COMMISSIONER MEETING
REGULAR SESSION
May 18, 2026
9:00 AM

ATTENDANCE:	
COMMISSIONERS:	Andy Beck, President
	Tom Helmer, Vice President
	Rick Woodall
COUNCIL:	Stephanie Campbell, President
COUNTY ATTORNEY:	Jim Ensley
AUDITOR'S OFFICE	Kristina Berish
AUDIENCE:	26 Individuals

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on May 18, 2026, at 9:00AM in regular session. The meeting was held at the Putnam County Courthouse. Beck opened the meeting and the pledge to the flag was given.

Beck stated Planning had asked to move their old business topic to the first thing on the agenda due to people in the audience here today regarding the topic.

PLANNING – REZONE REQUEST VERTICAL BRIDGE A1 TO A2

Director Lisa Zeiner said this had been tabled at the last meeting. Vertical Bridge gave a presentation regarding the request to put a cell tower in the county. If approved, separate hearing for special exception for putting a tower in the location. The request is due to Verizon having a coverage gap. They reminded the board that today, they are just looking at if it meets requirements for rezone.

Ryan Whitley with Kimley Horn stated they needed it to be rezoned from A1 to A2. The property in question meets the requirements for the request. Passed out information to the board. It showed how the site was selected. Verizon showed specific location as to where they had gap of coverage. Sent letters to surrounding landowners. Jason Riggs with Kimley Horn went over the overlay of existing vs proposed coverage.

Property owner of 11748 S CR 525 W Center Point, Indiana stated he was very curious about remonstrators here today. He felt it was a benign request to rezone this for a cell tower. There is a house near it that was sold that has now gone to a junk yard. He wrote a letter to county complaining but none of the other neighbors have objected to the junk yard visually or what it does to their property value, so he was surprised to see they are objecting to a cell tower.

Les Martin said he and his wife were property owners to the west of this proposed rezone property. If allowed, the cell tower would be right out his front door. He felt he has always been a good neighbor. He has lived there for over twenty years. He will go above and beyond to help people and the community. But they do not want to look at a cell tower every day. They moved to the country to see countryside, not a tower. He felt there should be a better site to put this instead of a neighborhood. He did not think it was right that he had to fight for his property. They have always played by the rules, and this would hurt their family and the value of their property. This tower needed to be put where the dead zone is located, which is not their neighborhood. The company stated they sent out letters to all surrounding property owners; he never received one.

Jeremy Jankowske came to the meeting today to speak against it. He had not received a letter either. When he looked to buy property in the country he looked at where the power lines and towers were located and deliberately stayed away from them. He is now in the middle of building his house on this property to find out a neighbor is wanting to put a cell tower in their neighborhood. He would never have bought the property if he had known. He does not want this at his back door. And he felt this would bring the value of their property down. And ruin the aesthetic of their country living. There must be a better spot for this tower. He has had zero issues with his cell service. He passed out paperwork to the board supporting his objection.

Rep from Vertical Bridge stated property owners' concerns were not for today's meeting. Today is just to address the rezone request. Their concerns are when they hold hearings. If approved today, the next step would be to go before the BZA. Their concerns could be voiced and heard and that board takes them into consideration when voting. Today this board's only decision is if they meet the rezone requirements.

Riggs presented reports to the board that shows comparative analysis of properties in Hendricks County and Hamilton County, Indiana and properties in City of Eureka, St. Louis County, MO which are all near a wireless communication tower. All of these show no drop in property value.

Woodall asked Zeiner what would happen if they approved or denied the request today. She stated if approved, it would go to the June 11th BZA board. They will hear it and decide whether it should be constructed or not. If denied today, the petition dies and they cannot move forward with the special exception. They could come back in a year and start the process again.

Beck closed the floor for comments.

Helmer made the motion to approve the rezone ordinance 2026-5-18-1 from A1 to A2. He felt dead zones needed to be addressed in the county for both the citizens and the law enforcement. He is not sure this is the proper location for the tower but that is to be decided by the BZA. Today, the request meets the requirements for the rezone. Beck seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

<u>VACATE ALLEY IN TOWN OF ROACHDALE</u>

Jim Ensley had advertised a petition to vacate an alley. The lot that runs north and south county roads 1000 North and 975 North. Property owner had asked for it to be vacated. Woodall asked if this would allow it to go back on the tax rolls. Ensley said yes, it would be split between the adjoining property owners. Letters had been sent out, and they had received no response. Megan Long and Dustin Long property owners are located at 2253 E CR 975 N came to the meeting today. They are looking to build a barn, and it would help them with meeting BZA requirements.

Beck asked the audience if anyone was present that was against the request. No one spoke up. Beck made the motion to approve ordinance 2026-5-18-2. Woodall seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL

Woodall said they had a meeting last week with EPIC. We had a horrible claim year a few years ago that is still hurting our rates. They were told at the meeting Anthem for 2026-2027 they would see a zero increase or decrease which is good news for health insurance. And the supplemental insurance would not increase either. His recommendation along with Auditor's Office is to not go out and shop but to accept these numbers. EPIC does recommend to put it out for bid next year since the high claim year should be dropping off. Woodall made the motion to approve and not change the employee's portion of the premium. Helmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

THRIVE PROGRAM

Reps from Thrive came to the meeting to explain the new program that would help low-income families with home renovations. A property owner could receive up to 25K. This could be used for a new roof, HVAC including water heater, or ADA accessibility.

The county could request up to a 500K grant. The county's match would be at maximum of 50K plus 7K for the grant writing fee. If awarded, they would also handle all the administration of the grant. This could potentially help 30-35 property owners in our county.

Woodall made motion to enter into the agreement with up to 70K to come out of the EDIT warchest. Beck seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

Sgt Boller said the remaining sixteen vehicles from criminal cases that are considered abandoned would like to sell these as well to the company that bought the surplus vehicles at the previous meeting. The gentleman would take the responsibility of contacting previous owners and collecting the fees so they could get their vehicle back or he would go through the process to take ownership of the vehicles. Woodall made the motion to approve. Helmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

HIGHWAY REPORT
Director Clint Maddox presented:

1) Rehab Huffman Bridge – received project overview. Scoping report and fees. Design cost $80,300 scope of work and construction would be $482,632. Weight limit 12-15 tons total $562,932. Intensive rehab to get it back open to traffic. They could start it and finish it this year using wheel tax bridge fund. Completion would be next year. Beck made the motion to approve pending Council approval of the $80,300. Helmer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
2) Fuel tanks have been removed. Process of new tanks has begun.
3) Bridges 122, 123, and 124 have been paved over
4) Paving update starting at 900 E hopefully on Wednesday
5) Bridge list for 2027 reviewed looking at 5 bridges next year to revert to culverts and have them removed from the bridge list
6) Professional services agreement for United needs signed.

MINUTES
May 4 (regular and executive) and May 10 minutes – Helmer made the motion to approve the three meeting minutes. Woodall seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

MAIL
The Commissioners acknowledged their mail.

WALNUT CREEK FIRE BOARD APPOINTMENT
Beck made the motion to appoint John Pearl. Woodall seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

FENCE PROJECT PEOPLE PATHWAYS 875W SOUTH OF COATESVILLE ROAD
Beck said he had looked at it this past Saturday. It was approximately 500 feet of fence. Ensley said he would need to research and see what the requirements were. Once he had the information he would get it to the Commissioners for review.

ADJOURN
Beck 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**