide services for inmate billing and negotiations of medical bills. The company that utilizes Heritage does business in all 50 states. When they put together the original contract, they left out language that is specific to Indiana. They have been paying according to the language, but this amendment puts it into the agreement. House Bill 1268 changed state statute that the Sheriff is obligated to pay Medicaid plus four percent (or below). Don Adams made a motion to approve Amendment #1 with Attachment B. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

Mr. Rogers stated that the second aspect of the agreement regards the medical consultant to Heritage. Mr. Rogers stated that the medical consultant is now a Heritage employee and the contract needs to be assigned to Heritage so payment goes through Heritage instead of paying the provider directly. This agreement will be on the next agenda.

TREASURER'S REPORT & UPDATE

Kenny Hale acknowledged receipt of the Treasurer's Report for March. Dan Bastin stated that in addition to the monthly report, he included a report showing the 2025 interest earnings. The interest rate for Home Bank has been staying at 4.3%, Merchants Bank has been at 3.7%. First Merchants interest earnings year to date total \$418,623 and Home Bank totals \$62,725. There is a total of \$85.5 million in Certificates of Deposit.

Mr. Bastin stated that he is working on expanding opportunities for taxpayers to be able to make property tax payments by working with Citizens Bank and BMO to set up their ability to take payments. People have been able to make payments at First Merchants. Tax bills will be in the

mail this week.

Bryan Collier noted that if current legislation passes through as written, citizens could see an increase of 40% next year if the county can no longer subsidize property taxes with income tax. Mr. Bastin stated that he did not understand why the state wants to take away from the counties that chose to use local income tax to provide property tax credits. Mr. Bastin stated that he informed someone close to the state process that if they take away the ability of the county to fund property tax credits, they are looking at a 33 to 35% increase in property tax bills next year. Mr. Bastin stated that in his opinion, it is not fair for the state to decide for the county what local income tax will be used for. The County Council made the decision in 2007 to save property tax payers money and has delayed the effects of the circuit breaker. Government services for the county are being funded half with income tax and half with property tax. The total burden of services is not on one type of taxpayer. Mr. Bastin stated that if you take your current tax bill and divide it by .72, the result will give you what the tax bill would be without the property tax relief.

MERCHANTS CARD PROCESSING SERVICES – Auditor’s Office

Linda Pruitt requested approval from the Board of Commissioners to have the ability to accept credit card payments in the Auditor’s Office. Ms. Pruitt stated that she has worked with First Merchants to have a system at no cost to the county. There is a 3% fee paid by the user and they send the funds the following morning by ACH. Don Adams made a motion to approve the request. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

RESOLUTION – WHITE RIVER GREENWAY MASTER PLAN

Kenny Hale stated that HWC presented the plan at the previous meeting and the resolution to adopt the plan is up for approval. Mr. Hale stated that he was contacted by several people who wished to speak about the plan and he would like to let them speak before discussion from the Board.

Dave Ferguson stated that he lived on a farm that could be affected by the trail between Brooklyn and Mooresville and he would like to see what his property could turn into and looks forward to future conversation on what they possibly could do.

Otis Pugh, Jr. stated that his property is next to Mr. Ferguson’s and they wanted to be part of it to ensure the right thing is done.

Clint Cragen, representing property owners along the trail, stated that he, along with his brother and dad, farm the ground between the city and the power plant. They have been forced to give away five easements for utility companies and now they have recreation after them. There are security concerns due to flooding in the area and there are concerns regarding people on the trail while they are harvesting grain or spraying crops for weeds and insects. This could cause a liability and is a concern. Mr. Cragen mentioned crime issues on the Monon Trail. Participants do not always know where the property lines are and he would not want to be held responsible when someone steps off the trail into a hole and is injured.

Patricia Saint stated that she supports Mr. Cragen as he farms for their family. The location of the trail poses concern. It affects three critical infrastructures and is a national security threat.

