

TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2020

Pursuant to recess comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 5:00PM in the Annex Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Kathryn Norem, Bryan Cavender, and Charles Chesak 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 at 5:00PM.

TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF OFFICES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Commissioner Norem advised they have two orders of business here today. First, is a temporary closure of all Starke County Government offices to the public due to the COVID-19. Effective immediately as soon as the Board of Commissioners signs the order all county offices will be closed to the public. The employees will still come into work, the court will have its own order that they will be issuing because this does not cover the judicial branch at all. This order does not cover the Sheriff's Department either, the Sheriff has his separate things to do. Commissioner Norem explained this is a temporary closure and it is open ended, they are not saying it is for two weeks or three weeks, they are saying this is until further notice, the length of closure will depend on the guidance they receive from the state and federal government. Commissioner Norem advised the order does go on to say any unauthorized members of the Public attempting entry or refusing to leave immediately upon request may be subject to removal by security staff. However, what the Board of Commissioners are asking is that the public do their business by telephone 574-772-9100, email, US Mail, and teleconferencing. She advised there are exceptions, in certain circumstances members of the public may be allowed into County Offices for a personal meeting, but by appointment only. She explained this will be until further notice. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the Executive Order for Temporary Closure of all County Offices to Public Access Due to COVID-19. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion passed with all ayes.

TEMPORARY OPERATIONAL POLICIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Commissioner Norem advised the second policy they will be going over is a Temporary Operational Policy in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic for county employees. She advised that this policy will be handed out to the department heads who will then distribute to their employees. The county is adopting the Center for Disease Control and the Indiana State Board of Health resources and guidelines for COVID-19. She explained this policy will be applied to non-judicial employees, the Sheriff's Department will be subject to the lawful authority of the Sheriff and applicability to the EMS is subject to the discretion of the EMS Director. She advised what the policy says is that employees who are symptomatic such as a fever in excess of 100.4 with oral thermometer and/or persistent cough, difficulty breathing, or other symptoms of respiratory ailments should not report to work. She explained if you don't have any of those symptoms then you are considered asymptomatic. If employees are experiencing those symptoms then they are considered symptomatic. She advised that employees are to not return to work until they have been symptom free for 24 hours without the uses of medication. Employees will have to use their sick time, vacation time, and apply for FMLA. She advised employees can still use their vacation time even if they are not sick, vacation time and sick time can also be used to care for immediate family who are not ill but need care, due to the closure of the schools etc. Employees are not to bring their children or elders to work with them whether they are sick or well. Do not bring any family members to work. If employees need to take time off they are to use either sick time or vacation time.

Commissioner Norem advised if employees have insufficient sick or vacation time, they will be allowed to use up to 14 days of unearned vacation days for the illness for self-isolation and quarantine requirements. She advised depending on how this goes the Commissioners will periodically review this operational policy and if they need to extend it they may extend it. If employees have exhausted their six time or vacation time the employees can apply for FMLA leave. If employees are not eligible for FMLA leave employees may make a leave of absence request. She explained if we do pay employees for un-accumulated leave, because of this crisis, and the employee terminated their employment before the county gets that time back the county reserves the right to take that out of their final paycheck. Employees who are at increased risk for complications from COVID-19 due to being over age 60 or subject to underlying health conditions are urged to consult their physicians about steps they can take to protect their health. Supervisors can make alternative work assignments to employees. For example, if

employees can work from home it would be between them and their supervisor. The Board of Commissioners do not want the employees to have to be unpaid. They will review the policy periodically and hopefully we can keep the government working. They do not want employees to suffer any economic loss.

Director of Security asked the Board of Commissioners if the buildings need to be locked down. Commissioner Norem stated yes all county buildings should be locked to the public. She also advised the Judge will be making his own announcements regarding closure. Director Mattraw with Court Services and Starke County Probation asked their direction in making appointments with offenders. Commissioner Norem asked Director Mattraw to confer with the Judge as they are under the jurisdiction of the Judge. Assessor Schouten asked if her department was still allowed to go on the planned inspections within the next few weeks. Commissioner Norem advised that would be fine as long as they utilize social distancing and disinfectants. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the Temporary Operational Policies in Response to COVID-19. Commissioner Cavender seconded to motion and the motion passed with all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There being no further public comments and no further business, Commissioner Cavender made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and it passed with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 5:21PM.

MARCH 17, 2020

Charlie Chesak, President

Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender

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