

PERRY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
April 21, 2026

The Perry County Board of Commissioners met at 6:00 p.m., as was duly advertised. Commissioners: President Randy Cole (RC), Vice President Pam Janniczky (PJ), and Rebecca Thorn (RT) were in attendance. Auditor Kristinia Hammack was also present. There was no *Sheriff, Attorney or News Representative* in attendance.

The meeting opened with all present reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA

RT made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by PJ. Motion carried 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

a) Tabitha Crosby

Crosby appeared to discuss her opposition over the Commissioners signing a General Engineering Services Agreement that will be discussed at this meeting. Crosby felt that the residents should know that this agreement involves an hourly billable rate plus expenses, and does not include a cap nor not to exceed value. This would essentially give a blank check for the Commissioners to be able to get the work they want performed done, as well as getting the work product from that work sent directly to the Commissioners.

Crosby stated that this would directly cut out the superintendent for many things. She added that this meeting was intended to cut out the Highway department.

This was advertised as GSA 2026 in the biggest of terms. No one in the community or the Highway department were aware this was about engineering services until it was discussed later. Crosby believed this was done intentionally, not to upset the community, because the Commissioners have tried to request a civil engineer, and it did upset our community and the Highway department.

Crosby stated that as a county, there is no need to an as needed engineer to improve the roads. The county has the staff necessary to do that. Acting Superintendent Steve Howell has 48 years of experience, and he is the person who can improve the roads. In addition, the Highway department staff are the experts in doing this, as they have decades of experience and committed their time to Perry County roads.

Crosby stated that currently the Highway department is not making what they deserve to be making, yet the Commissioners are going to be discussing a contract that will pay over ten times what the County is willing to pay the current staff.

Cosby added that the County continues to make decisions that make the Highway department an undesirable place to work. There are currently eight open positions at the Highway department. If the Commissioners want to do what is best for the County, they should be focusing their time, resources, and energy to providing the best equipment and staff necessary to meet the needs of the Highway department.

Crosby stated that currently there are paved roads that are in desperate need of repair and attention. Howell has a proven track record of being able to ensure these jobs get done on the tightest of budgets. Interfering with that by making decisions with an engineer, and without his input, is going to result in a non-cohesive plan, and this is not going to help meet the county needs. Crosby was unsure why after 48 years, the Commissioners are questioning Howell's abilities. Crosby addressed the body of the contract. It states that the owner is the Perry County Board of Commissioners. Crosby quoted from the contract "the engineer's services will be performed solely for the benefit of the owner", the owner being the Commissioners, "and not for the benefit of any other persons or entities".

b) Mary Kay Elder

Elder stated that there was an issue in the Commissioner's room. A board went in that room after hours and held their meeting, which was livestreamed, and there sat the voting machines. The Election board, along with Clerk Joan Hess, spoke to the Auditor, Kris Hammack, and was advised that all boards were notified their meetings were to be held at the Armory. Hammack is now locking the door through the kitchen. However, the two glass doors will not lock. RC responded that with fire codes, and if there is a congregation of X number of people, with

having locks on those doors could be an issue. RC added that there can be specific markers on them that states the door must be unlocked in all times that the building is open. This marker is green, and it is operated by a key. Elder responded that the doors should be able to be locked in an evening when the early voting is done. RC responded that normally when they are done, only people with access, county employees or whatever, should be in the building. Elder stated that the cleaning people are in the building, but they do not go in that room.

RT asked what organization had a meeting in the room? Elder responded the Troy Township Trustee. RC asked Hammack if they were aware of not going in there, and Hammack responded yes. Hammack stated her office does everything it can, and all the offices were notified well in advance that the Commissioner's room is being used for early voting. During this time, all meetings have to be hosted at the Armory, and that they need to get with Greg Linne to make sure they can get in that building.

Hammack stated that the master key does not lock those glass doors. Signs were hung on the doors, and she advised the Election Board, as they advise all offices, do not leave your stuff out.

RT asked about the sliding glass wall, if it opens up as well? Hammack responded they are open, and RT responded that there is no securing there either. Hammack stated that those glass doors are folding, and no way to secure them, therefore they can not be locked either. Elder requested to get locks on the glass doors. Hammack responded that the glass wall is still an issue, and Elder asked if the County could look at getting some sort of lock on them as well? RC responded that it will have to be looked into.

