

REGULAR MEETING OF THE JASPER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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The Jasper County Commissioners met this date at 8:30 A.M. C.S.T at Jasper County Fairgrounds, Community Building, 2671 W. Clark Street, Rensselaer, Indiana with the following members present: Rein Bontreger, Craig Standish and Ryan Hilton. Also present were Auditor, Diana Boersma, Deputy Auditor, Cynthia Slaughter and Eric Beaver, the Attorney that represents the Commissioners. Those present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Bontreger. There was a brief moment of silence following the Pledge.

MINUTES: Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the minutes from December 22nd, 2025 as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the minutes from January 6th, 2026 as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the minutes from January 21st, 2026 as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

PAYROLL CLAIMS: Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the payroll claims with checks dated January 15th and January 30th, 2026. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

CLAIMS: Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the claims, as presented. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

NIPSCO KANKAKEE TOWNSHIP REZONE: Mr. Bontreger stated they will open public comments with a 2-minute limit.

DOTTY WARRICK, 436 S. Kittery Drive Rensselaer: Ms. Warrick stated she had spoken to elected offices of numerous counties, and they all said no to their rezone. She stated the Indiana Utility Regulatory Board Commissioner approved the creation of GenGo in 2025 which will operate as a generation only entity. How can the taxpayers for Jasper County and the Commissioners of Jasper County rezone property which she is assuming will be sold to Amazon for millions and millions of dollars. She stated she feels like NIPSCO is promoting or working as a tech company. She stated there is no written plan for this facility, there is no proven data of water consumption, and the data center could use up to 4 million gallons a day. She stated Amazon should be here with buildings specs and what they are going to use in water. She stated they need to document what they are doing. She stated she is more worried about noise. She stated she has a video of noise from a data center if she has time to play it. She stated people will need to relocate because of this data center and the company should pay a homeowner \$2 million to relocate. She stated NIPSCO, with the problems they are having with their utility rates, needs to work on lowering, not asking for high rates, and working on managing the money that they have now.

TONY SCHOONVELD, 4401 Hawthorne Rd. Wheatfield: Mr. Schoonveld stated the first time he spoke from a limited education, the second time today he did a little bit of research, knowing exactly what is going to happen where he lives. He stated this time it is basically just to the Board, different comments. He stated this all started from just rezoning and we didn't know why. He stated NIPSCO had no plans they just said they wanted a rezone from an agriculture zone into industrial. He stated they said, total transparency, they were not building anything, maybe some peakers to replace the coal. He stated the bottom line is we know it is coming and obviously nobody here wants it. He stated being in the union he knows it is about a year and a half to two years of union work and then our community is stuck with this, whether it is the grid, the water, the environment, whatever the case, the traffic and the construction and he knows that none of them live here. He stated the thing that gets him is the transparency because NIPSCO has used the word so many times. He stated they are building out there now and they have made it very prevalent that it does not really matter what they say because they (NIPSCO) have already built it. He stated there are no fines, no charges. He stated this is really good indication of big government pushing out the little people. He stated the Commissioners are supposed to represent us and he already has an idea as does everybody here what way the votes going to go. He stated he knows zoning is hard, they have to put some guidelines on what they are going to build. He stated it has already been

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TONY SCHOONVELD, 4401 Hawthorne Rd. Wheatfield CONT'D: proven people have lost value on our houses with the solar fields. He stated he is not going to sit here and say oh we are not going to vote for you. He stated whatever their decision is there are damages that will be done. He stated to remember that they can't expect people to come out and shake their hand when they are making decisions that are going to affect all of us.

ANN SANDERS, 12613 McLean Ct. Wheatfield: Ms. Sanders stated data centers are mainly driven by massive energy consumption which will strain power grids and raise utility rates for consumers, which is evident now. She stated a single data center can consume as much bulk power as 2,000 homes. She stated it will use millions of gallons of water for daily use, for cooling, and it will attack our local water supplies. She stated who will pay for our wells running dry if there is a drought. She stated the peaker plant that they are in the process now of building will have its own issues for the people living by it. She stated by adding noise pollution, adding hydraulic electronic waste, and limited long-term economic benefits to our community with the data center, potentially, will be devastating to Jasper County. She stated GenCo is a new, unregulated subsidiary designed to isolate the cost of the data center developers themselves rather than sharing it among all customers. She stated critics, such as the Citizens Action Coalition, say loopholes could still leave everyday consumers paying for these data centers through a less regulated process. She stated her husband and herself, as well as many others, are seeing skyrocketing prices already. She stated, we, as consumers, are paying for something the majority of us do not want. She stated her actual usage of gas was \$70.10 but their delivery charges were \$104.75. She stated they have been in their house for over 20 years and this is the highest bill they have ever received. She stated how can they be paying more for something that has been in place for over 20 years in their home than the actual usage of gas. She stated we know the answer and say no to the data center.

REBECCA DEARDORF, 13951 N. 500 E. San Pierre: Ms. Deardorf stated after the December 16th Planning Commission meeting NIPSCO representatives were asked why they moved their groundwater testing wells in parcels 3 and 5 for the proposed rezoning area and NIPSCO representatives gave the answer, to continue monitoring. She stated that answer did not make a lot of sense, they could continue monitoring without moving the wells. She stated since then she discovered a 600-page report on the NIPSCO website. She stated that NIPSCO report says they moved the well October 2025 to facilitate divestment of certain real estate so they knew before October that they wanted to divest these parcels. She stated they were not transparent when asked by our county officials about the moving of the wells. She stated NIPSCO has the right to divest these parcels why would they not be transparent about that? She stated why would we have to find that information buried in a 600-page report. She stated this report also contains information about how the pumping of groundwater affects the aquifer. She stated despite hearing alarmed citizens express their concerns about groundwater depletion time and time again NIPSCO has not shared that they already have testing data on this in the aquifer test section of the 600-page report. She stated it states that at a pumping rate of 240,000 gallons of water the drawdown was between 1 and 6 feet within 22 minutes. She stated so not only is it untrue that pumping out groundwater would not draw down the aquifer levels, NIPSCO's own report shows that it does draw down levels. Ms. Deardorf stated she has been to several meetings, and the Commissioners talk about how they have met with NIPSCO, talked to NIPSCO, and had team calls with NIPSCO, so are those meetings actually legal meetings when you probably had at least two Commissioners at those meetings.

GAIL WOOLEVER 3219 W. 1700 N. Wheatfield: Ms. Woolever stated she is a retired teacher and her concern about what we are doing with our county is what are we going to leave to our children. She stated our kids are our future. She stated she doesn't know if they are aware of this but one of our larger exports from the State of Indiana, we have the best education system with 2 Big Ten Universities, and we export our children to other areas of the United States and the world. She stated we are not able to keep our kids here, partially because of the quality of living that we have here. She stated she is also concerned about the water, as a farmer's wife, they have to use

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GAIL WOOLEVER 3219 W. 1700 N. Wheatfield CONT'D: the water to irrigate. She stated our water table fluctuates with the river, the consumption of water is immense, and you are going to dry it up. She stated she wonders if we are leaving ourselves open to a nuclear plant being put in here. She stated she knows it sounds far-fetched, but the restrictions have been dropped on the nuclear building code. She stated she worries about our taxes and who is going to be paying for all of this but most of all she worries about our kids and what we are going to be leaving them.

