

Minutes of the Wingate Town Council Meeting
Tuesday, April 8, 2025

ROLL CALL

The Wingate Town Council Meeting began at 6:00 p.m. Council Members Kyle Campbell, Andrew Lorenz, and Curt Hadley responded to a roll call. At the request of Council President Kyle Campbell, Janet Alexander acted as clerk on behalf of the town.

Town Maintenance Supervisor Jay Busse with Busse Excavating, Coal Creek Twp Fire Chief Darren Forman, Troy Elless of UMAC, Suzy Bass, and Janet Alexander of Local Government Services were also present. Park Advisory Committee Members Mark Fruits, Phil Bane, and Joyce Stonecipher were also present.

Town Marshal Jared Kirby was absent

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The Minutes of the March 11 Regular Meeting and the Executive Meeting held March 31, 2025, were presented for approval. Kyle Campbell made a motion to approve all the meeting minutes as presented. Andrew Lorenz seconded his motion. The motion was put to a vote, and it carried.

BID OPENING

Two sealed bids were presented for the Park Community Center / Pavilion Project. Luke Gill of DES Engineering introduced himself and opened the two bids received from Biddle's. Luke announced the dollar amounts of the two bids received.

Bid 1: \$299,882.00

Bid 2: \$339,856.00

There was a brief discussion regarding the bid differences due to site placement (16 feet north, 128 feet south to avoid the volleyball court and to reuse the existing septic tank. Janet Alexander raised concerns about a funding shortfall (\$30,000-\$40,000). The existing funds available for the project include the Montgomery Community Foundation funds, roughly \$75,000, and the READI 180 Grant, \$192,000, were noted. A discussion was held proposing to "phase in" the completion of the interior work. Luke Gill explained that DES will put the bids received through a compliance matrix to ensure that nothing's missing, and then he will get back to the town by the end of the week. Following this discussion, Curt Hadley motioned to close the bids and take them under advisement. Kyle Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was put to a vote, and it carried.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Park Advisory Board – Mark Fruits and Phil Bane commented on the following

- Reminded the Council that the pavilion project has secured a state permit.
- The MPO will accept a project with fewer than three bids due to market conditions.

Town Maintenance Supervisor Jay Busse reported on the following:

- Crack sealing streets started in the town's second half (Main Cross, High Street, Walnut, etc.).
- He and Troy are working on a water loss estimate from a water leak at Cording Hall.
- Accessing the 2-inch line meter, which services the Keystone Co-Op Chemical Barn, is an issue. This meter is inaccessible due to the covered pit. Jay proposed moving the meter outside the pit with a protective structure.
- There is a storm drain issue near Harry's; a possible blockage is causing flooding. Jay contacted INDOT
- The handheld water meter reader is outdated; he received a quote for a tablet to be used as a replacement, which would cost \$3,500. Decision deferred to monitor performance.

UMAC—Troy Elless reported on the following:

- He is still waiting for a quote from Covalen for wastewater treatment plant bobber repairs. He stated that the Town had previously received a quote of \$19,000 to repair four units.
- Sherry Winters has provided a contract with a quote to continue assisting the Town with the lead line inventory compliance reporting. The Council discussed the proposal for work at \$100 per hour. The Council discussed setting a “not to exceed 10 hours.” A discussion was held. Troy explained that the EPA & IDEM have made several changes to the requirements. He stated that her proposed rate of \$100 per hour is reasonable.

Andrew Lorenz moved to table the proposed contract until the May meeting. Kyle Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was put to a vote, and it carried.

Coal Creek Fire and Rescue—Fire Chief Darren Forman reported:

The department received a record high of 29 calls in March (8 fire, 21 medical). Year-to-date runs as of April 1st total sixty-two (62). The Chief asked the Town Council if the fire department could store a surplus tanker in the town hall garage due to space constraints. He said that the fire department would provide all upkeep and insurance. A discussion was held. The Council will review space availability and discuss this further at the May meeting.

Town Marshal's Report

Marshal Jared Kirby was absent but provided his March activity report, which was then given to the Council for review.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Clerk-Treasurer - Financial Reports

Janet Alexander presented the town's financial reports. The reconciled financial reports for March 2025, including the Fund Report, Appropriation Report, Bank Statement, and Bank Reconciliation, were presented and reviewed. Kyle Campbell made a motion to accept the reports as presented. Andrew Lorenz seconded the motion. The motion was put to a vote, and it carried.

Janet Alexander presented the Accounts Payable Docket for \$24,067.21, dated April 8, 2025. Kyle Campbell made a motion to accept the reports as presented. Andrew Lorenz seconded the motion. The motion was put to a vote, and it carried.

