

ALLEN COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 11, 2026

5:30 PM

The Allen County Council met on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 8:30 pm in the Chambers in Citizens Square. The purpose of the meeting was for additional appropriations, transfer of funds in excess of the current budget, grants, and any other business to come before Council.

Attending: Kyle Kerley, Lyndsey Hammond, Tom A. Harris, Bob Armstrong, Paul Lagemann, Ken Fries and Don Wyss.

Also Attending: Jackie Scheuman, Auditor, Nathan Kuhn, Finance and Budget Director and Mitch Harper, County Council Attorney.

President Bob Armstrong: Thank you. Welcome to the Allen County Council meeting for Wednesday, March the 11th, 2026. If you'd join me with a pledge of allegiance and a minute of silence.

Councilmen: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

President Armstrong: First thing on the agenda is to adopt the agenda.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. Chairman, we didn't add this to the agenda in advance but based on discussions I know you had with Commissioner Turpin, I would like to amend the agenda and make that a permanent addition that after public comment, the commissioner's report would be heard. That would need a second.

Councilman Kerley: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Councilmen: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Passes 7-0. Approval of February 11th minutes.

Councilman Lagemann: Motion to approve.

Councilwoman Hammond: Second.

President Armstrong: There's a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Councilmen: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed?

Councilman Fries: Abstain.

President Armstrong: 6-0-1. Finance report.

Jackie Scheuman: Good evening, Council. Jackie Scheuman, auditor. Really don't have a whole lot. We just have two months of the year elapsed. One thing I wanted to comment on, because we talked about it last time, was the building department. The February collections were \$270,000, where January was \$700,000 and some \$1,000, because of the Google permits, so \$270,000 is probably a little bit more than that. \$270,000 is probably going to be a more typical month. I just wanted to touch on that. Also, the jail bonds, we had a--

Councilman Lagemann: Just real quick, Jackie.

Jackie Scheuman: Go ahead.

Councilman Lagemann: On that, because we're in the middle of winter and there's not a lot of permits being pulled for residential, I would suggest that as we move into spring, when foundations are ready to pour, that we'll probably have a pretty big pickup. That may not be true for commercial, but it's certainly true for residential.

Jackie Scheuman: Okay. I'll just keep that in the forefront and touch on it each month, so we bring it out since it's been a topic. On the jail bonds, the proceeds, we did have a busy month in February paying construction costs of \$8 million, so our proceeds are down to \$91 million. We have a total of \$7.5 million of interest that we've earned on those. Those proceeds to date. I just wanted to touch on that one also. The coliseum that Tom had asked about, for January and February, their revenue and expenses are holding pretty even, so they still have \$180,000 balance at this point. We put in some additional analysis in the notebook for the coliseum, which Nathan will update each month for you all.

Councilman Lagemann: Thank you.

Jackie Scheuman: That's the few things I wanted to touch on, unless anyone has any questions.

Councilman Lagemann: Real quick, what happens to the interest? Does that remain in the fund for the--

Jackie Scheuman: We will pay construction costs from that, yes. I believe it was part of the calculation. I will have to look to see, but- Mr.

Councilman 3: Mr. Turpin is nodding, so I presume that [crosstalk]--

Jackie Scheuman: They did do analysis on the interest and use that as part of expected proceeds to pay for construction. I can look back at the bond documents for what their estimate was, but \$7.5 million is a lot of money. I'll just touch on that every month then. Thank you.

President Armstrong: Thank you. Total appropriations requested out of the general fund, \$278,009. Total appropriations requested of other funds, \$10,000. Next thing is public comment. Do we have any public comment? Going once, twice, seeing none. Do you want to add that now for Ron? Okay.

Jackie Scheuman: Paul, you want just to put that in there, like public comment, just commissioner's report?

Councilman Lagemann: Commissioner's report, that was the motion. As long as the commissioners are good with that, I think that just puts you on a spot. If you don't have a report, you don't have to give it, I guess. That's fair. It puts it at the beginning of the agenda.

Commissioner Turpin: Allen County Commissioner, one of the things, appreciate this, one of the things I've talked with commissioners Beck and Brown about is that we're going to, as part of this, we want to do a monthly report the first week of every month. We're going to start that in April to council and just give you an update of here's what's going on. We will send that to you a week before this meeting. That way, if there's something that you would like to bring up that's on that or not on that, this can be an opportunity to do that. That's another thing that we want to do to help with the collaboration between council and the board of commissioners on that.

That's something we will work on, again, for the first week of April that we will send to you in that. A couple of things to update you on, as you all know, the legislature in House Bill 1038 approved a referendum that will be in place for both Allen, Steuben, and DeKalb counties. It is a must-have. It is not something that we have to vote on. There will be a referendum on the ballot that will be there. It will be a pretty simple question. Do you, the citizens of Allen County, want a gaming facility in your community? Something like that. From that point, if the citizens of Allen County say no, then the issue is done.

The way House Bill 1038 is written is that there is not a chance to do a second referendum. It's a one-and-done. It would be on there unless the legislature would change the law in that. If the citizens of Allen County say yes, that they want a gaming facility in Allen County, then it's up to an operator. An operator has three weeks from the time of that referendum until December 1st to submit an application to the Indiana Gaming Commission if they would want to be somewhere in Allen County. If it is in unincorporated Allen, anywhere outside the city of Fort Wayne, it would have to be the board.

The board of commissioners has to have a vote on that regardless of where it's at. If it's in the city of Fort Wayne, the mayor would also have something in there, and that'd be part of the packet. We don't know of anyone right now that's considering that. However, keep in mind that whoever the operator is, they have to make a \$650 million commitment, which is sizable.

\$150 million to the state of Indiana, and then \$500 million in actually construction of the facility itself. It's a sizable commitment. This'll be the first time in the history of Indiana it's open to any operator in the country. In the past, it's always been someone who operates currently. In Indiana, this one is open up to anybody. We shall see. At this point, as board of commissioners, we have no real opinion on this. Let the citizens of Allen County have their say, and we will see what happens with it. Next thing is, yes, go ahead, Councilman.

Councilman Lagemann: I understand that the city of Fort Wayne currently has an ordinance that prohibits any gaming facility within the city limits. Are they going to repeal that?

Commissioner Turpin: That's actually not accurate. What it is, I know that's been

reported on. I would tell you that the way the city of Fort Wayne is, in 2022, city council passed an ordinance amendment which modified C-3, that you cannot have a gaming facility by right. What that means is they were really trying to target these small things popping up that maybe had some Cherry Masters or this and that. The challenge with that is today in the city of Fort Wayne, it would have to go to the BZA. Imagine if you would, that under current law in the city of Fort Wayne, if you have this \$500 million facility, it would not be city council that decides it would be the BZA that decides it.

That's not really anyone wants to do that.

We also asked the Department of Planning Services to make that same look at Allen County because we don't want that same thing to happen in Allen County, where the BZA would be making that call. We feel the elected officials should make that call, not appointed bodies. That's something that we're looking at as well to ask them to look at. It's a great question, Councilman, but it's one that I know DPS is looking at for both the City of Fort Wayne as well as Allen County

If that happens, it wouldn't be us saying it's coming. It's us being proactive to make sure, again, I know our goal as a Board of Commissioners is taking as many of these things out of the BZA as possible, where it's being decided, again, by bodies that are represented by you and by us and not by BZA.

Councilman Lagemann: BZA, just for clarification, has no elected official members?

Commissioner Turpin: That's correct. Speaking of BZA, the next item that you've probably all heard about. This potential quarry that's interested to come to Allen County. As you all know, back in the day, this was a swamp in Allen County, so there are various areas that have a lot of quarry material that's in there. We already have quarries in Allen County. However, there is a group out of Indianapolis that has a letter of intent to purchase 1,600 acres. If you look at that, it's two and a half square miles bordering I-69 to the east, Homestead Road to the west, IU Health, their new hospital to the south.

Think about the railroad tracks shortly south of 24 that would be to the north of that. There's five farming families right now that own those parcels. They have entered into an LOI with Heritage Group, one of their subsidiaries for that. Currently, they've started the application process with the Department of Planning Services to have this start down the process. The process would be once you've got a good application, and right now the application is not completed, so that is one piece of that, the quarry itself would go to the BZA for Allen County, because that would be a special use variance, it would not be a rezoning.

That would be before the BZA. The earliest it would be right now would be in May. I will say I know the Heritage Group and their affiliates are meeting with the neighbors right now in the west and east hamlets. I believe that meeting's next week to have those conversations with them because they're the most impacted as far as that. I know they're also meeting with representatives of IU Health to talk about that because, as you can imagine with quarry, there is blasting, making sure that you really don't want a brand new hospital doing your heart surgery when blasting is going on down the road, making sure all those things have been discussed as well.