STEVE WOOLEVER, 3219 W. 1700 N. Wheatfield: Mr. Woolever stated as a farmer he is concerned about the river, number one. He stated he has witnessed the river go up and down and when there is excess water, they probably will have no trouble, but what happens when we go through a drought like in 1980 where the river goes down 2 feet. He stated how are you going to maintain the water, are we talking about a dam in the river becoming regulated by whatever/whoever is going to run this thing and once they do that, we are going to have issues all over the county. He stated the river dictates drainage for miles away and once we start messing with that we are in trouble. He stated he is also concerned about traffic and road destruction. He stated if they have something like what happened near San Pierre where they just fully annihilated our county roads and actually made them gravel until they were finished. He asked who pays for all that, who pays for the repair of our roads.

BARB DEARDORFF, 5298 E. 1350 N. San Pierre: Ms. Deardorff stated her address is in Kankakee Township near Teft. She stated for the past few months our community has been consumed by NIPSCO's petition to rezone 5 parcels of land, including a proposed data center. She stated the Planning Commission heard hours of testimony nearly exclusively from citizens who are asking to deny the rezone. She stated throughout this process they have heard NIPSCO folks say over and over that they want to be good partners with our community, while the community rolls their eyes at that sentiment. She stated at the Planning Commission meeting it was discovered that NIPSCO had plans to build the peaker 2 years before requesting a rezoning and indeed have started building the peaker without proper zoning, but they want to be good partners. She stated since the Planning Commission meeting, it was discovered that they are building the peaker without a county building permit, but they want to be good partners. She stated they never went through a drainage board before starting the construction of the peaker, but they want to be good partners. She stated they moved monitoring wells that check for groundwater contamination that has already been done elsewhere on their property onto what appears to be county right-of-way, but they want to be good partners. She stated 3 weeks ago NIPSCO contractors were pumping water out of the county ditch for a, quote, big project, without a permit and they want to be good partners. She stated the website violation tracker shows that NIPSCO has paid over \$600 million in penalties for various environmental, consumer protection, safety, competition, and other offenses but they say they want to be good partners. She stated their actions have shown us for years what kind of partner they are and will be with our community and they have not stopped showing us the past few months. She stated when she built her house she followed the rules, before she even broke ground, she had a building permit and had the property inspected by the county to see if she needed a culvert for her driveway, but NIPSCO is not following the rules. She stated their pattern of behavior seems to be proceed until apprehended, apologize, and say they are going to be a good partner. She stated she asks that they vote no on the rezone.

TERRY WELLSAND, 3474 E. 500 N. Wheatfield: Mr. Wellsand stated he needs a couple questions answered by you three Commissioners and possibly, representatives of NIPSCO. He stated China has a land mass of 3.7 million square miles, Indiana has 36,000 square miles. China has a population of 1.4 billion people, Indiana has 6.9 million. China has 449 data centers, Indiana has 72, what is wrong with this picture. He stated The United States, as of November of 2025, has 5,427 data centers and Germany has 529, the UK has 523, China has 449, Canada has 337, and Russia has 251. He stated why do we need another data center, that is what he wants to know, here in Indiana, here in Jasper County, why. He stated the second is the good neighbors that they keep telling us they want to be, at the last meeting they said well we are a different NIPSCO, we are a

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TERRY WELLSAND, 3474 E. 500 N. Wheatfield CONT'D: new NIPSCO, we have a new CEO. He stated in 2024 NIPSCO had \$7.7 million in fines for energy market violations. He stated in 2024 they had a \$707,850 fine for utility safety violations. He stated in 2024 they had \$213,600 in fines for pipeline safety violations. He stated he could not find the 2025 violations. He stated do we really trust them, they say they are following all the regulations then why are they getting fined \$9 million in fines total, what is wrong. He stated the NIPSCO peaker plant is for fluctuations in green energy, solar and wind, that is what they are designed for so why didn't they build it in 2017 when they knew the coal plant was going to be finalized in 2019. He stated look at the people who are for it, they are wearing suit coats and the people that are against it are in flannels and jeans and missing work to be here.

HEATHER ENNIS NORTHWEST INDIANA FORUM, 6100 Southport Rd. Portage: Ms. Ennis stated she is the President and CEO of Northwest Indiana Forum. Ms. Ennis did not state if she is a resident of Jasper County. She stated they are a 7-county economic development organization. She stated as the voice of economic growth in Northwest Indiana she knows that investment in this new power generation and data centers will help the economy to prosper. She stated building 2 new natural gas plants means more power for cold winters like this and to also be able to attract additional investment. She stated developing data centers means additional jobs so that they can bring the youth back to Northwest Indiana, these are high-tech jobs. She stated she knows there are construction jobs to go alongside of it but as they look at the opportunity that is happening in Hobart, 1100 full-time jobs are going to be at those data centers, and those jobs are meaningful in order to bring back the youth. She stated this multi-billion dollar investment couldn't come at a better time for Jasper County, as they look at impacts around State actions and without a boost to local budget, Jasper County could be forced to raise local income taxes or underfund local services so this could not be happening at a better time for Jasper County and its residents. She stated data centers generate millions of dollars in tax revenue which will help fill holes in the budget and support community initiatives and the companies that come alongside are generally great partners around STEM and educational processes. She stated she knows they have heard a lot of people in the community voicing concerns about project impacts on community assets but much of this is misinformation, there is a lot of misunderstanding around impacts of this development, water usage has continued to evolve and she would encourage them to support this.

RANDY PALMATEER, DID NOT PROVIDE ADDRESS, NORTHWEST INDIANA BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL: Mr. Palmateer did not state if he is a resident of Jasper County. He stated he is the Business Manager for the Northwest Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council, they represent Lake, Porter, Newton, and Jasper Counties, have 30,000 members, 33 affiliates, 14 trades that he represents, and he is speaking on their behalf. He stated he does understand some of the people in the audience. He stated he spoke at the last meeting and feels the need to come to every single meeting and speak. He stated they heard what he had to say and he echoes Ms. Ennis's comments. He stated he also feels for the residents that don't support it. He stated he charged his business managers with reaching out to their members that live in Jasper County to do a kind of pool of what they want to do with this and more than 80% do want this project but do not want to show up to the meetings for non-confrontational reasons and things like that. He stated he rises in support of the rezone that is in front of them. He stated he knows there are some others from Lake County or Porter County and we all breath the same air and drink the same water and if there was an air permit in his area for the B.P. Whitting Refinery he would appreciate anybody from around the state to come up and speak on it because it affects us all the same in his opinion. He stated he was elected by his members that live in Jasper County to come speak for them here and that's why they don't run for office because they don't want to be a public speaker. He stated he appreciates their diligence, transparency, and the process they have put this through. He stated this should be done for every project, the way they have done it, they should be proud of themselves for that. He stated in closing I rise in support for the region.

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MYRA ROBINSON, 351 E. 1500 N. Wheatfield: Ms. Robinson stated her concern is not just for the community but for herself and her family that lives on that road. She stated she would like to have had someone personally come and talk with those that live on that road, what are they to expect. She stated she has already seen over the last year the traffic, the big equipment trucks that drive so fast. She stated she was raised there, her kids were raised there, and her grandkids are raised there. She stated her grandkids would get on their bikes to go down to the ditch to go fishing and they can't do that anymore. She stated they can't even ride their bikes on that road because it is dangerous right now. She stated as a resident and someone that has lived there most of their life, she thinks that respectfully one of them should reach out and talk with them too and allow them to know what they should expect as somebody who is living on that on that road and she would appreciate that. She stated she is very easy to get ahold of and if they can do that she would appreciate it.

