

**COMMISSIONER MEETING
SPECIAL SESSION
March 10, 2026
6:00 PM**

<u>ATTENDANCE:</u>	
COMMISSIONERS:	Andy Beck, President Tom Helmer, Vice President Rick Woodall
COUNCIL:	Stephanie Campbell, President Wayne Huffman Kerry Williams
COUNTY ATTORNEY:	Jim Ensley
AUDITOR'S OFFICE	Kristina Berish
AUDIENCE:	40 Individuals

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on March 10, 2026, at 6:00 PM in special session. The meeting was held at the Putnam County Courthouse. Beck opened the meeting.

TRUSTEES – NEW LAW CHANGE SB 270

Beck stated the Commissioners had asked the trustees to attend tonight's meeting to start the discussion of SB 270: “township mergers, authored by Senator Rick Neimeyer, addresses township efficiency and administration. The bill requires mergers of underperforming townships, as determined by a points-based performance system. Specifically, the bill directs the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) to compile data on Indiana townships and assign points based on performance metrics. Based on this data, nearby underperforming townships will be merged to increase resources and improve local services. Failure to provide township assistance, actively manage emergency services, or file annual finance reports all weigh negatively on a township’s score. All Indiana townships, except those within Marion County, are subject to these provisions.”

DLGF deadline: December 31, 2026

Townships must adopt a resolution by: October 1, 2027

Merges in a county effective: January 1, 2029

Beck went over the scoring system that was passed out to everyone before the meeting. Any township trustee scoring 4 or higher will be merged. State Representative Brett Clark and Beau Baird gave some background on the bill.

Woodall stated there are counties that have already started the process of proactively working with the trustees and starting the process of merging. He asked if there were any trustees interested in merging. Trustees for Warren, Floyd, and Marion stated they were. Warren township trustee has been in contact with DLGF to learn the steps of how to merge by December 31, 2025.

Woodall said there would be pros and cons to merging. They needed to really think about the size of the townships being merged. If you merge a small one with one that is a lot larger, the smaller one will lose out in this scenario. When it is merged, it will also merge the rates, debt, etc. of the townships together.

Warren trustee Heavin said when she talked to the State, she was advised to have a lawyer and they suggested county attorney. Jim Ensley said he would help. Heavin is willing to merge early because it is the best for her constituents. DLGF said if they elect to merge, they get more say than after scoring.

Woodall said they would need to start looking at the best way for the constituents of the county to merge the townships. One way is to split it up like the Commissioners are: north, central, and south. North would have 5 townships, central 4 townships, and south 4 townships. The townships must touch to be able to merge.

McPherson Washington trustee said he would like to see how the scoring comes out before making any decisions.

Council Campbell asked what the odds were of legislation changing before 2029. Senator Bray said it was slim. He suggested the trustees scoring themselves now so they would know in advance if they must merge. Look at your bordering townships and see which one made sense to merge with. It is better to control your fate than DLGF.

It was suggested that it should wait until after the general election to see if there is a change in who the trustee is. The potential new one may want to continue and not voluntarily merge.

McPherson also said there is a township trustee online program that gives more detail and if you are a member you can look at that and see if you will score 4 or higher.

Brett Clark said the bill was done by someone that used to be a trustee, Rick Nemeyer. The structure of township trustees has been discussed for 25 years. It was not easy for him to do. It needed to be done to save constituents money.

Something else that needs to be looked at is consideration of how busy each trustee is. You don't want to necessarily combine two very busy trustees. Bray said it would be less likely for a busy trustee to merge with another. You would not score high enough for the need to merge with another.

Commissioners thanked everyone for coming, thought it was a good start in the discussion of SB 270.

ADJOURN

Woodall made the motion to adjourn. Helmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Andy Beck, President

Tom Helmer, Vice President

Rick Woodall

Attest: Auditor's Office
Kristina Berish