

MONDAY, JULY 6, 2020

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 6:00PM in person at the Starke County Annex Building, Knox, Indiana, with Charles Chesak, Kathryn Norem, and Bryan Cavender present and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner President Charles Chesak directly after the Joint Session with the Starke County Council at 6:00PM.

STELLAR COMMUNITIES PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Chesak opened the public hearing for Stellar Communities at 6:00 PM. Mike Semak made a comment about the Bass Lake Trail Head, he stated that they are going to take away from the overflow of the fisherman's parking to put a trail head in for bicycles. Superintendent Ritzler advised that the main purpose of the trail head is to expand the parking lot for the parking overflow for the fisherman. He advised they are planning to have about 10-14 new spots for the parking. Anita Haug asked why they are not telling them about the Koontz Lake project before they are asking for comments because she just received information about this on her way to this meeting, she advised there has not been anything posted online about this project and this is all new to her and she wanted to know if they are voting on anything tonight regarding the Koontz Lake project. Commissioner Norem explained that the Board of Commissioners do not comprise the Stellar Committee, but there are several members of that committee here tonight and the Board of Commissioners have given authority for the Stellar Committee to apply for this grant. She explained they were a runner up last year and were awarded \$333,000 to apply towards their communities. Commissioner Norem explained that they went through the entire vetting process and their first idea was actually to put restroom facilities down by the park where their ball diamond is and where the Lions have their meetings. She advised that at the last minute the Lion's expressed that they do not want to be responsible for the building so the plan fell apart. She advised she then received calls from individuals at Koontz Lake expressing the need for a project. Through several discussions with the Stellar Community an alternative project was planned, something that would benefit the Koontz Lake Community. A gentleman in the audience explained that the alternative project was on the wish list and that information was posted on Facebook over a year ago.

After further discussion was held among the audience members Commissioner Norem advised there is a limited time frame on the public hearing and they will most likely not be voting on anything tonight as they are the best conduit, under the circumstances, to hold the public meeting. She explained they will be forwarding these comments to the Stellar Committee who is going to meet within the next day or two who will be voting either yes or no. Discussion was then held regarding the lighting, pavilion, lighting for the pavilion, size of the pavilion, the logistics of a pavilion is allowed or recommended in that location, and a suggestion for a boat ramp. Robert Wayne Haug then had a discussion about incidents that have occurred in his area at Koontz Lake, he explained that if a pavilion is put up, like they are talking about, there is going to be more incidents like he has occurred happening. Commissioner Norem then asked if there were any other comments. Tom Camery had made a comment regarding the restricted access to fire lanes if this pavilion was built in the purposed location. He stated however, the fire trucks will not back their trucks down these lanes as they would get stuck in the ground. He felt that a "fire lane" is not the true description of those easements at the lake. Another individual in the audience commented that the access they are talking about for the pavilion is a paved access. A discussion was then held about putting the pavilion and grills at one of the 20 other easement access points. Cindy McKenna then made a comment about growing up along Koontz Lake as a child, she stated they had problems even back then with other individuals and drugs. She said they will always have problems and she believes this pavilion should be built as this will be so much more useful for families.

Karen Johnson also made a comment about the Koontz Lake Association meeting and she advised that Sheriff Dulin was there and he stated that if there was any problems in the Koontz Lake area all the residents need to do is just call and that they are aware of what is going on at the beach right now. Roger Anderson then made a comment about the police reports he has made regarding situations in the Koontz Lake Area, he also advised he is in favor of the pavilion plans for the beach area. Bonnie Hepner then made a comment regarding the beach area, she advised that many families utilize the beach area and she is in favor of the pavilion in the beach area. Commissioner Chesak closed the public comment for Stellar Communities at 6:35 PM. Attorney Lucas explained that Koontz Lake is just one piece of the project and the idea of the project is to enhance some of the nicest things we have in the county for more public access. As a committee they decided that what would have the most impact is to have something close to

everyone's homes rather than focusing on one particular place. He explained that what they are looking at are not the final plans. He explained that if these preliminary plans are approved by the committee and by OCRA they will have final designs completed and they will take public comments on those as well. Commissioner Norem explained that she is the Commissioner Representative for the Koontz Lake area, she does not get a vote in the matter but she is encouraging the Stellar Committee to move forward with this project and give these folks something nice they can be proud of and have their families come to enjoy but also be conscience about some of the concerns.

