

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL
MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2021**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council at 5:30 PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman (Via Zoom), Kay Gudeman, Brad Hazelton, Don White, Howard Bailey, Don Binkley (Via Zoom), Todd Leinbach present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council Vice President, Brad Hazelton at 5:30 PM for the Starke County Council Regular Session.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 19, 2021 meeting with a slight correction. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR 2022 BUDGETS

Councilman Hazelton opened the public hearing for Starke County's 2022 Budget at 5:32 PM. With no comments being made Councilman Leinbach made a motion to close the public hearing at 5:32 PM. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Hazelton opened the public hearing for the North Judson San Pierre School's 2022 Budget at 5:33 PM. With no comments being made Councilman Leinbach made a motion to close the public hearing at 5:33 PM. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Hazelton opened the public hearing for the Koontz Lake Conservancy's 2022 Budget at 5:34 PM. With no comments being made Councilman White made a motion to close the public hearing at 5:34 PM. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Hazelton opened the public hearing for the Starke County Airport's 2022 Budget at 5:34 PM. Councilman Leinbach asked Charlie Weaver about the occupancy of the airport. He would like to know the ratio of Starke County residents compared to out of county residents. Mr. Weaver advised he does not have those numbers but he can say that if anyone from Starke County wants a place they will get a place. Councilman Leinbach also questioned why their fuel is so much cheaper than anyone else. He advised he is questioning this because he knows the fuel can be raised and can be used to offset their budget. Mr. Weaver explained that we are a very small community and there are not a lot of amenities to attract people who are in flight. They believe that by dropping the fuel this allows for more traffic. Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to close the public hearing at 5:35 PM. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Hazelton opened the public hearing for the Starke County Solid Waste 2022 Budget at 5:36 PM. With no comments being made Councilman Leinbach made a motion to close the public hearing at 5:36 PM. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

SCEDF BOARD MAKE-UP AND SCILL/SCEDF SEPERATION

Lisa Dan, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Starke County Council to discuss their board make-up and the separation of SCILL and SCEDF. She advised that she discussed with the Board of Commissioners this morning their board make-up and how they believe that it is beneficial to the board itself. They have reduced their board from 28 member to 23 members over the last several months. They anticipate at least 2 or 3 more members being removed at the end of the year because some terms expiring and also Ron Gifford will be leaving at the end of the year as well. She explained that at the beginning of the year they removed the Planning Commission and Hamlet town's seats as they did not attend the meetings. However, since then she has been to a Planning Commission meeting and a Town of Hamlet meeting and they do want to be added back to the Economic Board. Director Dan advised that the Board of Commissioner did recommend to further reduce their numbers and to look at their at large members to reduce in that area as well. She advised

that at the Commissioners meeting she also went through a few reasons how the SCILL and SCEDF are separate, one being that the SCEDF is a 501-C6 and SCILL is a 501-C3. Both entities have their own separate board. Ron Gifford is no longer a part of the SCEDF and is SCILL Interim Director until the end of the year at which time he will not be a part of that entity either.

Director Dan advised that as they are considering their contract for next year she wanted to go over a few things to justify keeping the contract with the SCEDF. They are trying to seek funding through different avenues by going out into the community to try and secure other ways of funding throughout the community. She has been reaching out to other counties to get ideas on how they can find other sources of funding. One of the disadvantages they have at being a 501-C6 verses and 501-C3 is that not all grants are available to 501-C6's. The Foundation has brought in over 31 million dollars in investments through expansions by Traffic control Specialist, JW Hicks, and Norton Packaging. There have also been over 370 job created and retained as of the result of those expansions. Director Dan explain the Rule Opportunity Zone initiative and where they stand right now in the project. The goal of the Opportunity Zone is to market industry on the south side of US 30 from US 35 through SR 23. She explained they are in the advanced stages of the solar project, the developers plan to have an official groundbreaking ceremony the first week in October. That project is in the neighborhood of \$250 Million. They do expect to be up and running by June or July of 2023.

Director Dan advised that Manufacturers Day is coming up soon but she has not been receiving a good response from Manufacturers and she believes this is because everyone is so short staffed that they do not have the extra employees to send to represent them at Manufactures Day. She advised they are also working on the second annual North Judson pitch contest as well as broadband opportunities, her big push for the American Relief money is for broadband. She explained that the Foundation continues to manage the Hamlet Fire Well for Starke County as well as the Lead Tracks. She advised they did work very closely with KVREMC and they still have a credit with them after they had fixed the whole billing situation. She has reached out to the Starke County Highway Department today to make signs so that they can put signs all over the building stating Do Not Use Fire well between 4 and 7 PM, because that is when the bills will skyrocket at the fire well. Director Dan then talked about how the Foundation was beginning to work on their strategic plan. She explained that a barriers to the plan though is not knowing year to year if they will be funded. It would make it a whole lot easier if they knew they will have future funding.