No utility adjustments were presented.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Wastewater & Stormwater Master Planning Grant Study Update

Keegan Dunn, of HWC Engineering, introduced himself and stated that the purpose of his presentation is to give the council an update on the work that has been done. Keegan said that his goal for tonight is to get feedback from the Town that HWC can use to formulate a recommended project. This recommendation could include one or more of the utilities. He provided maps and written summaries of each system being studied to the Council Members. The presentation covered each of the three areas they evaluated to comply with OCRA's requirements.

Regarding the Town's Water System:

The Town water wells are generally in good condition; he noted that the casing in one of the wells was recently replaced. The other well's casing may need future

replacement due to age, but a full well replacement, which Bastin Logan recommended, is not urgent. This comment was included as a long-term option to be considered within a 20-year planning period.

Suggested water system upgrades include replacing the pressure transducer in the well building, upgrading telemetry (e.g., Omni-site to match the wastewater system), and purchasing a portable generator for emergency power (there is an existing hookup at the well building).

Regarding Water Treatment, he commented that a filtration alternative was considered but deemed unnecessary to address the Iron and manganese levels, which exceed EPA secondary contaminant levels but are typical for the area and not mandatory to address.

He also acknowledged an issue with maintaining chlorine residual, especially on the town outskirts, due to water stagnation in the tank. One proposed solution would be to install a chlorine booster station and mixer at the storage tank to maintain consistent chlorine levels.

Concerning the Water Tower and Water Storage, he stated that the storage tank is in good condition, as reported in the most recent inspection. The study does include considering replacing the interior wax coating with epoxy, as wax is outdated. This update is not urgent but recommended for the next maintenance cycle.

Regarding the Water Distribution System, the engineers looked at some alternatives for the Town to consider.

Alternative 1: Replace all galvanized mains (identified in a prior report) and lead service lines, marked as purple lines/dots on system maps (e.g., Main Street, Main Cross, McClure St. south of Wabash). Replacement is needed if galvanized pipes are downstream of lead or cannot be proven otherwise.

Alternative 2: Per 10 State Standards, replace all small-diameter mains (4 inches or less) with 6-inch or larger pipes to improve flow and pressure, especially for fire hydrants. These are marked as dashed blue lines on maps.

A discussion was held concerning prior replacements using 4-inch mains (e.g., near Curt Hadley's home). It was noted that some "fire hydrants" are flush hydrants, which are not intended for fire protection. Curt asked about the existence of records to allow for the exclusion of recently replaced lines.

Keegan noted that the water system is functional overall but requires upgrades for reliability and compliance. Immediate priorities include telemetry and chlorine

residual improvements. Other priorities include future well replacement, tank recoating, and main replacements, which are longer-term considerations.

Regarding the Town's Wastewater System:

Keegan stated that the town's most pressing utility need is the wastewater system. He described the current system, explaining that the collection system primarily uses 4-inch mains to collect effluent from septic tanks, with no significant issues. He stated that two sections of old ductile iron gravity sewer mains (located under the former railroad bed, one on the east side, one on the west) experience frequent blockages and require cleaning. A proposed alternative would be to replace these two lines to address degradation and solids buildup. He said there should be no railroad right-of-way issues, as ownership has reverted to property owners (except one spot near Keystone Co-operative).

He also said that the 13,000-foot, 4-inch force main from the main lift station to the wastewater treatment plant has issues with short cycling and reduced pump efficiency, possibly due to trapped air. He suggested two possible alternatives. One alternative would be to install new air release valves (ARVs) at high points and clean-out structures at low points to improve flow and maintenance. The locations of existing ARVs are unknown. They also suggest that the Town could upsize the entire force main, adding new ARVs and clean-outs to reduce head loss, improve pump efficiency, and save energy. He noted that this alternative is a more expensive option.

Lastly, he addressed the issues at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The current lagoon system has violated effluent limits (e.g., ammonia), with the most recent violation reported in September 2024. The current management system is outdated "bobber" aeration technology is no longer effective. HWC proposed a few alternatives, including:

- Alternative 1: Replace bobbars with surface aerators or diffused aeration, repair lagoon linings, replace faulty valving, and install a Submerged Attached Growth Reactor (SAGR) to address ammonia limits.
- Alternative 2: Replace the lagoon system entirely with a mechanical packaged plant (e.g., Aero-Mod), which would modernize treatment but is costlier.

Keegan said that addressing effluent violations is the top priority and is likely to be included in HWC's recommended plan.