EMS MONTHLY REPORT

EMS Director Travis Clary and Clerk MaryLynn Ritchie came before the Board of Commissioners to present their monthly report. Commissioner Chesak read off the collection report. EMS has collected \$689.75 from Attorney Jonathan O'Hara. Clerk Ritchie stated that the runs were down a little bit last month, but what they have found is people are just not going to the hospital. She had spoken with someone at the hospital and their volume is down as well. The hospital transfers are still at 30%. Commissioner Norem asked if their runs and transfers are back to where they normally are for this time of the year. Clerk Ritchie stated not yet. She advised that the insurance companies are slower in processing claims and payments. Director Clary advised their operations continue to run smoothly with four ambulances, one for 12 hours per day and then three of those running 24 hours per day throughout our county. They continue to keep up to date policies in regards to COVID-19. They continue to operate a full-staff with no vacancies. They have not hired any part-time staff since the pandemic has started. He stated they continue to train our staff on the daily changes in regards to protecting themselves against COVID-19. They held their monthly audit & review with Starke Hospital/Doctor Marovich. They reviewed chest pain calls, and went over specific STEMI runs. They actually got to review some patients we transported directly to the CATH lab, and got to virtually see the images of their angiograms as they placed the stents. They will soon be scheduling times for our crews to go to the cath lab at Laporte Hospital to shadow the cath lab staff. They are waiting for it to be safe to do so, and will be doing this with the help of our EMS Coordinator Dale Lanham.

Director Clary stated they have had another injury free month. He advised they had some DEF system issues with two of their ambulances this past month. 0514 went into the reduced power mode, and was unable to clean the system on its own. It was taken to the Auto Park GMC in Plymouth. They replaced many EGR sensors that were reducing the flow, changed the exhaust temperature sensor, replaced the actual EGR valve, and topped it off with coolant. They also replaced the fuel filter and cleaned the DEF system. 0084 was taken into the Auto Park GMC in Plymouth for similar repairs. Both trucks are now back in service. 0514 was also repaired during the month of June from a very minor deer strike. It was repaired at Mark's Body Shop, and was only out of service for approximately 8 hours for those repairs. Director Clary advised that they have started to gradually convert our station lights from standard T8 bulbs, to LED's. They have also converted all emergency lighting to our bases to LED's at this time. He will keep a close eye on how much they will be saving in electricity by making this switch. He is continuing to look further into rebates for doing this, but from the information he has gathered so far it seems they do not provide rebates any longer for commercial locations. Director Clary then advised that he still has an outstanding grant out to get their 4th Lucas Device for the transfer unit. He also has a grant out for a new/upgraded ventilator. EMA & I then also just put in a new foundation grant through the State of Indiana for Protective equipment. HE will continue to research further grant opportunities for ambulance stretchers. He also advised that they are starting to do the mobile response team again with Healthline.

HIGHWAY MONTHLY REPORT

Superintendent Stephen Ritzler came before the Board of Commissioners to present his department's monthly report. He said they were the first ones to get hit with the decreased revenue from COVID factors. Their draw in May was about 13% less than what they should have received. He was also down in June but overall for the year they are only 3.5% down in MVH and 3.8% in LRS. The traffic volumes are up about 96% than what there were pre-COVID. It looks like they have to weather the storm for July and August and then it will be better. They are looking at an overall decrease in their budget this year between 5% and 15%. He then presented a chart for their MVH and LRS revenues from 2016 through 2020 as well as their expenditures for 2020 so far. He advised that they do not anticipate as much as a loss in comparison to county general next year but they do anticipate some. He has reduced the MVH, LRS, and Cum Bridge budget by 5.83% in the amount of \$221,602.93 for 2021. He advised this should cover any losses they may have and they will not have to ask the county for any money like they haven't for the last 7 years. He advised if they get more money than they anticipated then they will be putting

that money back into the roadways. Superintendent Ritzler advised they are on pace for 85 miles of improvement, but they did shift some of the types of things that they do. He then presented a list of 2020 Roads improvements to the Board of Commissioners. He advised they have been grading and reshaping the roads as well as reshaping the roads with grindings. He advised they will also be completing 11.75 miles of hot mix roads with the Range Rd. and 250 N. project. He advised that in Community Crossings we were very fortunate to receive the entire 1 million dollars as it looks like they will not be doing a second round of community crossings this year.

