Council Members Seminar
November 6, 2026

Agenda

10:00 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Jennifer Simmons, Chief Operating Officer, Aim
MMI Sponsor Spotlight – CORE – **Gise VanBaren**

10:10 a.m. – 10:55 a.m. **Safety, Efficiency, and Engagement: Leveraging Language Access to Achieve Result**

In this presentation, council members will learn proven strategies to improve communication with non-English-speaking residents, increase government efficiency through language access SOPs, and advance safety for all. Speaker Lucas Fonseca, whose research was recently cited in a national study and report for the U.S. President and Congress, will share municipal data, case studies, and cultural insights that shape effective communication across communities.

Speaker:
Lucas Fonseca, CEO, Language Matters

10:55 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. **Break**

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **Keep IN: Keeping Businesses in Indiana Initiative**

Learn about Governor Mike Braun's Keep IN: Keeping Businesses in Indiana Initiative, a statewide effort to preserve local businesses and jobs as aging business owners prepare for retirement. With nearly 60% of Indiana's business revenue generated by owners aged 55 and older, communities face potential economic challenges as businesses transition or close. This session will explore how the initiative supports business succession planning, reduces preventable closures, and helps communities retain locally owned businesses and strengthen their economies.

Speakers:
Joe Brown, Cofounder and CEO, SMB
Ed Mysogland, Managing Partner, Indiana Business Advisors
Rachel Zajac, Director of Operations, Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, State of Indiana
Brian Schutt, Director, Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, State of Indiana

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Lunch**

12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. **Rate Caps**

Indiana's property tax system continues to evolve, creating important implications for municipalities and taxpayers. This session will provide an overview of Indiana's levy-based system, the MLGQ, circuit breakers, and the impact on growing communities. Presenters will review the property tax changes enacted in 2025 and how those changes will phase in. The session will also preview potential 2027 proposals, including rate caps, a possible shift to a rate-based system, and what that could mean for municipalities. Participants will also learn how potential changes could impact municipal debt and long-term financial planning.

Speakers:
Campbell Ricci, Policy & Financial Resources Director, Aim
Cameron Starnes, Partner, Taft Law
Ben Tooley, Senior Director of Public Affairs, Taft Law

1:15 p.m. – 1:20 p.m. **Break**

1:20 p.m. – 2:05 p.m. **Brownfields for Housing: Converting Contaminated Sites into Attainable Housing Opportunities**

Indiana communities face a growing need for attainable housing, while former commercial and industrial properties are often overlooked due to real or perceived contamination. This workshop will help council members evaluate brownfield sites for residential reuse, identify environmental risks, conduct appropriate due diligence, and determine cleanup standards based on future land use. Presenters will cover strategies to reduce liability, leverage brownfield resources and funding, and work with developers to move sites toward redevelopment. Attendees will leave with practical guidance for selecting viable sites, managing risk, and transforming underutilized properties into safe, productive housing that strengthens neighborhoods and makes better use of existing infrastructure.

Speakers:
Matthew Bono, CHMM, Vice President, EnviroForensics
Tom Garvey, Director of Entitlements & Development, Ash Union

2:05 p.m. – 2:10 p.m. **Break**

2:10 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. **Utilizing Professional Leaders for Day-to-Day Municipal Management**

This session provides council members with a clear overview of Indiana's city and town manager form of government, including the manager's statutory duties, the council's role in

setting policy and oversight, and how the two work together. Participants will learn how having one professional point person for day-to-day administration, such as overseeing departments, personnel, budgets, and project implementation, can free the council to focus on vision and policy rather than operational details. The workshop will also address common concerns about the transition, such as cost, accountability, and the willing shift in council responsibilities, using real examples from Indiana communities that have adopted the structure. Attendees will leave with practical tools to evaluate whether a town manager model fits their community and steps for implementing it if they choose to move forward.

Moderator:
Ben Lipps, Town Manager, Cumberland

Panelists:
Tonya Galbraith, IMMA / ICMA Senior Advisor
Andrew Klinger, Town Manager, Plainfield
Milton Otero, Town Manager, Avilla
Hannah Walker, Town Manager, Huntertown

2:55 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **Closing Remarks**