DENISE WRIGHT CENTER OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION, 504 Broadway, Gary: Ms. Wright stated she is with the Center of Workforce Innovation and represents the 7 counties in Region 1. Ms. Wright did not state if she is a resident of Jasper County. She stated she is here to just talk about the workforce and the working age population. She stated their workforce report shows that the prime workforce population is declining by up to 60% since 2000 and that is important. She stated what she wants to say is that bringing this into Jasper County will really help revitalize your community. She stated she wants to reiterate what Gail said, she is worried about the children and she agrees with that. She stated Center for Workforce Innovation helps run the Work One offices and they help support and skill the population to have better, high-paying jobs and that is what they want to do. She stated she has personally been in the schools in the area and she sees the passion and drive within the children and they want to keep them within the community. She stated bringing these jobs, bringing this to the economy will help make that happen. She stated during the construction phase, hundreds of jobs will happen in construction. She stated it is important that those jobs here over those years during construction will help the community. She stated when the data center is up and running, even if there is only 50 fulltime employees, they see at least 6 jobs per employee and that is over 300 jobs that they have brought into the community after construction is complete. She stated it is important to consider keeping our kids in our community, she has lived in the region her entire life, her grandchildren, her children live in the community, she wants to keep them close to her and she wants to make sure there are options for them. She stated to make sure that they want to stay in the community. She stated new industries attract new workers, new workers bring families and families strengthen our schools, they expand housing markets, and they revitalize the communities.

FRANK GOODMAN, Wheatfield: Mr. Goodman stated one of his concerns is public safety. He stated this project during the construction phase, especially for both the power plant and the possible data center will bring thousands of construction workers. He stated Wheatfield currently has one ambulance and a very small volunteer fire department which is really small during day turns because they are volunteer firefighters with that force and have to pay their NIPSCO bills and have to work day turns. He stated there have been many times that he has seen, where one guy in a firetruck shows up to an auto accident, going to the school for an emergency, whatever. He stated we don't have the manpower to supplement NIPSCO building the power plant and the data center from a public safety standpoint. He stated he thinks it is important that they ask NIPSCO to provide within 30 days a comprehensive plan to do in-house, at their expense, ambulance and fire service. He stated our community cannot afford to take care of this massive construction project with what we have got. He stated imagine telling a parent, their kid got hurt at Wheatfield Elementary, they are bleeding all over the place, call 911 but it's going to take an extra 10 minutes because we have to get mutual aid from Keener Township to come help the child because our 1 ambulance was at NIPSCO's property. He stated same thing with transportation, travel through the area. He stated we are going to see a massive amount of more traffic in this area when I65 turns into a toll road, that has already been discussed with some of the folks at the Sheriff's Department. He stated they are looking at a massive influx of more vehicles on our roads. He stated outside

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FRANK GOODMAN, Wheatfield CONT'D: construction companies from out of state are already staging in various areas around Wheatfield getting ready to go and their equipment is already here.

MARY ANNE MEHLUN, Aspen Ct. DeMotte: Ms. Mehlun stated she lives in the buffer zone, so she does not get to speak at the DeMotte meetings. She stated she is very concerned about the data centers; they have a 30-to-50-year tax break. She stated the long term is maybe 25 jobs according to X.com. She stated she looked up how many employees are needed for a data center and it is only around 25. She stated she has reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and has looked at all the work that is going to happen. She stated we had 87% agriculture in 2022 when the Comprehensive Plan was written and there has been growth so she does not know what percent we are at currently for agriculture. She stated 13% covers commercial and residential. She stated we want to be an agricultural community and be rural. She stated people here love the space that is the reason why they moved here was because of the space. She stated she escaped from Orland Park Illinois. She stated that started out as a rural community and in came economic development and was built up all around. She stated they left and then moved back there and there were lights shining in their windows, there is light pollution everywhere. She stated she loves being here because it is nice and dark. She stated her concern is that we are not going to get the tax money, that is a lie. She stated we are not going to have a whole bunch of jobs, it will ramp up and then what happens is we have to ramp up services and then suddenly go down to just 25 jobs and you have lost 1000 jobs, and a 1000 income taxes and the tax rate is going to skyrocket. She stated vote no for the data center but the peaker unit sounds great.

MARTHA MARY, 2267 W. 1400 N. Wheatfield: Mr. Mary stated she has done some research, in Oregon in 2011, they put an Amazon data center in. She stated a rancher started noticing a lot of women miscarrying, a lot of rare cancers, a lot of kidney failures and stuff like that. She stated they did research and there were numerous amounts of nitrate in the water. She stated her concern is the water, with our water table you only have to go 20 feet to reach water. She stated if NIPSCO puts a bunch of stuff in the aquifers are they going to spend the billions of dollars to have water trucked in for us because we have no other source of water. She stated we cannot get water from Lake Michigan we are too far way. She stated that is her main concern because our wells are all we have, we have no other source of water whatsoever.

COMMISSIONERS:

Mr. Bontreger stated he would like to thank everyone for their time and attention for the meeting here this morning, the shared comments, they appreciate that. He stated he wants to thank the Plan Commission, NIPSCO's presentation at that time was incomplete and this gave them pause to be able to do the research they are supposed to do as Commissioners. He stated he has found this job is less about authority and it is about responsibility, how are they going to be responsible for Jasper County and help make it viable for decades to come. He stated there is provision, they are able to have gatherings, information gatherings at times to gather more information. He stated they consider this project so impactful, transformational potentially that it was their responsibility to engage the locals. He stated they did talk with township officials in Kankakee, Wheatfield, and Walker Townships as well as the Town of Wheatfield. He stated they are fully aware of it, it is going to be impacting for this project, they are fully away. He stated they have had conversations with NIPSCO and they are fully away that they have left many things incomplete. He stated they have collected \$30,000 in fines from them for the building permit. He stated there is a drainage plan, they are checking the boxes. He stated they are actually engaging with NIPSCO leadership, he would say, in an unprecedented fashion for Jasper County. He stated does that mean everything is perfect, no. He stated here is where we are at folks, he is being as sincere as he could be and anyone who has seen him in county government would know he only knows one way to do it. He stated they can say no today and you are still going to get a data center. He stated there is legislation advancing through the State legislature right now that is going to give the State authority to cite a data center and Jasper County is one of the specific locations, along with a few other, remediated coal sites and other places in Indiana that they are looking to do this. He stated here is where they