RC stated he sees two issues. He stated that he does not know who programmed the meeting for that room. Hammack responded that the livestream is on YouTube. It is the exact same thing at the Armory as the Courthouse. RC responded that in other words, if he was at the Courthouse, he could have logged in and conducted the meeting? Hammack responded yes. She had the computer in the Commissioner room turned off, so they had to be able to get in the computer, knowing how by previous meetings to unlock the computer. Hammack added that the computer has now been shut down, but they can still turn the computer on. A sign has been put on that computer that all meetings are being held at the Armory. RC stated he believes that Greg Jarboe can take down the streaming part of this, however, they could still come in and have the meeting. RC stated that the second issue is security related to early voting. The room needs to be secure during that period so that no one has access. RT stated that the County could contact Thomas Glass and see about locks on the doors to secure that. Hammack will reach out to Thomas Glass.

- c) Elder asked the Commissioners if they have ever made their appointment with Steve Howell? RC responded not yet. Elder responded that she thought the Commissioners said 30 days. RC stated that they have had some meetings and discussion with Howell about different road improvements, a road plan. RC added that they are still waiting for it. Elder responded that it is going into five months, and PJ added that the Commissioners have been waiting for the five months for the road plan also.

MINUTES

- a) 04.06.2026

PJ made a motion to approve, seconded by RT. Motion carried 3-0.

KRISTINIA HAMMACK, AUDITOR

- a) 04.10.2026 Payroll: \$172,518.54

RT made a motion to approve, seconded by PJ. Motion carried 3-0.

- b) 04.10.2026 Payroll W/H: \$35,757.61

PJ made a motion to approve, seconded by RT. Motion carried 3-0.

- c) Medical Insurance: \$14,852.61

RT made a motion to approve, seconded by PJ. Motion carried 3-0.

- d) 04.21.2026 Solid Waste Claim Docket: \$5,244.05

RC stated this amount does include new stickers.

PJ made a motion to approve, seconded by RT. Motion carried 3-0.

- e) 04.21.2026 Accounts Payable Claim Docket: \$1,735,337.25

RT made a motion to approve, seconded by PJ. Motion carried 3-0.

COMMISSIONERS

a) Perry County GSA 2026 Agreement

Bradon Downing of Butler, Fairman and Seufert, Inc. stated that this is a general services agreement for engineering services. This does not bind the County to anything. It would come out as a task order after the fact. Downing asked if the Commissioners had any questions regarding the agreement? RC stated that his understanding of the agreement is just accepting an hourly rate. Downing confirmed this. RC asked if the County does not use his service at all for anything, the County would owe him nothing. Downing responded exactly. RC stated that the purpose of this is that if the County has an issue related to a problem somewhere within its road system, or anything that Downing deals with, that Butler, Fairman and Seufert, Inc. would be available to call or contact, and Downing would review it and give his recommendations. Downing responded that it would be a task order, which would define the scope and everything, and then the County would have a price within that. It would be signed off on before anything is done at all. RC responded that he does not like to sign anything that is open-ended, but for example, there was a turkey farm individual that came to a Commissioner meeting and had damage to a truck. The issue was mid-winter where the turkey farmer had a problem with possibly two hills, and it had torn up a truck. If the Commissioners would come to Downing stating this hill was presenting the County problems, and he took a look at it, and then came back to the Commissioners with what he thinks might be a resolution to the problem? RC asked at that time Downing would respond to fully engineer the solution, it would be X number of dollars? Downing responded correct. RC stated it would be a nominal fee to go look at it, and then report back to the Commissioners the proposal to correct the situation would be X number of dollars, and then the work to be done could be bid. Downing responded yes.

