

Vermillion County Government 255 S. Main St. Newport, IN 47966

VERMILLION COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES

September 1, 2026 / 6:00 PM / Auditorium



Live Stream @vermillioncountyindiana

<https://www.youtube.com/live/x0C8bgSX614?si=WIGwVLZuXA04zoB5>

Commissioner President RJ Dunavan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance led by RJ Dunavan.

Roll Call. Present; President RJ Dunavan, Vice-President Misty Hess, Commissioner William Peebles, Attorney Jon Spurr, Auditor Ron Dunavan and Meeting Secretary Amy Tolbert.

Approval of the Minutes from August 25, 2026. Peebles motioned to approve, seconded by Hess. Motion carried.

Approval of claims: August 14, 2026 and August 28, 2026. Hess motion to approve, seconded by Peebles. Motion carried.

Approval of Payroll: August 14, 2026 and August 28, 2026. Peebles made motion to allow, seconded by Hess. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

Public comment addressed a wide variety of community concerns including commentary on proposed power plants and carbon sequestration. Residents voiced strong apprehension about the transparency and integrity of the Rise Board, calling again for their resignations as well as Jerry Acy's. They also asked for better representation from the public on the Data Center Committee. There was discussion on Economic Development, non-disclosure agreements and the handling of public resources. The public asked for more transparency in boards

Dunavan suggested one commissioner be put in charge of gathering information and reporting back to the board. It was agreed that Hess would spearhead this project.

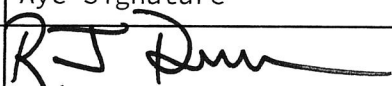
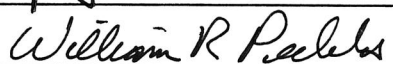
3. Seth Recknor, change in zoning. RJ Dunavan reported that this issue needs to go back to Area Plan before it comes back to them and the item can be removed from the agenda. A new request will be submitted at a later date.
4. Vermillion Rise Board Appointments. Tabled. Executive Session to be held on the 15th at 5:15 p.m.
5. Truman House-Bruce Aukerman. Aukerman gave recognition to John Espland, MRT Director with West Central Community Corrections, for his work with moral recognition therapy in the Vermillion County jail, with 36 out of 81 inmates participating. He also spoke about the Truman House Recovery home for men, stating they have served approximately 250 Vermillion County residents since 2016. He explained that the program operates eight houses with an average stay of nine months, focusing on long-term recovery. Several former residents, now leaders, of the Truman house highlighted the transformative impact of the program on individuals and the community. Aukerman stressed the importance of community-driven recovery initiatives and ongoing support was emphasized. Aukerman stated that the Opioid Grant funds were used for Peer Court until the Vermillion County Council defunded it. He explained the Opioid restricted and unrestricted funds. He is asking that the fund balance in the unrestricted fund be used for repairs and upgrades to the Truman Houses. He explained that the County has paid the Hamilton Center an average of \$149,080.00 since 2015, a total of \$1,938 million dollars. In January 2026 the county paid Hamilton Center \$96,512.00 and on July 31, 2026 \$100,086.00. He asked that a representative from Hamilton Center be invited to discuss a program for women. He asked that the balance in the unrestricted Opioid fund, \$70,820.41 which is not tax payers dollars, be given to the Truman house. Aukerman had an update from Nina Alexander, which stated that the Commissioners control this fund, not the council. Attorney Spurr agreed. The Commissioners asked that itemized receipts be provided to them, Peebles made a motion to provide \$70,820.41 to the

project nor do they have affiliation with that project. He said this is a standalone, natural gas energy facility. He said Tenaska is one of the largest private energy companies in the world based in Omaha, Nebraska and founded in 1987. The River's Edge generating station is a 1540 megawatt combine cycle power plant which will be fueled by natural gas. He also said the land they have acquired near Dana has nothing to do with a land swap deal at Vermillion Rise. He said their next step is to meet with the Area Plan Commission on September 10, 2026.

Adjournment:

Hess made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. Peebles seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned.

Read in Full and approved by the Vermillion County Commissioners this 5th day of October, 2026.

Name	Aye Signature	Nay Signature
President RJ Dunavan		
VP Misty Hess		
William Peebles		

Attestation:		Auditor Ron Dunavan
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