Don Adams stated that there is an area on his property that would make a great trail, but he would also have a concern about people stepping off the trail and trespassing. He had not considered the liability of spraying adjacent fields. Bryan Collier stated that when he had a job detasseling corn many years ago, a plane flew over spraying a chemical that caused blisters on the crew; he had not thought about spraying fields near a trail. After further discussion, Kenny Hale stated that the plan is not a binding document and does not obligate any party. Mr. Ferguson stated that it feels like a threat. Ms. Saint stated that it doesn’t make sense to plan the trail on private land. Mr. Hale stated that it is a guiding document, it does not take away any rights; it allows them to apply for federal grant funds; they have to start somewhere. Mr. Pugh suggested planning trails along roads or places where they already have right of way. Gary Oakes stated that it is a visionary process. Don Adams asked that there be alternate routes in the plan. Eddie Fisher stated that his sons have property in the area and it seemed like the cart was before the horse.

Don Adams made a motion to table the issue to gather more information on what it would cost to obtain alternate routes. Bryan Collier stated that he would be willing to table it and also made a motion to table. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

RICH MEDIA SOP – 911 Dispatch

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

IMMUNIZATION GRANT – Morgan County Health Department

Tricia Runningen, Morgan County Health Director, stated that the Health Department is requesting approval to accept Immunization Grant funding for July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$14,839.12. This is a decrease from the prior year. Don Adams made a motion to approve the request. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

CCMG CONTRACTS – Highway Department

Justin Schneck, Morgan County Highway Engineer, requested approval of three CCMG (Community Crossings Matching Grant) agreements that total \$1.5 million. This is the match they received from CCMG last year and finalizes the commitment to use the state funds. The agreements are between Morgan County and INDOT. The agreements are as follows: DES 2401043 Multi-bridge HMA Overlay Project \$377,500; DES 2401044 – Roadway HMA Resurfacing \$760,000; DES 2401055 – Bridge 99 Rehabilitation \$362,500. Don Adams made a motion to approve all three agreements. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

BOND – BROOKLYN SEWER PROJECT

Justin Schneck stated that the Town of Brooklyn is planning a sewer line relocation project along Tidewater Road from their treatment plant to the Brooklyn town limit. This work is in the county right of way and a permit must be issued. One of the permit requirements is to have a performance bond from the contractor to make sure the right of way is restored to county standards. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the bond. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

UNOFFICIAL DETOUR AGREEMENT

Justin Schneck stated that INDOT is replacing some small structures on State Road 42 from Little Point to Eminence. There will be an official state road detour, but they anticipate that local traffic will seek a local alternate route. INDOT can monitor the pre-condition and the post-condition of the projects and if roads deteriorate due to the project, they will restore the roads. Don Adams made a motion to approve the three unofficial detour Letters of Understanding. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

ORDINANCE 2025-4 – Monroe Twp Capital Projects Fund

Anne Cowgur stated that they are not asking for any money for this fund. They currently have \$200,000 available for the fund and there will be an additional \$400,000 plus interest coming into the fund as future payments. The agreement for this fund stipulates that the monies will be used for the Monroe Township EMS. These funds are being paid pursuant to an agreement with this Board and Westpoint Development. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-4 An Ordinance to Establish Monroe Township EMS Capital Projects Fund. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Anne Cowgur asked about a second reading. Bryan Collier amended his motion to add a waiving of the second reading. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

TORT CLAIMS

Bryan Collier made a motion to send the Mitchell and White tort claims to the insurance company. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTY

Don Adams stated that Eddie Fisher and the Highway crews and Abby Worth and the EMA team did great work during the recent flood and made him proud. Bryan Collier also gave kudos to those that had to work with the flooding issues. Mr. Collier stated that they had nine water rescues even though people were supposed to stay off the roads.

Mr. Collier stated that Norman Voyles has been his mentor; they debated many years ago about giving 3% pay increases and how long before a loaf of bread is \$3. Now he lives in fear that one day bread will be \$10 a loaf. He will probably still be working three jobs, but is concerned about the next generation. The county is growing and changing, but if they don't plan, they'll end up with a lump of clay instead of a beautiful vase. Mr. Collier stated that he appreciated the people that spoke and was glad they could meet, express differences and work together.

Don Adams mentioned that there will be an open house tomorrow evening regarding the construction plan for the Courthouse Square.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Morgan County Board of Commissioners

Don Adams

Attest:

Bryan A. Collier

Linda Pruitt, Morgan Co. Auditor

Kenny Hale