

**THE MORGAN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MET IN A REGULAR
SESSION ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2025 AT 6:30 P.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*

COMMENT

Bryan Collier announced the passing of former Commissioner Norman Voyles and mentioned his impact and service on himself and the county. Mr. Collier mentioned how Mr. Voyles helped him to make a cub scout derby car and many years later that Mr. Voyles told Mr. Collier's dad "that boy needs more filters; several more filters". Kenny Hale stated that he was a great man.

TREASURER'S REPORT/CLERK'S REPORT

Kenny Hale noted that they had received the Treasurer's Report as well as the Clerk's Report.

GRANT APPLICATION

The Honorable Judge Dakota VanLeeuwen was present to request approval of a \$5,000 grant application to provide language access services for the courts. This grant is through the State of Indiana Office of the General Counsel. They will also pay for Spanish lessons and seven employees have enrolled. Judge Van Leeuwen thanked Deb Verley for her help in getting the county website translatable into over 70 languages. Don Adams made a motion to approve the grant application. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

HERITAGE HEALTH AGREEMENT – *Jail*

Dave Rogers, Morgan County Jail Commander, stated that this is the annual renewal of the dental contract for the jail. They provide care for the inmates and it is a slight increase over last year. Don Adams made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

ALICE 360 AGREEMENT - *Security*

Dave Rogers stated that he would like to implement a program called Alice 360, which stands for Alert, Lock-down, Inform, Counter and Evacuate. This is for staff training on active shooter and other serious incidents. It is an employee-based, nationally recognized program. This is in addition to annual training. Don Adams made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

LINCOLN HILL ROAD

Justin Schneck, Morgan County Highway Engineer, stated that they are progressing with the Lincoln Hill project where they are correcting two curves along the road. Mr. Schneck provided the 45% plans as well as the right of way layouts for each curve and requested approval of the plans. Bryan Collier stated that the improvements are needed and made a motion to accept the plans as presented. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

BRIDGE #29 INSPECTION CONTRACT

Mr. Schneck presented an agreement between Morgan County and United Consulting for replacement of Bridge #29 on Mahalasville Road. Mr. Schneck stated that at the previous meeting, he presented a construction to obtain federal funds to build the project. This is the inspection contract in the amount of \$148,000. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the agreement. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0

BRIDGE INVENTORY AGREEMENT

Mr. Schneck stated that it is a federal requirement to inspect all bridges that carry vehicular traffic every two years. There are 157 bridges in the county that meet that requirement. Mr. Schneck requested approval of the \$550,000 contract. This will cover the next four years, through July 31, 2030. Bryan Collier made a motion to accept the contract. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0. Bryan Collier noted that Senate Enrolled Act 1 will bring mass changes to tax bills and the Community Crossings grant has been reduced. Mr. Collier stated that it could be five years before construction begins. People will have a hard time seeing property taxes increase while at the same time, the county does not have the ability to apply asphalt and repair every bridge. The county chip and seals roads to extend the life of the road, but even this might have to be cut back. When Mr. Collier started in county government, it was \$7,000 per mile to pave and it

is now \$110,000; chip seal is \$16,000 per mile.

GRANT APPLICATION – Health Department

Tricia Runningen, Morgan County Health Department Director, requested approval of the application for the \$20,000 Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Base Grant and the \$26,832 Cities Readiness Initiative Grant. These grants are through the CDC and the Health Department has received them for several years. The PHEP has typically been \$25,000 but has been reduced to \$20,000 this year. Don Adams made a motion to approve the grant application for both grants. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

GRANT APPLICATION - EMS

Brent Worth, Morgan County EMS Director, requested approval of a \$50,000 EMS Mobile Integrated Healthcare Grant Program through IDHS. EMS has kicked this program off in partnership with the Morgan County Health Department to focus on care outside of the emergency system to meet needs of citizens with chronic conditions. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve the grant application. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

BUILDING LEASE/PURCHASE – 60 S. Jefferson St.

Josh Messmer, Morgan County Administrator, stated that they leased the former Reporter Times Building in 2019 with an option to purchase, Craig Fenneman, the owner of the building, has agreed to exercise the option early, which saves \$600,000. This purchase helps complete the master plan with the construction of the Judicial Campus and Courthouse renovation. This gives a place for the Health Department towards the end of the project. Mr. Messmer stated that Mr. Fenneman has signed the purchase agreement and it just needs Board of Commissioners approval. Bryan Collier made a motion to execute the document for the purchase of the building. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

PARK BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Kenny Hale stated that the County Assessor has been designated as the county official to make an appointment to the Park Board. The Commissioners have two appointments to make and the County Council has two appointments to make. Bryan Collier noted that Indiana Code requires that appointments be made from different political parties and made a motion to nominate Darrell French as the Republican appointment.

