



Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

Pres. – Brendan Kearns

V. Pres. – Arin Shaver

Secretary – Dale Brier

September 9, 2026, 1:00 pm ET

Wabash & Erie Canal Interpretive Center

1030 N Washington Street

Delphi, IN 46923

Streaming Link: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/228916819557690?p=aipafCYH9a1cgImScv>

Meeting Agenda

Call to Order, Introductions, Announce Proxies, Open Agenda

Review and Approval of July 8, 2026 Minutes

Comments from Visitors or Guests

DNR Finance Report (Dale Brier)

Committee Reports

- ✿ Commission One-Pager
- ✿ Sponsorship Policy

President's Report

Old Business

- ✿ Previous Sponsorship Requests
 - Wabash Riverfest
 - Float Jam 2026
 - Monarch Festival
 - Riverwild
 - Sullivan Co 8th Grade Rafting

New Business

- ✿ New Sponsorship Requests

General Reminders, Discussion, Announcements

Adjournment

Next Meeting: ** November 18, 2026, 1:00pm ET, Vermillion County ** (Nov 11 is Veterans Days)

If you anticipate needing a reasonable modification under the ADA to participate or have questions concerning access at the meeting locations, please contact Ric Edwards, DNR ADA Director, at REdwards@dnr.IN.gov or 317-232-4145.



Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission

Pres. – Brendan Kearns

V. Pres. – Arin Shaver

Secretary – Dale Brier

July 8, 2026, 1:00 pm ET

Little River Wetlands Office

8315 W. Jefferson Blvd.

Fort Wayne, IN 46804

Attendance

Voting Members Present:

Adams County - Randy Lehman
Allen County - Kyle Quandt
Carroll County - Dan McCain (alt)
Cass County - Arin Shaver
Gibson County - Bill Knowles
Huntington County - Dave Hacker
Knox County - Ben Burke
Parke County - Phil Cox (alt)
Posey County - Ralph Weinzapfel (alt)
Sullivan County - John Waterman
Tippecanoe County - Kris Gertz (alt)
Vermillion County - Les Zimmerman
Vigo County - Brendan Kearns
Wabash County - Mike Beauchamp
Warren County - Sam Cody
Wells County - Doug Sundling
DNR - Dale Brier (designee)

Guests:

Allen Hurst - DNR State Parks
Dave McCain
Eric Shideler - Warren Co Alt
Keith Poole - Wabash Co Alt
Laura Schwartz - Adams Co Alt
Ron Zartman - Allen Co Alt
Terri Lehman

Counties Absent:

Fountain County

Counties with no Appointment:

Jay County
Miami County

Meeting Agenda

Call to Order, Introductions, Announce Proxies, Open Agenda

President Brendan Kearns called the meeting to order at 1:16 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. He announced that Mike Tetrault had stepped down from the commission. Dan McCain added that Tetrault had taken a new position with Salesforce and that the Canal Center would be looking for a new executive director.

Kearns thanked Kyle Quandt for planning the activities and Little River Wetlands for hosting the meeting.

Allen Hurst reported there were no proxies. There were no changes to the agenda.

Review and Approval of May 13, 2026 Minutes

Quandt moved to approve the minutes, and Phil Cox seconded. The motion passed.

Comments from Visitors or Guests

Dave McCain said that he looked forward to hosting the next WRHCC meeting in Carroll County at the Wabash & Erie Canal Park.

DNR Finance Report (Dale Brier)

Dale Brier presented the DNR finance report (Attachment A). The revenue in FY26 was \$125,070, the lowest it had been in the past five fiscal years. The available balance of the fund was \$389,215.43.

Kearns noted that revenue was not as high as in previous years and that should be considered for future expense considerations. With revenue not as consistent or as strong as in the past, the fund may never grow big enough again to launch a \$600,000 grant round.

Mike Beauchamp asked what the \$2,333 property tax expense was. Brier answered that those were taxes paid to Wabash County, Illinois, where one of the royalty-providing oil wells resides.

Kearns asked Brier to provide an overview of the \$378k expense in grants. Brier explained that those funds reflect capital projects awarded through the historic preservation grant round. Kearns then asked whether DNR staff time spent administering grants is covered through grant encumbrances. Hurst clarified that staff time is not paid from grant encumbrances; instead, it is an additional expense and reflected within the DNR payroll line item.

Kearns asked whether the grants were wrapping up. Brier noted that the Division of Historic Preservation & Archeology (DHPA) had recently provided a grant status update. Shaver asked if grants have a finite timeline. Brier explained that grants have contractual deadlines, but those deadlines can be extended or renewed. He added that contract cancellations are rare, but in the event of cancellation, the monies are liquidated and any remaining funds would return to the WRHCF.

