

additional \$12,000 for autopsy expense, \$3,000 more for toxicology expense, \$1,500 for cell phones, \$1,000 added for travel/mileage, \$1,250 for gas lube and oil, and \$3,500 for vehicles. The total increase to the budget was \$33,100 over the current year.

**Assessor-** Robin Alberson, assessor, presented her 2026 budget. She explained the only significant increase was related to computer software and contracts. The council questioned the use of professional services and clerical accounts as they had not been expended in 2025. Mrs. Alberson explained she budgets money in those accounts for any appeals or reassessment help the department might need, but it is not always needed.

**Prosecutor-** Wes Schemenaur, prosecutor, presented his budget for 2026. There were no significant changes or discussions.

**Extension Office-** Allison Keen, director, presented her 2026 budget. Their major increase was for the Purdue Extension contract of \$3,825. They also moved money from telephone to equipment repair to cover the cost of copies.

**Veteran Service Office-** No one was presented from the Veteran service office, but there were no significant changes or discussions.

**Building & Planning-** John Hemmelgarn, administrator, presented his 2026 budget. There were no significant changes or discussions.

**Commissioners-** Duane Monroe and Doug Horn were present for the 2026 budget. Emily Franks, auditor, explained the large increases to budget including \$103,600 in longevity. However, it only represented an increase over the prior year budget of less than \$5,000. They also put in an 8% increase to health insurance for \$108,768, \$100,000 increase in computer maintenance for the new IT services, \$105,000 to insurance for buildings, liabilities, and vehicles, \$33,500 for telephone costs and a \$67,600 increase to workers' compensation due to recent claims.

**Courthouse-** No one was present for the courthouse department. There were no significant changes or discussions.

**Superior Court-** Judge Gail Dues was present from Superior Court. The only change to the budget was an additional \$3,000 for translator services due to an increased need in the department.

**Public Defender-** Brandon Murphy, chief public defender, presented his budget for 2026. The main increase was an additional \$1,000 for office supplies for each public defender. He also explained only the chief public defender followed the state funding guidelines as there was no deputy public defender.

**Circuit Court-** Judge Brian Hutchison, was present from Circuit Court. There were two significant changes \$4,000 in operating supplies for renovations with their FTR program, and a \$3,500 increase for transcripts and records due to recent appeals.

**Probation Department-** Judge Brian Hutchison, was present for the Probation Department. There were no significant changes for discussions. However, Mr. Hutchison explained while the state probation scale was frozen for 2026, they were still entitled to any overall raise given by the county.

**Emergency Management-** Samantha Rhodahamel, director, presented her 2026 budget. There were no significant changes or discussions.

**Cemetery-** No one was present for the cemetery department. There were no significant changes or discussions.

**Retirement Center-** Cindy Bracy, JCCL ABOD President, explained there were very few changes to the budget aside from the removal of the housekeeper supervisor position. She advocated for the department to be budgeted for the entirety of 2026. They hope there will be a decrease to the amount of building supplies and meals needed for the year.

**Community Corrections-** No one was present for the Community Corrections department. There were no significant changes or discussions.

**Highway-** Robert Howell, Superintendent and Stephanie Klarer- Asst. Superintendent, came to present their 2026 budget. They explained the large increase of \$1,300,000 to the bridge repair budget in their Cum Bridge fund. This will be used as a 25% match for the Community Crossings Grant. They used the money for this most recent round for a road paving project, due to timing. Out of the 10 bridges that need repaired, only one has been shut down. Ms. Klarer explained they hope to lower costs from \$2.1 million to \$1.5 million but will need to see if those changes will work. Lastly, explaining the fund would only be down \$411,000 by 2029. Mr. Howell explained \$295,000 budgeted in local road and street would be used for match money on the next community crossings grant. However, there are some soft spots that need taken care of ahead of road conversions. Mr. Minnich suggested the county use the road conversion money to maintain current roads and bridge repairs before continuing with conversions.

**JEMS-** Gary Barnett, shift supervisor, was there to present his 2026 budget. Mr. Barnett noted an increase in contractual services for the medical billing in the amount of \$9,000, as they receive 5.6%. He also noted the lack of benefits, as the reason the department runs without two full time paramedics.

**Health-** Health Butz, health environmentalist/supervisor, presented his 2026 budget. He explained the 1161 Health First Budget will only receive 25% of the funding in 2025, which should be \$119,000.