Regarding the Stormwater System:

The suggested stormwater system improvements target chronic drainage issues at key locations (Vine/Wabash, west of Garfield, and Wabash/McClure) using dry wells, storm pipes, and rain gardens to enhance infiltration and reduce flooding. Keegan outlined proposed alternatives to address drainage issues in Wingate's stormwater system, focusing on specific problem areas such as:

1. The intersection of Vine and Wabash. The proposed solution is to install drainage infrastructure to redirect water from Vine and the Wabash/Vine intersection to a dry well at the park. He said that soil infiltration rates appear suitable, but geotechnical testing would confirm feasibility during design. The goal being to improve drainage along Vine and reduce flooding at the intersection.
2. The area west of Garfield Street. The proposed solution for this area is to install a storm pipe along the alleyway west of Garfield, crossing Wabash, and discharging into another dry well at the park. This could enhance drainage for areas north of Wabash, particularly west of buildings, and mitigate runoff issues.
3. The intersection of Wabash and McClure Streets. The idea here is to redirect drainage from the parking lot into a rain garden or riprap ditch area to promote infiltration. To deal with the discharge the Town could connect to new storm sewers at Vine and Wabash or to an existing system south of Wabash. The goal is to manage runoff and reduce standing water at the intersection.

Engineer Keegan Dunn concluded his presentation, stating that HWC expects to deliver a draft report by June 2025, with a potential follow-up meeting to review recommendations and refine the proposed project. A final report is planned for July, followed by a public hearing to share findings with the community.

After the discussion, the Town Council prioritized wastewater treatment due to regulatory concerns, followed by stormwater drainage and drinking water. Given the high costs of these utility upgrades, funding would likely involve OCRA grants (\$600,000-\$750,000) with a 20% local match, supplemented by State Revolving Fund loans or Rural Development programs.

Keegan will coordinate with Janet to schedule a follow-up meeting within a month, involving at least one council member, Troy, and Jay, to review cost estimates and refine priorities. No further action was taken after his presentation.

Public Hearing—Proposed Water and Sewer Rate Increases—Janet Alexander introduced Robert Reynolds, CPA, with London Witte Group (LWG). Reynolds prepared the proposed water and wastewater rate review, which was used to prepare the proposed rate ordinances.

Janet explained that the published rates were inflated by 20% to allow the Council flexibility. She also said that following last month's meeting, she tried to get rate information from other utilities in towns with Keystone Co-op. However, this proved difficult because each of the utilities contacted uses differing measurement units (gallons vs. cubic feet) and rate structures, making direct comparisons difficult.

Copies of the two proposed rate ordinances were provided to the council members and to the public. The proposed rate increases are modest, \$7-\$9/month for average users (sewer: 7.5% increase, \$4.36 for 3200 gallons; water: 19.35% increase, \$9.89). The rates will become effective on the July bill covering consumption from June 16 to July 15.

Robert Reynolds explained that the declining rate block structure used in our rate ordinances is commonly used by utilities statewide. He said that lower usage incurs higher per-gallon costs to cover fixed costs, while higher usage covers variable costs such as treatment. He said that Wingate's rate structure is typical and appropriate for a small town without a large industrial base.

Janet reminded the Council that the reason it is necessary to adopt new rate ordinances is that the town's water fund had only \$1,800 at the end of 2024. However, it recovered to \$5,000 by January 2025, which is down from \$35,000 the prior year, due to added costs and inflation. Also, the town does not have a depreciation fund for either utility, leaving the town vulnerable to infrastructure costs, explaining that a single water main break could deplete funds from the operating fund. She reminded the Council that the last rate increase was in a decade.

Resident Dave Dixon weighed in on the conversation, complaining that Keystone uses a lot more water than residents and that they pay significantly less per gallon than residential customers. Dave believes that this is unfair. He repeated that Keystone provides water to farmers (e.g., from Tippecanoe and Montgomery Counties), which he believes Wingate residents subsidize. He is frustrated because, in his opinion, Keystone, a high-volume water customer, pays less per gallon compared to residents.

Robert sympathized with Dave's concerns but emphasized that state law requires fair and equitable rates and prohibits singling out a single user without a cost-based justification. He explained that rates are designed uniformly across all users, regardless of meter size, and a separate rate for large users would require a costly cost-of-service study (\$20,000-

\$30,000). He stated that the Town Council could hire him to prepare a report redesigning the rate blocks to shift costs to higher volume users, such as Keystone Co-Op and the churches but he estimated it would cost \$1,500-\$2,000 for 8-10 hours of work and that it would not generate any additional revenue.

Mr. Reynolds explained that the rate blocks in the proposed ordinances are set to meet revenue requirements (\$18,835 additional needed for water), ensuring operational costs are covered without overcharging. He noted that the sewer utility is currently cash positive but nearing a deficit due to inflation; the water utility had a \$2,000 loss last year, with a declining fund balance.

He suggested that the Council adopt the proposed rate increases (7.5% sewer, 19.35% water) to address immediate financial needs.