The other piece of this is the quarry is about 525 acres of that 1600. They've also put in that letter that they want to do a little over 200 acres for industrial that would be adjacent to I-69. If you think about industrial, that would be rock plants, asphalt plants, things like that. Then the quarry would be on the other side to the west of that. That would be zoned from A-3, which A-3 right now is agricultural, but it's estate lots. It's not a subdivision, but you would have estate lots multi-acre that would be there.

The third thing they are proposing is a rezoning from A-3 to commercial for commercial like strip malls that would be right around the IU Health facility that would be there. This is all still in discussion phase. As proposal, it is not by any means a done deal. It's still very early in the process. We wanted to inform you of what we know today, and that's about as much as we know throughout the process that will go. Like I said, the Board of Zoning Appeals for the quarry, and then it would be through the Planning Commission for the rezoning, and then depending on what the Planning Commission does, the Board of Commissioners for the other two pieces.

Still very early in the process. We've encouraged residents that talk to Heritage Group as they come and do their presentations. Learn about this. We certainly want this to be a very open process because it's a big deal. The quarry, and there's still pieces there, even if we approve all of that. Because of where it's at, this is in a floodway, so it would be the Department of Environmental Management for the state would have to approve that, and so there's still a number of pieces that would be there. The benefit, if this comes, is a couple fold. One is, as you all know very well, we have a housing crisis that we have right now, not just in Allen County, but in the entire region.

Part of that is the affordability of homes. A big piece of that is rock and stone work. The cost of that rock and stone work is not necessarily in the extraction, it's in the transportation of that. The closer we can have rock and stone to Allen County, the cheaper it makes the construction process. That's one piece of this. There are pros and cons, and those are things that we feel have to be public in comment to have all the bodies make the right decision for where they're at. The overall big piece really is the All-in-Allen Plan.

What does our comprehensive plan say about something like this in that location? Is that an appropriate use, or is that not? That will be the overlaying of all of this, but it'll be many months in the conversation of this. It's by no means a done deal, but we wanted you all to be aware of that.

President Armstrong: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Councilman Lagemann: Who's Heritage Group? What do we know about them?

Commissioner Turpin: They are a privately owned company out of Indianapolis. It's a very large company of many different companies, they have many different subsets. This is one of their sub works that they do this rock extraction work.

Councilman Lagemann: Who [crosstalk] work?

Commissioner Turpin: I can't remember exactly, Paul, who that is, but I know it's

ultimately owned by Heritage, but it's a subset of theirs.

Attorney Mitch Harper: Is this Heritage, this same Heritage that was involved in hazardous waste material?

Commissioner Turpin: That I don't know. I know of them, but I don't know all of the pieces of it. Yes.

Councilman Harris: I don't know if there's any more questions on this. I wanted to go back. Go ahead.

Councilman Wyss: I got a quick question for you, Commissioner. Maybe just speak on a few weeks ago, maybe a month ago, the quarry to the east. The quarry to the east that was asked to be reopened was not allowed to reopen. I know they own acreage on the east side of 69 all the way out to 69 on the east side of 69. I don't know if now's the time to talk about that and why that was shut down when now we're talking about a quarry on the west side of 69.

Commissioner Turpin: That would probably be an IDEM question.

Councilman Harris: Yes. Just going back to the casino piece. Presumably, I think Fort Wayne probably has an interest in doing something to get revenues, right? Have we had any other input from the other commissioners in Steuben and DeKalb? Have you talked to them? Are they going to assertively go after this?

Commissioner Turpin: From what you've seen publicly, the commissioners in Steuben County have actively, to the legislature, actively promoted that Steuben County, in their perspective, wants that. DeKalb County commissioners, to my knowledge, have not said anything about it. The Board of Commissioners for Allen County, I want to make very clear, we are not pro or anti-casino. What we've said is that we are open to the conversation of letting the people of Allen County decide what they want to do.

If Allen County is the place an operator wants to come in, if the people of Allen County, via referendum, say that they want to be here, then we believe that we need to be as smart about that revenue as possible. Not use that for supplementing the general fund, but looking at how do we do that to make Allen County grow. Particularly, we've talked about the resiliency fund, which for us is mental health and addiction. Two massive areas that we have. If you talk to the sheriff today, he would tell you that it is an issue that we see more and more in our jail. There are people who have mental illness or addiction issues, and our sheriff and his team are not equipped to deal with those things.

We need other facilities for that. There's a number of those items that would be there, Councilman. Ultimately, it comes down to an operator, and especially when they have to spend \$650 million. It's an operator that's going to be looking at the numbers, and they're going to be looking at where they have the highest return on investment. That will depend on where that's at.

One would think because of the number of employees that you would need for a facility like that, Allen County probably is the best place just because of the number

of people we have here, as well as the volume we would have. I also personally think that Steuben County would have a challenge because of their proximity to the casino in South Bend, as well as the one in Michigan. That also creates some other. At the end of the day, it's up to an operator as to where they want to be at.

Councilman Harris: I do find it fascinating, and we'll have plenty of time to talk about casinos in Allen County. I find it fascinating that the city of Fort Wayne is in need because of the state comes back and changes the process. The city of Fort Wayne needs money. All of a sudden, they're interested in a casino that brings \$600 million or \$500 million into the state coffers. I just find that fascinating. State government messes up local. Local has to do stuff to help state. It's just we see this over and over. It's another example of it.

Commissioner Turpin: I agree. The beauty about this is the people of Allen County get to decide. I've encouraged folks that this is a time where we hope we have a very high turnout in the November election

because this is an opportunity for the people of Allen County to, number one, help educate themselves as to whether they believe that it's a pro or a con to have that facility here. Then they have the opportunity. This is a chance where their voice matters, that everyone is equal in this one. If the citizens of Allen County, the majority voted down, it's done.

It doesn't matter what any one of the rest of us think. I can't think of a better example of where the people's voice matters than this one. The next thing Jackie told you about the jail, I'm pleased to say that we are on time and under budget of that facility. We made the commitment to you before that our goal was to keep that under \$305 million. Right now, we are below that number, and we are on schedule. Completion date is looking at December of next year, 2027. We will be doing tours of that facility over the course as we get further to completion on that.

Right now, hopefully you have all seen, we do drone footage every month that we post to our website for the county where we give the public an update of what's there. Everything is under roof right now. Most of the cells are in, but they're doing all the other work that's in there. If you've not been through it yet, it's a massive facility, 400,000 square feet. It's one that, again, our goal is to get done under budget and then get paid off as quickly as possible for that. We feel good about where we're at with that.

Another thing is some of you have asked me the question about the Byron Health property. We are currently having appraisers appraise that right now. Our goal is to get that sold this year. We'll be working on that and coming back to you when the time is right for that. The last thing is you all are aware that we currently have architects looking at the Meyer Road property. That's where the old International Harvester Engineering Building is. We have 280,000 square feet there. We've looked at a number of options of departments that we can co-locate there that would be complementary to the jail.

Again, we've talked about the concept before of centers of excellence. The county owns over 40 properties. Our goal is to sell off as many of those properties and consolidate as possible in order to be more efficient with tax dollars, and we're in the

process of looking at that right now. When we have that first plan from the architects for that, we'll bring that back before you. Our goal is to try to look at doing some tranches, and so working together on what those tranches look like. Those are some of the big updates we have of things going on right now.

President Armstrong: Any other questions? Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Turpin: Thank you.

President Armstrong: Next on the agenda, economic development.

Rachel Black: Good evening. Rachel Black, Allen County Economic Development. I will mention the general manager, Brian Gallagher. I'm not seeing him here this evening. Beyond the knowledge that I have, I won't be able to answer maybe some of your questions. Are you okay with me moving forward? It's very unlike Mr. Gallagher. I will note that. He's always been very communicative. I sent him an email earlier this morning, and I didn't hear a response, so I'm not sure.

President Armstrong: Move on. Go ahead. Yes, thanks.

Rachel Black: I'll go ahead and provide the presentation. In January, the company, which is Ram Joe Inc, and Jackson Oil & Solvents Inc submitted an SV1 application for your consideration of approval of a \$4.5 million investment for the build-out of a 30,000-square-foot shell building, as well as new equipment. The site is seven acres, located at 9185 Conservation Way. That's south of Airport Expressway and just east of Water Furnace. The company would provide storage for on- and off-road diesel fuels, gasoline, lubricants, oils, and diesel exhaust fluid. Their main facility was established in the 1930s in Indianapolis.

They also have facilities in Greenfield, North Webster, as well as Fort Wayne on Leesburg Road. If all goes to plan, the Fort Wayne facility would be closed, and all operations then would be moved to the Conservation Way site. Eight jobs would be created as a result of the project with salaries of \$389,000, while 10 will be retained with total salaries of \$575,000. 80% of the jobs retained and created are within the \$48,000 range, which you will note on your point document that you have. The project site is also located within the Conservation Allocation Area, or TIF District.