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are at as Commissioners, this is what they are faced with as far as responsibility goes. He stated do we exercise and go ahead and make a vote to approve the rezone and leverage the maximum amount of income potential for Jasper County that we can. He stated sure, there is a provision in the legislation that will have an economic development agreement provision but at that point we lose our initiative to be able to leverage maximum transformational impact for the county. He stated the question was raised, who is going to pay for municipal water, potentially, for Wheatfield, and help get that we need. He stated it's going to be this developer, when they come forward. He stated another question was why can't the data center person come present this. He stated it is because the petitioner who owns the property has to be the one who makes the petition. He stated if we get past this point today, then we can actually start negotiating aggressively. He stated here is his bottom line, he has listened to your concerns intently, he has talked to the locals, he hasn't been able to talk to all of them, he has talked to the Council, and they are not out on a limb here on their own. He stated they have support. He stated the question he asked the Council was do you guys want the responsibility of having, technically, more money than you could imagine to manage on behalf of Jasper County. He stated that is a big burden and if they said no they would let it go or do they want to negotiate now one of the most aggressive, lucrative deals for Jasper County in The United States and they have that opportunity right now. He stated he never would have thought that would have been dropped in his lap. He stated they took a visit to New Carlisle last summer and the thing that was in his mind was that they need to do an aquifer management study, which they are doing and he thought they would be facing this topic in a couple of years, fast forward a few months and there they are dealing with the topic. He stated they have the opportunity to address the needs, so yes, they are doing a fire service study to find out what it is going to cost to have to provide partial or fulltime fire coverage for Jasper County. He stated who is going to pay for that, the developer. He stated if they institute a fire territory, that is a tax on you folks and based on the study that was from the Volunteer Fire Association we are 281% behind where everybody else is and you are going to see a massive tax increase. He stated they have had meetings with volunteer fire departments, and he was told that a few of our departments, within a couple of years, won't have enough guys to answer a call which echoed Mr. Newton's comment. He stated we are going to need more ambulances, and they are going to have to raise the wage level throughout the county. He stated if this goes through it is going to be a beehive up there for 3 years and then things will settle down to a new normal. He stated they have a list of commitments that they have been trying to develop that will be attached if they approve this rezone that have to be addressed or they can come back in a year's time if it does not get addressed and rezone it back to Ag. He stated he is taking this absolutely serious as possible. He stated they have driven the site, they have sat at the site, Ryan has gone up to Hobart and viewed that site and even talked to some locals in another state. He stated they have the opportunity to be able to negotiate and capture enough revenue they can put in a trust and generate a revenue stream. He stated for example, wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to fund roads with a wheel tax. He stated how about if they can avoid that, who is going to pay for that, the developer. He stated his position is, on behalf of Jasper County, he is going to get right up to the line of being greedy and make even bigger asks and secure it for the County. He stated he wants to set Jasper County up with success for decades to come. He stated a conversation that they have had internally is, they can say no and it is going to get cited and now we are going to have to deal with all the influx without the resources to manage it. He stated they do not want to be in that position and that is one of the greatest fears that they have talked about. He stated one of the great big concerns that they have talked about, and they have assurances here, it is going to be part of the conditions, is water. He stated they have been told it is going to be committed to that these projects will operate under the current permitted use that has been in there for 50 years, nothing new, not drilling new wells, working with the water they draw in and retain. He stated they are in a position then, if they don't follow that, then they can mitigate and establish damages. He stated they are going to be able to cause them a lot of trouble if they are not willing to work with us. He stated how he sees it is that he has 2 positions, he can say no and you are still

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going to get it and we are going to be underfunded or they can decide to approve it, because that is what Commissioners are given the authority to do, and then negotiate aggressively on behalf of the County to get us the revenue that we need for decades to come. He stated he has not made this decision in advance. He stated he talked with the Council, and they are willing to work through the process of what it is going to take to manage that.

Mr. Hilton stated for anybody in this room who knows him he has done this job a year and a month. He stated never in his life would he feel like he would be tested to one of the hardest decisions he has had to make in his life. He stated he has lived here his whole life and has 5 generations in this county. He stated seeing his back up against the wall by the State of Indiana has put him in a very, very piss poor position. He stated to have opportunities to sit behind the table with these two gentlemen, some Council members, has been vastly beneficial. He stated we all know collectively that NIPSCO missed the mark in October, missed the mark in December. He stated we all know that and they have admitted that. He stated they sat down, discussed, had a better idea and better vision of what is going on, they checked the boxes, they paid the fines, and they continue to do so. He stated having an opportunity this past week, he took a road trip to North Dakota with his family. He stated on his way out there, there is a town called Ellendale, North Dakota, that is getting a data center that is almost 3 times the footprint of this one. He stated looking at the cranes, the construction, seeing the traffic, they pulled into town saying why is the truck not going a mile over the speed limit. He stated he spent a few days there. He stated he is thinking about the magnitude. He stated he sent videos of that construction process to these gentlemen, as well as Council. He stated in a restaurant, in a town of about 300 people in North Dakota where he sat next to a gentleman and started a conversation. He stated this gentleman was from a mile inside of Minnesota and he farmed ground outside of Ellendale. He stated the gentleman told him he had no financial gain in this and he had nothing to do but believe him. He stated it was just a conversation with a random stranger. He stated the gentleman said the Commissioners in that county have been so stringent that if they looked sideways the wrong way they would shut that project down until it was corrected, put 6,000 people out of work for a day and that is a big financial hurt when they have deadlines. He stated, personally, if something of that magnitude goes through in Jasper County, he will use said executive power to shut that project down until they see that everything they ask for is being done properly and correctly. He stated whether we use compliance monitor systems or we do it ourselves or have a County Manager, the protection of the people of Jasper County is first and foremost in his heart and will always be. He stated he wants to continue a place for his kids to want to live, for his friends to want to live, for his family to want to live. He stated he wants to see a future for this county, a prosperous future. He stated when he is sitting up against the wall the best thing he can do is negotiate to the hardest extremity that he has. He stated anybody who knows him knows that he can be a royal pain in the ass. He stated some people in this room know that and they know he is not going to let off. He stated it takes one phone call and they will shut it down but just know that everybody in this room that is a resident of Jasper County he is thinking about them and he is thinking about everybody and he wants to work with them continually and he wants to work hard because if we don't do it the State puts us in the position to do it anyway and we are going to get less than they are going to bargain for. He stated he appreciates those who are in support of a decision made. He stated he understands everyone's concerns and they have heard them loudly and they are taking everything into consideration step by step everything from police, fire, EMS, public safety, these were all strong concerns in all of their hearts, and they can't reiterate that any louder. He stated they have some thresholds to cross but they will get them done.

Mr. Standish stated a lot of what he has to say has already been said. He stated this is a huge project and from those that don't know his day job is an operating engineer. He stated he was on a modernization program at Whiting when there were 19,500 tradesmen in there every day. He stated anyone that has been to BP Whiting understands that you get there through Indianapolis Boulevard