Councilman Pearman stated he wanted to remind the council that when it comes to the size of the SCEDF Board there are things the Commissioners have authority with and things that the council has the authority with. He would like the council to consider the size of the board and how effective a board can be at that size. Councilman Bailey asked Director Dan if she felt like all 23 members put in input at the meetings. Director Dan advised she does not. She believes about 15-16 have very good input. Director Dan spoke about the past attendance of board members as well. Councilman Hazelton advised that one problem that he has with the meetings is that the meeting time is 4 PM in the afternoon and if we are trying to get business people in and getting them to attend then they are probably working at 4 PM in the afternoon. Director Dan advised they can always revisit their meeting time as well. Councilman Pearman also advised that he as well as other council members are still concerned about what went on with Saber and SCILL rejecting the offer by Saber. He would like the SCILL Board to explain themselves in regards to this matter. Director Dan advised that she can give somewhat of an explanation as to the transaction that took place. She stated that the SCILL board did go out and tour the facility when it was offered to them as a donation but there was too much work/money to be put into the building for it to be used. Councilman Hazelton questioned why didn't they just accept the Saber property and sell it for \$5. Director Dan stated it has been for sale though with no interest. Councilman Leinbach stated yes it has been for sale for over \$1 million but they could have sold it for \$100,000.

Director Dan advised they do not know what it would have cost to rehab the building for the SCILL programs, they did not know if there would be future funding for SCILL or for SCEDF. Councilman Hazelton advised they could have just took it and sold it. Director Dan stated she does not know when the City of Knox was offered the building and she did not know that they had discussed if SCILL was not going to take it they would give it to the City of Knox. After further discussion regarding the transaction involving SCILL not accepting the Saber property Director Dan advised that all she knows now is that it was offered to the City of Knox and they are going to use it for storage and putting in a pop up industry. Councilman Pearman asked Director Dan that if there is ever a time that an opportunity like this arises please come to the Starke County Council or Board of Commissioners to get us involved. Councilman Pearman asked for the SCILL minutes as well.

EMS PAY RATES/PAY RAISES

Travis Clary, Director of the Starke County Emergency Medical Services came before the Starke County Council to talk about pay rates and pay raises. He presented the council with a pay rate proposal sheet. Director Clary advised he tried to compare other services around our area and what they pay. Newton and Pulaski County are more sizable to us and if you look at their figures they are 25-35% higher than our county. Director Clary advised to keep in mind to take out medical insurance for a family of approximately \$5,400 per year, taxes and etc. out EMT/Paramedics are making approximately \$10,000 less than the gross income we see above. He advised new paramedics start out at \$17.43 and when he started they started at about \$17.00. He stated he was hired in as a basic EMT 10 years ago at \$10.00 per hour and we are only up to \$11.88 at this time. Full time does get a slight increase at \$12.13 and a lot of these people who are with him tonight carry 2-3 jobs and work over 100 hours per week. Director Clary advised that the Board of Commissioner did just approve an increase to the rates they charge. They are also looking at Accumed which is a third party billing company to help with bringing in revenue. Councilman Hazelton stated that he supports their operations and the employees the EMS Department has but the council just approved the budget for 2022 an hour ago that now they would have to completely redo. He advised that if he can find money in his budget to do that he would full support it. Further discussion was held regarding an EMS billing service and the EMS pay compared to other counties. Councilman Leinbach made a motion to table the EMS Pay Rates and Pay Raise discussion until next month. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION-JAIL CEDIT

Sheriff Bill Dulin and Matron Pam McDonald came before the Starke County Council for an additional appropriation for Jail CEDIT for the purchase of a body scanner for the jail. Sheriff Dulin presented the Council with two quotes, one for \$199,999 and another for \$175,000. Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the additional appropriation for Jail CEDIT 1114 in the amount of \$175,000. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Bailey made a motion to approve the purchase of the \$175,000 body scanner from Tek 84. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

SURVEYOR TRANSFER REQUEST

Councilman Bailey made a motion for the following transfer request:

Additional Appropriation for 1000.10300.000.0006 in the amount of \$600.00
Reduction for 1000.10400.000.0023 in the amount of \$300.00 and 1000.10405.000.0023 in the amount of \$300.00

Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION – CUM CAP

Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the additional appropriation request for Cum Cap 1138 in the amount of \$30,000. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilman Leinbach made a motion for Auditor Oesterreich to publish an additional appropriation for CEDIT 1112 for the grant matching amount for the COVID-19 Relief OCRA grant. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Auditor Oesterreich stated she would like to recognize and thank Platt Book Coordinator and Deputy Auditor Suzanne Sims, Deputy Auditor Rebekah Wagner, Deputy Auditor Sara Dingman, Human Resources Administrator and Deputy Auditor Wendy McIntire and Paula Hunter in the Surveyor's office for the endless hour's that have given toward this most recent food voucher program that started last month. These individuals have taken hundreds of phone calls, prepared vouchers, and handed out vouchers to the public. We are now up to an estimated 1200 residents who are now on the program so you can imagine how much work goes into this.

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilman White made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:54 PM. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**AUGUST 16, 2021
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Dave Pearman, President

Brad Hazelton, Vice-President

Kay Gudeman

Don White

Howard Bailey

Don Binkley

Todd Leinbach

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