That was established in 2024. There are no current financial commitments to this TIF District. However, as the project is located within an allocation area, the legislative body that approved the allocation area must also approve a resolution consenting to the approval of the statement of benefits by the council. The Board of Commissioners met at their March 11th meeting, and they did approve that consent resolution. Based on your policy to evaluate applications, the company is eligible for a five-year tax abatement or tax phase-in for both real and personal property.

The real property tax savings would be around \$45,000 and \$76,000 for personal property over those five years. I would also like to note that a special use to allow a truck fueling station in an airport overlay district was approved with conditions back in December of last year by the zoning hearing officer. Like I said, if I can answer any questions, I'd be happy to, but I can't.

President Armstrong: Questions? Ken?

Councilman Fries: Do they have a local facility here now?

Rachel Black: Yes, it's located off Leesburg Road.

Councilman Fries: Where's that?

Rachel Black: They're going to close that, and then they would move into this facility.

President Armstrong: Out there, right next door to the new dog pound and the bus station.

Rachel Black: Go all the way down on Main and then take a right, and then it's on the left.

Attorney Mitch Harper: A few days ago, they renamed Leesburg in that section to St. Francis Way.

Rachel Black: Oh, goodness. Well, thank you for that update.

President Armstrong: Any other questions?

Councilman Harris: Please go ahead.

Councilwoman Hammond: I was going to say, I don't have any questions for Rachel because I spoke with her earlier today. I did have some questions for the representative of the company. I do have, I guess, some questions that could alleviate some concerns based on the answers. The underground tanks, they are contributing 5% to economic development, but with these underground tanks, depending on what they're storing, I wonder if there's an increased chance of emergency or fire. I would have liked to ask them to consider to give that to public safety versus economic development because of that.

I'm assuming they're working with IDEM on that. I did reach out to Stacy from ACTEM to see if they had any concerns. She said that's heavily regulated by IDEM. They are taking, on a five-year abatement, three years to add eight jobs, which I was going to ask about that as well, because that's a long time period to add eight jobs, especially when the project will be complete the end of this year, for the most part.

The wages are, and if you look at the breakdown of the jobs, the wages on the majority of the jobs are considerably low. If our intent as a county is to increase wages, we're looking at attracting and creating higher paying jobs, then in my opinion, this misses that target. What else I have on here? I do like that it's a local business expansion and creating more jobs. Abatements are economic development tools at our disposal to encourage economic development, growth, and investment. My hope would be that there would be higher-paying jobs and maybe created in a shorter time period, but that was it.

President Armstrong: Tom?

Councilman Harris: Yes. I was just going to add that it didn't look like they were contributing additionally to the one fund. Their footprint is going to go beyond Allen County, I presume, in their sales. Yet, just as the commissioner mentioned earlier, having them in this area growing their business will help manufacturing. There's this industry and such, instead of having to go in other places, down to Indianapolis or whatever, the fact that it's here, that will add to the benefit of being a company in Allen County.

I like the fact that they've followed the process, and the process shows that they do receive an abatement opportunity. As you can see, their benefit plan is pretty extensive as well, so I'll be voting in favor of that.

Rachel Black: I will note that there will be minimal retail type sales, people coming to the site to get their products. The majority of them is them taking their trucks and then going to the customer, so just on a safety aspect of that as well.

President Armstrong: Any other questions? None? Motions?

Councilman Harris: I'll move for the approval of consideration of resolution 2026-03-11-01, approving the statement of benefits SB-1 for Ram Joe Incorporated, Jackson Oil & Solvents Incorporated.

President Armstrong: We have a motion.

Councilman Lagemann: Second.

President Armstrong: Second. All in favor, say aye.

Councilmen: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed?

Councilman Fries: Aye.

President Armstrong: We are at 6-1-0. Passes.

Rachel Black: Thank you very much.

President Armstrong: Do you have another thing here?

Rachel Black: Mrs. McGauley will be up. Okay.

Elissa McGauley: Good evening, Elissa McGawley, Director of Redevelopment. In your council packet is the Redevelopment Commission's Annual Report for 2025. Under Indiana Code, Redevelopment Commissions are required to file with the fiscal body their Annual Report and present it at a public meeting, so that is why I'm here tonight. The Annual Report is required to be submitted as well to the Board of Commissioners and the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance. We also share this report with the City of Woodburn, our state legislative representatives, and local and state economic development partners.

The report covers our month-to-month activities from the Redevelopment

Commission meetings, as well as provides information on our projects, financial activity, and the different funds that we control, and a section on Commission members. The Allen County Redevelopment Commission has been in place since 1982. It consists of five members. We have three, plus a non-voting school board member selected by the Board of Commissioners, and we have two members selected by this body. Members serve one-year terms, and your appointments are council members Lindsey Hammond and Kyle Curley currently.

Commissioner appointments are Jill Kinder, Kurt Gutman, and Commissioner Rich Beck, with Tim Hines, who serves as the non-voting school corporation appointee. Tim is currently president of the East Allen County Schools Board and has been the school board corporation appointment to the Redevelopment Commission since 2020. For 2026, Commissioner Rich Beck serves as our Redevelopment Commission's president, and Kyle Curley is the vice president. Jill Kinder is our Redevelopment Commission secretary, and Jackie Schuman is our treasurer. Rachel and I serve as staff to the Redevelopment Commission.

Our meetings are held here on the second Tuesday of the month at 1.30, so we had our meeting yesterday. As of last summer, our meetings are now live-streamed and recorded for viewing by the Allen County Public Library Access Fort Wayne staff. In 2025, the Redevelopment Commission made payments of about \$2.1 million towards bonds, loans, and other agreements.

Payments to the Allen County Board of Commissioners for reimbursement agreements that we had with them on public infrastructure projects totaled about \$740 million, \$14,000, which included \$464,000 for Ryan Road and about \$250,000 that we owe on the improvements that we made to create Stonebridge Business Park south of General Motors. Payments to companies under incentive agreements were a little bit over \$328,000. Redevelopment Commission also provided \$100,000 that we have a commitment with the City of Woodburn on for its sewer bond.

The Redevelopment Commission maintains a general fund, which is Fund 246 for general expenditures. We also have a capital fund that we maintain and use for expenses related mostly for the Stonebridge Business Park. Last year, we spent about \$29,000 for those expenses. The fund ended in capital with a balance of about \$7.9 million. There are individual funds that we control for each allocation area or TIF district. We keep the income and payments separate for each TIF district to make accounting functions easier. For all the TIF funds combined, the Redevelopment Commission received about \$5.4 million in property tax increment and had expenditures totaling about \$2.2 million last year.

Interest income totaled a little bit over \$400,000 last year. The Redevelopment Commission has 30 allocation areas or TIF districts. Of which there are about 27 allocation areas with funds created that can collect property tax increment. By June 15th each year, one of the other requirements the Indiana Code requires us to do as Redevelopment Commissions in Indiana, we have to make a determination regarding the use of property tax increment for the following year.

The Redevelopment Commission has to notify the county auditor, the fiscal body, and each taxing unit that is wholly or partly in a TIF district whether the Redevelopment Commission intends to collect property tax increment in that district

the following year. If there is any excess value to the taxing units that will be released. In June last year, the Redevelopment Commission determined that it would collect property tax increment in 21 of the 30 allocation areas while releasing all property tax increment to the affected taxing districts in nine of those areas. With that, I'll just be happy to answer any other questions.

President Armstrong: Paul?

Councilman Lagemann: As you take a look at the TIF collections, how do you balance that with the infrastructure investment that's been made by-- Do you maintain a list of what infrastructure investment has been made by folks once the TIF district is created? So that you know exactly what your full reimbursement schedule is going to look like, or how do you plan that?

Elissa McGauley: I'm trying to get an understanding of exactly what you're getting at here.

Paul Lagemann: If I have a TIF district, my hope is that I'm going to be reimbursed for the infrastructure that I put in. If I put in roads, sewers, water, whatever, right?

Elissa McGauley: Right.

Councilman Lagemann: Do you up front maintain a spreadsheet of what those investments look like so you can plan for future disbursements, or do you just wait until they ask?

Elissa McGauley: Initially, when you set up an economic development area, which is the larger planning area, and then within it you can have a TIF district, we have to set forth a plan that gets approved by the Redevelopment Commission and is also blessed by the legislative body. It's we, in that plan, lay out what kind of public infrastructure or what kind of improvements are going to be made utilizing the TIF district's money.

That's done right off the bat, when we set that plan up in the first place. From there on, if we are working in that TIF district and there are some planned public infrastructure improvements, obviously, we set forth either how we finance it, whether or not we have property income tax increment to pay for it right now, or we're going to set forth and bond against it. If it's a bond situation, obviously, we go through that process, and so we have an accounting that way. If it's more of a pay-as-you-go, as we earn increment, obviously, we have construction agreements and set forth those plans in place. Yes, we're accounting for that, for both current and future plans in that district.

