

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**MINUTES**  
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2021**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 6:00 PM, in person at the Starke County Annex Building, Knox, Indiana, with Charles Chesak, Bryan Cavender, and Mark Gourley 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 at 6:00 PM.

**EMS BILLING ACCUMED**

Travis Clary, Director of EMS and Kate Melasi with Accumed came before the Board of Commissioners with their request. Director Clary advised they are looking to outsource their billing as there was some discussion that they may be able to increase their revenues. Kate explained that they were incorporated in 1989 to provide services to municipal based providers. They currently service 251 clients with 61 of those being in Indiana many of those being our neighboring communities. Kate advised they employ the services of Page, Wolfberg & Wirth, LLC. She explained for the life of the contract Starke County would have access to the law attorney group if there are ever questions about instances that arise. She advised their goal is to reduce the in house costs for the county by taking on the billing service. She stated that their fees are based on what they collect not what they bill. Auditor Oesterreich advised that Director Clary will be paying for this from his budget by not hiring a part time person to fill the open spot in the EMS office. Commissioner Gourley asked if Accumed would incorporate the older billing items as well. Kate advised that they usually do not take on anything prior to their start date but they do have the ability to look at some accounts on a case by case basis. Teri Johnson, Vice-President of Accumed advised the reason they usually do not take on billings prior to their onboarding date is because situations get a little confusing sometimes with the codes that were used to bill for the instances that have happened prior to their onboarding.

Director Clary advised that Nancy could still keep taking care of the old accounts and then Accumed could begin October 1st, or whatever date is agreed upon. Attorney Lucas asked about Section 4.D were it states if Starke County refunds or waives a fee Accumed still collects it fee unless the non-collection was the fault of Accumed. Director Clary explained that there are times that they do not bill for example if they go to a lift assist call or if an ambulance was called by a business but the individual refuses to go to the hospital they will not charge. Kate advised that in those cases there would be no billing records that would come to Accumed anyway, so they would not charge a fee. Attorney Lucas also asked about the 5 year duration of the contract and whether or not if that is negotiable. Kate stated that they do 3 year contracts as well. Auditor Oesterreich stated that with the 3 year contract the charge would be 5.5% rather than the 5% as in the 5 year contract. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the Accumed Billing Service Agreement. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**PROSECUTOR BAKER-NEW POSITION INVESTIGATOR**

Leslie Baker, Starke County Prosecutor came before the Board of Commissioners to request the approval of a new position, being an Investigator position. She presented the Board with a Job Description. She advised that this position would be a fully funded position through a grant with Health link. They will be providing up to \$5700 per month for salary and benefits for this position, which will fully fund the position being full time with benefits. This position would work in her office but would work with all the departments and closely with overdose cases and family members who are still surviving. Health link will be providing Prosecutor Baker with a Memorandum of Understanding. Commissioner Check asked how long the funding would last. She advised that the grant cycle starts in September 2021 through September of 2022 and then for September 2022 she could reapply for another year. Prosecutor Baker advised that Health link expressed they do not see this funding going anywhere because of how problematic the opioid crisis has been. She advised that just in case, if this funding is not available next year, she put in the job description at the bottom "This position is funded through federal grant funding and such is renewed annually. If, at any time, such grant funding is not available, the position will no longer be available." Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the Investigator position for the Prosecutor's Office so long as grant funding is available. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **KINGS LAKE LOTS**

Renee Green did not appear for the Kings Lake Lots discussion. Auditor Oesterreich explained that Renee had expressed concerns over the gates that had been installed within the Kings Lake Lots. She advised that “back in the day” Tommy Williams had an agreement with the current Highway Superintendent to put gates up because they had so many problems in that area with trash dumping. Then around 2009 the issue was brought up again and the Board of Commissioners at that time agreed to the gates as long as Tommy provided a key to those who did own lots in the back section. After further discussion it was decided to have Auditor Oesterreich contact Tommy Williams to see what his side of the story is.

## **AUDITOR BUSINESS**

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$704,632.96. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the payroll docket in the amount of \$241,669.37, including deductions in the amount of \$72,872.99 for the pay period ending on 08/22/2021 and pay date of 09/10/2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the payroll docket in the amount of \$245,612.88, including deductions in the amount of \$74,150.23 for the pay period ending on 08/21/2021 and pay date of 08/27/2021. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes from August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Auditor Oesterreich advised that she has had a few inquiries about whether or not they are going to bring back COVID pay. She stated that as they know the Federal Government COVID pay ended December 31, 2020 and then the Board of Commissioners extended it to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. She also explained that there is a lot that goes into it for example, will there be pay for individuals whose daycare or school shut down and they did not have child care, those who are quarantine, those who are positive? She asked if they did bring it back would it go to those employees who already used it the first time? Would it go to those who have not been vaccinated since there is a vaccine? After further discussion it was decided that COVID pay would not be reinstated.

Attorney Lucas explained the Electronic Meetings Policy of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the Resolution for Electronic Meetings Policy of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Dan Dipert, Superintendent of the Highway Department came before the Board of Commissioners to talk about a couple of things. He would like to reinstate the crew leader pay within his department. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to reinstate the position of the crew leader at the Starke County Highway Department. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Superintendent Dipert would like to remove some “Slow” signs around the county and replacing them with a “35 MPH” sign. Commissioner Gourley asked if those areas has been designated as being the speed limit in that area. Attorney Lucas advised that usually they have an engineering basis for setting the speed limits in certain areas. Auditor Oesterreich suggested contacting Laura Slusher with LTAP to ask her about doing an engineering study regarding the “Slow” signs as LTAP’s engineering studies are done at no cost. Superintendent Dipert mentioned that their phone system has been acting terrible, he said IT said this has been an ongoing problem and that they need to update the facility. The Board of Commissioners advised Superintendent Dipert to consult with IT about the cost of this upgrade. Superintendent Dipert stated he had sent the Board of Commissioners a map of where the solar farms are going in. He advised they have contacted him about the road usage out there. Attorney Lucas advised to look into the road usage agreement that was used for the NIPSCO transmission lines. Commissioner Gourley amended the crew leader motion to be retroactive to September 5<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Gourley asked Councilman Pearman for an update from the Communications Committee. Councilman Pearman advised they have had J & K out doing PM’s all week last week, things have improved. He advised that Bass Lake is still saying they have issues, he is doing some testing in that

area. They also still have to work out some problems in Washington Township but overall it has gotten a lot better.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

With there being no further public comments and no further business, Commissioner Gourley 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 6:55 PM.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2021**

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Charlie Chesak, President

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Bryan Cavender, Vice-President

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Mark Gourley, Member

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Rachel Oesterreich, County Auditor  
& Secretary to the Board