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or Dickey Road and showing that many people in that area every day and out every day relatively at the same time is a nightmare and he understands that. He stated he believes it was Ms. Robinson that lives on 1500 North and they have to figure out how to mitigate that because they still have to live there. He stated there have been talks of a Road Use Agreement and what that looks like internally so they need to figure that out with NIPSCO on how they will be able to get up and down the road, how do you manage kids to get on the bus when they are still in the neighborhood. He stated there are people on 1350 that are going to be affected by this, everybody in the town of Wheatfield is going to be affected by this from incoming traffic from one way or the other and it is going to be ongoing. He stated it will affect Kouts and the north side of DeMotte, everybody understands that. He stated they see what is going on now with traffic, if you travel down 231 at 5 o'clock in the morning at 900 North, the people going to the solar project in Pulaski County is a stream of traffic coming from the west and the east. He stated same thing at 5 o'clock in the evening when they are going back home. He stated so they are mitigating that and having the opportunity to enter into those Road Use Agreements early on plays a part of what President Bontreger said. He stated if they wait for the State to stuff this on us they lose that negotiation power up front. He stated it is evident; anyone can look it up, it is House Bill 1333. He stated he is sure everybody in this room has made themselves well known on it, it is making its way over to the Senate and it seems to have quite a bit of support at this point. He stated the only place in our area that was affected by that is the Wheatfield site, from an energy production zone. He stated there are 12 throughout the whole State. He stated there is a lot to be concerned about with water usage and they are using the DNR permit that NIPSCO has had for 50 years. He stated he thinks that allows them 63 or 68 million gallons a day of withdrawal, to the point, they were told that 25 million has been their maximum so they are looking at it being under that with the conversion of gas and to a potential data center. He stated not drawing it out of the ground, obviously understanding the gentleman farmer talk about the water table. He stated he does not know how much we are going to see groundwater affected by river withdrawal. He stated it is comforting in some aspects to know they are not going to be drilling a well, it is going to be coming from the river. He stated he is concerned heavily about the construction traffic, and we will be past the construction phase in 2-3 years and we will see a better pace when we just have day-to-day workers going there if that's the way they end up going. He stated no matter what, they do see the peaker units working, there has been ground clearing out there for the CCGT plant on the opposite side of the road. He stated they are going to get those new projects, regardless of how the data center pans out today. He stated he thinks it is important. He stated many people talk about the future of our community and our children and he has lived there all his life, he is at the end of 49. He stated he has 2 children and neither one live in Jasper County anymore and he wants to see them getting back here. He stated he hopes that by spring of this year he will have one of them back here, it is very important for him to keep his roots here. He stated it is where his family made a living, it is where he wants to continue to make a living and where he wants them to be able to find jobs, build a household and raise grandchildren closer to him and where they all came from. He stated there is nothing that they have been taking lightly. He stated Ryan touched on the point of the construction compliance monitors and it has been huge in Jasper County and they have seen the best production of that through the windmill process in Carpenter Township. He stated they were absolutely an asset they couldn't go without. He stated whether it is that or potentially a county manager, whatever the agreements look like to just go forward to the letter of the law that they are going to enforce on whomever, that is their commitment. He stated they want your input on that, if it goes to that point, what do you want to see, you are the people living here, the people that are going to deal with it every day, trying to get to your jobs, get your kids to school and they need your input on those things to get your concerns built into those. He stated he appreciates everybody's outcry and coming out and sharing your concerns, hopefully getting answers from us, getting answers from the Planning Commission, hopefully this turns out to be the project that they hope it will be for

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Jasper County in the long term and be an economic punch to the county that we have never seen before.

Mr. Bontreger stated in information gathering they have been working to establish a list of commitments that would be attached to what the data center parcels will be, NIPSCO has received that from them. Mr. Bontreger asked if NIPSCO had any comments based on those commitments. NIPSCO President Vince Parisi stated, President Bontreger, with respect to the commitments that are attached to the data center, they are agreeing with these commitments and are confident they can work through those details and meet those commitments that were requested. He stated concerning point 9 they have spoken with a potential developer and they can work within the 60 foot. Mr. Bontreger stated they have been taking concerns from the public and these are commitments that they would be attaching and would accompany the rezone for that parcel. He stated there is no value set to these, but these are tenants that have to be agreed upon so that they can get the things they talk about as far as public impact. Mr. Bontreger read the Jasper County Board of Commissioners Commitments:

1. The developer of the Data Center on the Subject Property (legally described on Exhibit "A" attached hereto) shall be responsible for one hundred percent (100%) of any costs for new construction or upgrades to existing infrastructure to the electrical grid, sanitary sewers, and municipal water directly attributable to the operation of the proposed Data Center, as agreed or contracted with the utility/agency responsible for such utility service or infrastructure, each party acting reasonably.
2. All water utilized by the Data Center for cooling purposes shall be under and in compliance with the existing Northern Indiana Public Service Company LLC ("NIPSCO") permit to draw water from the Kankakee River, and water used for cooling shall be discharged back into the Kankakee River, in accordance with existing or required discharge permits issued by Federal/State/Local government agencies with appropriate jurisdiction.
3. The developer of the Data Center shall pay for repairs to the existing roadbed and/or road surface along the perimeter of the site that is caused by construction traffic associated with the Data Center development of the Subject Property, as reasonably determined by the Jasper County Highway Department and on a schedule mutually agreed upon by the Jasper County Highway Department and developer and pursuant to a road use agreement (or equivalent) reasonably acceptable to the parties thereto.
4. Prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for any Data Center building on the Subject Property, the developer of the Data Center shall obtain written documentation from NIPSCO that sufficient infrastructure and capacity is either already available or will be constructed at said developer's expense to provide for the operation of the Data Center. Subject to any proceedings before the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (the "IURC"), as applicable, regarding the provision of services by NIPSCO to the Data Center, such new capacity shall have no material increase to utility rates or material adverse impacts to utility services provided to surrounding utility users or infrastructure, as determined by NIPSCO's filing with the IURC and as approved by the IURC.
5. Prior to issuance of the certificate of occupancy for the Data Center, the operator of the Data Center shall prepare and file an emergency management plan for approval by the Jasper County Board of County Commissioners ("County Commissioners"). The emergency management plan shall be updated as reasonably required by the County Commissioners.

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6. A final site plan, landscaping plan, and building elevations shall be submitted for approval by the County Commissioners prior to obtaining an Improvement Location Permit for each Data Center building or buildings.
7. Within ninety (90) days of the adoption of (rezoning) Ordinance, the developer of the proposed Data Center shall enter into a mutually acceptable Community Enhancement Agreement (or equivalent) with the County Commissioners, which will provide for, among other things, a series of contributions to be made to Jasper County or other agencies/entities within Jasper County, as reasonably determined by the County Commissioners, as a result of the development of the Data Center. If a Community Enhancement Agreement (or equivalent) is not entered into within the ninety (90) day timeframe, then no permits for the Data Center shall be applied for or issued, and the developer shall initiate a rezoning of the Subject Property back to the A1 zoning classification, or the County Commissioners may initiate such rezoning if developer fails to do so with ten (10) business days following the expiration of the ninety (90) day time period.
8. The only permitted use of the Subject Property shall be that of a Data Center, as described in the Application for Rezoning or otherwise adopted by the Jasper County Zoning Administrator.
9. Any Data Center buildings shall not exceed sixty feet (60') in height (unless additional height is approved by the Jasper County Board of Zoning Appeals, excluding any rooftop mechanical equipment and rooftop access points meeting the requirements of the Jasper County Unified Development Ordinance (unless otherwise approved by the Jasper County Board of Zoning Appeals).

Mr. Bontreger stated those are the commitments that will be attached to the property, whoever that developer is that takes on the project they have to agree with that. He stated then they get to sit down with them and actually hammer out what those numbers are, they are getting an idea of what those costs would be for Wheatfield, Walker and Kankakee Townships to be able to provide the kind of service that it is going to take. He stated they are working on funneling a road use corridor and these are ongoing discussions. He stated they have a lot of leeway here to make sure that they mitigate, as much as possible, the difficulty imposed upon you folks who live up around there. He stated things are not going to be perfect and there will be things that absolutely will have to be dealt with, but they are engaged in the process. He stated they had a discussion with the Mayor of Hobart and you folks have seen the kind of money they are going to be able to capture from that project. He stated his preference is one and done, he thinks this is enough, lets get this done and see where the dust settles, manage that resource and keep life here as close to the normal that we have enjoyed as possible. He stated he had one fellow reach out to him as an accountant, there are 12,000 households in Jasper County, these were estimates and some assumptions were made but this one project will be the equivalent to having added 6,000 more households without all the baggage that comes with adding 6,000 households. He stated they have heard their process, they have heard their thought process, their discussions, their external line of thinking, and his bottom line is responsibility, as far as being a part of this team, to position Jasper County to be viable for decades to come.

