FAYETTE COUNTY COUNCIL
March 3, 2026

BE IT REMEMBERED:
That the Fayette County Council of Fayette County, State of Indiana, met in regular session on the above date at 6:00 p.m. with the following present: Council members Scott Bevington, Bob Stewart, Gabe Nobbe, Tim Patterson, Kay Riker-Peyton, and Connie Durham along with Auditor Jane Downard and County Attorney Geoff Wesling of said County and State. Sharon Cranfill was absent.

Vice President Bevington called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

MINUTES:
Councilman Riker-Peyton moved to approve the minutes from the February 3rd regular meeting, Councilman Stewart seconded the motion, and motion carried 6-0.

MAIL/EMAIL:
None

COUNTY ATTORNEY:
County Attorney Geoff Wesling did not have anything for the board at this time.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:
Councilman Nobbe has been working with some other entities Brown and Brown Associates in the process of looking for other counties and/or cities who are willing to join us. Preliminary talks. If it works, we should be able to greatly reduce insurance rates. Fayette, City of Connersville, another county up north. We would need at least 500 individuals taking the insurance. Wayne County might be interested. If it works, it would be very much like what the school currently has. He's been working on this for about a year.

COMMISSIONER REPRESENTATIVE:
Commissioner Strong gave an update on today's commissioner meeting. It was a rather short and uneventful meeting. They approved a new contract with Cintas Corporation for various supplies the county uses. They approved a 144 request for a part-timer at 911, and endorsed a 144 request for the Extension Office. They got some good news regarding the 2025 CCMG. A few months ago we were informed by INDOT that our 2025 application was not approved. He recently got a call from INDOT that there was a bill in the House that would provide an additional $75 million for projects so if we wanted to dust off our application and resubmit they were going to move that money out the door on a first come first served basis. We are going to open bids on March 12th, and we learned today that the funding was released by the legislature and Fayette County is going to be awarded.

Commissioner Strong addressed some questions raised by Councilman Patterson. He gave some background that David Sullivan approached commissioners in 2023 asking if there was anything the county could do to help save the lake. He did some research and found a grant available through DNR called a LARE Grant. We were awarded a LARE Grant in 2023, but that grant is limited to $100,000 per year. DNR realized it was a multi-year project due to restricted funding. We were awarded an additional $100,000 in 2024 and 2025. We applied for funding in 2026 and just last week we got a letter from DNR that informed us we will not be funded for 2026, but we were encouraged to reapply in 2027. He addressed Councilman Patterson's question about when the project would start, and he said there has not been a definitive start date. Councilman Stewart wondered if this would be an economic development project and if Brad Colter would be able to help. Commissioner Strong said he had talked to both Brad Colter and to Abby Roszell at the Fayette Community Foundation. One of the concerns that Councilman Patterson had is that we weren't following the plan. The plan itself was written by a gentleman from the northern end of the state that had no knowledge of how Manlove Park operated and it is sort of a one size fits all plan. The question has been asked why would we not dredge the lake hydraulically. Manlove Park is in a long-term lease agreement with the Fayette County Conservation Club to manage and operate the park. One of their income streams is renting out 20 acres of tillable ground on the east side of the lake. The only way to dredge hydraulically is to take that 20 acres away. In order to build the retention ponds to hold that material, we would have to strip all the top soil off that