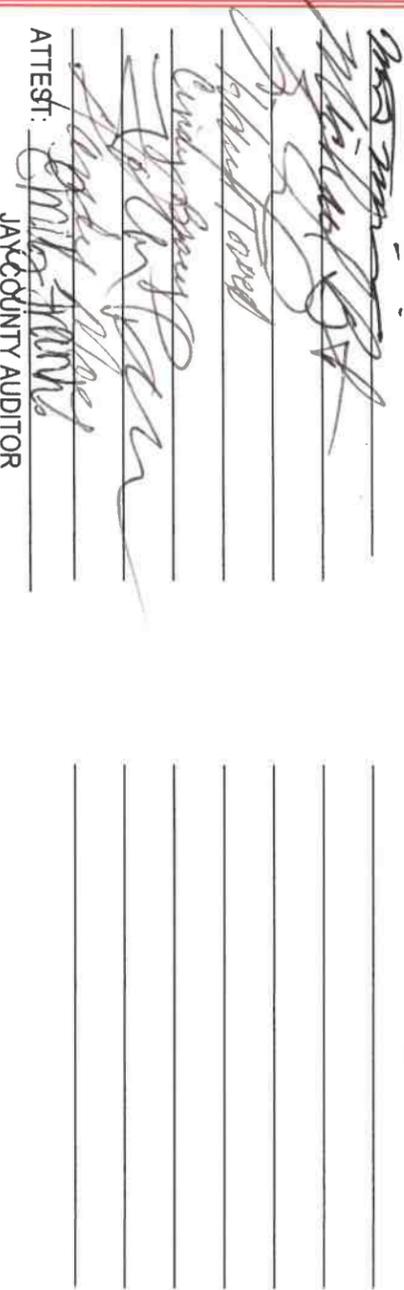
**Jay County Solid Waste-** The budget was presented with no significant changes or discussions.

With no further business Bryan Alexander made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Cindy Bracy seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

JAY COUNTY COUNCIL

AYE

NAY

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTEST:   
JAY COUNTY AUDITOR

**SEPTEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**

The Jay County Council met in session on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 6:00 PM, in the auditorium at the Jay County Courthouse. Attending was Faron Parr, Randy May, Michael Brewster, Bryan Alexander, Harold Towell, Cindy Bracy, attorney Wes Schemenaer, auditor Emily Franks, and Matt Minnich, president presiding Mike Brewster made a motion to approve the minutes from the executive session on August 13<sup>th</sup>, the regular session on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the joint session on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and the minutes from the budget review September 2, 2025 meeting. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

**ADDITIONALS**

**CUM BRIDGE** 1135.26300.00000.0000 Road Signs **\$15,000.00**  
\$15,000.00

The additional appropriation was to cover new signs through the end of the year. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the additional appropriations as presented. Harold Towell seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

**BACKHOE REPAIR & REPLACEMENT**

4903.25500.00000.0000 Backhoe Parts & Service **\$37,000.00**  
4903.31601.00000.0000 Surveyor Equipment Repair **\$5,000.00**  
4903.47700.00000.0000 Excavator **\$2,000.00**  
**\$30,000.00**

Brad Daniels, surveyor, explained the three additional appropriations. The first two were to repair the old excavator before it could be traded and the \$30,000 was for the downpayment on the new excavator. Michael Brewster made a motion to approve the three additional appropriations for Backhoe Repair & Replacement as presented. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

4908.31450.00000.0000 Courthouse Project **\$203,000.00**  
4908.38300.00000.0000 Repairs & Maintenance- Jail **\$177,000.00**  
**\$26,000.00**

The additional appropriation for the courthouse project was related to sealing, tuckpointing and damproofing the courthouse. The additional appropriation for the Jail repairs and maintenance was to upgrade the technology at the jail with the new phone system. Michael Brewster made a motion to approve both additional appropriations in the infrastructure fund. Cindy Bracy seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

**ARP-2021 CLFRE**

8950.31480.00000.0000 Professional Services- Ritter Strategic **\$8,800.00**  
**\$8,800.00**

The additional appropriation was presented for payment to Ritter Strategic services for invoice #202291 for work on the countywide radio project. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the additional appropriation as presented. Michael Brewster seconded the motion and the motion passed by majority vote, with Harold Towell voting against the motion.