Mr. Bontreger stated in regard to the NIPSCO rezone, they have received the unfavorable recommendation from the Plan Commission. He stated it is within their authority and responsibility to be able to choose to be able to recommend the parcels that would be for CCGT and then for the data center.

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Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the rezone. Mr. Bontreger seconded and the motion carried.

REZONE MARION TOWNSHIP: Ms. Scheurich stated the Plan Commission made a unanimous favorable recommendation for a rezone going from A1 to A2, a 24-acre parcel, for a 2-lot subdivision. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the favorable recommendation for the rezone. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

REZONE HANGING GROVE TOWNSHIP: Ms. Scheurich stated the Plan Commission made unanimous favorable recommendation for a rezone from A1 to A3, for a calf farm, 245 acres. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the favorable recommendation for the rezone. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

CORONER BOERSMA: Coroner Boersma was not present. Ms. Boersma stated some training was moved and it involves an overnight. Mr. Bontreger asked, so it is a request to go to training. Ms. Boersma stated yes. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the request to attend training for the coroner's office personnel. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

CLERK KARA FISHBURN: Mr. Bontreger stated this is in regards to the proposed vote centers for this primary election. Mr. Bontreger read the proposed vote centers:

- VOTE CENTER #1: Community Bible Church, 814 N Halleck St, DeMotte, IN
- VOTE CENTER #2: American Reformed Church, 1021 S Halleck St, DeMotte, IN
- VOTE CENTER #3: Wheatfield Public Library, 350 S Bierma St, Wheatfield, IN
- VOTE CENTER #4: First Church, 5387 W St Rd 10, Wheatfield, IN
- VOTE CENTER #5: Walker Twp Fire Station, 50 W 900 N Wheatfield, IN
- VOTE CENTER #6: Brushwood United Methodist, 5474 West 200 North, Rensselaer, IN
- VOTE CENTER #7: Rensselaer Armory, 1417 E Grace Street, Rensselaer, IN
- VOTE CENTER #8: Jasper County Fairgrounds, 2671 W Clark St, Rensselaer, IN
- VOTE CENTER #9: Tri-County Bible Church, 5856 W 1050 S, Rensselaer, IN
- VOTE CENTER #10: Remington Library, 105 N Ohio St, Remington, IN

Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the vote centers as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

AUDITOR BOERSMA: Ms. Boersma stated she needs to know what pricing they want to do for SAM.gov; 1-year \$599, 2-year \$999, 3-year \$1,299, or 5-year \$1999. She stated she sent them an email about this. She stated SAM.gov is used so that the county can get grants from the Federal and State government. She stated she believes Ed with the Highway Department uses it for the Department of Transportation. Mr. Cain stated they use it for the CCMGs. Ms. Boersma stated the 5-year is the biggest bargain, you are getting almost 2 years free. Mr. Standish made a motion to accept the 5-year pricing. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

KIRPC SAFE STREETS FOR ALL: Mr. Bontreger stated they have an invoice for \$5,937 for KIPRC Safe Streets for All and asked Phil if he could make a comment on the Safe Streets for All for people to have an understanding. Phil (BF&S) stated they assisted the county in applying for that grant through the Federal Government and the county was awarded the grant. He stated the selection process has been carried out, several firms submitted proposals and the county staff selected BF&S for the project and they are working on that agreement right now and expect to have it at the next Commissioners' meeting for approval. Mr. Bontreger stated KIRPC is doing a study on their own, is that correct. Phil stated yes and the county is still participating in that. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the invoice for participation in KIRPC Safe Streets for All. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

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OVERHEAD DIGITAL PROJECTOR & SCREEN: Mr. Bontreger stated they are looking into getting quotes for an overhead digital projector and screen to make presentations at the other meeting location more visible to everybody.

JASPER COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES: Ms. Sharon Colee stated per Ryan the pressure valve water holding tank at the Fase center is complete. Mr. Hilton stated they were approved by the Fire Marshall, and they are waiting on an invoice from Krooswyk.

Ms. Colee stated she is here today with contracts for pest control services for the building in Rensselaer and the Fase Center. She stated as a Commissioner owned building the plan in the past used Reliable Exterminators. She stated the services are on hold right now until the contract is approved. She stated she is requesting the contracts be included in the county building contracts. She stated the contracts are standard contracts, the initial charge is \$65 and they came out and did a service at Fase and they did pay for that one. She stated with your approval and going forward the contract denotes a \$65 service charge and a \$250 charge which she believes they come out during the year and do a special treatment, with an estimated cost for each building of \$890 and all details of service is noted on the contract. Mr. Hilton stated for some reason these locations were missed on the last contract. He stated the way this came to be was because the manager at the DeMotte center signed an invoice not understanding that it was a contract. He stated they thought they were just signing off on a receipt and through phone calls they got it retracted. He stated he thinks they need to put them on with the rest of the county paid contracts with the rest of the county buildings. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the contracts as presented. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Colee stated she was presenting an invoice for payment from Anderson Plumbing. She stated they have had a lot of plumbing problems in the kitchen in the Fase Center over the years and they have come in and rerouted with piping and drainage and the total bill was \$489.00. She stated it was leaking and she did not have a chance to get prior approval. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the invoice. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

NOTARY REQUEST SURVEYORS OFFICE: Mr. Standish stated the Surveyors office does not have a notary out there and has been using the notary with Mr. Beavers office for their minutes. He stated it was brought to his attention that Treasure Gilbert wanted to become a Notary Public there so she can notarize the minutes. He stated Mary Scheurich is a notary at the Courthouse and the County reimburses the fees to her for becoming a notary every year. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve Treasure Gilbert to get her notary certification at the County's expense. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT KATE BARRETT: Ms. Barrett stated with the approval of HR moving out to the Health Department she is here today to ask how to move forward with relocating the 5 safes that they need moved. She stated the safes weight between 770-975 pounds. She stated she brought a quote with her today from Professional Safe and Vault for \$825 to move the 5 safes. Mr. Bontreger stated it is \$825 to move them within their space. Ms. Barrett stated yes within their office just a different location. Mr. Standish asked if they can get the one moved from the shop to the North Annex at the same time. Ms. Barrett stated she will have to get an additional quote to add that. Mr. Bontreger stated they will get back to her on this.

Ms. Barrett stated Jordan has some conferences he will need to go to, one in February and one in March and both will require overnight stays. She stated both of these are for certification that he has to attend. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve Jordan attending these conferences. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

Ms. Barrett stated she has paperwork for the Health Board Members that were approved at the beginning of the year that the Commissioners have to sign off on so she can submit the paperwork to the State. Mr. Bontreger stated they will sign that.

