

MONDAY, JULY 20, 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, Howard Bailey, Don White, Robert Sims, Kay Gudeman, 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.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the minutes from June 15th, 2020. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

MAE ENGINEERING

Nancy Wellman with Mae Engineering came before the Starke County Council to discuss the pending abatement. She explained that for the last 3 or 4 years she did not realize this section was missing because her accountant fills out the form and he just thought it needed filled out based on their real estate improvements. She stated it was a communication gap between them. Councilman Pearman advised that it was the timing aspect of when it was turned in that they denied their abatement. Director Wickert stated it was on time this year. Auditor Oesterreich advised that yes it was technically on time but it was after office hours and it was not before the last council meeting, it was emailed around 5:46 PM. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the CF-1 request presented by Mae Engineering. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Further discussion was held regarding how Mae Engineering has been fairing through the COVID pandemic.

CLERK – VOTE CENTER RESOLUTION

Bernadette Manuel, Starke Circuit Court Clerk came before the Starke County Council asking for an approval for the Vote Center Resolution. Councilman White made a motion to approve the Vote Center Plan and for Implementation of the Vote Centers. Councilman Hazelton seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION JAIL CREDIT 1114

Starke County Sheriff Bill Dulin came before the Board of Commissioners requesting an additional appropriation in Jail CREDIT for the purchase of vehicle patrol cars. Sheriff Dulin explained that the Board of Commissioners had approved this request to be paid from Jail CREDIT. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the additional appropriation request for the amount of \$76,000 in Jail CREDIT 1114. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION CUM CAP 1138

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the additional appropriation request for Cumulative Capital Development 1138 in the amount of \$130,000.00. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

COURTHOUSE 3RD FLOOR REMODELING ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Commissioner President Charlie Chesak explained that the Board of Commissioners carefully investigated the current state of the needed repairs and renovations of this project and they are in unanimous agreement that the improvements are very necessary. The projects were prioritized and bid in increments. Commissioner Chesak explained that the items that were not covered by the budget given by the council included: seating replacements, technology upgrades, countertops, back panels, lighting improvements, and door hardware replacements. He advised there are items that were removed from the list and will not be considered at this time. Commissioner Chesak advised they are requesting an additional \$100,000 for the 3rd Floor Courthouse renovations. Councilman Pearman asked if they had anything stating what the additional \$100,000 will be spent on. Commissioner Cavender advised that we

have a courthouse that has a 3rd floor that has not been updated or remodeled for 50-60 years and we need to keep our courthouse updated. Councilman Pearman advised they would have liked to have a list of what is included in the \$100,000. Commissioner Norem advised they do have a list. All the items are listed on the bid sheet and she would have appreciated it if they would have asked for this ahead of time because they could have brought all that stuff. Commissioner Norem explained that they prioritized what needed to be done and the listed those by items. The items were listed as follows: Item #1 AHU/Ceiling Repairs, Item #2 Flooring Replacement, Lavatory Renovations, Item #4 Jury Room Repairs, Item #5 Small Courtroom Imps, Item #6a C.C.R. Door/Curtain. When they got to this point they stopped because this was to the point of their current budget so they just stopped here and that is what they signed the contract for. The next item on the list was Item #6b C.C.R. Lighting/Ceiling, Item #6c C.C.R. Seating Replacement, Item #6d C.C.R. Technology Upgrades, Item #6e C.C.R. Countertop/Backpanel, Item #7- Option 'A' Fire Protection, Item #7- Option 'B' Fire Protection, Item #8 Lighting Improvements, Item #9 Door/Hardware Replacement. They had removed Item #8 Lighting Improvements, Item #9 Door/Hardware Replacement as this was not necessary at this time. However, they do feel that the seating replacements, technology upgrades, countertop, and back panel are necessary.

Commissioner Norem advised they had met with the Judge and the contractor and spent a lot of time going over what was necessary and what wasn't. She advised that right now the project is scheduled to end at the \$300,000. What they are asking for is the \$100,000 for the three categories that need to be done but don't have enough funds to do so. Councilman Pearman asked if this will sustain things for a certain period of time. Councilman Bailey stated that the gentleman did say that everything that was estimated was over estimated and that it was expected the bids to come in lower than what they did. He advised he does support the project but it was his understanding that they cut the project down to \$300,000 because the estimates came in at \$400,000 and they were supposed to have been over estimated. Commissioner Cavender advised that right now is the perfect time for upgrades to the 3rd floor as they are not currently holding court because of the COVID and you will not be interrupting court at all. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the additional funding request in the amount of \$100,000. Councilman Sims seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Hazelton then amended the motion to approve the addition funding request in the amount of \$100,000 to be paid from CEDIT 1112. Councilman Sims seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

