

## **MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2021**

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, 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 6:00PM.

### **EMS MONTHLY REPORT**

Clerk Mary Lynn Ritchie came before the Board of Commissioners to present their monthly report. Clerk Ritchie presented the run and revenue report. Commissioner Chesak read off the amount collected from Attorney Jonathan O'Hara, the amount is \$926.69. Clerk Ritchie advised they have had the highest amount of hospital transfers for the month of February. This was 43% of their runs for the month, she explained this is a big part of their revenue. She presented their revenue for February being \$68,429.46. She explained this is lower than last year in February because COVID had not hit yet. She advised she does have two other issues to discuss. The EMS, back in 2018, was in need a DEFIB machines (heart monitors), the Commissioners at that time decided to buy the machines on a five year contract at no interest. Every year the payment is \$8506.25. She stated this year will be the fourth payment of that. She stated that in 2019 they had another machine go back so they did another contract but it was only for one so the payment on that machine is \$4537.54. She advised that this year will be the third year for that contract. She advised that these usually come out of cumulative capital development. Auditor Oesterreich advised she wanted Clerk Ritchie to mention these payments as a reminder to the Commissioners that an additional \$13,000 will be coming out of cumulative capital development this year. Clerk Ritchie stated the second issues pertains to their small claims collection process.

She stated that their process is to bill individuals 2 or 3 times and if their bill is not paid they send them a letter stating they will be turned over to small claims. What small claims have always done with the filing fee is added the filing fee onto the patient's bill, the EMS department did not pay this up front. Clerk Ritchie stated that to be able to proceed they have to have a signed green card. She advised the Sheriff's Department has always delivered this to the individual/patients. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> this year the Sheriff Department will not do the service anymore without the \$28.00 processing fee per case. In this process they have been coming up with solutions. She advised they contacted the Clerk's Office to see if they could add this \$28.00 Sheriff Service fee like they do the court costs and she was told this could not be done. She said another solution they could possibly get into is using the services of Attorney Jonathan O'Hara. Attorney Lucas advised that Clerk Ritchie should check into the logistics of what Attorney O'Hara would charge because he may need the \$28.00 sheriff processing fee upfront as well. After further discussion it was decided that Clerk Ritchie will still look into the fee collection with Attorney O'Hara but for now the county will be paying the \$28.00 sheriff service fee out of the EMS budget. Councilman Pearman stated they will keep an eye on it and transfer money when needed within the budget. That \$28.00 processing fees will be paid upfront to the Clerk's Office for the cases it pertains to, which in turn will eventually be put into the Sheriff Retirement Fund.

### **HIGHWAY MONTHLY REPORT**

Starke County Highway Superintendent Stephen Ritzler presented his monthly report to the Board of Commissioners. Superintendent Ritzler advised that most of February was a cold, snowy month. The new drivers experienced their first large, multiday snow event. Their inexperience shower but overall, out drivers did a good job handling it. We have used the relatively good weather of the last week to get caught up on truck repairs and to clean out equipment. He advised they were out patching today and plan to continue that effort for the rest of the week. He presented his report to the Commissioners with a few pictures of their operations and a thank you card they received with several positive comments. Superintendent Ritzler advised that they have been awarded a grant for Bridge 59 – CR700S over Bogus Run. They currently have three bridges and their bridge inspection contracts funded by grants. He presented the contract for Bridge 137 that they voted on last time, he would like the Commissioners to sign the contract. He advised he will be getting the paperwork for Bridge 7 within the next month for them to sign as well. He advised they received the completed book of the bridge inspections and the physical copies should be done within the next week. The bridge inspections went well and the bridges are in very good shape. He advised that for the Call for Projects for 2021-1 they applied for 700 E between SR8 and 625S, hot mix asphalt.

Superintendent Ritzler advised that depending on the money that is left the CR500N between US35 and Hamlet may have to be moved to the next Call for Projects. He advised they also have the CR210 around Bass Lake as an upcoming truck route. He advised that during the call for the INDOT call for projects, the 500N from US35 to 750E they flat out told him that this project should be done through Community Crossings. Almost every project in this call for projects were Bridges that were awarded. He advised that for the Toto Rd. sight distance correction that needed to be applied through the HSIP Grant which is through the Highway Safety Improvement Program. He advised that they have had two garage doors installed past month and the new front door for the office has arrived. He stated that in regards to the US30 coalition the PEL study will be done for the US30 corridor. This somewhat commits INDOT to moving forward with the freeway project. He presented the Commissioners with a list of vehicles that have been purchased and will be coming soon. He also stated that he received news from the insurance company and they should be receiving a check soon from them for the recently totaled truck they had. He advised he will be completing personnel evaluations within the next week. He then spoke about the road school presentation that himself and Auditor Oesterreich recorded for the upcoming Purdue Road School conference.

