

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council and meet in a joint session with the Starke County Board of Commissioners at 5:30PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman, Brad Hazelton, Don White, Howard Bailey, Charles Chesak, Kathryn Norem, and Bryan Cavender present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Dave Pearman at 5:30PM.

IT-BROADCASTING

Richard Franks, IT Director, stated he has looked into setting up an account with YouTube but it takes 24 hours to activate. He advised it was activated today but we can't broadcast tonight yet. He does have a quote for equipment that can be utilized down the road as well if they want to have any other kind of public broadcasts. The issue with how to broadcast the meeting and make a teleconference will continue to be looked into.

PTABOA APPOINTMENT

President Pearman explained they have received a request from Phyl Olinger to be a member of the PTABOA in Starke County. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to accept Phyl Olinger to the PTABOA Board at a rate of \$150.00 per meeting. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

SCEDF MONTHLY REPORT/HAMLET FIRE WELL/SCILL

Larry Wickert, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Starke County Council and Board of Commissioners for an update. He advised they continue to have conversations with Common Colab they intend to start work on the ground soon. President Pearman asked when they are projected to start hiring. Director Wickert stated he was not sure when they are going to start hiring but they could like to start the business in November. With there being no further questions regarding the monthly activity report presented President Pearman moved onto the discussion of the Hamlet Fire Well. He advised he knows Director Wickert would like to come to a settlement on the money owed but he is not at liberty to decide on a settlement without approval by the council and the Board of Commissioners. Director Wickert advised he did receive a \$2,000 check some time ago from the construction company and he took into Rachel's office today. He stated the question is now what more do you want? He advised the council had a total of \$4,300.00. President Pearman agreed that the \$4,300.00 seemed correct after looking at the financials. Director Wickert advised he is offering to pay an additional \$2,000.00 on top the \$2,000.00 received. He advised Auditor Oesterreich could not make out an invoice since it was less than the total of \$4,300.00 without council approval. Director Wickert stated that because the Foundation manages the Hamlet Fire Well he felt he had the authority to give permission for the use of the well. He had no idea it was going to end up costing so much.

Director Wickert explained that any time the pump kicks on it is automatically \$1,000 per month through REMC. President Pearman advised he would definitely like to meet with REMC regarding this matter. He also asked if Ortman's gives a copy of the maintenance report to the county when they are done with that. Director Wickert advised it comes to the SCEDF and then they keep track of those. President Pearman asked for a copy of the report and any future reports. Commissioner Norem asked Director Wickert what it means when he says they manage the Hamlet Fire Well, she never knew that they were set up to manage it. Director Wickert stated that was set up many years ago when it first started. He advised they work with Ortman's on the maintenance and repairs. If there is anything that goes wrong with the pump they get an automatic notice. For example, when the big pump kicks on they get a notice of that. He explained they don't do a lot but they do work with Ortman's on the maintenance and repairs. Commissioner Norem asked why it was set up that way at that time. Director Wickert advised he assumes that it was because Charlie Weaver was the Director of SCEDF and he would have been able to handle that better than the Commissioners would have, whoever was in office at that time. Councilman Hazelton advised it may have been set up that way because it is Economic Development's Building. Director Wickert explained they own the building North of the pumps location. He then explained that there is a little building that is own by the county in that location as well. He felt it was more having to do with the convenience of having Charlie look after the maintenance and repairs.

President Pearman advised he can even remember speaking to Charlie about why we are paying REMC \$12,000.00 per year. Director Wickert stated that when the pumps kick on and hit a peak REMC then charges that rate for the entire month. Commissioner Norem advised it is incumbent upon us as elected officials to review the contracts that are in place, just because they were good 20 years ago does not mean that it is good for today. She advised this is on the taxpayer dime and we need to take a look at to see if it is set up correctly for today's environment. President Pearman stated he agrees with Commissioner Norem we need to follow up on this matter. He stated Director Wickert is purposing a settlement of \$4,000 instead of the \$4,300.00. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the settlement. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to table the \$15,000 Hamlet Fire Well appropriation request pending President Pearman's discussion with REMC. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

President Pearman advised the last time they had tabled on the SCILL discussion, they were thinking of other thoughts or creative ways that could be done with educational development within the county. Director Wickert advised other communities and cities where they have workforce development support in some ways workforce development. There are public agencies all over the place that put money into their workforce development. In our county, Knox hosts a couple of the classes, they provide the space as well as the teacher. SCILL hosts three of the classes, we provide space for one and Knox provides space for the others and we pay for the teachers. Over in Marshall County, Plymouth schools hosts and pays for the teachers. The schools themselves put a lot of support into the workforce development rather than the county. He advised that Marshall County does have money set aside and they operate off of the interest. President Pearman advised that it is not that anyone does not support the SCILL program in its essence. He believes there are a few concerns such as looking at this on behalf of the tax payers. Our school system here is knocking on the door of \$50 million tax dollars and at the county level should we really be in the high school educational game or can we look at a broader approach maybe some of it has to do with high school but other parts have to do with adult education and development of employees for businesses within our county.