20 acres to create a series of bowls because that particular field rises in elevation by about 18 feet from the west side to the east side. You'd have to take all the topsoil off that field and in the process would probably destroy the existing drainage tile system. Through discussions with the people that run the park, their preference was to use a 10 acre area on the west side of the lake with very small trees. The elevation there was only about 4 or 5 feet from east to west. They made the decision to mechanically dredge to create the least amount of disruption to the operation of the park. One of the contractors that has been up there looking things over has taken a keen interest in setting up a sifting operation up there because he is convinced he can sell that material. DNR does not care how you dredge. We are doing what best fits the operation of the park, and that decision has been made by the entire management of the park. The first $100,000 needs to be spent by the end of this year, or we would have to ask for an extension. Tim asked how long the project was expected to take. He asked if the lake bottom will be able to withstand a 50,000 lb dozer, and Dale said I guess we will see. Councilman Patterson said the people he has talked to say we need to cut the dam. Commissioner Strong agrees that cutting the dam would be the best way. This lake is under the jurisdiction of the DNR and is a regulated dam. The DNR says you're holding 285 acre feet of water. The guy that did calculations says we are only holding 79 acre feet of water. He has challenged the size of the drainage area. DNR says the watershed is 1.04 square miles. The only way to effectively challenge the DNR would be through legal action, and it is really hard to sue someone at the same time you are asking them for money. Cutting the dam, doing repair work to the spillway, refacing the dam, and replacing the 6 inch drawdown pipe with a 12 inch pipe. He has contacted five engineering firms and cannot get any of them to take the job. He thinks it's because the job is too small. This has been a Rubik's cube of regulation, weather, money, and other considerations. Councilman Patterson says he thinks there's an 80% chance the work won't get done. Councilman Bevington asked how many firms were on the list from DNR, and Commissioner Strong said about 20, but we don't have to stick with that list. Councilwoman Durham asked if we have no plan and we had a guy from up north that did a plan that was no good, and Commissioner Strong said the guy from Kendallville, Indiana wrote up the plan and was paid $7,800 from our first LARE Grant. It was a requirement of the grant to have an engineering plan. DNR is okay with us deviating from the plan as long as we explain the changes to them. She misheard that they were going to get rid of the tillable land, and Commissioner Strong corrected her that we are protecting the tillable land. She questioned the lease and was told it is a 99-year lease. They agreed to operate and maintain the park and they have kept their word. Commissioner Strong says his priority is the lake. He'd like to see stone walls, shade for larger fish, nesting areas, concrete tile. Councilman Stewart asked what the major issue is we're dealing with, and Commissioner Strong said the problem is regulatory.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION:
Additional Appropriations to Statewide 911 Fund 1222 Account 10361 Overtime in the amount of $30,000, to Statewide 911 City Share Fund 4912 Account 10361 Overtime in the amount of $10,000, and a transfer in Statewide 911 City Share Fund 4912 from Account 20112 Office Furniture to Account 30303 Other Services in the amount of $300 were presented by Samantha Caldwell. Councilwoman Riker-Peyton moved to approve the additional appropriation and transfer requests as presented, Councilman Patterson seconded the motion, and motion carried 5-1.

Additional Appropriation to Animal Shelter Donation Fund 4102 Account 30301 Veterinary Charges in the amount of $30,000 was presented by Dave Ryckman. Councilman Nobbe moved to approve the additional appropriation as requested, Councilman Patterson seconded the motion, and motion carried 6-0. Dave asked for permission to hire a replacement for an employee who resigned. Some discussion was held regarding full time or part-time employees. Councilwoman Durham moved to approve the hiring of a full-time employee to fill the vacancy, Councilman Patterson seconded the motion, and a roll call vote was taken with the following results: Durham Yes, Riker-Peyton Yes, Patterson Yes, Nobbe No, Stewart No, Bevington No so vote ended in a 3-3 tie. Councilman Nobbe moved to approve the hiring of two part-time employees. Discussion was held about hours, job duties, and on call pay. Councilman Patterson seconded the motion, a roll call vote was taken with the following results: Durham No, Riker-Peyton Yes, Patterson Yes, Nobbe Yes, Stewart No, Bevington No, so vote ended in a 3-3 tie. Councilwoman Riker-Peyton moved to approve the hiring of one part-time employee, Councilman Patterson seconded the motion, and a roll call vote was taken with the following results: Durham No, Riker-Peyton Yes, Patterson Yes, Nobbe Yes, Stewart Yes, Bevington No, motion carried 4-2.

Additional Appropriation to County General Fund 1000 Soil & Water Account 30940 Examination of Records in the amount of $7,988 was presented by Bryan Sasser. Last year SWCD was audited by the State Board of Accounts for four years and were billed $7,988. Councilman Stewart moved to approve the additional as requested, Councilman Nobbe seconded the motion, and motion carried 6-0.