Superintendent Ritzler also advised that Bridge 137 – CR 300E over the Yellow River, just South of CR 50N has an estimated completion date of Fall, 2022, Bridge 7 – CR 1200E over the Yellow River has an estimated completion date of Fall, 2021, and Bridge 59 – CR 700S over Bogus Run has an estimated completion date of Fall, 2022. In culverts, they have finished their 2020 culvert inspections. They are compiling a clean out and replacement list for the rest of the year but they have already completed 8 culvert replacements so far. He stated they have asked Purdue LTAP to investigate two intersections: CR700E/200N- any improvement to decrease accidents and CR100E/500S, request for four way stop. They have completed the Boa Shores crosswalk. Superintendent Ritzler then presented a US30 Coalition bill for the amount of \$6,000. He explained they are not doing the full \$12,000 bill. They usually charge \$6,000 for one voting member. He advised the project may not be going forward or it could be going forward in a much smaller version. He does think there is some importance in being on the community so that we have a voice. Commissioner Norem asked if all the counties have paid their back dues. Superintendent Ritzler stated Porter and Laporte counties have not paid. Commissioner Norem advised they will not be paying this bill.

Superintendent Ritzler advised that earlier this year a couple trucks were running poorly. At first, they thought they may have received a bad batch of fuel. They had the diesel tested three times, and each time it passed. After changing the fuel filters on the trucks, they began running better. As a precaution they recently had the fuel tanks cleaned. The technicians told us that there were some bad seals in the tanks and hoses and air was allowed to get in and effect the fuel as it was being pumped into the tanks, this has been fixed and everything seems to be going well. He spoke about the fuel bidding and how the fuel bidding has saved about \$8,000 to \$10,000 per year. He advised this works fine in the summer and they have not had any problems in the fuel. Where they have had problems is in the winter where some companies meet the specs but it is still not exactly what they need. He advised Kenny and the Co-Op team have been very responsive and he, his foreman, and his drivers all feel that the fuel they receive from Kenny in the winter is a little bit better. He believes they should still bid the fuel in the summer but in the winter he would like a little more leeway in selecting the fuel in the winter. Commissioner Norem made a motion that they allow Rik to negotiate fuel prices as he sees fit. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Kenny with Starke County Co-op stated that he has done a little research with country mark. He advised that co-op has their own refinery located in Mount Vernon. Their pipeline pulls all of their supply out of Peru. There are a lot of times that they can't quite compete with other bids out there but the quality of the fuel is much different.

Kenny advised that if they were to make a commitment and buy from co-op they have an insurance policy and a guarantee that all costs would be covered if they ever ran into a problem like the incident that Rik had, if it was a problem caused by country mark. He handed out a paper that contains information on what they should be looking for in fuel specs. Superintendent Ritzler said he would like to implement the new negotiation process and study that over the next year and see how it goes. In the future they may want to thinking about going with one. Superintendent Ritzler then presented the safety chart and the crash records to the Board of Commissioners. He advised he will soon be receiving the 2019 statistics. He advised that the chart shows our overall crash statistics have been getting better every year. He stated that the applications for gravel road requests for next year are due and they had received two applications. He will have information on those roads for the Board of Commissioners next month and make a recommendation.

CLERK-RESOLUTION FOR VOTE CENTER PLAN

Bernadette Manuel, Starke Circuit Court Clerk came before the Board of Commissioners in request of approval of the Resolution for Vote Center Plan. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the resolution for the Approval of Vote Center Plan and for Implementation for Vote Centers. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the Fire Eye Contract Non-Disclosure Agreement. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. A discussion was then held regarding the Cumulative Capital Development Funds and the use of those funds to pay for the e-poll

books. Commissioner Norem made a motion to increase their request for for the additional appropriation to \$150,000 rather than the \$130,000. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Auditor Oesterreich informed the Board of Commissioners that the publication for the \$130,000 has already been completed but she can put in an additional request of \$20,000 for a future meeting.

