



Last week's minutes below, and a promotion for tomorrow's business meeting....**Come celebrate Frank Albright's 90th with pie and ice cream. Also seeking a speaker for the March 4th meeting, let Cassidy, Kim and I know of suggestions or volunteers.**

### **2/18 Meeting Summary & Highlights:**

#### **• Announcements**

- **2/25 Business Meeting at UMI - be thinking about new member recommendations**
- IN NEED OF SPEAKER FOR March 4th meeting

#### **• Tip Session Highlights:**

- Several doing business with Jimmie Kelley; others doing business with Lassus, Wayne Pipe, Guadalupe's, Christopher James, Dr. Gilbert, Votow, Kevin Caewood among others
- Dave McComb: EWA started in 2007; 350,000th transfer of human remains this week or next
- Kurt Schmidt: Excellent recent service from Fox & Fox
- Dave Arnold: Thanks to Brad Gough for guidance and recent valuations
- Scott Sproat: Stadium will be done for home opener!

### **Guest Speaker Presentation:**

#### **Jim Morlan hosted Ewelina Connolly, Candidate for Allen County Commissioner.**

Ewelina Connolly expressed gratitude to the group, praising their enterprising spirit, community investments, and charitable commitments. Key points:

- **Background and values:** She has decades of community service experience and serves as a nonprofit leader, engaging across sectors, including workforce development initiatives and the Allen County Jail. She calls nonprofits the “silent workforce” of Allen County.
- **Platform and alignment:** Running for County Commissioner on the Republican platform; a lifelong conservative whose personal convictions align with the party. She aims to appear on the primary ballot and continue to the fall; “May fifth are the primaries.”
- **Motivation:** Concern over “woke agendas” and advancement of socialist ideologies, which she views as counterintuitive to America’s enterprising spirit. Having grown up in Poland under a communist socialist regime, she describes socialism as soul-crushing and competition-killing, and does not want it for her children or grandchildren.
- **Civic vigilance:** She asserts local Democrat Socialist parties are active and urges vigilance even for those not engaged in politics.
- **Leadership vision:** She seeks to build on strong conservative leadership at the county level and envisions Allen County as safe, connected, prosperous, and open for business. She emphasizes transparent, fiscally conservative, collaborative government with representation from urban, suburban, and rural voices.
- **Outreach and approach:** She initiated “Ninety Meetings in Ninety Days” to test ideas and learn practical needs across constituents, industries, and government stakeholders. She favors big vision paired with tangible projects that enable measurable progress.

### **Ewelina’s platform rests on four pillars, each with practical priorities:**

- **Public Safety:** Top of mind, with immediate focus on ongoing “jail conversation” and large projects involving fire districts. She emphasizes supporting law enforcement, meeting capacity needs, and addressing training and support for frontline staff.
- **Smart Growth and Strong Infrastructure:** Align growth with clear success metrics to avoid haphazard decisions. Prioritize housing and zoning for smart land use to accommodate

growth at all levels. She referenced prior discussion of a sports stadium (soccer or football) as part of forward planning and decisive steps toward community success.

- **Economic Development:** She advocates for local government to “get out of the way” by streamlining and deregulating, frequently quoting Ronald Reagan: “lower the taxes, deregulate, rinse and repeat.” She stressed the need for permitting processes that match the speed of business, noting current processes are complicated and do not signal “open for business.” She believes practical, low-hanging improvements are readily achievable.
- **Quality of Place:** To compete for population growth—the engine of economic vitality—she will focus on family-friendly attributes, workforce needs, and higher-earning job opportunities alongside place-making efforts.

### **Q&A on Local Governance and Community Issues**

The discussion explored governance, permitting, fiscal policy, industrial development, and homelessness.

- **Personal journey and skills:** Ewelina shared that she arrived in Fort Wayne after graduating with a law and administration degree from a prestigious Polish university; her degree did not transfer, but the level did, enabling her to earn a master’s in education from Indiana University. She did not speak English upon arrival and learned over several years, aided by *Sesame Street*. She speaks English and Polish and has some Russian (mandated in school under the communist regime).
- **Fiscal environment (SB 1):** With “SB one” creating anxieties about fiscal impacts (e.g., property tax implications), Ewelina stated as a Republican she would not advocate raising local income taxes to offset losses. The priority, in her view, is examining current spending, cutting back where needed, and doing more with less to remain competitive.
- **Permitting delays and process reform:**
  - A developer reported that a dozen years ago it took six or seven months from primary plat submission to plat recording; now it takes about eighteen months—without changing their internal process—suggesting external roadblocks.
  - Ewelina has heard consistent developer feedback about process and capacity issues and finds the lack of progress puzzling. She questioned persistent understaffing in the Building Department and lagging processes.
  - An inspections app had reportedly been removed, pushing the county back to physical processes instead of a 21st-century solution, prompting her question: “Why are we not stepping into the twenty-first century?”
  - Ewelina believes fixes hinge on people and processes, anticipating change management, culture management, and people management, and committing to learn why barriers persist and what must change.
  - A suggestion emerged to involve Indiana Tech’s president (based on prior openness at an AI seminar) to evaluate processes and procedures, which could be a “real winner.”
- **City-County industrial development and utilities:**
  - The city has an interest reimbursement program for industrial spec developers; the county has historically not offered a similar program, creating friction for seamless industrial development.
  - Ensuring sufficient funding and zone-ready infrastructure for various site types—including megasites—is essential.
  - NIPSCO was described as difficult to work with, sometimes requiring significant investments (e.g., two million dollars for gas connections). More help is needed, and this issue was acknowledged as state-level.
- **Affordable housing and homelessness:**
  - Ewelina’s philosophy centers on empowerment, critiquing some philanthropic approaches for not agreeing on what “helpful” means. She argues support must build on strengths and capabilities, and not all helping is actually helpful.

- She described a five-year trend in homelessness reaching alarming numbers, adding that many are not connected to the local community. Fort Wayne has become a destination due to strong regional services, making the issue complex and not purely about local poverty or economics.
- She opposes establishing another no- or low-barrier shelter, citing sustainability concerns —managing individuals who are actively using or psychotic entails high medical and security costs.
- She traced part of the issue to the closure of state hospitals, noting many homeless individuals are unwell, have broken ties, and may not want help or to be housed. Rescue Mission requirements deter some; a mayoral initial proposal favored a no-barrier shelter, which she doubts can be sustained in the nonprofit environment.
- Ewelina underscored accountability, local ordinances, and collaboration between city and county governments. With about 2600 nonprofits and substantial philanthropic giving, she observed that the poverty needle has not moved, suggesting no single solution suffices.
- She emphasized clear problem definition, distinguishing, for example, local youth couch-surfing from out-of-town arrivals “who come here on the bus.”
- She shared a neighborhood encounter with a homeless man who declined housing, noting his family was willing to help but he did not want assistance—illustrating complexity where some individuals actively resist help.
- A question about the Allen County Jail’s psychiatric ward sought views on addressing severe mental illness contributing to homelessness; Ewelina reiterated the need for accountability, measured approaches, differentiated interventions, and collaboration across jurisdictions.