

[Remarks given at the April 8, 2025 meeting of the Monroe County council by chair of the county's vote center study committee, Ilana Stonebraker.]

I am a private citizen and volunteer as Chair of the Monroe County Vote Center Study Committee. For the past two years, our committee has been working to develop a draft plan for the adoption of vote centers in Monroe County. That plan is now available to the public on the Monroe County Election Board website.

As a reminder, vote centers in Indiana allow registered voters to cast their ballot at any designated location in the county, similar to early voting in Monroe County. This model provides greater flexibility than traditional precinct voting, where voters must go to their assigned location on Election Day. Currently, 65 out of Indiana's 92 counties have adopted vote centers.

Yesterday marked the first public hearing on the plan. From now until May 19th, community members are invited to provide written feedback. The report and comment form are accessible through the Election Board site. At the hearing, 50 people attended in person and 30 more joined online. Over 30 individuals including poll workers, rural voters, and student voters-spoke in support of vote centers.

I want to thank Council Members Deckard, Feitl, and Henry for attending in person, and Council President Crossley for participating online. I also appreciated hearing two County Council members express public support for vote centers and their significance to our community.

However, I want to note that in June 2023, when the committee began its work, the County Council tabled a resolution to support the study and has not revisited the issue in a formal way since. I had reached out about rescheduling the resolution, but it has not been placed on subsequent agendas.

In many other Indiana counties, the fiscal body plays an active role in the vote center study process, including appointing a representative to the committee and working alongside the election board from the start to assess financial implications. I believe Monroe County would benefit from a similar level of engagement.

While I understand the pressures of uncertain financial times, our shared values-particularly around democracy and equitable access to voting-remain constant. I respectfully urge the County Council not to delay discussion until the public comment period ends. Instead, I encourage you to take up this important issue publicly before May 19th.

Election Supervisor Kylie Moreland is available to present the plan and discuss its financial implications. I would also be glad to invite you to the upcoming May meeting of the Election Board, where we will be addressing questions about the proposal.

Many of you have expressed support for vote centers privately, and some publicly. The Monroe County Council now has an opportunity to engage meaningfully and visibly with this initiative. I hope you will take it.

Thank you for your time and continued service to Monroe County.