

**Commissioner's Meeting
December 15, 2025**

Date & Time: 2025-12-15 8:00 A.M.

Location: Room 106

Attendees: Jeremy Pasel Gabriel Nobbe and Brian Wenning

Opening

- **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
 - The meeting commenced at 8 o'clock with a welcome to attendees.
 - Title VI forms are available for attendees to fill out and submit to the auditor's office.

- **Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer**
 - The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Charlie Davis followed by prayer from Pastor Terry Canfield.

Approvals and Financial Matters

- Meeting minutes from December 1st were reviewed. A motion was made to approve minutes as presented by Brian Wenning, seconded by Gabe Nobbe. Motion carried unanimously.
- The claims were reviewed and no questions asked. Motion to approve made by Brian Wenning, seconded by Gabe Nobbe. Motion carried unanimously.
- Motion to approve payroll for the week of December 5, 2025, in the amount of \$423,351.83, was made by Brian Wenning, seconded by Gabe Nobbe. Motion carried unanimously.

Highway Department – Operations, Weather, and Road Conditions

- Highway Department is continuing regular work: mowing, grading, bridge and sign maintenance, and patching.
- Crews responded to a significant snow event; extreme cold reduced salt effectiveness, but improvement is expected as temperatures rise into the 30s.
- The Sheriff's office reported heavy accident volumes over the weekend (around 30 on Saturday, 40 on Sunday, and multiple ongoing incidents), including semi crashes causing closures on the interstate and South 421.
- Highway 421 remained closed until at least noon due to a tanker crash; local contractors lack capacity to drain gasoline, requiring specialized cleanup from out of the area.
- Commissioners discussed travel advisory levels ("orange" vs. "yellow") and will coordinate with emergency management and the Sheriff on any change and related public communication.

Additional county signage will be deployed to help divert traffic around closures near Main Street/421.

****Conclusion: ****Winter weather created heavy crash volumes and road closures, notably on 421. The Highway Department and Sheriff are coordinating plowing, closures, signage, and advisory levels

Highway Department Staffing

- For the 35-hour/week Highway Department secretary position, five interviews were scheduled; those who appeared were interviewed.
- Superintendent requested proceeding with hiring Sarah Eckert to replace Susan Gosnell.

- Susan’s last day is December 23; commissioners recognized her 45 years of service through five superintendents and publicly thanked her and wished her the best in retirement.

Tornado Siren Maintenance Contract

- Mike Snyder (EMA) was absent due to the 421-tanker crash; Gary Hash reported on his behalf.
- A tornado siren maintenance contract is under consideration with a specialized vendor Carolina Signaling Enterprises that appears cost-effective.
- Approximately \$5,000 can be reallocated within his budget, but shifting funds may require Council approval.
- The vendor extended the decision timeline until the end of January; Mike is scheduled to discuss the proposal with County Council.

Tax Certificate Sale Proposal

- SRI presented a proposal for a tax certificate “cleanup” sale to dispose of parcels that repeatedly failed to sell at tax sale.
- Concept: dramatically reduce minimum bids (examples from other counties include \$100 for parcels on sale one year, \$50 for more than one year) to return properties to the active tax roll rather than recover all past-due taxes.
- County already holds certificates on these parcels; commissioners could alternatively take them to deed for potential EDC/RDC use.
- County costs are limited to advertising; SRI charges 15% of sale proceeds (no flat fee). SRI’s fee is taken first, then liens, with the remainder going to the county; historical penalties and fees are essentially forgiven.
- An addendum to the existing tax sale contract and a commissioners’ resolution are required.
- Recommended timing: spring, roughly 30 days before May tax bills.
- Commissioners requested legal review by the County Attorney and plan to consider action at the first 2026 meeting.
****Conclusion:**** Commissioners support the tax certificate sale in concept but deferred action pending legal review, with intent to vote in early 2026.

Community Corrections / Community Action Coalition Grants

- Jeramiah McAdams - Community Corrections requested approval to accept two Community Action Coalition grants:
 - \$7,000 for field equipment and firearms upgrades, a new computer for juvenile probation/prevention, and drug screens.
 - \$800 for “Operation Parent,” a five-class program for Decatur County parents covering child welfare laws, behavior, substance abuse, electronics, etc., including books and door prizes.
- Jeremy Pasel made the motion to approve both grants, Gabe Nobbe seconded; motion carried unanimously.