At this point, Janet presented the proposed rate ordinances. Both titles were read aloud, and Janet stated that the ordinances were advertised for a public hearing. She asked if anyone from the public wanted to comment on the proposed rate increases.

Ordinance 2025 -01 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 2019-03 An Ordinance Amending the Rates and Charges for the Use of and Services Rendered by the Sewage Works System of the Town of Wingate, Indiana and Ordinance No. 2025-02 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 2019-04 An Ordinance Establishing a New Schedule of Rates and Charges for the Use and Services Rendered by the Waterworks of the Town of Wingate.

Resident Mark Fruits commented that he general disliked the idea of rate increases but acknowledged necessity. Dave Dixon repeated his concern that high volume users should pay more.

Phil Bane pointed out Keystones property tax contributions and highlighted their economic importance to the town. He was concerned about the utility having only \$1,800-\$5,000 in reserves which is insufficient to handle a major issue like a water main break.

No one else from the public asked to speak and the public hearing was closed.

The Council Members held a discussion. Andrew Lorenz compared the \$7.98 average increase (2017-2025) to a hypothetical \$1/year increase if rates had been adjusted annually and warned that without action, the town risks serious financial trouble by year-end. Kyle Campbell supports adopting the new rate ordinances to stabilize finances. Member Curt Hadley supports adopting current rates and studying rate block adjustments later. He suggests examining small communities with similar agricultural retailers (e.g., Woodburn, Greencastle) to benchmark Keystone's usage and rate its fairness.

Robert Reynolds highlighted the town's challenge of generating reserves for infrastructure projects, exacerbated by stagnant revenue and rising expenses in a small, non-growing community. He also described the situation as a "vicious cycle" where rate increases are the only way to meet growing costs without population growth.

The Council Members thanked Robert Reynolds for coming to this meeting and for his presentation.

Andrew Lorenz motioned to adopt Ordinance 2025 -01 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 2019-03 An Ordinance Amending the Rates and Charges for the Use of and Services Rendered by the Sewage Works System of the Town of Wingate, Indiana. Kyle Campbell seconded the motion to adopt. The motion was put to a vote and the motion carried.

Andrew Lorenz motioned to adopt Ordinance No. 2025-02 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 2019-04 An Ordinance Establishing a New Schedule of Rates and Charges for the Use and Services Rendered by the Waterworks of the Town of Wingate, Indiana. Kyle Campbell seconded the motion to adopt. The motion was put to a vote and the motion carried.

Robert Reynolds stated that he will provide a proposal for rate block adjustments by next meeting. Tabled.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. New Hope Church Kite Day - Curt Hadley mentioned that New Hope was asking about holding an event in the park and asked about requirements. A discussion was held. No formal approval is needed; reservation and proof of insurance are recommended due to potential power line risks.
2. Food Truck Inquiry - A question came up from a business interested in operating in Wingate. They already have a Montgomery County Health Department permit. No town permit is required; the Council agreed to allow operation unless issues arise. Potentially parking at New Hope Church or in the park.
3. Tree Removal - Well House – Jay explained that there are two trees (including a dead ash tree) threatening the well house. Kyle Campbell made a motion to authorize Jay to hire a tree trimmer. Curt Hadley seconded the motion. The motion was put to a vote, and it carried. Jay will get quotes from B&B, Anderson, or others (e.g., Frank Eberly, Jonah Davis).
4. Website and Internet Service—Shyanne Busse will manage the website, and Curt Hadley is looking into Internet providers. Due to metal structure interference, internet and phone service issues are being tabled for the next meeting to evaluate options (e.g., VoIP, modem upgrade).

5. Remote Participation in Meetings – During the last month's meeting, Andrew asked about regulations limiting remote participation by Council members. Janet reported that it is allowed by law, but an authorizing ordinance or resolution is needed. Tabled

6. Spring Cleanup Day (June 7, 2025) – Jay Busse is coordinating with T & S Trash Services. Dumpsters will be provided for tires and household garbage; no electronics will be accepted. Two large and one small dumpster will be reserved. Coal Creek has agreed to allow the Town to use their parking lot again.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Paul England asked if the Town would take action on the trash pile at 206 E (Harry's rental property). Paul reported that there has been no progress since the last meeting.

He also asked if his septic tank would be cleaned out this year. Jay confirmed that it is on the schedule for this year.

Linda England: Reported streetlight outages. Jay noted multiple outages due to staffing issues by the utility.

Darren Forman expressed concern about public safety related to the debris at the former Cording Hall site. Curt stated that Stu Weliever is pursuing insurance options. The contractor, Walden, provided a cleanup quote, but the town does not own the site.

ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kyle Campbell, Town Council President
Acting Clerk Treasurer