Councilman Lagemann: I just asked that question because I think it would be interesting to see what the future liability looks like. We have some level of commitment to reimburse \$10 million in infrastructure improvements, to be able to compare that with current TIF collections, would be helpful. I don't know if that's something you would normally include in your report or not.

Elissa McGauley: [laughs] Actually, one of the requirements that the state of Indiana added most recently was putting for redevelopment commissions are

supposed to submit a spending plan for each TIF district. We do that, and that's due in December each year. The other thing that we also do is a presentation to the affected taxing districts that is also a requirement. We go and take that a step further. We actually put together a report. Each allocation area or TIF district has its own page, and it tallies up what the expenditures have been, what the future plans are for that district.

Councilman Lagemann: Having a sense for each district, what the initial commitment is, what the planned distributions look like, and the timing of those distributions would be very helpful, I know, as we roll into these districts. Right.

Elissa McGauley: Those spending plans are distributed. Those reports are sent to you, so you do have those. I can share those with you again just to show you what we have.

Councilman Lagemann: That would be great.

Elissa McGauley: We've only been doing them for two years.

Councilman Lagemann: I'm actually looking at them, so that's very helpful if you wouldn't have been--

Elissa McGauley: The TIF presentation, I think, is key. We do a fairly good job at taking, throughout the year, a look at each of those districts. It starts with the June requirement where we have to notify Jackie, which TIF districts we're going to collect from for the next year, and which ones that we're going to pass through increment, and essentially turn off for the year.

Councilman Lagemann: Thanks.

President Armstrong: Tom?

Councilman Harris: Just a question on Stonebridge. Are all the properties sold, or do we still have some?

Elissa McGauley: No, unfortunately, we still have about 65 acres in the park available. We also have about 40 acres off of Bluffton Road. All combined, about 100 acres in total that the Redevelopment Commission has available. Obviously, Stonebridge is, in an industrial park, its own business technology park, meant to be that way to complement what's going on in the area with the other businesses. Vera Bradley's design center's there, as well as their distribution facility, one resource group.

General Motors, they're the one tenant in our park that North Point Development out of Kansas City that developed or built about 150,000 square foot building there back in 2014, '15. General Motors now owns that. They're technically our only tenant in the park.

Councilman Harris: Activity for that interest, is it up or down on that? Where does that stand?

Elissa McGauley: It adds and flows. At the end of last year, we had probably

entertained two or three developers and/or companies leads. Actually, a local broker brought forth a company that we met with or had a conference call with in January, so that's the most recent one. They would be interested in taking all of it. Well, everything except we have a small 10-acre piece. They were interested in the larger tracks that we had available. We're still working that lead.

Councilman Harris: You've got approximately, what is it, \$8 million in funds, the intent?

Elissa McGauley: Yes.

Councilman Harris: Any thoughts initially, or is that being discussed? Is that an average that you've generally run, or is that climbing a little bit?

Elissa McGauley: It's been climbing, obviously, because the interest rate that we earn on funds is higher. The interest we earn on that fund is obviously boosting data balance. It's something that we are looking at right now on how we utilize that fund. It's something that, because of the balances, we still owe money back to the board of commissioners for the park itself. There might be some opportunities to pay down some of that debt with that capital fund.

Councilman Harris: Thank you.

President Armstrong: Any other questions?

Elissa McGauley: Thank you.

President Armstrong: Surveyor's office.

Mike Fruchey: Good evening, Council. Mike Fruchey, Allen County Surveyor. I've reached out to a number of you to talk to you about us replacing our surveying equipment. It's been eight years since we bought our last round of surveying equipment. We were told later last year that our software would not be supported this year, or it could have gotten too old. Again, that'll hurt our work process and inhibit our efficiency. Also, in eight years, technology's advanced quite a bit. As I'm in tune with the other county surveyors in the state, there's a move to go to drone technology. We talked to Hamilton County quite a bit. They've done a great job.

Down there in their surveyor's office of utilizing the drone just to save man hours. Also, we have 760 miles of open ditches, some of them very hard to get to, very hard to hike to. Again, we're cleaning up obstructions and beaver dams all the time. We want to be as efficient as possible. We don't want workplace injuries either. This is, I think, a direction that we should go. That's my recommendation. That's part of this package of survey equipment. It includes two new rovers. Those are our GPS receivers, two data collectors that then, again, we're notating what those shots are in the field. Those go hand-in-hand with the rovers.

Also four mobile mapping stations. Again, we're constantly mapping. Storm infrastructure, all of our new subdivisions, everything's mapped and on GPS or our GIS system here so everybody can know what we have in the field. In a digital level as well as the drone, the drone that we've spec'd out, again, similar to the Hamilton County drone that they've used successfully for almost three years now. We'll have

LiDAR capabilities. As you know, in our county, it's been almost 10 years since we've had new LiDAR contours, which is just crazy to me. If we need contours, we can get that with that camera. We also have thermal capabilities.

We're maybe looking for illegal outfalls into our system. With that BLS, it did charge from industrial sites. The difference in the water temperatures, we'll be able to pick that up. I think it's a great move forward for us in technology from the drone side of it, but as well as from these other pieces of equipment. I know I realize it's a big expense, but hopefully, a future surveyor won't be back here for eight to 10 years or so asking for more. One of the issues with the equipment that was bought in 2018 is some of it was older technology at the time.

I didn't have any part in that purchase, but that's part of why we're here today. I would be willing to answer anybody's questions. I've talked to a number of you that were able to call me back or I was able to get in touch. I sent all of you an email with all the details, but I'm more than happy to answer any questions.

Councilman Harris: Just a couple. One would be, do you charge fees from your department to do different aspects that are needed in the community? What kind of fee structure do you have?

Mike Fruchey: We did do new fees last year, but they're more regulated drain fees or development review fees, this kind of thing. The surveying equipment primarily will be used to maintain our regulated drain system.

Councilman Harris: It's not like the revenue stream that comes in from your fees are pretty minimal to them?

Mike Fruchey: Yes. I would say, too, and I think we've proved that out with the ARPA projects. We were able to design nine of those in-house that I, as a professional engineer, stamped or my chief deputy, as a professional engineer, stamped. The more work we can do in-house, that saves money for the watersheds that pay for these different regulated drain projects. If we can do that work in-house, then their money goes farther to do a greater reconstruction.

Councilman Harris: I'm not necessarily suggesting this. I just thought that from the standpoint of the drone technology, will there be organizations or businesses or entities coming to your department saying, "Gosh, we could really use that technology or that technology?"

Can you take an extra picture? Can you take an extra look at this?" Is there a fee structure to say, yes, we'll provide that? Similarly, although GPS, we don't charge for GPS, do we? I'm not sure if we do or not. GPS.

Mike Fruchey: I hadn't really thought about that angle, the revenue of that.

Councilman Harris: I don't know that you want to let that capacity get sucked up because you've got enough stuff to do on yourself or by yourself.

Mike Fruchey: We do.

Councilman Harris: I'm not suggesting that you go create that revenue stream. You

might keep that in mind because I can see people going, "Oh my gosh, this is really good. Can I get a picture of X?" I just throw that out if that starts happening. You've got to think about a fee structure of some kind.

Councilman Lagemann: Mike, this technology, I presume, is consistent with engineering firms that do this work that would otherwise contract with county surveyors and other municipalities, other local units of government, the state of Indiana. This just allows us to move the stuff in-house and not pay per view as opposed to doing a one-time purchase and being in-house.

Mike Fruchey: Much more inexpensive than to pay a private consulting firm with a drone to fly one of our ditches over time that will add up very quickly.

Councilman Lagemann: If I wanted to survey something in particular as a private citizen or a business, I would typically contract with the firm. The firm is going to bill me to do so, right?

Mike Fruchey: The processing software that we ended up going with is a Swiss company. It's called PIX4Dmatic, and that's used by some other drone entities in Allen County. It does a great job processing and then bringing it into our Autodesk Civil 3D to, again, save time and be more efficient, which is my goal always.

Councilwoman Hammond: Hey, Mike. Could you explain to us whether or not there's any training or licensing requirements and what the additional cost of that would be?

Mike Fruchey: I am unsure about the exact cost, Lindsay, but I did talk to Bob King, who is the licensed drone pilot for Hamilton County. I had a number of good conversations with Mr. King. He studied for a couple weeks. It was a four-hour test, 200 questions, very straightforward.

Councilman Lagemann: With the FAA?

Mike Fruchey: Yes. We have two of our survey employees here, Chris and TJ, who will study and get that drone pilot's license. I'm confident in that. I don't think it'll be very expensive, and again, it'll be something we'll have to do. Yes. It's like a couple hundred bucks.

Councilman Fries: I can see on one page here, it shows that a one-day custom training, \$2,500 on the drones.