**Transfers:**

1000.21400.00000.0005 County General- Sheriff- Stationary to 1000-32100.00000.0005 Postage \$1,376.23. Cindy Bracy made a motion to approve the transfer of funds as presented. Bryan Alexander seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

1000.16300.00000.0161 County General Courthouse- Part Time Custodian to 1000.13900.0000-0161 Wages-Overtime \$3,000. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the transfer of funds as presented. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

1000.16800.00000.0201 County General- Superior Court Guardian Ad Litem to 1000.16400.00000.0201 Wages- Translator \$1,500. Cindy Bracy made a motion to approve the transfer of funds as presented. Harold Towell seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

4908.47900.00000.0000 Infrastructure- Road Conversion to 4908.31480.00000.0000 Professional Services \$33,570 to cover the downpayment to MSS Engineering for design work on a new public safety building. The proposed transfer died for lack of motion.

**2026 WIS SALARY ANALYSIS REPORT**

Lori Seelen, senior consultant WIS, presented their 2026 salary analysis report. She briefly went over their history with the county and their classification and compensation system including the entities used in the comparisons. There were a few reclassifications recommended including the change in the highway department from a mechanic (LTC D) to head mechanic (LTC E), the auditor's office three second deputies from COMOT B to COMOT C, and the Circuit Court Bailiff from COMOT A to COMOT B. They also recommended the elimination of the open Merit POLE E classification, and to remove the LTC C III classification. Their analysis showed the LTC job classifications are 5.73% behind with a total cost to midpoint of \$91,853.44. The COMOT job classifications were 8.13% behind for a total cost of \$122,498.96. The PAT classifications were 4.22% behind for a cost of \$31,128.22. Civilian POLE job categories were 3.67% behind for a total cost of \$77,970.94. Merit POLE positions were 4.20% behind for a total cost of \$32,347.68.

**COUNTYWIDE RADIO DISCUSSION**

Barry Ritter, Ritter Strategic Services, came to the council to discuss any questions they had regarding the countywide radio project. Motorola can only guarantee the current pricing and financing rates until September 18, 2025. They have reduced the number of radios at the county highway, changed radio types for volunteer fire departments at a cost savings while improving interoperability, eliminated Portland utility departments, reduced the number of consoles at the Portland Police Department. However, they have added hospital security and ER and added mobiles and portables for the Portland Police Department. Mr. Ritter explained the current system is at the end of its life and require replacement. The new system would guarantee 95% coverage in the designated area.

Currently, the project cost for Jay County the first year would be \$1,478,923 for the infrastructure, \$67,927 for the Drive Testing Coverage Levels, \$200,000 for 4-position console update at the Jay County Sheriff's Office, \$325,546 in equipment for the sheriff's department, \$97,500 for EMA, \$236,350 for EMS, \$15,500 for the Health Department and \$259,800 for the highway department. The cost for other department includes: Bryant Fire \$227,000, Dunkirk Police \$107,160, Dunkirk Fire \$154,375, Pennville Police \$45,000, Pennville Fire \$147,000, Portland Police \$435,000, Portland Fire \$399,500, Redkey Police \$30,000, Redkey Fire \$148,000, Salamonia \$205,000 and Hospital \$14,750.

The lease purchase options include a five-year option with annual payments of \$1,059,619 at 4.57% interest, seven-year option with annual payments of \$789,868 at 4.57% interest, ten-year option with annual payments of \$593,035 at 4.72% interest, and a fifteen-year option with annual payments of \$441,891 at 4.82% interest. All options exclude the annual SUA (service upgraded annual) and maintenance as annual

and recurring cost for updates and maintenance cannot be figured as the number is changing. The ongoing maintenance and service would be billed annually in advance of service. Any cost savings would be offered back to the county in a form of credit on the \$4.6 million. If the county were to do go with Motorola financing the first payment would be due February 2027. If the county were to purchase, 25% would be due at customer design-review, 60% due at the shipment of equipment, 10% would be due upon installation and 5% due upon final acceptance. They are still looking at a project cost for the infrastructure and equipment of \$4.6 million with a total cost over fifteen years of \$6.7 million. Mr. Ritter explained the county could take the next year to set up interlocal agreements with over agencies.

