

February 16, 2026

The Wabash County Drainage Board convened at 10:00 a.m. for a regularly scheduled meeting. Board Chairman Jeff Dawes; Board Members Tyler Niccum and Cheryl Ross were in attendance and a quorum was present for the meeting. Others in attendance included: Surveyor, Cheri Slee; Assistant Surveyor, Braden See; Highway Superintendent Ryan Smith and Deputy Surveyor Tonya Blair.

Drainage Board Minutes

Chairman Jeff Dawes initiated the review of the minutes from the February 2, 2026 Drainage Board meeting. Mrs. Ross moved to approve the minutes as written, and Mr. Niccum seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with a 3-0 Board vote.

Henry Keaffaber Drain

The Surveyor stated that the contractor has not yet completed the tree clearing and restoration yet but she would like to finish the certification of assessments on the Henry Keaffaber Drain so we can begin to bring money in to pay off the bank loan. After discussion, Board Members agreed to have the Surveyor certify the above said drain for reconstruction collection.

Kendall Owen Drain

Mrs. Slee explained that Brian Ranck contacted the office a couple of years ago with concerns about the condition of the lower section of the Kendall Owen Drain which runs through his and neighboring properties and beyond CR 600 E. Mr. See has surveyed the drain which consists of a 22" tile at the outlet along with some sections having 18", 16" and 12" tile. Tim Rank said that they have recently talked with landowners who are now requesting 36" tile installed throughout the entire scope of the project from outlet to a wet hole on the Bowman property. If it is determined that a smaller tile is adequate for the project and landowners want the larger tile installed, they would be responsible to pay for the upsizing. The drain outlets into Rush Creek and flooding neighboring properties with the increased tile size could be a problem. Mr. Rank also has some concerns with installing the larger tile and would like to have an informational meeting with the landowners to discuss the issue. Mrs. Slee added that she would like to have this sent to the engineers before an informational meeting but landowners are against spending their money on engineering. Mr. Niccum stated that engineering is needed for the project regardless of any opposition. After discussion, Board Members agreed to have an informational meeting with landowners before engineers are contacted to get their recommendations for the project. The Surveyor said that Mr. See would be back out to survey the area (west of 600 E) again before the informational meeting.

Garber Bechtold Drain

The Surveyor reported she has talked with Greg Michel and Andy Bolinger (contractor) regarding the maintenance project on a branch of the Garber Bechtold Drain within Mr. Michel's property. There was a question of whether to increase the tile size to 18" (recommended per watershed) or replace the existing 16" with 15" tile. Mr. Michel would like to have 15" tile installed due to concerns with the lack of cover in the area. The 15" tile will be at max capacity but will work according to Mr. Bolinger. The estimate for 15" tile is \$36,309.00 compared to \$39,782.00 for 18" tile (1100 feet). Board Members agreed to accept the estimate from Bolinger Agricultural Drainage for \$36,309.00. Mrs. Slee said she would contact Mr. Michel and Mr. Bolinger to let them know they can proceed with the project.

Kevin Bowman – Private Drainage issue

Mrs. Slee presented the response from Mark Frantz (County Attorney) regarding the petition for Board Members to review. Mr. Frantz has concerns that they won't be able to prove it's a mutual drain. He suggested that if proof of consent isn't found, researching back to a common ownership of the two properties would be the next step. If the two parcels were owned by the same person but then split causing a private drain to be a mutual drain, that would imply consent if there is nothing in writing. If the petition is filed, we would still need to investigate and report whether an obstruction of a mutual drain exists. The biggest issue is whether the Drainage Board can even exercise any jurisdiction over the US Army Corps of Engineers. Mrs. Slee said she is working to create a petition so it would be ready if Bowman's decided to proceed with the petition. If so, we will plan to take pictures of the site and investigate to determine if it's considered a mutual drain.

Micheal Bright – Manure station

The Surveyor stated that Brian Campbell, Plan Commission Director, brought it to her attention that Michael Bright is wanting to install a manure station on his property. Maps were presented showing the proposed location. There is already a lot of drainage within the property including a waterway from the neighboring property for his building location and a 24" tile that could create issues. It's not a good idea to place structures over any type of water pattern. Mr. Bright is currently working with the Plan Commission on permitting. After discussion, it was agreed upon by Board Members that Mr. Bright needs to come before the Board to present a drainage proposal for the manure station.

Miscellaneous Drainage business

Wabash County Treasurer – transfer of funds

The Surveyor presented transfer of funds from the Wabash County Treasurer for the following:

Funds Transfer/ Loan from #1158 General Drain Improvement;
\$9,202.71 to #2600 Drain Reconstruction Fund
\$1,010.17 to #2700 Drain Maintenance Fund

Repayment of loan/transfer to #1158 General Drain improvement;
\$41,950.08 from #2600 Drain Reconstruction Fund

\$10,343.10 from #2700 Drain Maintenance Fund

Building Permits

The Drainage Board agreed at the January 17, 2023 meeting to allow the county surveyor approval to allow for minor impact construction permits meeting the requirements established. The varied requests were for the following: Alan & Emilie Cook, 85-03-19-300-014.000-001, barn porch; Mr. Niccum motioned to approve the building permits as presented. Mrs. Ross second. Roll call vote, motion carried 3-0.

Claims

The Board reviewed drainage invoices: Reconstruction; John Maiden #600, \$5250.00 to Banning Engineering. Mr. Niccum motioned to accept the claims as presented. Mrs. Ross seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

There being no further business Mr. Niccum made a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Ross seconded the motion. Roll call vote, motion carried 3-0.

Jeff Dawes, Chairman

Cheryl Ross, Vice-Chairman

Tyler Niccum, Member