Rezoning Petitions (APC)

APC representative Doug Westerfeld presented five rezoning petitions:

- **2024-20 – Patrick Graue**
 - Rezone 2.99 acres from A1 to A2 for a primary residence (near Millhousen).
 - APC: unanimous approval (one absent).

- Once reviewed, Gabe Nobbe made the motion to approve, Brian Wenning seconded, motion carried unanimously.
- **2025-14 – Jeffrey Moore**
 - Rezone from B1 to R2 for a duplex on an empty lot in Westport's business district.
 - APC: unanimous approval.
 - Once reviewed, Gabe Nobbe made the motion to approve, Brian Wenning seconded, motion carried unanimously.
- **2024-21 – Paul and Haley Trenkamp**
 - Rezone 2 acres from A1 to A2 for a primary residence (carried over while survey/legal description were recorded).
 - APC: unanimous approval.
 - Once reviewed, Brian Wenning made the motion to approve, Gabe Nobbe seconded, motion carried unanimously.
- **2025-16 – Tina Watt**
 - Rezone 2.5 acres from A1 to A2 near St. Paul for a primary residence.
 - APC: unanimous approval.
 - Once reviewed, Brian Wenning made the motion to approve, Jeremy Pasel seconded, motion carried unanimously.
- **2025-17 – Brittany Warren**
 - Rezone 2.99 acres from A1 to A2 for a primary residence.
 - APC: unanimous approval.
 - Once reviewed, Brian Wenning made the motion to approve, Gabe Nobbe seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Battery Energy Storage Facility

- APC reported on a Battery Energy Storage facility associated with AYPAs Power.
- Due to the technical nature of battery storage, the county sought third-party plan review and inspection.
- Firms contacted: Commonwealth, Phoventus, and Burns & Mac.
 - Phoventus has a conflict of interest (already working for AYPAs Power on this project).
 - Burns & Mac could not meet schedule requirements.
 - Commonwealth provided a proposal and can meet the timeline.
- AYPAs has verbally agreed to fund all third-party costs; the county will serve as a pass-through. A written cost-sharing agreement is being finalized.
- Commonwealth's proposal is being refined to:
 - Clarify total cost and hourly rates.
 - Define site visit frequency (likely increasing from once to twice weekly) and associated costs.
- Comparative proposals show Commonwealth is less expensive than Phoventus.
- Weekly coordination calls are occurring every Friday; APC staff will remain actively involved to gain experience.
- County Attorney is reviewing the Commonwealth contract. Construction is expected to begin in January, so prompt agreement finalization is needed.

****Conclusion:**** Commissioners conceptually support hiring Commonwealth for third-party review and inspection, fully funded by AYPAs, but final approval awaits contract revisions, cost clarity, and legal review.

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and Process

- APC reported on the first steering committee meeting for the new county comprehensive plan, led by consultant HWC.

- Meeting topics:
 - Overview of comprehensive planning, steering committee roles, and expectations.
 - Project timeline, milestones, and grant-related requirements.
- Public engagement:
 - Public input sessions scheduled in January and again in spring.
 - A draft plan will be prepared using public input.
 - After comment, the steering committee will meet again to consider revisions.
- The 2017 plan remains broadly sound but needs updates to reflect new priorities and conditions. Previous plans (2008, 2017) were driven by specific issues (e.g., Honda); the new plan is intended to be more broadly focused.
- Steering committee includes representatives from agriculture, industry, real estate, business, legal, and other sectors; three members also participated in the 2008 plan, providing historical context.
- ****Conclusion:****The comprehensive plan update is underway with a structured timeline, diverse steering committee, and multiple public engagement steps planned through 2026.

Parks Department - Sports Complex

- Chris Noblett presented an REMC easement to bring power to a new concession stand and restroom building at the sports complex.
- Easement route: from an existing transformer north of the property, along an existing easement off Park Road by Diamond 5, then toward the new building.
- Commissioners emphasized future-proofing:
 - Consider 400-amp single-phase service instead of 200-amp.
 - Provide adequate panel capacity.
 - Install extra capped conduits (e.g., three 3-inch) from the new building for future expansion or re-feeding existing field lighting.
- Gabe Nobbe made motion to approve the REMC easement, subject to legal review and final documentation (parcel numbers, legal description). Brian Wenning seconded the motion, motion carried unanimously.
****Conclusion:****The REMC easement for the sports complex was approved with direction to design for higher capacity and future expansion and to finalize legal details.