Kearns raised the Merom grant project, awarded back in 2018, as an example of a project that has stretched on and continues to generate administrative costs even today. Brier stated that the project remains ongoing due to various issues. John Waterman acknowledged issues but added the project was nearing completion. Kearns said that anything can railroad an awarded grant project.

Waterman asked if he could present an event for sponsorship consideration. Kearns agreed but noted that Waterman would need to submit the official form to Hurst prior to the next meeting.

Hacker motioned to accept the finance report. Randy Lehman seconded, and the motion passed.

Committee Reports

✿ Commission One-Pager

Kearns summarized that a proof of concept was created and the DNR Division of Communications would produce a finalized version once the commission submits the content they want included. Suggestions should be emailed to Kearns and Hurst.

✿ Sponsorship Policy

Kearns stated, with great enthusiasm and no sarcasm at all, that Zoom remains the preferred platform and noted that the policy committee's virtual meeting proceeded without technical difficulties. He prepared a draft sponsorship policy proposal and distributed it to commission members, explaining that his goal is to shift attention from large grants to smaller, high-impact projects.

Brier had checked in with other state agencies to see if there were ways to get money to small non-profits or local governments in a cheap and efficient manner. Each agency replied that money does not go out without a full grant agreement and a contract. There was no good way for funds to be given to Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) or used for capital projects without a grant agreement. Resultantly, several elements of the proposal were not possible due to policy and requirements tied to state funds.

Referring to the earlier financial report, Les Zimmerman expressed concerns that administrative costs were very high compared to revenue. Quandt offered that having every other meeting virtually would cut travel reimbursements, thereby lowering administrative costs. Kearns said mileage was De minimis, instead arguing that because DNR salaries are charged to the commission, those operation costs have gone up, and large grants with long-term commitments may be problematic and costly, like the project in Merom.

Brier noted that increased sponsorship amounts will draw greater scrutiny from the state, and Eric Shideler recommended including additional documentation. The committee agreed to develop a tiered system with varying maximum request amounts, with each tier requiring increasing levels of documentation. During the discussion on the maximum sponsorship amount, Quandt moved to raise the limit to \$2,500; the motion did not receive a second. The sponsorship policy committee agreed to meet before the next meeting to produce a revised proposal, and Kris Gertz was added to the committee.

Kearns emphasized the importance of making progress and expressed the expectation of holding a final vote at the next meeting. Hacker cautioned that making major policy changes at a time when future funding may decrease involves risk and suggested postponing changes. Cox noted that larger grants have provided tangible improvements and continue to hold value. Kearns commented that spending more frequently and directing funds quickly reflects positively on the commission.

Old Business

✿ Previous Sponsorship Requests

○ Wonders of Wetlands Days

Cox overviewed the educational event for 8th-grade students in Parke and Vermillion Counties. Lehman motioned to sponsor the event for the requested \$1,000. Gertz seconded, and the motion passed. Cox abstained.

○ Knox County Wabash River Expedition

Ben Burke summarized the educational rafting event that would bring Knox County 7th-grade students out onto the Wabash River. Bill Knowles motioned to sponsor the event for the requested \$1,000. Gertz seconded, and the motion passed. Burke abstained.

- Splash on the Wabash

Hacker recapped the floating event that gets hundreds of people out on the Wabash River. Doug Sundling motioned to sponsor the event for the requested \$1,000. Arin Shaver seconded, and the motion passed. Hacker abstained.

- Mudpuppy Place- Multiple Events

Hurst read the project description from the Mudpuppy Palace submission. Cox added that the request was specific to five named events. Brier raised concerns about event proximity to the Wabash River, to which Hurst confirmed the events would not take place on or immediately near the river. Kearns said that they take place in the Wabash watershed. Hacker replied that it is the Wabash River Commission, and if all the watershed is included, it would be the State of Indiana Commission. However, Hacker said that he would vote in favor of this request because the sponsorship policy was about to change, and he need not worry about a questionable precedent being set.

Quandt motioned to sponsor the events for the requested \$1,000. Sam Cody seconded, and the motion passed. There was one opposed.

New Business

- ✿ New Sponsorship Requests

- Wabash Riverfest

Gertz presented the event for sponsorship consideration on behalf of the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC). It is a free community festival on the banks of the Wabash River in Lafayette. There are numerous activities, including kayak races, a 5K, fishing, guided hikes, and more. The request was for \$1,000.