Mike Fruchey: That is the standard of what Seiler puts in there. Although I do know that Mr. King from Hamilton County volunteered to meet with our guys and show them what they are doing.

Councilman Wyss: Mike, I think it's great to bring in this new technology. I know we have two airports in our county. Talk about the limitations and how far and wide the drones can't be used in proximity to the airport. What percentage does that limit you in regards to using drones in these areas?

Mike Fruchey: I'm certain we'll have restrictions around sensitive areas. I did reach out to Homeland Security. I talked to Chris Fleischer there. Again, these are things

that I learned. There's a drone committee, and we'll be a part of that now. Then again, they know the IP address of your drone. When it goes up, they know it goes up. It's either on a list that they know about or not within the city limits, but it's primarily around sensitive structures. We would certainly be mindful of that and follow whatever rule structure there is for staying away from those areas.

Councilman Wyss: Just a follow-up question. I can only imagine when we think about drones and having these in the surveyor's office, other departments may find a need or a value at some point of using them. Talk maybe about how working together with departments, is that possible, and having someone be able to fly that at the request of another department? Is that feasible? Is it practical? In my simple mind, it makes sense, but just want to get that view from you.

Mike Fruchey: I think everybody who knows me knows I'm helpful. I will try to be helpful with other departments, with highway department or others. Again, this is how we make government work. We all work together. That is my outlook, and we will be helpful as we can be.

Councilman Harris: That fee structure thing, I wasn't suggesting for the other departments, by the way. Just FYI.

Councilman Wyss: Glad you clarified that, Tom. Thank you, Mike.

President Armstrong: Kenny?

Councilman Kerley: Actually, my question is for Jackie. Historically, my last rodeo on council, we would set aside a set amount of money every year in the council line for capital equipment purchases. Did we stop doing that?

Jackie Scheuman: We haven't done that for a couple of years. They still submit a capital expense survey for three years out, what they expect. Mike has had this on his survey for a couple of years. Just simply because we have a hefty cash balance, we know that we can just take the capital since it's one time out of there. We just haven't built it into the budget and just haven't asked for it.

Councilman Fries: Mike, I was noticing on here there's 12-month subscription for the drone, two different times, \$1,625 a year. Is there any guarantee that it's not going to go up a bunch?

Mike Fruchey: I don't know if there are any guarantees in the current environment in, Councilman Fries.

Councilman Fries: Do you think 8 to 10 years, is that going to be the life expectancy of this, or?

Mike Fruchey: We got 8 years out of our last purchase. I'm hoping to at least get eight years. Again, I don't like to replace things. We're going on a 12-year-old plotter right now that as long as that thing works, we're going to keep it forever. I will use things as long as I can. I anticipate we'll get a long life out of these technologies. That's what my hope is.

President Armstrong: I read a couple of questions. Did you take and put any bids

out for this?

Mike Fruchey: We went with our manufacturer. That is the industry standard, is Seiler Geospatial and their tremble equipment. That is what our base station on top of the city county building is. It is very specific. We went through purchasing to make sure that they were okay with this. It is the industry standard and what we already have investment in, the Seiler products. It is what we see our local surveyors using.

President Armstrong: It's off-base, I guess. For cornerstones, I take it you're doing cornerstones this year?

Mike Fruchey: We do them every year. We have to.

President Armstrong: Are we contracting that out, the cornerstone things?

Mike Fruchey: We have to.

President Armstrong: How many contractors do we have under contract for 26?

Mike Fruchey: We have none right now. I'll be at the commissioner's legislative session on Friday. As we started our cornerstone program, again, massive undertaking, we're going through each of our 20 townships, assessing those and doing all the section corners that are easier in roadways, this kind of thing. We'll do our 12th and 13th township in 2026. That will be Jackson and Madison as we have ringed around the county. We started up in there high developing ones that if we don't get to them, they're going to be destroyed. We started up at Perry and those areas. We've worked our way around to now Jackson and Madison.

We've almost looped around the county. Then we're going to come in from the east. We'll assess, we'll do all the ones that are maybe a bit easier in the roadways. Because we need a licensed professional surveyor by state law to sign off on these, we have to do those contracts up until such time that I get my PS license, which that's going well. By the way, I passed my first exam in December, so I'm hopeful within the next year, I'll have that license to do the very few things that only a professional surveyor can do.

President Armstrong: What I'm driving at or trying to get to. The recorder's office gave us a report back August the 11th. In that report, from doing some digging because I haven't got that report back yet, so far in 2025, she reported \$194,485 goes from her department to your department for cornerstones. What can you use that money for, because that was just so far in 2025 what she had for us?

Mike Fruchey: That fund will bring in anywhere from \$250,000 to about \$350,000 in a given year.

That's all set up by state law. It's specifically only to be used for the perpetuation, which I know I've made Council aware of before. We got those employees out last year. We cannot use it for anything other than perpetuation. The fund is very limited.

President Armstrong: I just noticed in '24, it was \$311,000 and some change. '23, it was \$283,000 and some change. I just wondered if that money is by statute tied to cornerstones only. I guess my point is, can that drone be used for locating through

GSI or anything, cornerstones?

Mike Fruchey: No. It's not that we would never use it to take a picture over the top of one or something like this.

President Armstrong: It's not for targeting-

Mike Fruchey: No.

President Armstrong: -where you can go out and track coordinates and say there it's at, and get to it? I'm just trying to figure out because to me, I figured if we have contractors out there doing cornerstones and stuff that we're paying them. I just hate to go out and buy more equipment and more technology when we're paying. I'm sure I just know a foresight. I don't know if you use them or not. Anyways, if they've got drones, which I figure they all do-- if you're doing this for regulated drains, the drains very rarely go away, and very rarely do they grow. I would say the same miles, year after year, is pretty darn close to the same.

Mike Fruchey: They're always subdivision miles. Every subdivision by Allen County ordinance must be regulated. There are always miles being added on, always, and so it's growing. It's much like our Big ARPA project. That's a brand new drainage pathway of over a mile long, new ditch, cutting a new path. That's another mile added to--

President Armstrong: Added system.

Mike Fruchey: -yes, that we have to maintain.

President Armstrong: All right. Thank you. Yes.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. President, thank you. Mike, would it be safe to say, just to go back to the cornerstones, that there may be two dozen at most cornerstones total located during the terms of the previous two surveyors? Over about 20 years, they located, I don't know, maybe two dozen. Is that about right?

Mike Fruchey: We have records on about 1,400. There were about zero done during the six years of surveyors, or during the term of Surveyor Frisinger. There were less than the 5% done every year. Not one year in all those 19-- Back to maybe 2005 or 2004 maybe was the last time that they hit the state mandate. We are woefully behind.

To your point, Bob, when I came in as surveyor, or Councilman Armstrong, there was \$1.7 million in that account because Surveyor Sorg had done nothing. It just ballooned up in our county with so much development. We're getting \$5 off every recorded document. That fund grows pretty quickly. Now we've spent that down to about \$400,000 or so. I'm guessing they're a little bit. I'm using it for its intended purpose. We have perpetuated over 600 corners. In three years, it's been a ton. Our local engineering community is very happy about that.

President Armstrong: I'm glad. We talk about fund balances throughout the whole state. Everybody is looking at it at the state level. These funds are just growing and growing and growing. I'm looking at it on the reverse side of that. Do you spend that

number down to zero every year, or is that a growing--

Mike Fruchey: We're going backwards. It's getting lower and lower.

President Armstrong: Because you're using it.

Mike Fruchey: What I would say, again, alluding to Councilman Lagemann, because we haven't done a great job in our county, there's about 1,000 that are supposed to be there that we've never found, that we have no written record of. Part of my mission will be to find some of those.

Councilman Lagemann: How many section corners are there total in the county?

Mike Fruchey: There's theoretically 2,400. We have records on 1,400. There's approximately 1,000 that were laid by the federal surveyors in the 1800s that this office has never located. Not that you want to hunt down every one of those, but the true section corners, not quarter corners, if you get that lingo with the public land survey system, true section corners, there's about 15 to 20 unlocated in every township. That's our next mission, is to find those 15 to 20, to get them permanently located like they always should have been, and put that to rest.

President Armstrong: Those are just questions of my concerns with budget issues and stuff, but I appreciate what you do. You definitely were behind the eight ball when you come in, so I appreciate that.

Mike Fruchey: Getting staff done.

President Armstrong: Thank you. Any other questions?

Councilwoman Hammond: I got some questions.

President Armstrong: Oh, Lindsey.

Councilwoman Hammond: You and I talked about this on the phone. I just wanted to bring it up in the meeting. Are there any privacy concerns with using drones? I just look at it from my perspective. I have a ditch that runs behind my property quite a ways from my house. If somebody is back there walking it, they can't see as much as if they're flying a drone. If my property was closer to the ditch, I would probably have concerns regarding that. Is there any precautions that we should take because of that?