Parks Department – House Demolition at the Complex

- Parks revisited a plan to demolish a house at the complex and convert the area to parking.
- Quotes for comparable demolition scopes:
 - Allen Transport: \$18,500 (also performing satisfactory work at Milford Park).
 - CRF Roofing and Restoration: \$27,400.
 - Herbert's Excavating and Hauling: \$27,500.
 - Schutte: \$28,000 (included some additional parking work).
- Funding will come from the Parks Department budget.
- Gabe Nobbe made the motion to award the contract to Allen Transport as the lowest bidder. Brian Wenning seconded the motion, motion carried unanimously.
- Demolition timing is not yet set; Allen Transport will complete other park projects first.
- Gas meter removal by Centerstone is scheduled for the week of the 22nd; demolition will follow utility disconnection.
****Conclusion:****Allen Transport was awarded the \$18,500 demolition contract for the house at the complex, contingent on utility disconnections.

Road Use Agreement Addendum for Annexed Roads

- Legal counsel reported on an addendum to a 2024 road use agreement after the City of Greensburg annexed certain project roads.
- The addendum:
 - Adds the City as a party for affected roads.
 - Grants the City the same rights, protections, and per-mile surety as the county.
- County Attorney confirmed the county's rights and obligations (for construction, operation, and demolition) remain unchanged.
- Jeremy Pasel made the motion to approve agreement, Gabe Nobbe seconded, motion carried unanimously.
****Conclusion:****Commissioners were informed that the addendum aligns county and city rights; legal review raised no objections.

Fairground Rental Discount Proposal

- Commissioners revisited and reviewed a proposed discount structure for fairground rentals.
- After considering figures and previous mid-meeting adjustments, commissioners expressed support.
- Motion to adopt the discount proposal was made by Jeremy Pasel, seconded by Gabe Nobbe, motion carried unanimously. The next step is to forward it to County Attorney Chad Smith for inclusion in the new fairgrounds contract.
****Conclusion:****The fairground rental discount proposal was approved and will be incorporated into the new fairgrounds contract.

Inclusion Baseball Diamond – Concept, Community Impact, and Organization

- Mike Sefton presented on behalf of a project team including parks representatives, Rotary members, and community advocates of a proposal for an inclusion baseball field.
- Background:
 - Concept originated about 17 years ago, inspired by work with handicapped children, with renewed momentum after seeing Sean Casey's "Casey's Clubhouse" in Pittsburgh.
 - Contacts include Tim Gephardt and Eric Schmidt (field builder with Nuxall Foundation experience) and a local contact in Greensburg (Brendan Bridges).
- Field concept:
 - Estimated cost around \$328,689.90 for an inclusion diamond with a roughly 300-foot radius (costing assumptions discussed).
 - Serves athletes with special needs; data from Casey's Clubhouse show participation from 70 zip codes in one year.
 - Nationally, about 250 inclusion fields exist, with examples in South Dakota and at PNC Park in Pittsburgh.
- Organization and planning:
 - A "dream team" of ~8 people (largely Rotarians) is being assembled to lead fundraising, media, and construction coordination.
 - Project will proceed in phases: secure county "blessing" for space, then conduct feasibility work, then move into fundraising and implementation with a question log and timeline for tracking.
****Conclusion:****Commissioners received a formal presentation and expressed strong interest in the inclusion baseball field concept, with the key ask being county approval of a site.

Inclusion Baseball Diamond – Location Options and Logistical Considerations

- Primary site options discussed:

