

COUNCIL & COMMISSIONERS

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

Troy D. Morgan Public Safety Center, 620 Green Road, Madison, Indiana

DATE 02-05-2026

Commissioner Robert Little called the meeting to order. Those present: Commissioner Robert Little, Commissioner David Bramer, Commissioner Ron Lee, Councilman Dwayne May, Councilman Mike Turner, Councilman Ray Denning, Councilwoman Heather Foy, Councilwoman Pam Crozier and Councilman Gary Copeland. Councilman Ray Black were unable to attend the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss IT services, the juvenile facility, public safety distribution, riverboat wage sharing distribution, NKDH Funding and Animal Shelter funds.

IT Services- Commissioner David Bramer opened the discussion on IT Services, noting that the county has used several different approaches over the years. The County has been working with its current provider, which has been an improvement over previous solutions, but ongoing challenges remain. Particularly the lack of an on-site presence. Commissioners emphasized that departments need immediate, in-person support when critical systems fail rather than waiting for a technician to arrive after being called. The County has recently engaged in discussions with a new IT provider, EXOS, which would employ an on-site IT staff member. Cybersecurity was emphasized as a major concern, with several recent incidents occurring within the county.

The current IT contract costs a little over \$10,000 per month. While EXOS's proposal will be more expensive due to staffing, commissioners stressed that cybersecurity protections and reduced downtime justify the increased investment. Lost productivity from system outages is not insignificant and should be considered part of the overall cost.

Commissioners also discussed the possibility of sharing IT resources in the future with the City of Madison or the Town of Hanover. Shared staffing could lower costs while improving coverage, particularly during emergencies.

Commissioner Bramer will circulate the proposal from EXOS for review by council and commissioners. Later in the meeting, Council President Dwayne May requested additional quotes for services.

Juvenile Facility- Commissioners reported that all required approvals have been received to move forward with converting the old jail into the county's new juvenile facility. The remaining challenge is obtaining an accurate project cost for the required remodeling work. Local contractors have reviewed the building, but estimates have been inconsistent due to uncertainty regarding state code requirements.

To address this, Josh Nichols, who is expected to serve as the future director for Jefferson County's facility, will conduct an on-site evaluation on Saturday. He will review the building room by room using a detailed compliance checklist to determine what must be upgraded to meet state standards. This will allow contractors to prepare accurate, fixed quotes for the renovation.

Auditor Heather Huff confirmed that she has already advertised the necessary budget actions to reappropriate funds from ARPA and LIT so that money will be available when contractor payments begin. She also confirmed that the initial professional services retainer has been advertised and pending County Council approval at the February 10th meeting.

The cost for Nichols' consulting and project-management services is \$12,700 per month, covering March through December, for a total of \$127,000. This contract will support the county from its current stage through full facility readiness. A separate, future contract will govern Nichols' role as facility director once operations begin.

David Bramer made a motion to approve the Juvenile Detention Center Consulting and Project Management agreement for \$12,700 per month beginning in March through December. Commissioner Lee seconded the motion. Motion carried 3/0

Public Safety Distribution for Fire Departments- Auditor Heather Huff provided an overview of past public safety distributions to fire departments, noting that only one prior distribution has been made, totaling just over \$100,000, and that it was allocated using the same matrix previously used for ARPA distributions.

During the last budget cycle, council members collectively agreed not to issue a distribution for the previous year, allowing funds to accumulate in the public safety account for a more substantial future allocation. However, recent requests from fire departments prompted renewed discussion on how and when to distribute funds.

Huff explained that no specific percentage of the county's public safety tax had ever been formally dedicated to fire departments. Past distributions were based only on available funds and the previously used matrix. Because the public safety tax revenue increases annually alongside income growth, tracking the exact amount attributable to past rate adjustments is difficult.

Multiple fire service representatives expressed strong support for equal distribution among all county fire departments, emphasizing that each department faces the same mandatory equipment standards and replacement schedules. Representatives also discussed the financial burdens on small departments with limited tax bases and the increasing costs of insurance, maintenance, and compliance. Madison Township Chief Robert Black stated he was speaking for all fire departments in the County and the departments would like an even distribution.

Council and commissioners discussed various potential approaches but decided on an equal distribution to each department with \$100,000 allocated in the Public Safety Fund. An additional \$100,000 would also be allocated for special project applications, submitted by the fire departments. The County fire chiefs could meet to discuss which fire department could request special project funds from the County for major equipment or apparatus purchases. Any unused special-project funds shall roll over into subsequent years.

Auditor Huff confirmed she can advertise the distribution for Council's March meeting, provided the boards indicate their intent. Councilman Ray Denning made a motion to proceed with an even distribution of \$100,000 to county fire departments and to prepare for Council action in March. Commissioner David Bramer seconded. Motion carried.