RECORDER – ORDINANCE PERPETUATION FUND

Councilman Pearman advised the recorder is not present at the meeting but what she is requesting is going to benefit the county budgets. She is requesting an ordinance for use of the recorder's record perpetuation fund during calendar year 2021 to add the ability to use postage out of the fund in the amount of \$500. Attorney Lucas advised this ordinance has a 1 year limitation. If they would like to do this again next year they will have to go through the same process. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the ordinance for use of the recorder's record perpetuation fund. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

EMA – GRANT UPDATES

Jean Nier, Starke County EMA Director, came before the Starke County Council and the Starke County Board of Commissioners to give an update in what grants have been applied for and/or received. She advised that right now they are processing the payment for the radios and respirators. She is also still waiting for payment on her 2019 salary reimbursement and she is working on her 2020 salary reimbursement. She advised she is also working on the LEPC grant which is up to \$15,000. She stated she is working on the FEMA grant for COVID related OT. She advised that the court is looking to upgrade computers which is a CARES Act related item as well as PPE. Councilman Pearman asked if she would attend the next council meeting and present the Starke County Council as well as the Board of Commissioners with a spread sheet showing past, present, and possible future graphs. Councilman Hazelton asked if she could explained the radio grant to the council. Director Nier advised that they had received a radio grant for our firefighters and law enforcement. It was for over \$149,000, this was to be able to update the 800 radios to be phase 2 compatible when they go to phase 2. She said they are still phase 1 right now but they actually replaced their old outdated radios. She advised that each fire department got 10 radios, the sheriff's department got 14 radios, and Hamlet Police Department got 1 radio. She advised that Bass Lake has not gotten back to her yet. One thing that she did implement with receiving the radios was radio training. She advised they were required to sign a MOU as well so that they acknowledged that they were responsible to the maintenance on the radio and any damage to the

radio. President Pearman asked if they could get a copy of the MOU's that were signed by the Fire Departments.

QUOTE PROCESS DISCUSSION

Councilman Pearman advised that the discussion regarding the quote process came up during their budget workshops. He advised it is also being brought up as they are looking into discretionary spending. They are thinking of creating a line in county general where all the repairs would come out of one area. This would mean that the Commissioners would have better knowledge of how repair and maintenance to county vehicles are being spent and that policies for spending are being followed. He advised that they are looking into a policy that will include qualifying vendors, some type of threshold in case of emergencies, and that when the department were to look for repairs or maintenance they would be getting quotes from these qualifying vendors. Councilman Pearman explained that is what they would like to purpose from the Council, is that there is a mechanism in place for vehicles repairs. Attorney Lucas advised he would like to make this process easy and he was hoping we could come up with an electronic form that could be filled out and it would also streamline the process which would make record keeping easy.

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION EVENT

Auditor Oesterreich explained that she is requesting approval from the Board of Commissioners and the Starke County Council for \$1,800 to be spent out of the no appropriation fund for an employee appreciation event contingent upon our COVID situation. Councilman Pearman asked what would be included with this. Auditor Oesterreich advised that Councilman Sims has generously donated the VFW to the county for this event. There will be a catered meal held at the VFW. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the request contingent that it is worded as it was worded in last year's resolution. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ronald Vanna expressed his concern in regards to not funding the SCILL program. He would like to see the skill center keep going. He sees the SCILL center kids graduating, getting their own job, and then buying a house at 20 years old. Another thing that he is very upset about is that he heard that when kids do not have money for school lunches, the school takes the meal and throws it in the trash. Councilman Hazelton advised that as far as the school lunches go that is nothing that the council handles, he would have to contact the school. Councilman Pearman stated that the school board meetings is where he would want to go to discuss the lunch issue as well as the SCILL topic. Councilman Pearman explained that the entire SCILL discussion has not just happened now, it is not just something that has come up recently, and it has been a decade of discussions of how we can better manage our Economic Development funds. He stated this has nothing to do with government wanting to cut SCILL, we believe in SCILL, but what we learned was that in every other county the school is involved with that program. It is not normal for county to be involved in education unless you can educate everybody about everything, reaching all the taxpayers. He explained they are in support of the SCILL program and we want people to work in Starke County and work in Starke County, it has nothing to do with lack of support. Councilman Pearman stated it has to do with that the county has such a small amount of Economic Development funds to work with.