Bryan Alexander expressed concerns over various items on the project including funding sources, shortened timeline, lack of interlocal agreements with entities, and fluctuating costs. He did not believe the county was close to deciding and would be willing to pay the price increase to get answers to those questions. Mike Weitzel, Portland City Fire Chief, explained that the project had been started in 2021 with him and Motorola, expressing that first responders are organized by mutual aid and all work together. He confirmed the smaller fire departments would need the county to pay for their equipment due to lack of funds. Lastly, stating that the city had money earmarked for the radio project even if it hadn't been voted on by their council.

The 95% coverage was discussed with Harold Towell expressing concerns over the 5% not covered. Dylan Griffith, Ritter Strategic Services, explained Motorola would be required to provide 95% coverage, which is the gold standard for safety. When you go above 95%, we will see incredibly diminished returns. Motorola confirmed they are required to test and prove they can meet those requirements. Larry "Ray" Newton, sheriff, explained the need to protect his officers and was content with the 95% coverage over the current 15-50% coverage they receive now. Motorola explained the current timeline would have the tower completed by April-June 2026 and the radios once ordered could be in within six weeks. Barry Ritter explained that it might be too aggressive of a timeline, but the county was a high priority for IPSC, which could see results sooner.

Lastly, financing for the project was discussed. Motorola informed the county they could decide to pay off the entire balance of principal without interest at any of the milestone dates starting in 2027. Emily Franks, auditor, explained there were various sources of money, but no one source would be available to cover the entire project cost. The infrastructure could be paid out of the infrastructure fund which currently has a cash balance of just over \$2,000,000 with \$450,000 received annually. There is estimated to be a \$700,000 surplus in Economic Development funds this year due to a supplemental distribution. If the solar farms would start construction, the county would see over \$2 million from Hodson Energy in EDA payments. The Jay County Redevelopment Commission put \$450,000 in their plan to help with countywide radios, that might be available or potentially more, if they create a TIF district for the solar farms. Harold Towell noted the county would need to keep money towards this project and not other projects, specifically the 68 acres.

Michael Brewster made a motion to approve the notice to proceed with the 3.72% financing over ten years. Bryan Alexander seconded the motion and the motion passed by majority vote, with Harold Towell and Randy May voting against the motion.

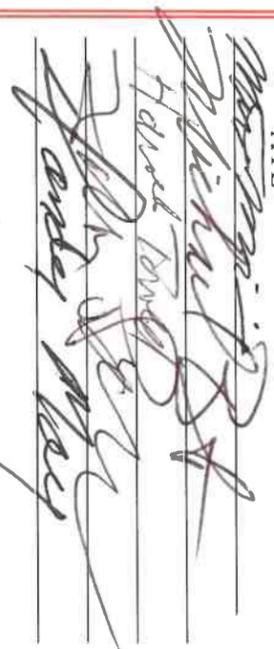
#### 2026 BUDGET

The 2026 budget was briefly discussed with calls made for cuts in various line items including Assessor clerical, and professional services, and in the commissioners', budget including computer maintenance, animal control contract, and telephone accounts. It was also discussed if the county home should be budgeted for the entire year of 2026 or only a portion. Cindy Bracy mentioned an incentive package for county home employees to stay on until the closure of the facility was being looked into by the board. Emily Franks, auditor, explained she had put together a proposal to show members where the county would sit financially if the large majority of accounts were frozen at 2025 figures, but provided a 2% raise for all employees. She added the conservative numbers would be a good place for the county to see the first impacts of the new state legislation. After reviewing the numbers, Bryan Alexander voted in favor of publishing the 2026 proposal figures. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

With no further business for the council, Harold Towell made a motion to adjourn the meeting: Randy May seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

#### JAY COUNTY COUNCIL

AYE



NAY

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:   
JAY COUNTY AUDITOR

**SEPTEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2025**

The Jay County Council met in session on Wednesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 6:00 PM, in the auditorium at the Jay County Courthouse. Attending was Faron Parr, Randy May, Bryan Alexander, Harold Towell, Cindy Bracy, attorney Wes Schemenaur, auditor Emily Franks, and Matt Minnich, president presiding. Absent was Michael Brewster.