Riverboat Wage Sharing Distribution to Nonprofits-

Auditor Heather Huff reviewed prior riverboat wage-sharing distributions, noting that previous allocations had traditionally totaled \$97,000. Huff noted that while \$97,000 had been the historic figure, an increase to \$100,000 was recommended for clarity and ease of distribution.

Councilwoman Heather Foy read the council's preliminary recommendations for each nonprofit based on their 2026 requests:

- Girls Inc. \$11,000 (full request)
- Boys & Girls Club \$20,000 (full request)
- 4-H \$20,000 (increased from prior years)
- Lifetime Resources \$20,000
- Veterans Service Office (transportation support) \$5,000
- CASA \$8,000 (reduced request, fully funded)
- Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) \$3,000 (maintaining 2025 level)
- Safe Passage \$3,000 (increased from prior allocation)
- Special projects \$10,000

The Jefferson County Kindness did not submit the updated proposal requested; council determined the initial request did not justify the increased amount. Visit Madison did not submit a 2026 proposal by the deadline. Council noted VMI receives substantial support through innkeepers tax funding and did not make a new request for this cycle.

Councilwoman Pam Crozier made a motion to approve the amounts listed above. Councilman Ray Denning second. Motion carried. Funds will be available in August.

Norton KDH Funding Discussion- The County contributes \$500,000 per year toward EMS operations. KDH has requested that this increase to \$600,000 for 2027, and additionally submitted a separate request for \$2 million toward the construction of a new ambulance transport hub. Members noted that the hospital has secured approximately \$2.2 million from the Bethany Legacy Foundation and earlier indicated they had raised close to \$2 million independently. With a previously reported project estimate of \$4 million, commissioners questioned why the full \$2 million additional request from the County would still be necessary.

Councilwoman Heather Foy mentioned that EMS operations reportedly cost approximately \$1 million annually. The County's annual \$500,000 contribution covers roughly half of current EMS

expenses. Without hospital-provided EMS, Jefferson County would be forced to implement and fund its own EMS service, likely at even greater cost and requiring new facilities, equipment, and staffing.

Commissioners discussed whether future financial partnership might be structured as a multi-year commitment rather than a single large contribution and suggested a possible fixed amount each year in exchange for guaranteed continuation of EMS services.

Health insurance acceptance was also raised as an unresolved concern. Several members noted that employees often struggle with KDH's decisions on what insurance the hospital will accept and requested that insurance stability be considered in any future agreement.

No decision will be made until further information is provided by NKDH.

Animal Shelter- Discussion began regarding the county's readiness to provide a letter of financial support for the Animal Shelter project to accompany the READI grant application

The Commissioners have invested approximately \$60,000 in architectural work and project renderings. The Council stated they were not yet comfortable making a hard monetary commitment due to budget uncertainty. Members of the Council stated they would issue a letter expressing support, but wording must avoid implying a guaranteed dollar amount at this stage.

Auditor Huff reviewed the Animal Shelter operating budget, which for 2026 totals approximately \$349,000. Actual spending in the prior year was substantially lower, around \$305,000, leaving unspent funds. The year-end fund balance as of December 31, 2025 was \$180,000. Based on this trend, members discussed the possibility of transferring any end of year surplus into the shelter building fund to grow reserves for a future facility.

The boards discussed the READI grant context, noting that Hanover College declined to proceed with its portion of the original regional project, causing funds to be returned to the READI pool. In response, Jefferson County resubmitted the project jointly with Ivy Tech and the Jefferson County Animal Shelter, significantly strengthening the regional impact of the proposal. Ivy Tech reported strong enrollment in its veterinary programs, including students from multiple counties, reinforcing the regional value of the combined vet-tech animal shelter project.

Commissioners emphasized that the community had already shown strong support, with over \$77,000 raised in donations in a short period. Members agreed that demonstrating the County's willingness to participate financially, contingent on the grant being awarded, would strengthen the overall proposal.

After discussion, Commissioners and Council members agreed to pledge \$150,000, contingent upon Jefferson County being awarded READI funding for the project. This amount would come from existing balances within the animal shelter's budget and would not require immediate appropriation.

Councilman Ray Denning made a motion to issue a letter of support and pledge \$150,000, contingent upon the project receiving READI grant funding. Councilwoman Heather Foy seconded the motion. Motion carried. Auditor Huff will draft the letter of support, and Council President Dwayne May will sign before submission to the READI committee.

Commissioner Ron Lee made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner David Bramer seconded. Motion carried.

A video recording of this meeting is available on the [Jefferson County, Indiana Government YouTube channel](#).

ATTEST: _____
Heather Huff, Auditor

Ron Lee, President

David Bramer, Member

Robert Little, Member