SCILL FUNDING

Larry Wickert, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Board of Commissioners to ask for the support for the SCILL center. He advised Albert Hanselman is with him, who heads up the co-op that they are a part of, for the high school training. Director Wickert advised that with the economic downturn it is important to focus on workforce training. He advised if we don't fund SCILL, the programs we have now will go someplace else, such as Plymouth. He stated if we shut it down one year we are going to shut it down forever. Commissioner Cavender suggested the school system getting involved in helping fund this request. Commissioner Norem advised that both the Board of Commissioners and the Starke County Council have been asking for changes for a long time and nothing ever happens. She advised that they have asked repeatedly that the SCILL center go elsewhere and find other funding and this never happens. She advised that state is providing workforce ready grants and employer training grants. She stated it is very frustrating when they ask SCILL to makes some changes and all they ever here is, we can't survive without it, this is the way we have always done it, nothing ever happens and nothing ever changes. Commissioner Norem advised she does not think this is a bad things or that they are doing a bad job, but we are the only county in this consortium that pays from their CEDIT funds. She explained that in a prior meeting she requested numbers from Ron Gifford and there has never been a clear answer given. Change cannot occur when you have the same board members and same habits since the 1980's and if you do object there is a character assassination that occurs. There is tremendous pressure to conform to what the Economic Development Foundation and the SCILL Center want. She advised that they know we are going to lose at least 15% of our income moving forward but what are they doing to do to adjust to that. Have they been to the schools? Have they done any fund raisers? Have they asked for employers to participate? Have they looked for any grants? She believes they need something who is enthused about their job and is energetic about seeking out what needs to be done.

Commissioner Norem advised we need new and fresh ideas on how to provide this education, not just come back to the Board of Commissioners year after year. It is a disservice to the taxpayers if we do not press the Economic Development Foundation to look into other avenues. Director Wicket stated that the training programs she spoke of are for individual workers or for the actual company. It is not a training program where they give a grant to a company like SCILL. He advised they do partner with Ivy Tech on a lot of things, he then explained the curriculum they use in partnership with Ivy Tech. He advised other communities do support Workforce Development. They do not have a program like SCILL in particular but they do support workforce development. Commissioner Norem stated she did see the list that was sent out but most of those counties are bigger counties and there was one county that only gave \$35,000, not a continuous \$80,000 every year. She advised there is also specific requirements established with that. Director Wicket explained that the SCILL was initially created because we did not have Ivy Tech and similar programs within our county at that time. Commissioner Norem advised that this is a very stressful situation and this is a small community and she knows that sometimes comments create friction between people. She does not like that but if she does not voice her objections in something like this then she is not doing her job as a Commissioner. Director Wickert asked if there was some level that they would be willing to support the SCILL program.

Commissioner Norem stated that she has been thinking about how we can come to a professional understanding that would not leave you high and dry, but push some of the changes that the Board of Commissioners and Starke County Council has been asking for, for years. She stated that they are the customer and they are the representative of the taxpayers. She stated that they could do a couple of things; one suggestion would be to dig into their CD's to pay this year's fees. She also suggests that they may be able to come up with a grant program for the SCILL program where for every dollar they they are able to get in a non-community setting they will match to help them get through this transition and to help them get more on their own. The immediate thing is if they need the money right now today, she would suggest their CD's. Director Larry Wickert would like to know what changes they are seeking, he will go back and read their email, and then they will talk again. A discussion was held about how they will discuss the matter further. It was decided that the Board of Commissioners will meet in their office within the next week with their office door open to discuss how to move further and then one representative, Commissioner Norem, will meet with Director Wickert to discuss the issues that were

mentioned. Commissioner Norem advised she does not want to disparage the quality of the programs coming out of the SCILL. It is not about the quality of the programs coming out of the SCILL. She believes the programs are good and she has heard that many many times. The topic of discussion is who is going to pay for it and how it is going to be funded, what are the priorities, and what needs to change to make everyone comfortable. Commissioner Norem advised one more time that if they need money tonight, they need to cash in their CD's, otherwise they will sit down and come up with a list of what they feel needs to change and then Commissioner Norem will meet with Director Wickert.