1. The existing sports complex.
 2. Rebecca Park (which already has an inclusion playground).
 3. A county-owned open field east of the main Rebecca Park area (triangular field).
- Sports complex:
 - Hosts about 30 tournaments annually.
 - Concerns about scheduling conflicts, parking pressure, and user frustration.
 - Advantage: existing concession and restroom infrastructure could be leveraged; less demand for additional playground amenities.
 - Rebecca Park (main area):
 - Advantage: existing inclusion playground; potential to create an integrated inclusive destination.
 - Concern: current parking is inadequate and constrained; cars already line the entrance during busy times.
 - Concept plans include additional phases (parking, concessions, restrooms), but even with expansion, capacity may be tight.
 - Rebecca Park east field (open triangular area):
 - Proposal: place the inclusion diamond in the southwest or south corner, with remaining space dedicated to new parking.
 - Benefits:
 - Better proximity to the inclusion playground while relieving congestion near pickleball courts and central green space.
 - Preserves informal recreation areas and reduces over-concentration of facilities in the existing park core.
 - Parks officials confirmed existing access/connection to that area.
 - Phasing and funding flexibility:
 - Project phases may differ by site:
 - At the complex: focus on parking and leveraging new/existing concessions.
 - At Rebecca Park: emphasis on parking expansion and possibly new concessions/restrooms.
 - Fundraising is expected to cover both the field and necessary supporting infrastructure, with flexibility to apply funds where most needed.
- **Conclusion:****There is broad support for the inclusion baseball diamond. Rebecca Park—especially the eastern open field—is emerging as a favored option, but final site selection hinges on detailed parking, access, and layout analysis.

Inclusion Baseball Diamond – Technical Design Features

- The proposed field will be fully turf:
 - 4–6 inches of base depth with stone underlay and about 0.5 inches of turf with infill.
 - Designed for wheelchairs and rapid drainage; fields can be playable within minutes after rain (based on example videos).
 - Typical dimensions:
 - Fence distance around 110–130 feet.
 - Bases and markings:
 - Usually painted or turf-marked bases (no raised bases) to avoid wheelchair obstacles; optional base plugs if needed.
 - Use:
 - Flexible for adapted baseball, softball, wiffle ball, and formats for visually impaired players (e.g., sound-emitting balls).
 - Dugouts:
 - Open design for ease of access and parental assistance.
- **Conclusion:****The inclusion diamond is intended to be fully

accessible, turf-based, and adaptable for multiple special needs sports formats.

Animal Shelter Leadership Transition – Interim Director and Recruitment

- Commissioners announced the passing of former animal shelter director Minde Myers and noted that the animal control board held an emergency meeting.
- The board recommended appointing Brenda Emsweller as interim director and making her a full-time county employee during the interim.
- Proposed interim structure:
 - Up to 90 days or until a new director is hired, whichever comes first.
 - One- to two-week overlap/transition period once a permanent director is selected.
- Brenda has been working at the shelter as a volunteer and as a paid worker through Friends of the Greensburg Decatur County Animal Shelter.
- When asked, Brenda indicated she prefers to serve only as interim director and then return to a part-time role.
 - Jeremy Pasel made the motion to approve Brenda Emsweller as interim director for up to 90 days, Brian Wenning seconded, motion carried unanimously.
 - ****Conclusion:****Brenda Emsweller was appointed full-time interim animal shelter director for up to 90 days (plus transition), and the job description for the permanent director is approved for posting.

Use of New Community Building – Freedom Sings USA / “America 250”

Veterans Fundraiser

- A request was made by Kristy Lowe to use the new fairgrounds community building free of charge on Friday, February 13 for an “America 250” dance benefiting veterans.
- Event details:
 - Partner organizations: Nuttin Fancy (local band) and Freedom Sings USA (TN-based nonprofit using songwriting/music therapy with veterans).
 - February 10–13: five veteran families will participate in songwriting sessions at Juwakata Farms.
 - Songs will debut at an intimate Thursday event at Jawacdah Farms and again at the Friday night community building event.
 - Event will honor the 250th anniversary of the U.S. and local veterans/military families.
 - Funding model: corporate sponsorship plus a cover charge (up to \$25 per person).
 - All proceeds flow through the Decatur County Community Foundation to a veterans fund for Decatur County (with possible broader SE Indiana support).
 - Professional songwriters, not the veterans themselves, will perform.
 - Light hors d’oeuvres only; alcohol may be served if allowed by contract and subject to insurance and licensed bartender requirements.
- Commissioner considerations:
 - Desire not to set a broad precedent for free use of the building for all fundraisers.
 - The county-wide veterans fund and strong local benefit weighed in favor, as did Nuttin Fancy’s fundraising track record (e.g., ~\$38,000 previously raised in Nashville).
 - Opportunity to showcase and acoustically test the new community building.
- Acoustics/testing:

- Commissioners and contractors have ongoing concerns about the building's acoustics.
- Insulation above 8 feet is intended to improve sound absorption, but performance is untested.
- Commissioners want a test-run event/band rehearsal with local sound professionals (e.g., Brothers McGee) once the building is complete (target late 2025/early 2026) before the major event.
- Gabe Nobbe made the motion to approve the free of charge usage, Jeremy Pasel seconded, motion carried unanimously.
****Conclusion:**** Commissioners approved free use of the new community building for the February 13 "America 250" veterans fundraiser and plan a separate acoustics test in the building once construction is complete.