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GRACE POINT RESOURCE CENTER BRIAN HANNON: Mr. Hannon stated he is the director of Grace Point Resource Center in Rensselaer and he would like to thank them for their support in 2025 and to request support for this year from the Opioid Fund to help them continue to expand their efforts in Rensselaer. He stated they help people with many different life challenges besides just addiction, things like marriage, parenting, anxiety, depression, anger, grief, suicidal thoughts, and things like these, no matter what someone's struggle is they have resources available to help them. He stated they are located at 204 West Washington Street in Rensselaer and have been there for six and a half years. He stated from their opening until now they have served over 2,000 people, had over 15,000 interactions with them through various services, have offered over 5,000 hours of free counseling and 4,000 hours of free classes. He stated all of their services are completely free to the community and they are supported completely by grants and donations. He stated they help those struggling with addictions with two key types of care, one being preventive and one being remedial. He stated preventive care offers support for struggles like grief, anxiety, or depression before they lead to the struggle with substance abuse. He stated by addressing root causes early they help prevent addiction before it begins. He stated remedial care is directly supporting those who are already struggling and battling with addiction and they primarily do that 3 ways. They offer individual counseling by appointment. Their counselors go through an 18-month certification process before they join their staff and they currently have 9 certified counselors with plans to add more soon. He stated last year they offered 910 total hours of free counseling and 212 of those hours were helping those struggling with addiction. They offer several group classes. He stated many people struggling with addiction have some sort of loss in their background that they have not fully recovered from. He stated they also offer quarterly CPR classes for free and part of that training is teaching people how to use Narcan in the case of an overdose. He then shared testimony of a person that they served last year who was struggling with addiction. He stated they are requesting \$15,000 from the Opioid Fund to help them continue to offer these resources for free to the people that need them. He stated he has shared their current year operating budget with the Commissioners and the reason it is low is because they depend on about 25 volunteers to serve in their ministry and so they only have one paid staff member at this time. Mr. Bontreger stated in reviewing the funds, Opioid Restricted would be an applicable fund. Mr. Hilton made a motion to approve the grant request from Grace Point. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

JASPER COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SARA DEYOUNG: Ms. DeYoung stated she did invoice the County for their typical amount that they have received. She stated in January they typically send out invoices to all of the communities that they work with, which is all of the towns and Jasper County. She stated they have not changed the amount, this is the amount they have requested for the past 10 years. Ms. DeYoung stated on Friday they were at a conference with Jasper County and the other counties in the Kankakee Iroquois Regional Planning Commission have been going through an Ag Accelerator and this is something to work with the agriculture assets in Jasper County. She stated they received a Readi 1.0 grant, and they plus the other 5 counties that were in the original document and then they included the additional 2 counties and brought them in a little bit later. She stated the event was Friday and they had elected officials and state leaders there to talk about the process and how they had gotten from an initial planning document, as far as, looking at our assets in the area to where they are now of leveraging those assets to get additional investment in agriculture in the area. She stated Jasper County had the most officials there and the county is the lead county for the ag strategy and they were the grant administrator, that is what JCEDO does. She stated this is important for the area and continues to have momentum. She stated they are hoping that KIRPC takes on this plan in the near future and has a dedicated economic development person to agriculture because the shared assets throughout the region. She stated milk that is produced in Newton County might be processed in Jasper County, mint in Pulaski processed in Starke. Mr. Bontreger stated the takeaway was that we need value added assets here to process our locally grown ag products as much as possible.

WEED BOARD JIM MARTIN: Mr. Martin stated they spoke last month about an employee job description and getting permission to go ahead and start looking for an employee and they have

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WEED BOARD JIM MARTIN CONT'D: submitted this to the Commissioners. He stated they would like it approved so they can move ahead with the new job for the weed board. Mr. Bontreger stated the position would be funded \$25,000 by the county, \$20,000 from Soil & Water, \$1,500 from the Jasper Newton Foundation, and \$2,500 from Jordan Township. Mr. Martin stated they are still chasing other grants and are hoping to have that number boosted a little bit better. He stated the Weed Board meeting is on the 11th of February and they would then like to have a hard number to present to the Commissioners and be able to detail how they are going to pay for this. Mr. Bontreger stated in regards to the Sheriff vehicle what is the timeline that you are going to be in need of that. Mr. Martin stated not before early March. He stated last month they spoke about an MOU between Soil & Water and the County. Mr. Beaver stated he had a log jam the last couple of weeks. Mr. Bontreger stated they are going to call a meeting for February 17th and they should have that worked out then.

COUNTY ENGINEER JACK HABERLIN: Mr. Haberlin stated they did not have any right-of-way permits. He stated they had a workshop on Friday for Bridge 88. Mr. Bontreger stated Bridge 88 is on County Road 1000 that makes you do a hitch through there and they are looking into getting it straightened out. Mr. Jake Dammarell, BF&S, stated that they have talked about Bridge 88 for quite some time as it relates to the County's priorities. He stated they have had in front of them an agreement for professional services related to all aspects of what would be required to move forward Bridge 88 for public bid at the beginning of 2027. He stated the project would include a realignment of the bridge, including the realignment of the intersection as well as working on the Zimmer Ditch into the Iroquois River. He stated they had a meeting with the residents that would be impacted and everyone was on board with the project. He stated they are looking forward to getting that started with their approval this morning. Mr. Standish stated they originally talked about adding to the original deck and going across north and south and that has proven not to be the most economical way to do it. He stated actually removing it and putting a box culvert in there, there were some questions from landowners about the amount of water that could go through the box culvert. He stated this box culvert would be large enough to allow more water than the bridge does currently. He stated going to a box culvert made a difference of about a million dollars. He stated everyone was at the meeting except one landowner and they were all on board. He stated when he says landowner he means every landowner that touches the bridge. He stated if they do go forward with it it will set back the cleaning of the ditch for the fall of 2027 and they agreed to that. Mr. Bontreger stated it was intended to minimize the inconvenience and do the bridge and ditch cleaning at the same time. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the contract as presented by BF&S concerning Bridge 88. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

ATTORNEY BEAVER: Mr. Beaver stated the Jasper County Fire District Study agreement has been sent to the county for review by Vaughan Miller, the consultant that will do the study. He stated he has reviewed it and is fine with it, the total price for the study is \$44,000. Mr. Bontreger stated that is the contract from Vaughan Miller with K2M Design and they are going to do a fire service study for the county. He stated they talked about this earlier, to find out what it would cost with multiple options, whether you have supplemental full-time staff added to your volunteer departments. He stated typically, it is during the day that they are having the most difficulty for people to answer a call. He stated it was originally estimated to be \$50,000 to \$75,000 and then it came in at \$44,000 and we should have some data in the next 2 to 3 months and formal recommendations within 6 months. He stated they are going to have interactions with all of our local fire departments. He stated they have already met with the local representatives from our local fire departments, so they know that the questions are coming and we are trying to make sure that Jasper County has good coverage as a whole. He stated it is difficult getting volunteers to get time away from their jobs or to have employers allow them to have time away from their jobs. He stated the issue they have in Jasper County is that we have an interstate with 5 interchanges and there are times that our fire departments are getting back from a call and are getting called to another accident. He stated they answer a lot more accidents than actual fires. He stated getting insurance to pay for those calls is difficult. Mr. Hilton stated if you look at some of the state

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ATTORNEY BEAVER CONT'D: decisions right now, they are talking about eliminating Township Trustees and a lot of these volunteer fire departments are township driven. He stated if that does happen, they are ahead of the curve. Mr. Standish stated this shows the ins and outs of what it is going to take to keep these volunteer fire departments going if it does not happen. He stated this would call out an objective point of view. Mr. Standish made a motion to approve the contract. Mr. Hilton seconded and the motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bontreger stated they have Schedule D from the Laredo Contract. He stated the Laredo Contract was approved at the last meeting and they need to sign Schedule D.