Commissioner Norem asked Mr. Hanselman if anyone has mentioned to him that the county may want to utilize their building trades program for a project here in Starke County on a piece of property that the county owns. Mr. Hanselman advised he has not been advised of this. Commissioner Norem advised that they may be in need of this service in future years. Mr. Hanselman advised that they have three construction programs and Culver has built a couple of houses in Starke County. What they do, for someone to build a house in any of their programs, a homeowner or a potential homeowner writes a letter of interest to the instructor talking about the kind of home they would want. They look to see if this is doable for the kids because this is a teaching class. Your name is then put on a list and you will be assigned a year. In most cases people will move up on the list because many people do not want the year they are assigned or something happens with their carrier and they move out of town. In their programs, the operating costs go back to the kids for scholarships. They charge 20% over the costs of materials. Commissioner Norem stated that another comment regarding SCILL is the partnership with local unions. The local unions came out very strongly in support of the Veterans War Memorial, would there be a possibility that SCILL could work with the unions in support of the SCILL program. Director Wickert advised he could look into that. Director Wickert advised that Toll Brothers will be closing September 4th but they do have a prospected new tenant who does that same type of work and the same employment level. Commissioner Norem made a motion for Commissioner Chesak to write the letter of interest to the Culver building trades instructor. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$304,430.91. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the payroll docket in the amount of \$259,406.37, including deductions in the amount of \$78,142.78 for the pay period ending on 6/27/2020 and pay date of 7/02/2020. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the payroll docket in the amount of \$276,540.10 including deductions in the amount of \$83,240.86 for the pay period ending on 6/13/2020 and pay date of 6/19/2020. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the minutes from May 4th, 2020, May 18th, 2020, May 28th, 2020, and June 1st, 2020. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

Commissioner Norem advised she has a candidate for the vacancy on the hospital board. She explained a couple of the current board members called her about this vacancy. They expressed that they have not had anyone from the North Judson area in a long time. She explained to them that she did not want the Board of Commissioners to have to appoint someone who would need to be educated on hospital issues. She would like someone that will be able to jump in and understand. The more she thought about the more she realized there is a newly retired nurse from North Judson that she used to work with. Her name is Rosanne Boisvert Shorter. Commissioner Norem explained that Rosanne has worked for both Starke and Valparaiso hospital. She has been in the North Judson area her entire life. Commissioner Norem spoke with Rosanne about this position and she agreed she would like the opportunity. She will be put on the hospital board as an independent. Commissioner Norem would like to nominate Rosanne Boisvert Shorter to be on the Starke Hospital Board as an independent to fill the remaining term of Jerry Wilson. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Auditor Oesterreich spoke about the meal delivery program. She explained that Claire, who is an intern for the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, will be ending her internship the first week in August. She suggested that the Board of Commissioners think about hiring a part time individual to deliver meals to replace the work that Clarie has been doing. Commissioner Norem asked if the need is still there. Auditor Oesterreich stated that the senior citizen request has gone down a little and the

quarantined/loss of job has increased. Attorney Lucas advised that they should be able to hire a part time individual with the funds available. Commissioner Norem stated that one of the restaurants, Downtown Depot, had told some of his customers that if it hadn't been for the county buying meals from him once per week he would not have survived the shutdown. They have produced two good things with this; to boost the local restaurants and to feed people that needed to be fed. Commissioner Norem stated Auditor Oesterreich has done an excellent job in organizing this program. Commissioner Cavender agreed.

Commissioner Norem advised she is very confident that the Veterans grant program will be hitting their \$50,000 match, they are getting very close and the program has been extended until July 21, 2020. She is amazed by the generosity of the people in Starke County. The project is on time and on budget. The concrete work will be started either this week or next week. Once the concrete work is done, depending on when the pavers come in, they can start laying the pavers. The stone is scheduled to be here in October and it will be carved. She is confident that they will be meeting the November 11th deadline.

PUBLIC COMMENT

An individual in the audience asked about who she would speak to about getting a "no jake break sign" on US421 in the San Pierre area. It was determined that Commissioner Chesak will speak to Superintendent Ritzler about this inquiry.

There being no further public comments and no further business, Commissioner Norem made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 8:28PM.

JULY 6, 2020

Charlie Chesak, President

Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender

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