Dianna Jennings, Democratic Party Vice Chair, stated that she has a list of names for Democrats that are interested in appointments. Kenny Hale stated that he knew that Tricia Runningen and Becky McKinney, both Democrats, have expressed interest in being appointed. Don Adams stated that he had two possible appointments and would like to nominate Tricia Runningen as the Democrat appointment. Bryan Collier made a motion to approve both Darrell French and Tricia Runningen as appointments to the Park Board. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Don Adams noted that Indiana Code determines term lengths. Motion carried 3-0.

RICOH COPIER AGREEMENT

Josh Messmer stated that he had requested approval from both Council and Commissioners to upgrade the copier fleet. This will be budgeted for next year. They will also buy back the current fleet to use for parts. Bryan Collier made a motion to move forward and authorize Kenny Hale as the signatory on the DocuSign document. Motion seconded by Don Adams. Motion carried 3-0.

TORT CLAIM

Bryan Collier made a motion to send the Yeoman tort claim to the insurance carrier. Motion seconded by Kenny Hale. Motion carried 3-0.

REQUEST FOR UNPAID LEAVE

Daree Fry, HR Director, stated that an employee was close to being out of time, but had to travel to another country because of a family illness. Upon return, they were diagnosed with Covid and had to take additional time off. Ms. Fry requested approval of the unpaid time. Don Adams made a motion to approve the request. Motion seconded by Bryan Collier. Motion carried 3-0.

COMMENTS

Brandi Garland, stated that she had a question for the people she works with to explain to them how this process works. She watched the last meeting and watched 160 acres be added on to a project that was kind of a surprise for novice folks like her. Ms. Garland asked how they learn what the Board has in front of them as far as the amounts and the paperwork beforehand so they can come to the meeting informed of what kind of questions they need to know because they don't know what they don't know. Ms. Garland asked if there is a way to share that with folks so that they can understand better and so that she can understand better what's going to be on the agenda. Kenny Hale stated that it is noticed in the paper. Deb Verley noted that what is in the paper is just notice of the meeting, not all the paperwork that is presented at the meeting, and offered her

contact information so Ms. Garland can contact her prior to a meeting for more information. Mr. Hale noted that Ms. Garland was likely speaking of the Plan Commission meeting, and that board makes a recommendation that is then forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for final vote. This meeting is also advertised.

GENERAL MORGAN PRESENTATION

Kenny Hale noted that Josh Messmer will soon be leaving employment with the county. Mr. Hale thanked Mr. Messmer for all his help and stated that he will be deeply missed. Mr. Hale stated that the Board of Commissioners would like to induct Mr. Messmer into the Society of General Morgan and presented him with a certificate. Mr. Hale stated that it will be a sad day when they have to shake his hand for the last time.

Bryan Collier stated that if you ask any of his family members, it is not easy to make dad look smart, but Josh has done a pretty good job of it. He takes the data and what he can pull together in 15 minutes to help present information to the public, Mr. Collier does not know how he does it. Mr. Collier stated that Mr. Messmer is an exceptional person and extremely bright; he is a beautiful person. He has helped put together the projects needed to build a Courthouse, something that has not been done since 1857. Mr. Collier stated that he will never be able to thank him enough.

Mr. Messmer stated that he does not love to be in front of everyone, but wanted to say that serving his community has been one of the highest honors of his lifetime, it is an opportunity he has prayed for for many years. For anyone considering public service, he encourages them to do it, whether it's on a board, as an employee, or as a volunteer, it's a great way to shape your community and he wished more people would get involved in different capacities. Mr. Messmer thanked Deb Verley, Daree Fry and Linda Pruitt and well as each Commissioner and Anne Cowgur for helping to make it an opportunity that was worthwhile. Mr. Messmer stated that if it had not been for the Commissioners putting their trust in him, this would not have been the same experience. Mr. Messmer thanked his wife, Charlotte and children, Simon, Ian, Elizabeth, Catherine and Elias because they make sacrifices for the evenings he is gone. Mr. Messmer thanked his parents for bringing him up and allowing him opportunities to do things he has.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Morgan County Board of Commissioners

Kenny Hale

Attest:

Bryan A. Collier

Linda Pruitt, Morgan Co. Auditor

Don Adams