Board and Leadership Appointments

BZA Appointment

- An open seat on the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) exists because Rick Hoeing is not seeking reappointment.
- APC's Doug Westerfeld recommended Joe Harmeyer.
- Motion made by Jeremy Pasel, seconded by Brian Wenning to appoint Joe Harmeyer; motion carried unanimously.
****Conclusion:**** Joe Harmeyer was appointed to the BZA, filling Rick Hoeing's seat.

Commissioner President Election

- Brian Wenning made a motion to elect Jeremy Pasel as president for the new year, Gabe Nobbe seconded; motion carried unanimously.
- Jeremy, who served as president the prior year, expressed willingness to continue.
- Motion to elect Jeremy as commissioner president passed.
****Conclusion:**** Jeremy was re-elected as commissioner president.

Area Plan Board – "Lucrative Office" Conflict

- Commissioners revisited whether Todd Mauer could continue serving on both the school board and the area plan board.
- The Attorney General's advisory on "lucrative offices" in Indiana defines both roles as lucrative offices.
- Legal counsel advised this is a constitutional issue; Todd cannot hold both and therefore cannot be reappointed to the commissioner-appointed area plan board seat.
- The commissioner-appointed seat is not tied to a specific stakeholder category, so various candidate profiles are possible.
- Commissioners will email potential names for APC Director Doug Westerfelds review and aim to appoint a replacement by the January meeting.
****Conclusion:**** Todd Mauer cannot be reappointed to the area plan board due to a dual lucrative office conflict; commissioners will identify and appoint a replacement.

Long-Range Planning for County Assets and Executive Sessions

- Commissioners and county council have formed a long-range planning committee to evaluate county physical assets (buildings, HVAC, equipment, dump trucks, etc.).
- Objective: integrate asset condition and replacement planning with the existing comprehensive financial plan prepared by Baker Tilly.
- Meetings will run through late 2025 and into 2026.
- Special sessions will be scheduled to discuss asset planning; commissioners publicly clarified the purpose to reduce speculation.
****Conclusion:**** A long-range asset planning committee is established;

special dual sessions will focus on aligning asset management with the county's financial plan.

Economic Development / Budget Power and State Incentive Changes

- Economic development report:
 - Recommendation to hire a project manager for “budget power”-related initiatives.
 - The state is changing its relationship with the IEDC and related incentive structures, with potential new cooperation frameworks between Decatur and Shelby counties.
 - ****Conclusion:****Commissioners received an informational update on evolving state incentive structures and local economic development strategy; no specific actions were taken.

Chamber of Commerce Updates

- Upcoming event information:
 - **Leaders and Lagers Holiday Mixer**
 - Date: Tuesday, 4–6 p.m. at “The Taap.”
 - Free and open to the public.
 - Collecting donations for Speranza Health (paper towels, toilet paper, feminine hygiene products).
 - **Ag Day Breakfast**
 - Date: Saturday, February 7.
 - Time: 7:30–9:30 a.m. at the Red Barn at Next Generation.
 - Sponsorships will be sought; speaker to be announced.
 - **Legislative Update**
 - Date: Friday, February 20, 11:30–1:00.
 - Free and open to the public.

Sheriff's Department – Additional Weather/Crash Context

- Sheriff's representative reiterated serious road safety issues tied to weather, including multiple crashes and significant response demands.
- Commissioners will continue coordinating with EMA and the Highway Department regarding travel advisories and signage, as noted earlier.
****Conclusion:****County leadership is monitoring weather-related incidents and will adjust advisories and signage as conditions evolve.

Meeting Adjournment

- Motion to recess was made by Gabe Nobbe, seconded by Jeremy Pasel. Motion passed. Meeting recessed.

The next Commissioner meeting will be held on Monday, January 5th, beginning at 6:00 P.M. in room 106.

Attest: _____

Date: _____