

MARCH 4, 2026

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Those present:

Chalmer Tobias	Carrie Mugford	Cam Kissinger	Maddie Shultz
Jim Smith	Matt Mize	Shannon Carter	Eric Christiansen
Allen Miracle	Nate Birch	Blake Hearn	Dr. Stacy Young
Gary Montel	Craig Walters	Miriah Tobias	Cynthia Johnson
Adam Penrod	Ryan Shock	Brandon Whitcraft	Other Residents

Those absent: Laura Rager. A quorum was attained.

The March meeting of the North Manchester Town Council was held at the Public Safety Building, 709 W. Main Street, North Manchester, Indiana, on March 4, 2026, at 7:00 p.m., pursuant to notice duly given in accordance with the rules of the Council. The meeting was called to order by council president, Chalmer Tobias, who presided.

MINUTES

Minutes of the 02/04/26 and 02/18/26 meeting were presented for approval. Motion to approve the minutes as presented: Miracle/Montel. Motion passes unanimously.

VISITOR COMMENTS

The following statement was read by Council President Chalmer Tobias regarding public comments made at the February council meeting:

The Town of North Manchester is prohibited from infringing upon, restricting, or imposing content-based prior restraints on artistic performances held at public facilities. Under the **First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution**, artistic expression is recognized as a "core" form of protected speech. Because the facility in question serves as a public forum, any attempt to curtail a performance based on its message, theme, or artistic content violates the **Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment** and federal civil rights protections under **42 U.S.C. § 1983**. Federal courts have consistently held that local municipalities may not censor expression simply because it may be unpopular or controversial, as the right to free expression is paramount in public spaces.

No further comments were made.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Requests for Funding – Learn More Center – Town Manager Adam Penrod introduced Cynthia Johnson from the Learn More Center. Johnson presented a funding request of \$10,000 for the North Manchester campus, citing delayed state and federal funding. The North Manchester facility is open 2 days a week for students. Johnson shared the 2025 Impact Report, noting that the LMC served 188 students county-wide, with 63 students utilizing the North Manchester campus. LMC achieved strong results, with 81% of their North Manchester students achieving a measurable skill gain and 23 students receiving their High School Equivalency. Johnson noted that the LMC is partnering with the county jail and Josiah White's to increase the

impact throughout the county. Tobias thanked Johnson. Council will consider the request at the next meeting.

2. Updated National Flood Plain Ordinance - GO #1, First Reading – Town Manager Penrod explained that he, Building Commissioner Blake Hearn, and Allen Miracle completed a virtual audit and compliance meeting with the DNR of the town's current flood plain management permitting process. This is not a common process so it was an educational experience. One of the pieces that need updated is the flood plain ordinance. The current ordinance is 4 pages, but the updated version is 35 pages. Penrod emphasized that compliance is required by FEMA and the DNR to keep insurance costs down for residents and maintain eligibility for federal disaster funds. Councilmember Allen Miracle stated that federal flood maps have changed and keeping our processes updated helps our residents get or keep proper insurance on their homes. Clerk-Treasurer Mugford read the first page of general ordinance #1, 2026, verbatim. The ordinance is available at town hall for inspection during normal working hours. Motion to approve GO #1 on first reading: Miracle/Montel. Motion passes unanimously.

3. Police Request to Purchase a New Truck – Police Chief Nate Birch requested permission to purchase and outfit a 2026 police package Ford F150 Supercrew 4X4. The truck will provide necessary bed space for hauling seized property, found bicycles, and a training trailer. Birch noted that the department routinely collects evidence that is too large, too dirty, or just inappropriate for the inside of the Explorers. Birch received quotes from Kerlin Motor Company (\$49,597.68) and City Ford (\$51,199.80). The quote from Renz Repair Service to outfit the truck is \$18,000. The truck will replace a 2016 Impala that is suffering from door hinge issues, high idling, and battery drain. The Impala will either be auctioned at Metzger's or kept for parts for the other 2 Impalas still in use. Penrod noted that the purchase of a new truck was discussed during the July budget discussions and funds were appropriated in the current budget. Motion to approve the purchase of a 2026 F150 from Kerlins: Montel/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

4. Eel River Commons Project, Phase 1 Environmental Contract – Town Manager Penrod explained that a Phase 1 desktop environmental review is needed for the Army Corps of Engineers permit for Eel River Commons, due to historic dump sites in the community. Penrod commented Eel River Commons is a large, multi-year project, that is not to the construction phase yet, but there are a lot of knowns and un-knowns that must be dealt with. An Army Corps of Engineers review process could take 10-12 months. The hope is that this desk top review will shorten or eliminate that step. Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc, has been contracted to complete the phase 1 for \$7,500 plus \$800 for travel expenses. This will be paid from Lilly funds but the town is responsible for approving the contract. Motion to approve the Kimley-Horn contract to be paid by Lilly funds: Montel/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

