

EMPIRE

Bancshares, Inc.

April 29, 2026

Dear Fellow Shareholder:

In my seven years as being your President & CEO, I've been transparent with you through the ups and downs of our shared experience. This letter is no different. Accordingly, we have some significant news to share with you about Empire Bancshares, Inc. and The Hicksville Bank.

With the unanimous approval of our Board of Directors, The Hicksville Bank and Empire Bancshares have entered into an agreement with Goshen, Indiana-based Interra Credit Union for ICU to acquire the assets and assume the liabilities of The Hicksville Bank. The cash consideration to be received by Empire Bancshares is expected to be at least \$47 per share. This represents a considerable premium of more than two times the current market price of our stock. Knowing that our stock price has remained in the \$18 - \$22 dollar range during my tenure, a price of this magnitude is significant and not one that could likely be attained through organic growth.

In addition to the attractive financial offer, Interra Credit Union shares our same core values of community investment and engagement with a specialty in business, agriculture, and small-town communities; all of which align nicely with our institution. Importantly, this combination will allow for an increase in per customer legal lending limit from \$3 Million to \$22 Million. Moreover, this transaction will also expand our customers' access to ever-changing financial products, accelerate the benefit of emerging technology, and preserve our relationship-driven approach as we continue to invest back into our communities.

Before agreeing to the transaction with ICU, your Board of Directors carefully evaluated its strategic options. It weighed the opportunity of accepting this financially attractive offer against remaining independent in a competitive and challenging environment. The Board feels that in approving this transaction, it has chosen the best course for the Company's shareholders, customers, employees, and local communities.

We will keep you updated on progress toward completion of the proposed transaction. You will receive a proxy statement describing the proposed transaction along with details about a special shareholders' meeting to be held within the next couple of months at which time you will be asked to vote your shares in favor of this transaction.

One important condition for consummation of this transaction is the approval of more than 66.67% of our shareholders. Please look for the notice of special meeting and proxy statement that will describe the transaction in greater detail and promptly respond to the request to return your proxy. This is a matter that requires your timely attention.

144 E. High Street | P.O. Box 283 | Hicksville, OH 43526 | (419) 542-7726

As always, should you have any questions about this transaction, feel free to contact me or Mindy Bobay, President/CFO. We appreciate your continued support.

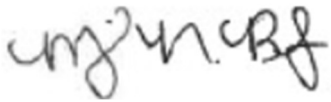
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Smitley".

Greg Smitley, Chief Executive Officer

Bank Main Telephone: 419.542.7726

E-Mail: gsmitley@thb.bank

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mindy Bobay".

Mindy Bobay, President/Chief Financial Officer

Bank Main Telephone: 419.542.7726

E-Mail: mbobay@thb.bank

April 29, 2026

Interra Credit Union to acquire The Hicksville Bank, expanding financial access into Northwest Ohio

Goshen, Indiana and Hicksville, Ohio — Interra Credit Union and The Hicksville Bank alongside its bank holding company, Empire Bancshares, Inc., jointly announced today that they have entered into a definitive agreement whereby Interra Credit Union will purchase substantially all the assets and liabilities of The Hicksville Bank in an all-cash transaction. The proposed acquisition represents a strategic expansion of Interra’s presence into Northeast Indiana and Northwest Ohio.

While the agreement is contingent on obtaining regulatory and Empire stockholder approvals, the proposed transaction has been approved by both institutions’ Board of Directors. When the purchase is complete, Interra will be bringing together two community-focused financial institutions with deep local roots and a shared commitment to people-first banking.

The combination is designed to strengthen long-term service for members and customers, expand access to financial products and technology, and preserve the relationship-driven approach both institutions are known for, while continuing to invest in the communities they serve. The partnership brings together two organizations deeply rooted in relationship banking, with a shared focus on supporting local families, farmers, and small-town communities.

“From the start, this was about people, our members, our employees, and the communities who trust us,” said **Amy Sink**, CEO of Interra Credit Union. “This is about honoring the legacy of two organizations that share a deep commitment to their communities and build a new future together. We’re excited to build on that foundation and continue delivering the service, trust, and support our members and customers expect.”

Founded with a strong local mission, The Hicksville Bank has long served individuals, families, and businesses through personalized service and community involvement across Northeast Indiana and Northwest Ohio.

“This partnership keeps our passion exactly where it belongs—on our customers and our communities,” said **Greg Smitley**, CEO of The Hicksville Bank. “Interra shares our belief that banking should be personal, accessible, and deeply connected to the places we serve.”

About Interra Credit Union - About Interra Credit Union - Interra Credit Union, headquartered in Goshen, Indiana, was chartered in 1932 and has assets of \$2 billion. The credit union’s field of membership spans 24 counties in northern Indiana, with more than 325 full and part-time employees serving nearly 90,000 members. Interra currently operates 16 offices in Elkhart, LaGrange, Kosciusko, Marshall, and Noble counties in Indiana and offers convenient online services at www.interracu.com. Interra Credit Union is being represented by Honigman LLP.

About The Hicksville Bank - The Hicksville Bank, established in 1901, is a community-focused financial institution headquartered in Hicksville, Ohio, with a long-standing tradition of serving individuals, families, and businesses. With approximately \$225 million in assets, the bank serves communities across northwestnorthwest Ohio and northeast Indiana through a network of four branches. The Hicksville Bank is known for its personalized, relationship-based approach and its strong commitment to the communities it serves. Learn more by visiting www.thb.bank. The Hicksville Bank is being represented by Shumaker, Loop, Kendrick LLP & Hovde Group.