President Pearman asked how many people that have been in the SCILL program are employed today in Starke County. If it is a big number that would be helpful to describe the legacy of the program. It would make sense to gear SCILL programs that support our own endeavors here in Starke County. He would agree that after so many years of only focusing on one thing there may be an opportunity in looking at other options. Councilman Bailey asked how many other school systems, outside of Starke County, are taking advantage of the SCILL program. Director Wickert explained there are nine school systems that partake in the program which includes Starke County Schools. Director Wickert explained that if, for example, a Plymouth School System student comes over here for the welding program the student is bringing over \$2,500.00 with them to help pay for the welding program from their school system. President Pearman asked Director Wickert if he knows how much the SCILL center is short without the county. Director Wickert advised it varies every year but they are not accumulating money. He stated he does not look at those books regularly, Ron handles that, but he does know we do not accumulate money as there is always needs for new equipment, new training programs, and etc.

Commissioner Norem stated she wants to clarify, she never made the comment that the quality of the program at SCILL were bad. In fact I said the welding program was the crown jewel. She advised did say SCILL was a dismal failure when it came to raising the wages here in Starke County. She has been a Commissioner for 12 years and 12 years ago we were one of the poorest counties in Indiana and 12 years later we are still one of the poorest counties in Indiana. She stated there are two entities in place, you have SCILL and then you also have the Economic Development Foundation. When she looked at the SCILL she looked at the North Central Area Vocational Cooperative website and they list their partners as: Alfa Flight, Ancilla College, Ball State, Ivy Tech, Vincennes University, SCILL Center, and Starke County Economic Development Foundation. She was surprised to see the SCEDF along the listed of educational facilities. Not one of those facilities that she knows of is supported by any county money other than SCILL. What she has heard is why Starke County is paying SCILL Center to do it if they are in a four county cooperative, why are we paying to supplement that when no one else pays to supplement that. She advised we need to decide whose interest are we serving? Are we serving the interests of SCILL? Commissioner Norem also explained that she has had people come up to her and asked why we are using their income tax money to pay the SCILL for people that are coming here from other places and no one else in this entire school cooperative is paying? She stated if SCILL wants to be an educational facility they should be an educational facility. She is not necessarily opposed that if the Commissioners decide this is a priority to fund Starke County kids. She received a list from Knox Community Schools regarding all the programs they have. There are kids going over to Plymouth, they

pay their own way to get to Plymouth, we don't pay anything for the kids that are going to the beauty college, or the kids that are going over to Culver for Building Trades, so why are we paying for SCILL.

She is against funding the SCILL program unless we can see what benefit it is for Starke County. Something she has been trying to get the SCEDF to show for a long time. They have also been trying to get the SCILL program to act like an educational institution, for at least four years, to fund themselves, if that is what they want to be. She explained if we are paying for the SCILL program then we should have the right to have some of these questions answered. She also believes that before the Board of Commissioners decide what to do regarding the SCILL money she would like to have public input. She explained that there was a lot of information said at the last meeting and it was not reported in the newspaper or on WKVI so she is not sure that the public even knows about the situation. She is willing to take out a one page ad in the newspaper to ask the public to give us some input. If the public is wanting us to continue to pay for SCILL she is willing to do so. Commissioner Norem advised at this point she is not willing to recommend anything until we know what the dollars and cents are. She also advised that last March the Board of Commissioners did give them a one year grant with some specific requirements to the grant. Director Wickert asked what grant she was speaking of. She explained that the \$80,000 the board gave last year came with a grant agreement.