PUBLIC COMMENT

REBECCA DEARDORF, 13951 N. 500 E. San Pierre: Ms. Deardorf stated several years ago with the Dunns Bridge solar project you had economic development money coming in. She stated the first payment, 3-year payment, \$1.26 million came in in '25. She stated they did get \$155,000 in Kankakee Township, where the solar project was. She stated they put a roof on the ambulance building in Remington and she is going to say for \$50,000, a housing study for \$50,000. She stated at that time they also committed to an ambulance for Jasper County EMS. She stated the sidewalk replacements around the courthouse, although it was paid rainy day fund, they are going to take it out of the second payment. She stated the ambulance will have to be paid out of the second payment because there was not enough ARPA funds to take the waterworks out to 1000 in Rensselaer. She stated at the meeting after the Joint Meeting in either October or November there was some talk because there is still money coming in from that and 5 years for the wind, so the total of those 2 projects was \$10 million but the spending was flying before it even came in. She stated there was talk of possibly putting 90% of that money aside with standards of how that can be used. She stated she has not heard anything since then about doing that, but what really concerns her now is this huge windfall that they will probably get and who and how are you going to keep control of that. She stated she knows they have plenty of time to figure it out but she thinks she needs to have something in place. Mr. Bontreger stated now that they are able to start advancing their discussion, Wheatfield, and those townships are going to now receive magnitude more investments to answer the concerns. He stated as he mentioned to her before, those were some of the projects that came ahead of the line and that area is now at the front of the line. He stated some of the commitments that they talked about are going to answer the very things she talked about. He stated Sara with economic development, is going to work with them to develop an internal coding system and when they get the windfall, so to speak, they are going to work with Baker Tilly to figure out how to structure a long-term investment and they have been talking with the Council. He stated it is going to be 2 bodies working this out and not the Commissioners telling them what to do, they are the fiscal body and have good ideas. He stated they have some good numbers guys in the 10 of them and are excited to figure out what it is going to look like. Ms. Deardorf stated on several occasions she has heard him refer to Wheatfield Township and it is not in Wheatfield Township.

MARY ANNE MEHLUN, 1946 Aspen Ct. DeMotte: Ms. Mehlun stated she is in the buffer zone and is not allowed to speak at the DeMotte meetings. She stated there is a developer that has moved into the area at the old Kapers that went out of business, it is Schilling. She stated she has looked them up and they are land developers and were into setting up HOA's and land covenants and she has a problem with that. She stated she does not consent to HOA's being allowed, they undermine private property rights. She stated also, what happened in DeMotte with the setup of corridors. She stated she does not know if they realize when they set up a corridor, everything that borders that corridor, it doesn't matter if it is residential or private, it is going to be rezoned to commercial eventually. She stated what they did in DeMotte was they set up ordinance that hamstrung the residential property that is along Halleck. She stated, granted it is US 231, but it is causing problems. She stated they talk about housing; she watched 3 houses get torn down along Halleck

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MARY ANNE MEHLUN, 1946 Aspen Ct. DeMotte CONT'D: and they are saying they need more houses. She stated she has looked at the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Bontreger stated some of your comments are focused on the town of DeMotte. Ms. Mehlun stated she is getting to the county part of the Comprehensive Plan. She stated Schilling is located in Demotte at the old Kapers, but she has looked at the Comprehensive Plan, and it looks like they are going to be focusing on the area that is the county along Route 10 and that falls into the unincorporated area. Mr. Hilton stated as far as what the existing location was it is going to be utilized for some form of Schilling development and the 9 acres surrounding that is proposed for some housing development along with some other opportunities from his understanding and that would still fall under the town of DeMotte's jurisdiction. Ms. Mehlun stated her problem is that she lives in DeMotte but lives in the buffer zone and has no say about what is going to happen. She stated she can tell them what is going to happen because it happened in Illinois. She stated they are going to set all this up, they are going to get tax breaks, they are going to set up HOA's, and people are going to start complaining because they are losing their property rights and taxes are going to fly up. Mr. Bontreger stated thank you for a heads up on this and some of the topics of concern should be a conversation with the town manager of DeMotte because that affects them more directly. Ms. Mehlun stated Economic Development JCEDO received \$100,000 and she does not consent. She stated the EMS that was set up, she was looking at the Comprehensive Plan, and they did all sorts of sessions and stuff like that. She stated when they were first set up, they were to see what were the issues in Jasper County and she did not see anything in there about having problems or concerns about EMS. Mr. Bontreger stated that it is a growing concern, funding and staffing for EMS services is a situation that counties throughout the State of Indiana are dealing with. He stated getting those professional services, let alone when there is a shortage of EMT's and medics, they have been working with townships and the county to make sure that we have good, consistent coverage, and that they know the impact, potentially, of future developments and they are going to have to ramp that up. He stated it is a very important topic, it is on their radar, and they are looking to make sure that they get funding taken care of. Ms. Mehlun stated they talk about funding, when they first moved here it was about \$2 million a year to fund EMS and now, we are up to over \$3 million. Mr. Bontreger stated you can't expect to hire medics for \$15 an hour anymore because we have competing services going up the river where they are paying more so they have been working hard to keep a unified wage approach in the county because they can have folks shifting between the 3 service. He stated that they are trying to get all on the same page. He stated they currently have 2 trustees that are actively involved in managing EMS and with pressure coming from the State to force trustees to either be eliminated or consolidated that is why they have to be in the conversation here. He stated that it is a service that you cannot be without, when you call 911 you expect someone to be there in a few minutes, whether it is fire, EMS, or law enforcement. Mr. Hilton stated this has been a long, large transition because he remembers when he was a kid Keener Township was a volunteer EMS service, as well as Wheatfield Township and they are at the forefront of a full-time service today. He stated looking at the possibilities of what the future may hold you are going to see change. He stated you have to continually have support for people and emergency service providers. He stated we have had great waves since the past to where we are today. Mr. Bontreger stated equipment has a lifetime of 3 to 4 years and that is why you have to be involved in active conversations now.

COMMISSIONER BONTREGER: Mr. Bontreger stated they had received a letter of thanks from the Connection Center. He stated Tourism gave them a \$10,000 grant. He stated if any of you have been to the DeMotte Connection center it is a really good place, they have a café, basketball, pickleball, volleyball, and a walking path. He stated it is a resource for the community that you should take advantage of if you are up in that part of the county. He stated the Tourism Board gave a grant of \$10,000 and the Connection Center was sending a thank you regarding that even though that is not directly associated with them. He stated that money is associated with the County Innkeepers Tax which the County Council established years ago.

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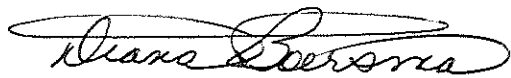
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FRANK GOODMAN, Wheatfield: Mr. Goodman stated for Ed (Cain) and his highway crew, this winter, he is really happy with what he has seen from his folks getting out and taking care of the roads. He stated usually people come up here and bitch, but he is going to compliment the service this winter. He stated he thought they did a really good job and when it got really cold, they did what they could and the intersections that he went through were all graveled and pebbled and they should get a pat on the back.

Commissioner Bontreger stated they are calling a Special Meeting on the 17th at the Sparling location. He stated that it will not be a continuation of this meeting but its own Special Meeting.

There being no further business, Mr. Hilton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Standish seconded and the motion carried.

ATTEST:



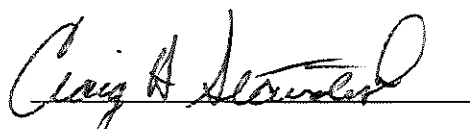
Diana Boersma, Auditor of Jasper County



Rein Bontreger, President



Ryan Hilton, Vice President



Craig Standish, Member