**Transfers:**

1000.11401.00000.0380 County General- Jail- Wages Jailers to 1000.12200.00000.0380 Wages- Other Compensation \$14,000  
1000.11190.00000.0380 County General-Jail Wages- Communication Officers to 1000.12200.00000.0380 Wages- Other Compensation \$33,500. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the two transfers of funds as presented. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

4908.47900.00000.0000 Infrastructure- Road Conversion to 4908.31480.00000.0000 Professional Services \$33,570 to cover the downpayment to MSS Engineering for design work on a new public safety building. Chad Aker, commissioner president, spoke in favor of the transfer to the council. Cindy Bracy explained she would rather wait for the location of the building to be decided before moving forward on the design work. The proposed transfer died due to lack of motion.

**2026 BUDGET HEARING**

Emily Franks, auditor, read the budget as advertised to taxpayers; General Fund \$12,034,253, Reassessment \$83,976, Referendum Debt (Jail Lease) \$731,000, Highway \$5,098,618, Local Road and Street \$400,000, Cum Bridge \$2,592,000, Health \$415,867, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) \$1,307,950, Sheriff Continuing Education \$5,510, Emergency Telephone System (Statewide 911) \$291,833, Cum Cap Development \$500,000, Economic Development \$345,750, LIT Public Safety \$1,117,805, Surveyor Perpetuation Fund \$2,500, Co Elected Officials Training \$4,500, Deferral (County User Fee) \$5,500, Adult Probation Fees \$61,942, County Corrections \$18,639, Jury Fees \$27,500, Backhoe Repair & Replacement \$58,493, Infrastructure \$132,250, Comm Corr Home Detention \$151,475, County Plat Book \$23,800, Local Public Health \$237,953, County Disclosure Fees \$4,500, LIT\_EMS \$ 923,796, Retirement Center Donations \$5,000, Emergency Planning Right to Know \$14,000. Ms. Franks explained the budget was advertised with the higher amount to account for remaining questions on the budget. There was an error inputting the 4th of July account in the Economic Development Fund instead of \$10,000 it was put in as \$1,000. An additional appropriation will need to be completed for the difference in January 2026.

There were a few reclassifications recommended including the change in the highway department from a mechanic (LTC D) to head mechanic (LTC E), the auditor's office three second deputies from COMOT B to COMOT C, and the Circuit Court Bailiff from COMOT A to COMOT B. They also recommended the elimination of the open Merit POLE E classification, and to remove the LTC C III classification.

Bryan Alexander made a motion to accept the WIS recommendations for the classification changes. Faron Parr Seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Bryan Alexander requested the council look at increasing the surveyor base pay to match the Recorder from \$50,791 to \$55,085. The increase would also be for the 1st deputy. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the increase in wages for the surveyor. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. The surveyor also requested \$55,000 for a new truck for the department and \$500 to pay for CDL physicals and licenses. The purchase price of the truck should be reimbursed back to county general through the ditches. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the two requests. Cindy Bracy seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

The contract with Purdue University through the Jay County Extension Office in County General was increased to \$131,335 for 2026. Cindy Bracy made a motion to approve the increased amount for 2026. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. Ms. Franks asked for clarification on the mental health and development disabilities rate as an increase was discussed due to the closing of the retirement center. The rate advertised was the max for mental health at \$183,722 and \$50,000 for developmental disabilities. Bryan Alexander made a motion to approve the amount advertised. Cindy Bracy seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

The sheriff request for medical & hospital and utilities was reviewed. Ms. Franks let the council know the sheriff had already exhausted the money budgeted in medical hospital for the year and had an additional appropriation in for October. She suggested the council approve the requested amount in the two accounts to avoid additional appropriations next year. Bryan Alexander approved the increase to Jail Medical & Hospital to \$332,500 and Jail Utilities to \$195,400. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. Bryan Alexander made a motion to fund the retirement center for six months of 2026. If the department needs more time, they will come back and ask for additional appropriations. Faron Parr seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. Ms. Franks recommended the vehicles budgeted in 1170 should be taken out of Cum Cap Development due to the decrease revenue in LIT\_Public Safety. Cindy Bracy made a motion to approve the decrease of the vehicle account to zero. Bryan Alexander seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting was opened for public comment, with no public comment, Faron Parr made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Randy May seconded the motion and the motion passed by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

AYE

NAY

*[Handwritten signatures: Faron Parr, Harold Towell, Cindy Bracy, Bryan Alexander, Randy May]*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**JAY COUNTY COUNCIL**

ATTEST:

*[Handwritten signature: Emily Franks]*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JAY COUNTY AUDITOR