Superintendent Ritzler advised that this has been a very difficult decision for him but Traffic Control Specialist approached him recently and made him an offer that he could not refuse. He thought hard about it and he loves being the Starke County Highway Superintendent and he works really hard at it and tries to do the best he can but he will be taking the position with Traffic Control Specialist. He advised moving forward to continue the asset management program. He advised the effective date of his resignation will be March 12<sup>th</sup> because he has several grants that he needs to transfer the lead contact to Mary Perren and Rachel Oesterreich who are ERC's for our county. He advised he is currently on the US 30 Coalition board but they may not want him to be on it anymore and he advised it may be better if one of the Commissioners took that over. He went over aspects to be remembered for the vehicle purchases, training budget, workman's compensation claims, ADA coordination requirements, and the Construction Inspection Program. Commissioner Cavender expressed that he is gonna hate to lose him.

#### **TREASURER COMPUTER PURCHASE**

Treasurer Lauri Venckus came before the Board of Commissioners to request a new computer purchase. She advised that she is in need of an updated computer system and the one she is currently using was manufactured in 2012. She advised of all the problems she has been having with it since she took office and it has gotten to the point of affecting her productivity and helping the public entity. Commissioner Gourley advised the only thing he would question on the quote is the need for new monitors. He stated that there is a pile of adapters that could be used as well. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to accept the cost of the \$802.68 and \$307.91 portions of the quote for the computer request, to be paid from cumulative capital development. 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 \$525,516.57. 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 \$277,171.36, including deductions in the amount of \$85,735.19 for the pay period ending on 02/20/2021 and pay date of 02/26/2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the minutes from February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Attorney Lucas advised that our liability insurance company has reviewed our updated handbook and they had a few suggestions. The first is under Indiana law when an elected official, that is a constitutional office, makes a decision about employment, there is not any review by the Board of Commissioners. However, Attorney Lucas fees that the grievance process in a good process to have in place. He added a footnote in the handbook that reflects this Indiana law but also states it does not preclude the individual from the process. The other issue was in regards to FMLA. The insurance company is stating an employee on FMLA should be paid holiday pay. Attorney Lucas is still looking into this matter as he is not sure this is correct. He has not added any changes in the handbook for that

matter yet. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to accept the updated handbook. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Kenny Wallace came before the Board of Commissioner ad he advised that the grandson of Marvin Peters unfortunately is unable to accept the appointment to the ABC Board. Commissioner Cavender advised that he has a candidate that is interested, Jim Brown, he is of the correct political affiliation. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to appoint Jim Brown to the ABC Board. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Chesak signed the documents for the Courthouse Sidewalk Project.

Commissioner Cavender advised that he and Todd Leinbach went to several different businesses in the unincorporated areas of the county to get letters of interest for the new CDBG grant.

Auditor Oesterreich brought up the issue of employees using the county vehicles when they are completing county work but not for things such as driving to conferences. She suggested that if the board does not require the use of county vehicles then the employee should have to sign a waiver saying the county is not responsible for damages to their own vehicle is they occur because they were offered the use of the county vehicle. Commissioner Cavender stated why we would pay mileage to an employee when we have vehicles sitting in the parking lot that needs to be used. Commissioner Gourley stated he believes he should leave that call up to the department heads. He stated if they are interested in saving money in their budget, they will use the county car, if they are not interested in saving money in their budget they will use their own car. Auditor Oesterreich advised that the Board of Commissioners are in charge of taxpayer money and this is taxpayer money that we are spending. If the department heads can save money within their budget then maybe we can afford to give our employees raises. Carrie Block with 1<sup>st</sup> Source Insurance advised that this has been discussed in the past and she has a good document that she will get to the Board of Commissioners that outlines how they should or shouldn't and the implications for the use of their own vehicles. She advised this may help them make a decision on how they want to handle this.

**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 7:09 PM.

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Charlie Chesak, President

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Bryan Cavender, Vice-President

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Mark Gourley

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