DEPARTMENTAL & COMMISSION REPORTS

Police Dept. – Report in Packet. Police Chief Nate Birch noted that call volume has been normal for this time of year. Accident reports are slowing down with the better weather. The department recently hosted Indiana State Police Crime Scene Technician, Jason Page, to train officers on properly photographing scenes and gathering evidence.

Fire Dept. – Report in Packet. Fire Chief Cam Kissinger reported that the department completed its transition to the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS). Chief Kissinger and Dan Renz recently attended training on gas props at the Wabash training facility as part of the state certification for Live Fire Instructors.

Building Commissioner – Report in Packet.

Plan Commission –

Board of Zoning Appeals – BZA met February 23 and approved two special exception requests for single family homes in the business district.

Traffic Commission –

Parks & Recreation – Report in packet.

Town Life Center –

Tree Advisory – Minutes in packet.

Grow Wabash County – Penrod spoke at the Annual State of the County breakfast in February.

Redevelopment Commission – Did not meet. RDC will meet in March.

MEDCOR –

Solid Waste – Report included in packet. Councilmember Gary Montel noted that the Solid Waste District is working on getting more education in the schools. They have a new raccoon mascot to teach the kids about recycling.

Storm Water Board – Town Manager Penrod reported that the Storm Water Board met in February and elected officers. The board considered a request letter from a resident with drainage issues and took it under advisement. A broken storm tile created a void on Buffalo Street behind Cornerstone Apartments, which will be repaired soon. The stormwater board will meet in March to consider a stormwater plan from Daniel's place.

Public Works – Street Superintendent Craig Walters reported that residents are heavily utilizing the recycling dumpsters at the street barn. They get dumped three times a week and, so far, have avoided the trash like other sites were receiving. Significant amounts of salt and sand were used this winter, meaning the street sweeper will be busy this spring.

Wastewater Superintendent Shannon Carter reported that a concrete ring in the Riverside lift station is disintegrating. It was originally installed around 2016 and Carter feels inferior concrete was used. Carter is looking into lining the lift station with a different gel-type product with a longer warranty.

Water Superintendent Ryan Shock reported that the frost coming out of the ground caused movement that has created breaks in the water mains around town. All 5 wells were recently serviced and 2 were found to show 20% loss in production. One of those wells, in service for 13 years, will be pulled and overhauled. The annual water audit was recently completed and showed about a 26% loss for the last year. Shock is waiting for the numbers to be validated. The new water meters are still providing a lot of information and improving customer service.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Manager Adam Penrod reported that the South Market Street bridge is projected to be open by mid-July. Penrod noted that residents can park in the Town Hall parking lot and see the work being done. The State Road 114 bridge will take much longer.

Water main reconstruction is on the cusp of starting any day. Pipes have been delivered and roads will be milled down in preparation for trenches to be dug.

Penrod will be presenting a \$2.2 million request to the Northeast Indiana RDA for READI 2.0 funding to assist with the Eel River Commons project. This amount will fund the new pedestrian bridge from downtown to the new park and other amenities.

CLERK-TREASURER'S REPORT

1. Financial Reports – Approved subject to audit.
2. Claims - The Town claim docket totaling \$626,680.88 and the Public Works docket totaling \$323,883.55 were submitted for payment. Motion to pay our obligations: Smith/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.
3. Conflict of Interest – Mugford presented a conflict of interest form for Chalmer Tobias for consideration, stating that Double Dads Entertainment will be performing at a Park Department event. Motion to approve the conflict of interest form: Smith/Miracle. Motion passes unanimously.

VISITOR COMMENTS

No one spoke.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Chalmer Tobias addressed comments made at the February meeting regarding voting elected officials out of office if they disagree with constituent demands. Tobias clarified that decisions are based on facts and legal information rather than personal opinions. Tobias encouraged all residents to run for office if they are so inclined.

The next regularly scheduled town council meeting will be April 1, 2026.

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 pm.

TOWN COUNCIL, TOWN OF N. MANCHESTER

Chalmer Tobias, President

Laura Rager, Vice-President

Allen Miracle

Gary Montel

ATTEST

Jim Smith

Carrie Mugford, Clerk-Treasurer