Jerry Gurrado advised that he has been with the SCILL program for ten years and if he remember correctly they received the same amount of money back then as well. He stated that this is a necessary pot of money for SCILL to be able to exist. They are totally separate from the school system and the school pays tuition for each one of the students that come into the SCILL program. He explained that SCILL is a very important aspect of Starke County and individuals such as State Legislators and congressional people have come to SCILL and raved about it. He stated that they are going to dig deep and get through this year but there is no way that SCILL can continue in future years without help from the county. He asked the board if they have any concept of the men and women that have come through the SCILL program pay taxes and have gotten off welfare rolls, got insurance to where they are not a toll on the hospital. He explained that 65% of the kids in the SCILL program are Starke County kids. Councilman Pearman advised that they had asked several times for this information, for example, how many people in Starke County work in Starke County or live in Starke County and they have never gotten an answer. Councilman Pearman explained that the Board of Commissioners had asked Ron Gifford for a report requesting specific information. They told Ron "deliver this report and this year we

will consider the funding". He stated when the report came it was the usual information and it did not fulfill the obligation of what was requested.

After some further discussion between Councilman Pearman and Jerry Gurrado, Commissioner Norem advised that the Board of Commissioners have asked that a study be done to identify the needs for the people of this county. She stated they had brought up EMT's and Fire and Rescue as an example but she does not know if that is the best place to put their dollars. She advised when she asked Ron Gifford about how they determine what classes they need, he told them he just asks the employers. However, there are statistics out there that should be able to tell you what is needed. She advised they have never disparaged SCILL, as a Board, they have no trouble with the training programs. It is a matter of the fact that they have been asking for a number of years what they are going to do to alleviate the county in the amount that they contribute. Commissioner Norem advised that the taxpayers of Starke County are funding kids that come from other counties and they have asked repeatedly that they do something about their funding because we do have a shrinking tax base that is shrinking. The state provides training programs and grants for employers to get their employees trained. She said there has been some other issues and Mr. Gurrado does not know all the issues that have taken place. She explained they will be discussing this tonight but they are getting an outside agency to come in and evaluate Economic Development. She suggested to Economic Development that they need to get into their CD's to pay for this program, if they believe in it so highly, while this evaluation is being done. At that time they will come back to the table and talk about what they can do and what they can't do. Commissioner Norem explained to everyone from the public representing SCILL that they have been misled and hearing only one side of the story and it is not that they don't support the SCILL center because they do support the SCILL center.

Jerry Gurrado then asked if there was a slim possibility of getting some funding upon this review. Commissioner Norem stated that it depends on how this review goes. What they have said is that they want changes within the Economic Development foundation and also within the SCILL program. She has been to several Economic Development meetings and if you don't agree with them the character assassination that follows is terrible. She advised they are going to get this review and then they are going to sit down and take a look at it. Director Wickert is going to participate in the review and she will have them call Mr. Gurrado because the company will want to talk to some of the stakeholders. Following further discussion that was held by Ronald Vanna, a member of the public, Director Wickert stated that the funding that comes to SCILL comes predominantly from the schools. The school puts in four times as much money into SCILL than the county does. Councilman Pearman stated that during their discussions they were not saying that the schools do not provide any funding, they just want them to fund the other \$80,000. Councilman Bailey asked how the school supports the SCILL program other than the \$1500 per student. Director Wickert advised that wherever the student comes from the school will put in \$2500 but for auto tech it is \$3200. Commissioner Norem advised that she has an email from the Superintendent of Culver Schools and she stated that her school system puts in \$1500 per student to come to the SCILL center. Councilman Hazelton stated that is one of the issues, that there is so much misinformation that everyone is getting, nobody knows for sure what is going on, which is why we are getting this firm to come in for the review.

Further discussion was held by Ronald Vanna, Councilman Pearman, and Director Wickert when Councilman Pearman stated that the Board of Commissioners is the County Executive body and they have asked for some very specific things with the idea of if you want this funding then we want you to deliver these items we are asking for. Commissioner Norem advised again, the Board of Commissioners are getting an evaluation and if they need money immediately then the Economic Development can lend money to the SCILL program. Director Wickert stated that every dollar they have they have already designated to go on some project. Commissioner Norem advised that the economic development foundation had just offered them \$50,000 for the grant they wanted to apply for recently, she stated there is \$50,000 right there and all they need is another \$30,000. A few more comments from the public were given regarding the wages in Starke County and the SCILL program. Councilman Pearman then stated that for a long time they have been asking the SCILL program to become self-funded so that they can focus those dollars more towards economic development. He also advised that the main reason this has become an issue is because the Commissioners have asked for some very specific items to be delivered to them and it did not happen. It has nothing to do with politics or who has a job, the Commissioners asked for these specific items and those items were not delivered.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

After having no public comments made Councilman White made a motion to adjourn at 7:03PM. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**JULY 20, 2020
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Dave Pearman, President

Brad Hazelton, Vice-President

Kay Gudeman

Don White

ABSENT

Howard Bailey

Robert Sims

Freddie Baker

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

**JULY 20, 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