Mike Fruchey: As you may know, by Indiana code, the county surveyor and his staff are legal trespassers. We just have to give notice. The law doesn't say how we give notice. It says we just have to give notice. When we have a standard letter, we probably encourage our staff, if they're flying over private property, to send those letters, to give notice that we are going to be over the statutory easement, which is pretty wide. It's 150 foot, 75 foot from the top of bank on each side of a ditch.

We've got a wide swath of land that is ours to go in and try to manage. I'm fine with doing that. The law says if we're going to physically go on there. I would take the same approach with drones. It's not a big deal to send those letters. They're right tied to state law. They reference it, and everybody knows what we're doing.

President Armstrong: Paul?

Councilman Lagemann: Mike, I would say as someone who lives out in unincorporated Allen County, probably best to make sure that they receive that letter because you all don't want shotguns taking that \$10,000 drone out of the air.

Mike Fruchey: I hear you.

Councilwoman Hammond: That is exactly what I was thinking because I live in unincorporated Allen County as well.

Councilman Lagemann: Maybe make those letters require signatures.

Mike Fruchey: I'll send a certified mail.

President Armstrong: All righty. Any other? Tom?

Councilman Harris: I'm just going to go ahead and make a motion, a motion for miscellaneous equipment appropriation within General Fund 100 for \$176,390.

Councilman Lagemann: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Passes 7:0:0.

Mike Fruchey: Thanks, Counselor. Have a good evening.

Councilman Lagemann: Thank you, sir.

President Armstrong: Thank you.

Councilman Lagemann: I'll just be out there with my shotgun.

President Armstrong: This would be a good time to take a 20-minute break. Oh, Building Department. [laughs] Dang, he was still here.

Ron Turpin: Just for that, we're going to have the drone over your house first, Councilman.

President Armstrong: I do live in the county.

Commissioner Turpin: I live in one of those areas where it would get shot down. Don't worry. Ron Turpin, Allen County Commissioner for the Allen County Building Department. As you're all aware, a number of months ago, we endeavored to take an exercise to what we call Building Department 2.0 to rebuild the department with the goal being that we have inspections done in no more than three days and building permits the same day.

To do that, we've done a number of things this Council's been supportive of. We increase the number of staff by three. We're in the process right now of interviewing

to hire those people. We also endeavor to have NFP, who is our consultant on salaries, look at eight different positions. Five of those were adjusted last year. We have the last three, which we'll bring before you tonight.

We did bring this up last month. I appreciate you all giving us a month to re-look at this. What we did in that interim month is we went back to a number of firms in Allen County and looked at what the average pay was for those that are laborers and journeymen in a number of the trade areas that were there our goal being we know we're not going to be at those numbers. However, we want to be competitive. The reason being is that we currently have six open spots in our inspector team.

Our other permit clerks are full now, which is a good thing. We do have a number of applications right now we're looking at for the inspectors. This does make us a little more competitive in that. We've also asked HR to go through and look at our turnover rates. Right now in the Building Department, our turnover rates are consistent with the rest of Allen County. We're not seeing any data that tells us that number is worse. We aren't losing a lot of people for pay. However, it's an attraction issue that we're looking at. Our hope is to do that.

One of the things that we bring before you is we've got three different levels. We have here our permit clerks, which are the front desk people when you come in and apply for a permit, our inspectors that are out in the field, and our senior inspectors. You see the current levels that are there, a B3 for our permit specialist, a D6 for our inspectors, and a D7 for our senior inspectors. NFP came back at a B4 for the permit specialist, a D7 for the inspectors, and a D9 for the senior inspectors.

The Board of Commissioners met with a number of other departments to talk about-- what we didn't want to do is blow up the salary grids that would create-- we're solving one problem, but creating a much bigger problem with 1,800 employees. How do we do this to make us market competitive and not blow up the grids at the same time? In looking at that and looking at the data we had from the other shops that we looked at throughout Allen County, the recommendation the Board of Commissioners has is to go one level higher than what NFP recommended, so a B5 for the permit specialist, which is in conformity to other front desk clerks throughout Allen County.

President Armstrong: DPS specifically.

Commissioner Turpin: If you go to DPS, if you go, Jackie, I think your front desk people, if you go to what you've done for the county clerk, it puts us in conformity with those departments. The inspector, a D8, which again puts us in conformity with we're at about 80%, 85% of what that standard is in the trades throughout Allen County right now. The senior inspector at a D10, which, again, is that same 80% to 85% rate that's there.

This is one the Board of Commissioners unanimously agreed to that we are comfortable with and it's one that we've looked at. The salary grids, Jackie was with us in that meeting talking through some of the numbers. We've talked to leadership of council to walk through the why behind that and looking at that. It's in our recommendation that we make those three adjustments.

President Armstrong: Any questions? Tom?

Councilman Harris: Yes, a few. This increase is going to increase applications by how much?

Commissioner Turpin: That's the piece we don't know, Councilman, because pay is one piece of a puzzle. We still are not at the market rate. The person that's going to be looking for one of these inspectors, you have to be licensed. That limits the pool to start with.

It also typically is someone that we find who has a number of years of experience that may not want to still go through crawl spaces in the middle, in the cold, and work on electrical all day or plumbing all day. It's someone who still wants to do 10 or 20 more years left, but they're done doing that. We do feel, from talking to Joe Hutter, our commissioner, and several others, that we think this makes us more attractive in there, but we don't know how much more attractive.

Councilman Harris: One other thing. You said that HR can do and that department can do is basically, as they interview throughout the year, find out if pay is the issue. I don't know that it is because they would have said that, and we've not heard that yet. Five offers were made. Five offers were declined because they didn't pay enough. People didn't come forward. You don't know how many people didn't come forward. I get that. We don't know what we don't know. If we increase that pay and we get no applications, do we come back next month and raise the pay again?

Commissioner Turpin: No. Our thing is, what we talked about within the Board of Commissioners is, our recognition is, "Let's try this." Then if it's not working, there's also people leave for culture, they come for pay. One piece is, when any of our jobs are posted, it has salary ranges in there. We do know, from what Joe has told us, is that he has heard from a number of people they haven't applied because of the pay pieces. That's coming from our building commissioner when he talks there.

We know we've heard from other contractors in the industry that our pay is low for these positions. NFP has told us our pay is low based on the data they've seen. The question is, how low? That's the thing that we've looked at. Then, again, our goal is not to be over the market. We can't be at market. However, we need to be competitive. We feel that this gets us in that range.

One of the things we're doing is, HR is much more involved in the hiring process for the Building Department than they have been in the past, and so we're starting using things like Indeed and other things that we've done more in the past. We actually have brought an outside firm in for the--

Councilman Harris: How long has that been going on, by the way?

Commissioner Turpin: The Indeed piece?

Councilman Harris: No. Just HR being more active in it.

Commissioner Turpin: Probably the last three months. That's why we've seen a little uptake in this. However, even HR has told us that they think we probably need to move some of this up as well. Again, the question is the amount. Everyone right now, talking to HR, as well as our board of commissioners, Mr. Hutter and others,

are comfortable with the recommendation we're making. It's enough to get us in the ballpark without, again, going off the grid structure, and it throws us off of that. Again, we're not trying to create another problem here. We're trying to solve a problem that we've got right now.

Councilman Harris: One of the challenges is, if I'm close and I know the director, and gosh, he said, "Come on board," and I don't come on board, is it because of pay or is it because of culture? I'm going to always say it's pay. That's why people don't come to organizations. They don't come because of cultural issues as well. You're fully aware of that, and I'm sure they're evaluating that, but that does need to be looked at. Is there overtime required currently?

Commissioner Turpin: No. We've had that data pulled, and we had about 600 hours of overtime last year. About \$73,000 was spent. Council gave a budget of \$60,000, so we're not that far off of that. The challenge we have right now is in the timeframe of doing an inspection. State law, if we don't stay up on this, the state will mandate it for us. The state wants a standard of two days. Right now, we're two to three days.

One of the things we've talked with Mr. Hutter about is we want five inspectors in each of our lanes. Right now, we might have three. If you think about it, based on vacations or because we may have employees that, one had a heart issue last year, another one falls down a flight of stairs and breaks his leg, that puts us under the gun. The goal is to be sufficiently staffed so that we can really do inspections in two days to keep things moving. The overtime is not as much.

Councilman Harris: Are the employees against the overtime? They don't want to--
[crosstalk]

Commissioner Turpin: No, not at all. Not at all.

Councilman Harris: Why would we not if we're short and contractors are saying, "My goodness, come visit. I'll stay over. I'll be here at 6:00 PM"? Why wouldn't we want to help that, particularly if the employees are willing to work the overtime either during the week or even on a Saturday?