Additional Appropriations to Local Public Health Services Fund 1161 to Account 10179 Liaison Nurse in the amount of $18,926, Account 10136 Clerk in the amount of $8,000, Account 20102 Supplies in the amount of $10,000, Account 20160 Nursing Supplies in the amount of $30,000, Account 30302 Advertising in the amount of $1,000, Account 30303 Other Services in the amount of $15,000, Account 30804 Trash Hauling in the amount of $1,000, and Account 30311 Liability/Casualty Insurance in the amount of $4,500 were presented by Matt Sherck. Councilman Nobbe moved to approve the additional appropriations as presented, Councilwoman Riker-Peyton seconded the motion, and motion carried 6-0.

144s:
Community Corrections Director Steve Bills presented 144s requesting salary increases for Community Corrections employees totaling 4%. Some discussion was held regarding the funding and whether the increase was sustainable, and Steve said he believes they are sustainable and the funding is all from either grants or project income. Councilwoman Riker-Peyton moved to approve the salary increases as presented, Councilman Nobbe seconded the motion, motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Bevington voting no.

Judge Paul Freed presented a 144 to increase Brandon Burgess's salary by over 10%. Judge Freed explained the funding would come from grants and project income. Councilman Nobbe moved to approve the increase as requested, Councilman Patterson seconded the motion, motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Bevington voting no.

Extension Director Stephanie McCurdy requested council reconsider and allow her to offer full-time status to her Office Manager. Councilman Patterson moved to approve the request, Councilwoman Riker-Peyton seconded the motion. Discussion was held. Roll call vote was taken with the following results: Durham No, Riker-Peyton Yes, Patterson Yes, Nobbe No, Stewart Yes, Bevington No resulting in a 3-3 tie vote. Councilwoman Cranfill joined the meeting via telephone. Councilman Patterson moved to approve the request, Councilwoman Riker-Peyton seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken with the following results: Durham No, Riker-Peyton Yes, Patterson Yes, Nobbe No, Stewart Yes, Bevington No, Cranfill Yes, and motion carried 4-3.

OLD BUSINESS:
None

NEW BUSINESS:
Sheriff Zac Jones presented the commissary report. Cintas estimated savings were discussed and Sheriff Jones said the projected savings for his departments would be around $20,000 a month. Sheriff Jones gave credit to Commissioner Bever for heading up getting a contract in place and hammering out a deal.

Auditor Downard reviewed some numbers mentioned in the February meeting related to the budget. She shared documents and gave explanations that council's 2026 approved budget was $18,368,000 and covered 30 funds. There are an additional 156 funds that are county dollars but not budgeted funds. Those funds are money that can be appropriated by council, but isn't budgeted as part of the annual budget process, such as donation funds. The remaining funds that council sees monthly on the financial report by fund are not county money. The 60000 series is settlement funds, the 50000 series is payroll clearing funds, etc. Auditor Downard thanked Councilwoman Riker-Peyton for bringing Gateway to the public's attention and encouraging people to research various reports on that website. All the reports for the County are uploaded into Gateway by the Auditor. The final thing discussed was the 2025 Salary Ordinance. There has been a lot of chatter among certain people about a last-minute revision to the ordinance presented for signing that evening. County Attorney Geoff Wesling was the one who came up with a solution to a problem through discussion with the individuals involved, and he presented it to council immediately prior to the meeting. Of the six council members present that evening, four of them clearly remember the conversation with Mr. Wesling prior to the meeting, so it is unfortunate that one council member doesn't remember it, but that doesn't mean it didn't happen. Auditor Downard thought it was important for the public's benefit to understand the truth and not listen to some of the gossip that's been out there. Attorney Wesling confirmed it was his idea and a way to fix a problem.

Councilman Nobbe spoke and agreed with Councilwoman Durham that he was disappointed in the council because if we have a hiring freeze, the purpose is to sop the hiring. He added what he's really disappointed in council about was they continue to talk about saving money but last year had the opportunity to save $80,667 from eliminating insurance benefits to Council and Commissioners and they neglected to do that. could have been eliminated for a savings of $80,000.

PATRON CONCERNS:
None

ADJOURNMENT:
Councilwoman Durham moved to adjourn, Councilman Nobbe seconded the motion, and motion carried 6-0. Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Sharon Cranfill, President	Scott Bevington, Vice President
Connie Durham	Gabe Nobbe
Tim Patterson	Kay Riker-Peyton
Bob Stewart	Attest: Jane Downard, Auditor