- Float Jam 2026

Gertz presented the festival-style event on behalf of WREC. Float Jam is a free community event where local musicians are staged on two fishing boats captained by two local anglers. Hundreds of audience members will paddle alongside the “stage boats” in canoes, kayaks, rafts, and voyageur canoes. The concert will take place over a 4.5-mile stretch of the Wabash River. The request is for \$1,000.

- Monarch Festival

Quandt presented the event on behalf of Little River Wetlands Project, a land conservancy in Allen County. The event includes educational presentations and demonstrations, butterfly tagging, Monarch displays, and native plant offerings. The event is on September 20, and the request was for \$1,000.

- Riverwild

Mike Beauchamp presented this educational event on behalf of the Wabash River Defenders. All seventh graders in Wabash County are taken on a rafting trip down the Wabash River with educational stops along the way. The request was for \$1,000.

- Sullivan 8th Grade River Float

Waterman presented the event on behalf of the Sullivan County SWCD. The event provides educational rafting experiences for Sullivan County eighth graders in September. Lunches are provided for the students, and the trip includes educational stations. The request was for \$1,000.

General Reminders, Discussion, Announcements

Quandt reported that Northeast Indiana Water Trails (NEIWT) had social paddles scheduled throughout the season and encouraged members to sign up. NEIWT had also received a grant to host introductory paddling courses. They needed volunteers, and those interested should contact Quandt.

Kearns shared a story of seeing a group presenting on the health and benefits of the Wabash River, only to find out that none of them had been out on the river. Kearns had brought them out to experience the river firsthand on his boat.

Cox reported that the Wabash River Run event was on August 29. Shideler added that it was a sanctioned event.

Adjournment

Quandt motioned to adjourn the meeting and Shaver seconded. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 3:52pm.

Attachment A:

48686 Wabash River Heritage Corridor Fund		FY26 as of 6/30/2026	
Account	Description	Expense	Revenue
431401	AD - Oil and Gas royalty along		\$ 125,070.00
510101	Payroll Salaries & Wages	\$ 12,175.20	
516002	FICA Regular	\$ 712.68	
516005	Payroll Medicare	\$ 166.64	
517003	Payroll Perf St Pd Em COnt	\$ 365.30	
517005	Payroll PERF State Share	\$ 1,363.64	
518161	Health Insurance	\$ 2,756.54	
518606	Payroll Life Insurance	\$ 10.12	
518796	Payroll Anthem Dental Trad	\$ 82.80	
518800	Anthem Vision	\$ 9.22	
518901	Payroll Employee Assistance	\$ 3.02	
519006	Payroll Long Term Disability	\$ 73.05	
519503	Payroll Def Comp - StateMatch	\$ 64.30	
519722	HSA Health Savings Acct 2	\$ 192.30	
547022	SpOp-Uniforms&Related	\$ 816.00	
541002	Mot Veh Ex - Gasoline	\$ 238.93	
541010	Mot Veh Ex - Parts & Supplies	\$ 124.64	
546002	Off-Office Supplies	\$ 40.84	
599036	AdmOp-PostageMeter/Potage	\$ 38.35	
547044	SpOp-Library Books (Powerbank)	\$ 114.68	
592026	AdmOp-Property Tax	\$ 2,333.70	
592029	Adm&Op Taxes & Collection Fees	\$ -	
595120	InState Travel - Per Diem&Meal	\$ 102.50	
595130	InState Travel - Lodging	\$ 220.00	
595180	InState Travel - Board Member	\$ 16,854.08	
599116	AdmOp-Event Sponsor	\$ 8,875.00	
571010	Grants - Cities	\$ 65,219.00	
571100	Grants - Counties	\$ 100,000.00	
571300	Grants - Colleges Universities	\$ 23,808.10	
573100	Grants - Nonprofit Orgs	\$ 189,154.61	
	DNR payroll	\$ 17,974.81	
	Operating	\$ 3,707.14	
	Travel costs	\$ 17,176.58	
	Sponsorships	\$ 8,875.00	
	Operational/Admin FY Expenses	\$ 47,733.53	
	Grants	\$ 378,181.71	
	Total FY Expenses	\$ 425,915.24	
	Fund Balance as of 7/1/25	\$ 902,941.00	
	FY26 Revenue	\$ 125,070.00	
	FY26 Expenses	\$ (425,915.24)	
	WRHCF Balance	\$ 602,095.76	
	Encumbered	\$ (212,880.33)	
*****	FY26 Available Balance	\$ 389,215.43	*****