PJ stated that the Commissioners were not saying that the Highway department is doing anything wrong. For example, with Apricot and Cottonwood roads, the Highway department has gone above and beyond to try to keep this working, and keep it going smoothly. However, the County does not have an engineer to give a professional opinion of how to fix the problem. Steve Howell with the Highway department stated that the County has two engineers, Bernard and Lochmueller, and Cash Waggoner on the same contract. PJ responded that Howell has never reached out to them in all these years. Howell responded that Bernard and Lochmueller came to Perry County and looks all the slides. PJ asked what they said about that road? Howell responded he did not look at that road. PJ asked why not? Howell responded that they were looking at the County slides. PJ again asked why they did not look at that road, and Howell stated that at that time the County was not having problems with that road. PJ stated that it still has problems, and Howell responded that the Highway department fixed that problem with that road.

Howell stated that the Highway department did not have an engineer, but they went out on that road and busted that rock out and fixed the road themselves.

Howell added that the turkey farm owner had told the Commissioners that they had no other problems with that road the rest of the winter.

Howell stated that the County does not need to spend tax dollars on an engineer when the Highway department does not need an engineer to tell him how to do his job. PJ responded that if we want to move forward as a county, and grow and get the roads in better shape, she believes there needs to be an engineer involved. She stated does she think he will take over Howell's job, or anybody's job, no. It would provide the assistance that the County needs of an educated opinion.

Howell asked who is going to say when the Highway department needs the help?

PJ responded that the Commissioners and the Highway department can work together on when they are needed. Howell stated that the County has two other engineering firms under contract. PJ stated that Howell has worked with this firm before, but never signed a GSA Agreement.

A question from the audience asked what it would cost the taxpayers per hour to have this person come out, and RC responded it depends. He has a multi-level for different requests.

RC stated that the Commissioners, and he believed that Howell was involved in the meeting, had C & R Construction go out with the Commissioners to look at the roads. The purpose of this was to help come up with solutions. Howell asked RC how he thought that made Howell feel when the Commissioners met and loaded them in PJ's vehicle, and did not include him? PJ stated that Howell asked

for an engineer, but Howell stated he never asked for an engineer. Howell clarified that he had stated he was not against an engineer, but if he is going to replace Howell, then yes, he was against it.

Howell stated that in the Executive Session, they talked about the roads, and Howell told the Commissioners that he was going to have Rusty with C & R Construction get him some quotes, or estimates, on the roads. RC asked Howell to set up a meeting with them. Howell set the meeting up, the Commissioners came out to the Highway garage, and everyone got into PJ's vehicle.

Howell mentioned with Community Crossings, there was a requirement to have an Asset Management Plan eleven years ago. Consultants wanted anywhere from \$40,000 to \$80,000 to do the plan. Howell called INDOT and asked if the County had to do this, and if so, can the County do their own. He was told yes, INDOT had forms and they would help. The Highway department did their own Asset Management Plan for the roads and bridges, and it was approved. The County saved between \$40,000 and \$80,000 for the taxpayers. Howell stated he is not going to be a part of throwing tax money away. PJ stated that she would like to have a plan and see the County move forward. PJ added that the Commissioners are trying to get help for the Highway department.

RC discussed a binding agent for the roads, and a crown where the water actually shields off to the edges. This will reduce the effort to constantly bring rock to the roads. RC stated that the County needs an expert in binding agents, and can make some suggestions as to what the County could try. The goal is to make a better gravel road.

RC asked Downing if his firm has ever done anything similar to this on gravel roads? Downing responded that the engineer that would be doing that work has done this. RC added to get someone that has some expertise and take them to a gravel road, and at least try it. If it does not hold up, then the County does not need to do that again. If it does hold up, then the County needs to consider what it would cost to do that, and take a look at other roads and see how this can be brought to those roads to make them better.

Howell questioned why the County would need three engineers, and RC responded if two are busy, then the County could call on the third. With this agreement, the County is out no money unless they use their service. He added that what the County is looking for is an answer of how the County can improve the roads. PJ stated that the Commissioners were not saying everything Howell has done is wrong, but what they were saying is it is open to change. Howell stated he is not comfortable to hire a company that has the individual working for it that the Commissioners want to replace him with. PJ responded that was not a true statement. Howell stated he has been at the Highway department for over forty years, and now he is micromanaged to the point he can not even do his job. PJ stated that the County would like to try something and see if it works. The County may ever use this company. Or, they may use them on one project and make a huge difference on the residents' lives on a road condition that people are just fed up with. PJ added that yes, it could be tax dollars spent, however, it could be good tax dollars spent. If the County would be adding businesses, and adding people who are living on the roads and increase the quality of living, that would be a plus for Perry County. RC stated that the main goal is a better road system for the people who live here. He feels different things will have to be tried in order to get there.