Commissioner Norem explained the Board of Commissioners are trying to give the SCEDF notice, as with the grant agreement, that they need to become more self-efficient because we cannot keep funding this as other issues may arise that require funding. Councilman Bailey suggested asking the school system to pay some of the money toward SCILL. President Pearman and Commissioner Norem held a discussion on skilled trade and they both agreed that it is something that is needed however it is the county's responsibility to fund this. President Pearman stated that the \$80,000 could be a grant in which many different individuals could apply for including the SCEDF. He stated for example, if an individual wanted to go to truck driving school the grant would pay for that and then there would be some structure of how it is paid back. This could end up being a revolving situation in which the funds would come back and the program could be sustained. Another example was given by Commissioner Norem, if an individual would like to go to the beauty college but cannot, for whatever reason, these grant funds could help that individual as well. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to table the SCILL appropriation request for \$80,000 until the Board of Commissioners decide what they would like to do. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

EMS- NEW AMBULANCE QUOTES AND COTS

Travis Clary, Director of Starke County EMS came before the Starke County Council to present new ambulance quotes as well as quotes for cots. President Pearman explained there is a revenue report in front of everyone. He explained to Director Clary that he asked Auditor Oesterreich to crunch some numbers which included capital assets. He stated he ran for council to support Fire and EMS and one of the things when we looked at EMS is we wanted to try and make this things break even. He explained they have grown a lot and their gross income has grown but the net income is still flat. President Pearman explained we funded a new ambulance last year and we funded a new used ambulance this year. Due to this, he believes the council is in no position to fund another ambulance at this time because we do not know what the economy is going to look like moving forward with COVID-19 and we could end up having a lot of problems. He also advised that other counties in Indiana as well as the United States do not always look at miles when replacing a vehicle. Director Clary stated he agrees, the current ambulance they just retired was a 1998 but had a 1980's box on it. He explained it has been remounted multiple times. The one they are looking at retiring would be unit number 3308, it is a 2011 Chevy. It currently has 220,000 miles on it, last year they had spent over \$20,000 in repairs and maintenance. President Pearman explained that he thinks there is an opportunity to grow here. It has not even been one year yet that the transfer unit has been in place. He said we can look at the numbers again next year and they should begin to see a progression in the numbers.

The only issue that Councilman Hazelton sees is that it is a 230 day wait for the vehicle once the purchase is made. Councilman Hazelton advised this is something they may want to look at the beginning of 2021. President Pearman stated we used to replace ambulances once every five years in this county. Director Wickert stated that is why they are so far behind. That is why he was looking at multiple rotation because now we have multiple rigs with over 220,000 miles on it. President Pearman does not believe we would be able to have a straight 2 year rotation but that is why we find these other rigs that have low miles on them. Director Clary explained those rigs go very quickly. President Pearman deferred to the rest of the council as he stated he does not believe they are ready to fund the ambulance request. He also advised we can make a better argument about purchasing a new ambulance

when the revenues increase. Further discussion was held between Director Clary and President Pearman regarding the future possibilities of both EMS and Fire services.

Director Clary then mentioned that the Starke County Community Foundation and the Hardesty Fund just gave them a \$17,500 grant for the purchase of a cot. He did meet with Stryker to see if we could get a bundle deal as they still have a payment option of 0% for five years. He explained they are in desperate need of cots we could either purchase one now with that grant or use the \$17,500 as down payment and pay \$14,900 per year to be able to purchase cots for the entire fleet. He advised they have a two year bumper to bumper warranty. Commissioner Norem asked Director Clary if he found out if there is a cash discount. He advised that there was not, that is only for purchases over \$100,000, right now they would be at \$77,000 for the purchase of the cots for the fleet. A discussion was then held regarding whether or not this would alleviate calls for lift assist. Commissioner Norem advised against the purchase at this time as we do not know what we are going to be dealing with regarding COVID-19 and the economic fallout from the virus. She advised they could purchase one now and see how things go the rest of this year and possibly purchase one at the end of the year or even a few months from now when this pandemic is over. President Pearman advised the council will wait for the recommendation of the Commissioner's on this request as well. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to table this request. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Councilman Bailey made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 17, 2020 joint council/commissioner meeting. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 17, 2020 joint council/commissioner meeting. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

After having no public comments made Councilman Hazelton made a motion to adjourn at 6:43PM. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**MARCH 16, 2020
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Dave Pearman, President

Brad Hazelton, Vice-President

Kay Gudeman

Don White

Howard Bailey

Robert Sims

Freddie Baker

Rachel Oesterreich, Starke County Auditor and
Secretary to the County Council

MARCH 16, 2020
STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Charlie Chesak, President

Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender

Rachel Oesterreich, County Auditor
& Secretary to the Board of County Commissioners