Commissioner Turpin: We do do that. There are some employees who don't want to do that, so we're not forcing them to. There are others that if someone is ill and out, you have another coverage. If you look at it, it also depends on where that coverage is happening at. If the underage is in residential, but we have commercial-- Commercial has been what's really driving a lot of this recently.

We have with interest rates, residential has been down. As interest rates are going down, we are seeing more residential coming up. As you all know, our builders and developers are looking at starting to ramp up because of the demand. That's going to put more pressure on those residential inspections. I understand what you're saying completely. Our goal is making sure we have as little overtime as possible because we've covered each of our areas sufficiently.

Then overtime is something that we're also looking at, an option we have that we could look at. Other counties do. We have developers that are actually willing to pay.

Hey, if inspectors come on Saturdays, for example, they're willing to pay the overage. That's another option we can look at as well.

Councilman Lagemann: [unintelligible 01:18:59] has that program, does it not?

Commissioner Turpin: I'm sorry?

Councilman Lagemann: The state has that program, does it not?

Commissioner Turpin: They do. They do. That's one we're looking at as well. However, we want to make sure we're sufficiently staffed in order to do that. Right now, we're just not.

President Armstrong: Don't forget, we do have some inspectors that hold dual
Commissioner -

Ron Turpin: We do.

President Armstrong: -which is a benefit.

Commissioner Turpin: It is.

Councilman Harris: I appreciate the fact that there's been further analysis, further discussion done instead of what was proposed last month of us basically going over the cliff and wiping out our entire comp system again. I appreciate that extra effort that was done. I'm not convinced that it's a pay issue in that department. I guess not. I've heard too much and I think other things ought to be considered in this process. Thank you.

Councilman Lagemann: Just a couple of comments. Number one, when you're 40% low, it pays an issue. If you're saying, "Hey, I'll do that job right now," a licensed contractor, and I think Councilman Hammond can attest to that. Her son is in the trades. These people are all making over \$100,000. When you're saying we're going to pay a \$60,000, ain't going to work. That's not a matter of benefits, it's not a matter of anything.

It's a matter of my wife won't let me take that job [chuckles] at the end of the day because it's such a massive pay cut, even if it's supposed to be less work, and if it's supposed to be less work, and we're putting our guys through tons of overtime, for the most part, I walk into that office. I'm one of the younger guys in that office when I walk in, and I'm no spring chicken.

When you're working 70 hours a week, and you're 67, which we've got a couple of guys that are in that age group that are doing these inspections, that's hard. A lot of these folks left the trades because it's tough on their body. They need an opportunity. They have the expertise. They can take a look at this stuff. When we're beating them to a pulp, and we have the kinds of injuries that we have on a regular basis, we're understaffed, we're underpaid. I want to say thank you. These numbers are fairly close to where we came in last time. I think you guys really did a good job of evaluating it. I want to say how much I appreciate the extra effort of taking a good hard look at this.

Councilman Wyss: First, Commissioner, thank you for all of your work and the other commissioners' work on this, as well as our personnel committee and all the people involved. I do appreciate that. I keep coming in on this is timing. One other thing I'd bring up on Paul's point on pay is our benefits are fantastic. That has to be factored in as well. The timing on this, I would love to see this wait until budget season and be incorporated into budget season this summer. I don't think it's going to hurt us to bring this forward during budget season unless someone else can bring a reason of why it has to be done so quickly.

Commissioner Turpin: A couple of reasons I would advise not doing that. The first is our purpose would have been to have that effective January 1st as well. However, we gave NFP so many things to look at, eight different job classifications, that it took a while because we wanted to make sure we got it right. The other thing is that this is one that we know we've got the issue today. I do have a concern about us. All of our departments are important, all 30 that we have in Allen County. This one is very front-facing and really helps drive the economy of Allen County. Getting those jobs filled as fast as we can is important.

I will say to Councilman Harris's question, I have talked to HR about doing a culture audit. We're going to start in the Building Department and go through each of our departments to really find out from our employees, how are things going? What can we do better? How can we be a better employer? I've talked to Mr. Hutter about that. He's great with that as well. We're going to start that as well to get a better perspective.

This is one, Councilman, also, I would say, this one is a little different in that, if you recall, on January 1st, the Board of Commissioners raised and changed the fee structure for the Building Department knowing that we have promised the builders and contractors that we are going to invest those funds in building out the Building Department. I personally feel an obligation that we've made that commitment that, "If you pay more for this, we will do X." That's certainly our obligation. It may not be yours. However, it's another reason why I think speed matters on this one.

Councilman Harris: What's the plan B if it doesn't work? What do you do?

Commissioner Turpin: I think that we have to look at a number of things, Councilman. I think we also have to look at working with HR continually about how are we marketing these positions and looking at, do we widen the net a little bit more? Right now, we use Indeed. We use our job board that we have. Mr. Hutter goes to the different union halls and talks to them. We have, obviously, discussions with the different contractors throughout the county as well.

I think just like we did for this assistant commissioner position, which we were having a little hard time doing, we brought in an outside firm to help us widen the net a little further for that. I think we just have to look at having all options on the table.

Councilman Harris: That sounds like plan A.

Commissioner Turpin: No. We are doing those things.

Councilman Harris: That's what I'm saying. You're doing those things now, right?

Commissioner Turpin: Yes

Councilman Harris: What's the plan B here?

Commissioner Turpin: I always have a plan B, C, and D in place for that. I feel pretty confident, though, that I've talked to enough builders and contractors around the county. We've talked to our Building Department staff that we feel like this will be something that will work. We're committing to work that to make sure it works. We're not coming back and asking for more pay.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. President. As someone who gets probably half a dozen calls a week on permits one way or the other saying, "Hey, we're behind the eight ball, we're behind the gun, we've got to get this permit to move. What can you do to try to help get this thing done?" I work really closely with Joe on this, and he's been great to understand that these are small businesses or large businesses in many cases that have a very specific timeframe, and every day they're late. It's costing them money.

Right now, this county is costing our private sector tens of millions of dollars in delays. Is a little bit more money going to make the difference? I absolutely think so. Would even a little bit more probably make a little more difference to try to get these jobs filled? Probably. It's going to be a tough market because we've got a lot of building coming this year. We have a lot of these contractors that are making really good money being plumbers, being licensed contractors, all the things that are required to be an inspector.

I go back to, we're doing the right thing. We made a commitment to the building and development community when we changed these rates of permit costs. The permit costs pay for this. I think we're doing exactly the right thing. If we don't do it, it's going to have even a broader and bigger economic impact that could absolutely be devastating.

Right now, it's tough to get stuff done. If we let it go any further or if we delay, we really risk not just not growing but gaining a reputation for a community that does not want to grow. I get back to, either we're going to grow or we're going to die. This is how we grow. If we can't get permits done, we can't do a whole heck of a lot more. We talk about economic development. This is at the very heart of it. I thank you for doing what you're doing. We need to get this done.

President Armstrong: Kenny, nothing?

Councilman Fries: Waiting for a motion.

President Armstrong: I'm with you.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. President, to that end, I move for the salary ordinance reclassifying the pay of senior inspectors from D7/1 at \$59,949 to D10/1, \$75,519, 40 hours per week, non-exempt.

Councilman Kerley: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed?

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: How many nos? Two. (Don Wyss, Tom Harris)

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. President, I move for the salary ordinance reclassifying the pay of inspectors from D6/1 at \$55,509 to D8/1, \$64,745, 40 hours per week, non-exempt.

Councilman Kerley: Second.

President Armstrong: Motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed?

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: 5:2. (Don Wyss, Tom Harris) Passes.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. President, I move for the salary ordinance reclassifying the pay of permit specialist from B3/1, \$43,556, to B5/1, \$48,939, 40 hours a week, non-exempt.

Councilman Kerley: Second.

President Armstrong: I have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed?

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: 5:2. (Don Wyss, Tom Harris) Passes.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. Chairman?

President Armstrong: Yes.

Councilman Lagemann: I want to thank Council for meeting the commitment that we made to the building and construction community, and I look forward to faster permits and more inspectors and some of the best guys out there. Thank you, Commissioner, for all your work.

Commissioner Turpin: Thank you, Council.

President Armstrong: Thank you.

Councilwoman Harris: Mr. President, just on that one piece. I think some consideration ought to be given to how did the personnel committee come up with the recommendations that they did last time, and why is that so much different than this time? Internal, we don't need to do it here in front of the cameras, but I think some discussion needs to be done on how those numbers came before Council last month. It could have topped and overturned our entire comp system. You guys are at the threshold of making a big mistake, so I think we need to look at that at some point. Thank you.

President Armstrong: Any other questions? Next on the agenda, the Purdue Extension.

James Wolf: Good evening. James Wolf, County Extension Director-

President Armstrong: Good evening.

James Wolf: -for Purdue Extension. Before I get into the request, I just want to take a quick moment. Before the meeting, I passed out our statewide impact report from Purdue Extension, which also includes an insert of the county-specific items that we report. Allen County was not included in the statewide impact report this year, but we do have a lot of those programs that we offer or could always bring those to the county.