Howell stated that the paved roads are in pretty good condition, due to Community Crossings. However, the County has 250 miles of gravel. RC responded that if the County can do something with a binding agent, then the Highway department would not have to visit that road as often, and would free up the Highway department's time to do other things that are positive. Right now, it is a constant back and forth.

RT asked Downing if they used this binding agent in Dubois County, and he responded yes. RT asked does it work, and he responded yes.

RC stated that once a road is identified that the County wants to visit, then a set of specifications or something would have to be drafted. It is different from what the County has currently been doing. RC stated he can not write that spec, and he did not think Howell could either. Therefore, the County would have to get somebody to do that for the County. RC added that the Commissioners are trying to make an improvement.

Hammack asked, as the Auditor, with this contract, was this going to be as far as the services provided by this engineer, who would be initiating that? Would that

be Howell's call? RT responded it would have to be all three of the Commissioners, with RC added the Commissioners would make that determination. However, the Commissioners would not decide to work on a road and never consult Howell. Howell responded to RC that they never communicate.

RC stated that the Commissioners had C & R Construction take a look at the roads, however, they are too small of a construction firm to do any of this planning and put stuff together. When the weather gets nice, they start paving and do all the things they have to do that makes them money. RC added that the Commissioners thought C & R Construction might put something together that the County could use as a big package to put it together. RC stated that just because C & R Construction will not do this for the County for free, what else can the County do? Howell responded that C & R Construction is currently giving him quotes to do that. RC added for the asphalt roads. Howell responded that whatever the Commissioners and C & R Construction looked at, they are supposed to be getting Howell prices on, plus behind Cannelton on Sulphur Springs Road. RC stated he spoke to C & R Construction regarding behind Cannelton on a couple of roads where they have the paving contract. Howell stated he was given an estimate of \$240,000.

RC stated that the road on Catbird Road has pavement on both ends of it, and a rock section between them. Howell responded that C & R Construction is going to give a price to pave the whole road. RC stated that C & R Construction told him if any of the other roads to be worked on would need to be widened, the banks sloped, or ditch work, C & R Construction does not have time to do that. RC stated that if the County is going to do something with the roads that needs a little more work, then the County is going to have to get some outside expertise into the process.

Howell stated that he felt he and the employees at the Highway department have enough experience. They do not fool with bonding agents, so have no experience with that. As far as getting the road ready to pave, the Highway department is able to do that, while ensuring that the ditches are clean and culverts are in place. Howell added that the last road cost \$250,000 to get it ready to pave, plus the cost of getting it paved.

RC asked Howell if he wanted to identify a road and take on the task to turn the gravel road into something suitable that the County wants to embrace? RC added to figure out how Howell would do the binding agents, the cost, and how to apply and put it in? Howell responded that he can try to do that. RC stated to not hire an engineer. Howell responded that the County already has two engineers, with RC responding no, the County is not going to pay anybody, as it would be wasting the County's money on engineering since Howell can do it. Howell responded that the highway department will figure out how to do it.

RC stated earlier the Commissioners spoke regarding a Road Plan, but they are going to skip the plan, and told Howell to get two or three gravel roads that he would suggest that would be candidates for incorporating binding agents in it and the County will try it. RT suggested a road that a school bus has to travel on. Howell stated he would be glad to check on that and get some cost estimations. RC stated that this needs to be moved on, as the Commissioners want to move, get it bid, and get started. RC added that the County is in somewhat of a time crunch. The Commissioners are trying to eliminate the number of times that the Highway department has to keep going back to maintain the roads, and at the same time control the dust and make them more serviceable for the people who live out there.

RT asked Howell to forward the quotes when he receives them.

