

PIGEON CREEK WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

LINDA FREEMAN, CHAIR

CHERYL MUSGRAVE, SECRETARY/TREASURER

KARAN BARNHILL, VICE-CHAIR

KRISTI JOHNSON, MEMBER

Some information about the Pigeon Creek Watershed Development Commission aka PCWDC in Vanderburgh County, Indiana:

The Pigeon Creek Watershed Development Commission is the very first and as far as I know the ONLY watershed development commission in the state of Indiana created under IC 14-30.5. It was established A county ordinance was signed into effect by the Vanderburgh County Commissioners on December 19, 2023. Public notices were given, formal hearings were held and on September 17, 2024 the PCWDC was established by the Indiana Natural Resources Commission under Administrative Cause No. 24-001W. This was the culmination of many meetings, emails, phone calls, and lots of hours from several local elected officials and stakeholders. It was a lengthy process, but it was accomplished. One that hopefully Warrick and Gibson counties partake and join as multiple county cooperation is one of the tenets of the Indiana Code.

Vanderburgh County is the only member of PCWDC at this time. The statute was set up for multiple counties to join and work together on watershed commissions. However, at this point Warrick and Gibson Counties have not joined. Both counties have had an advantage over Vanderburgh as they were able to make Pigeon Creek within their counties a regulated drain. This gives them the ability to bill, receive funds and a right of entry to the creek. Which in turn allows them to access the property along Pigeon creek and perform maintenance or remove obstructions like logjams. Vanderburgh County has NOT had these rights to use. Up until now, if a logjam or some type of obstruction formed, the county had to wait until it moved against a county bridge. Then county bridge funds could be used to remove the danger to the bridge. If you were a property owner on Pigeon Creek that had a problem, it was your responsibility. The creek is not owned by a government entity, there are some state and federal agencies that have jurisdiction as to what can be done within the creek. Ultimately, the property owner was the one totally responsible financially and held to requirements by state or federal agencies.

The board consists of Kristi Johnson, DNR appointee, Karan Barnhill, city appointee, Cheryl Musgrave, county appointee, and myself, because of my office as county surveyor. The startup workload is incredible, as currently we have no funds except the money that we can borrow against from the county commissioners under an interlocal agreement. We are working on our regular jobs and tasked with starting a business – a domestic nonprofit one that is separate from the county. We have had to apply for a federal EIN, a Unique Entity ID from SAM.gov, a certificate of incorporation from Indiana to obtain a business id, along with numerous other tasks. We have had to open a bank account, hire legal representation, hire an accountant to manage and oversee our funds, hire and work with a consultant to create short term and long term work plans, ad nauseum. By law we are required to hire an executive director, but without funds we are in limbo with a lot of the requirements stated in the Indiana Code.

The surveyor's office personnel have been working diligently on this project while continuing our regular duties of reviewing site and drainage plans for developments and subdivisions, perpetuating section

corners, preparing specifications for the 80 miles of regulated drain maintenance, along with reviewing the bids, awarding the contracts, and receiving complaints of drainage issues – just to name a few.

I know that this has tasked other county offices as well. We have worked with the assessor to get parcel ids and property class codes added or corrected in the GIS mapping. The auditor has had to work with us to massage the data and get it into a workable data set for the Xsoft software. I want to thank all that have been involved, all that will be involved and those that will be handling the phone calls that come once the bills hit the mailboxes. Please be patient with us as we work through this. It is a team effort to improve conditions for the Pigeon Creek watershed, such as being able to remove obstructions to help with flooding issues.

The area the watershed covers within Vanderburgh County will stay the same, unless the USGS (United States Geological Survey) makes modifications. Parcels that get split, change property class codes, buildings built on commercial vacant land, etc. will change the special assessment on them. As per the code:

IC 14-30.5-5-1 Annual special assessments imposed within designated watershed; maximum amounts or lower amounts; alternative methods of financial support

“... an annual special assessment against each taxable parcel of real property that is located in the county and within any part of the commission's designated watershed, as follows:

- (1) For a residential parcel of real property, seven dollars (\$7).
- (2) For an agricultural parcel of real property, the product of:
 - (A) one dollar (\$1); multiplied by
 - (B) the number of acres in the parcel.
- (3) For a commercial parcel of real property on which no structures are situated, the product of:
 - (A) two dollars (\$2); multiplied by
 - (B) the number of acres in the parcel.
- (4) For a commercial parcel of real property on which at least one (1) structure is situated, fifty dollars (\$50).
- (5) For an industrial or public utility parcel of real property, three hundred sixty dollars (\$360).”

The PCWDC is a very new endeavor and we are trying to get to the purposes for which it was created, to address flood damage reduction, drainage, storm water management, recreation, and water infrastructure needs. If you have any questions about the PCWDC, feel free to reach out to myself or Justin Dickson in the Surveyor’s office.

Thank you,

Linda Freeman, Vanderburgh County Surveyor & Chair of PCWDC
1 NW MARTIN LUTHER KING JR BLVD RM 325
EVANSVILLE IN 47708-1860

www.VanderburghSurveyor.com

My desk: 812-435-5211

FAX: 812-435-5023

Main Office: 812-435-5210