We also, to the surveyor's discussion on drones, we do have a drone in our office that I can utilize for basic imagery, aerial imagery, and field mapping. We do that for clients. We can certainly work with county departments. I cannot do the extensive work that they need, but could definitely work with departments on small programs. Also wanted to introduce our newest educator that we hired in mid-January for 4-H Youth Development. I have Gary Jones with us. He's brand new on our staff. All of our Extension educator positions are currently filled, which is really exciting.

To the request that I've got before you, this has been an ongoing request. This is actually a request for \$5,619 that was approved by you last fall for our computer equipment. We're going through the process of switching from our leased equipment to purchased equipment, which will be about a \$6,000 savings long-term by the time we're all done. We got the computers ordered in fall. They arrived. However, Purdue, at least the four computers in the initial phase, they arrived, but Purdue could not produce us an invoice before we needed to have everything closed out with the county. That invoice came in January.

All that funds that you had approved before rolled back into the general fund. I'm just here, now that we have the invoice, to request that again. We will be back then hopefully probably summer or early fall when we get another set of four computers purchased to make a request at that point as well. I can answer any questions.

President Armstrong: Any questions?

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. President, I move for an appropriation within General Fund 100 for \$5,619 in equipment for the cooperative extension.

Councilwoman Hammond: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Oppose? Passes 6:0:1 (Ken Fries left early).

James Wolf: Thank you.

Councilman Lagemann: Thank you very much.

President Armstrong: Thank you.

Councilman Lagemann: Thank you for coming to our new extension educator. The work that you all do for 4-H is really, really important work with these kids. I want to acknowledge that and say a special thanks.

President Armstrong: Next on the agenda. ACJC.

Wendy Kyler: Good evening.

President Armstrong: Good evening.

Wendy Kyler: I just wanted to bring you up to speed on some of the grant programs that we have coming up that we're applying for all revolving around juvenile justice and preventing jail time for the kids in the Fort Wayne area. The first one is for the behavioral health. Another one we have is for the diversion, which is a new program that's going to be started with ACJC. All of these are actually new programs starting with ACJC.

The juvenile community alternative grant is going to be based mainly on gun-related charges with our youth and intervening in those types of cases. The one that's not listed on here, which I didn't get until after everything was already turned in, was our juvenile problem-solving court that we're going to be starting out there. That was just to bring you up to speed on those new programs that are going to be coming to ACJC. The main question that we're here before you is we have two vehicles that have been redlined by the Service Department. We are requesting county general appropriation to get those purchased.

President Armstrong: Questions?

Councilman Harris: Yes, Bob. I guess the first part is we do have to approve the three applications. You weren't suggesting that we're voting on the problem-solving grant tonight, are you? Does it have to be advertised for the request, or can we go ahead and approve the request even though it's not been advertised?

Jackie Scheuman: They're not asking for appropriation.

Councilman Harris: Understood. That's what I'm asking. It's not been advertised, but they're simply saying, "Can we apply for this?" If it's okay with--

Jackie Scheuman: It's not one of the three that's listed?

Wendy Kyler: No. The problem-solving, I didn't get that-

Councilman Harris: To you.

Wendy Kyler: -put through until after everything was already turned in.

Jackie Scheuman: It doesn't need to be advertised. It's up to you on that.

President Armstrong: How much is the problem-solving one for?

Wendy Kyler: The problem-solving one is for \$80,000, I believe. Is that one over a two-year period? It's over a two-year span. Money will come to us one year, and then the following year, we'll get the same amount to get that up and running.

Councilman Harris: Mr. President, I had a chance to meet with Judge Ecenbarger, our new judge. I think I pronounced that correctly, I think. Yes, good. It was an extensive meeting. We had a good conversation. I can make the motion for number one and cover all four of those if the Council is in agreement for moving forward with that.

President Armstrong: Okay.

Councilman Harris: All four, yes. I'll make a motion for the permission to apply for the four grant requests listed in number one.

Councilman Kerley: Second.

President Armstrong: I have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Passes 6:0:1 (Ken Fries left early).

Councilman Harris: Then we also had the discussion about the vehicles, and they said that those were extensive, or according to the-- What is that?

Wendy Kyler: Yes. One of them scored a 26, and one of them scored a 34. [laughs]

President Armstrong: You should go to the parking lot.

Wendy Kyler: Right. [laughs]

Councilman Lagemann: Do you have to crank that engine, or is that a key start?

Councilman Harris: Mr. President, I'll move for the approval of the vehicles of 96,000.

Councilman Lagemann: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Passes 6:0:1 (Ken Fries left early).

Wendy Kyler: Thank you very much.

President Armstrong: Thank you. Circuit Court.

Angela Terry: Good evening, Council. I'm Angela Terry, Finance Director of Circuit Court.

President Armstrong: Evening.

Angela Terry: Circuit Court applies for and receives three separate problem-solving court grants. For the ones that we received, we got our finalized award letter after we had turned in our budgets for 2026. I'm here just to request transfers so that our grants mirror Indiana Office of Court Services.

Councilman Kerley: I will go ahead and make a motion. I'm just going to knock all these out at once. Transfer from within IOC Grant Fund 128, from schools and seminars for \$2,500, to drug screen supplies, incentives, and graduation supplies for the same amount, transfer within IOCS Restoration Court Grant Fund 131, from schools and seminars for \$1,700, to drug screen supplies and graduation supplies for the same amount, and transfer within the OVWI Court PSC Fund 877 from schools and seminars for \$1,500 to drug screen supplies of \$4,500.

Councilman Lagemann: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Passes 6:0:1 (Ken Fries left early). Community Corrections.

Cody Fry: Evening, Council. Cody Fry, Assistant Director with Community Corrections.

President Armstrong: Good evening.

Cody Fry: I am in front of you this evening really for a timing issue. Our grant that we seek with the Office of Court Services and Fund 852, we seek this on an annual basis. We did not get our award letter back from them until October of last year. That \$10,000 that we were awarded was not able to be appropriated at that time. We use that for a variety of things, including some staff training, some hygiene items for things that we can pass out for reentry court, as well as some incentives and some covering of drug screen fees if they're passing those within the program. I'm here to answer any questions you might have about that.

President Armstrong: Any questions? Seeing none.

Councilman Lagemann: Mr. Chairman, I move for the appropriation within the IOC Grant Fund 852 for other supplies, travel, schools, and seminars, and other services for the total amount of \$10,000.

Councilwoman Hammond: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Passes 6:0:1 (Ken Fries left early).

Cody Fry: Great. Have a good evening.

Councilman Harris: Thank you for being last.

President Armstrong: Thank you.

Cody Fry: No problem.

Councilman Harris: A long night. There we go.

President Armstrong: Discussion on other business to come before the Council?

Councilman Kerley: Mr. President, with the Council's blessing, I know I've spoke to all of you before the meeting, given the early timing of next month's meeting and the fact that it falls over some spring breaks, I would motion and ask for the blessing of Council to move Council meeting back one week to April 15th. I have confirmed with-

Councilman Lagemann: Second.

Councilman Kerley: -Mr. McGauley that the room is available. That's my request.

President Armstrong: Motion second. All in favor?

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? The only thing I would like to add, I know it's getting old, I'm still trying to figure out how to handle this, August 11th, I asked for a hard copy of the recorder's office record. Here we are in March. Lo and behold, I still haven't got that request. As soon as I get it, that hard copy will be distributed off to you all, and we are still dealing with that issue. Recent or upcoming meetings? None? Hearing none. Liaison's reports?

Councilman Wyss: I just have a quick one, Mr. President. The Allen County Soil and Water had their annual meeting. It was well attended. They headed out to Solomon Farms there on DuPont Road. Anyway, just to report that there's a lot of people there doing great things for the community there at Allen County Soil and Water, and they had a really nice turnout for their meeting.

President Armstrong: All righty. Thank you, sir.

Councilman Lagemann: Just a quick comment on that. Having been to a lot of those events and such, it's cool to see the conservation focus of so many farmers, particularly with the river-rich space that we live in. Everything from filter strips to cover crops, it's great stuff. I just want to say thanks for representing Council, and

please pass along our appreciation of what they do.

Commissioner Wyss: Well said.

President Armstrong: Thanks, Paul. All right. What do we have?

Councilwoman Hammond: Approval to waive the second reading on any matter approved today for which it may be deemed necessary for the County Council meeting of March 11th, 2026.

Councilman Kerley: Second.

President Armstrong: We have a motion and a second. All in favor, say aye.

Members: Aye.

President Armstrong: Opposed? Motion to adjourn. We are adjourned.

Councilman Lagemann: Motion to Adjourn

Councilman Kerley: Second

President Armstrong: Opposed? Motion to adjourn. We are adjourned.