RC stated he does not have a problem with signing the contract with Butler, Fairman and Seufert, Inc. RC would like to explore some opportunities to pick another road and did not feel it would cost the County a lot of money for them to look at a gravel road. RC asked what that would cost, and Downing responded it depends on the road. RC asked for a range, and Downing responded \$10,000-\$25,000. RC asked that amount is for a full engineering job, and Downing responded that fully varies. It is job dependent. That is why they come out, look at it, give a price, and the Commissioners would sign for that. RC asked what would be the cost to come out and look at it, and Downing responded that part is free. RC responded he wanted to go look at some free roads. Downing added that if they look at a road and the Commissioners determine that they want to do it, then that is when this company would do the task work, and somebody would

have to sign it before they would begin anything. Hammack asked what this company is giving the Commissioners if the road is looked at? Downing responded it is a professional engineer's recommendation of what needs to be done, along with costs. Hammack responded basically this company would give the Commissioners a quote for free, and Downing confirmed that. PJ stated this would not be for every road, it is for the problem roads. She added that Howell and his crew can do most of the roads. When there are people or businesses complaining, this company can give the County another avenue to reach out to. PJ added she was not trying to step on Howell's toes, or put his department down by any means. RC stated his whole thought on this would be to successfully go after some of the other roads that Howell is currently getting quotes on, and stated that the Highway department will be busy putting in culverts. Howell responded that they are currently working on them. RC stated that if more roads are put on the list, it is just that more work. Howell responded they are busy, and are eight people short. They have had benefits taken away, plus making 5% less than they were last year. Howell added that something needs to be done to get the wages up and stop taking away. His crew can do amazing work.

Discussion regarding the bids received for new trucks for the Highway department. RC stated the bids were for single-axle dump trucks, and the questions was whether the County needed to embrace single-axle dump trucks. RC added he knows the Highway department would need that for plowing, but there was a discussion about possible other resources in the county that would plow roads, and then Mulzer Crushed Stone was going to haul with triaxles to the roads. Therefore, the Highway department may or may not need the same size fleet. In addition, the department is eight people down. Howell responded that the Commissioners need to try to help the Highway department get more people out there, to get to a full crew, or at least close to a full crew. RC responded that it comes back that the Highway department needs a plan, and what it wants to get accomplished years one through five. This way the weaknesses within the system can be addressed.

PJ made a motion to approve the GSA Agreement. RT asked how long the agreement was for? Downing responded one year, and the price was in it for one year, which will be all of 2026 with the hourly rates. RC stated that if it is never exercised, then the County never spends any money. RC seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

b) Alpha Quote

RC stated that the courthouse now has two compressors down. Everything will work fine until the third one fails. RC asked Hammack if there are sufficient funds in the maintenance budget? Hammack responded yes. RT asked for the full amount of \$18,000, and Hammack responded yes.

RT asked how quickly could Alpha get on this? Hammack responded that she will call the next day.

RC stated that it is a lot of money for two compressors. Hammack responded that Josh with Alpha had stated he had spoken to the Commissioners at one time regarding unifying the whole courthouse. RC responded that was a \$1 million quote to redo the system as it is currently. Hammack stated that the courthouse temperature is so inconsistent. RC stated that at the current time, the Commissioners have no plan to update the HVAC system in the courthouse.

RT made a motion to approve replacing two compressors at the Courthouse. Hammack asked to pay it out of Building Maintenance EDIT? Hammack added that the County does not have this amount in the General budget. RC responded no, there is a maintenance budget every year. Hammack stated that is not where she thought he was asking about. Hammack responded that there was only \$15,000 for the whole year, and it would have to come out of somewhere else. RT asked where do they want to take it out of? RC asked how much is in the maintenance budget for the Courthouse? Hammack responded well over \$10,000, however, that will drain it for the whole year. If it is all used, then we would have to come every month and take the maintenance expenses out of CEDIT. RC suggested to take out of EDIT Building Maintenance \$15,000, and the remainder out of Courthouse Maintenance, which would be \$3,000, and then add it to the General. PJ seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

A Joint Commissioner and County Council Work Session will be Friday, April 24, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

The Commissioner next Regular Meeting will be Monday, May 4, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m. CST.

RT made a motion to adjourn, seconded by PJ. Motion carried 3-0.

Randy Cole
President

Pam Jamniczky
Vice-President

Rebecca Thorn

Minutes reviewed by:

Kristinia L. Hammack, Auditor

Minutes prepared by:

Leisa M. Ecker, Deputy Auditor