

**Monday, April 4, 2011**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in regular session at 9:00am in the Annex meeting room, Knox, Indiana, with Dan Bridegroom, Kathy Norem, and Jennifer Davis present and the following proceedings were held to wit:

**RE: MINUTES**

Kathy Norem made the motion to approve a draft of the minutes of the March 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> meetings, and the final minutes of the March 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Jennifer Davis seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with three ayes.

**RE: PAYROLL AND VENDOR CLAIMS**

Kathy Norem made the motion to approve the payroll claim for the pay period ending March 19, 2011 in the amount of \$ 164,104.42, seconded by Jennifer Davis; passing with three ayes.

Dan Bridegroom presented the pay claims for the period ending April 4, 2011. The total amount of the claims totaled \$ 189,601.14. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the claims for payment, seconded by Commissioner Davis. The motion passed with all ayes.

**RE: EMS**

Mary Lynn Ritchie, EMS Clerk, notified the board of \$ 194.55 collected from Mr. O'hara and \$ 823.60 received from the Starke County Clerk for accounts that were in collections.

Lisa Burger, the EMS Director appeared before the board. She presented them with a report she had compiled covering her 1<sup>st</sup> year as the Director. A copy of the report is on file in the Auditor's Office. She stated one problem she encountered was getting broken item fixed in a timely manner. She specifically spoke in regards to the cot situation. She advised in one instance, it took over three months to get a cot repaired. She stated there is a cot repair class she could send an employee or employees to, in Ohio, that would teach them how to repair cots. The cost of the class is \$ 500.00. Commissioner Bridegroom stated he would like to see what other expenses would be included in attending that class, such as travel and hotel expense. Commissioner Norem commended her on the good report, and stated she would like to see every department head submit a report at the end of every year. Commissioner Bridegroom stated the department has come a long way with the limited amount of resources they receive. Lisa stated work is pending on the radios in the outlying bases. It was discovered that the antennas were facing in the wrong direction.

Commissioner Bridegroom stated in regard to the grievance situation, that he believed it was an in-house communications issue and there was no merit to the complaint. Commissioner Norem stated she found no merit to the grievance.

**RE: COUNTY HIGHWAY**

Steve Siddall, County Highway Superintendent, appeared before the Board to report that the State recently conducted an inspection of the county bridges and they closed down three bridges, # 9, #62 and #156. Also three other bridges were reduced to one lane: # 43, on CR1000E at Koontz Lake, # 70, on CR50S at CR500S and the bridge on CR250W at Toto Road. He stated in reference to the bridge on Range Road, which is scheduled for repair in 2012 and that federal funding had already been awarded, was closed after the State witnessed a delivery semi crossing the bridge. The State documented it in pictures. Mr. Siddall stated a lack of maintenance over the last 50 – 60 years is the reason for the present condition of the bridges in the county. A member of the public in attendance at the meeting stated, that bridge, #156, was a used bridge when it was installed in 1939. Commissioner Norem stated so now what does the county do. Mr. Siddall stated Bridge 156 is closed until the repair projects starts in 2012. In regards to the other two closed bridges, repair work could begin right away. He does have a firm that could start on the paperwork right now for the other two bridges. Those three closed bridges will not be open for two years. Commissioner Norem inquired if a temporary solution could be used,

such as a culvert . He stated the county would need to get permission from the 4 County Drainage Board to put in a culvert to assist the farmers in the area of the closed bridge. Jack Awald, whose telephone number is on file in the Auditor's office, advised he is a neighboring land owner and gives his permission to install a culvert. Commissioner Norem stated she is the President of the 4 County Drainage Board and the next meeting is scheduled for April 21<sup>st</sup>. She will check with the Surveyor, Dennis Estok, and see if an emergency meeting be called. Commissioner Bridegroom inquired if permission from the Army Corps of Engineers is required, and they stated they would ask the Surveyor. Commissioner Norem inquired as to the status of Bridge # 62, on CR500S, off Range Road, if a culvert could be used there. Mr. Bridegroom stated it is located in wetlands. He is concerned, though, about emergency vehicles, that would need to travel that area. Brad Lawrence, in the audience, inquired about the type of bridge, # 156 will be. Mr. Siddall advised it will be a preformed concrete slab bridge, with banisters. The bridge will be widened to 24 feet, with two feet of guardrails. The length of the bridge would remain the same. The cost of the project will be \$ 895,000.00. He also advised that all of the bridges over twenty feet in length are inspected every two years. He will notify the Commissioners when the State has the bridge inspection report ready, so they could be in attendance at the presentation. He also advised bridge # 154, is the next one scheduled to receive federal funding. Commissioner Norem advised the county better be coming up with a plan. Mr. Siddall advised maintenance hadn't been completed in the last 4-5 years. He stated salt, sand, and weather takes a toll on bridges. They are approximately seven years behind from the plan, and bridges should have been replaced 4 – 5 years ago. He stated also that the State has been notified, in case Starke County's timeframe for repair, could move up.

Lee Nagai, from the audience, inquired as to what the balance was of the county's cumulative bridge fund and what the county's match to that federal funding would be. Mr. Siddall replied that the balance of the cum. bridge fund was currently a little over one million, and the county match of the federal grant was 20%. Mr. Nagai inquired if the county would be interested in hearing a proposal on how the bridge could be constructed quicker, and for what costs the county would be spending on the 20% match. Mr. Siddall stated the engineering for Bridge # 156 has already begun. The Commissioners stated they would be interested in seeing a proposal, if he could have it completed before the next meeting, on April 18<sup>th</sup>. If he completes it before then, submit it to Commissioners Norem or Bridegroom, since Commissioner Davis will be on vacation. Mr. Nagai advised the construction could begin in two months, and would be completed quicker than the federal program. Also, the proposal would be completed with no cost to the county, it would be his donation. Commissioner Norem inquired if the bridge would last as long as the federal constructed bridge, and he replied it would last longer. Commissioner Bridegroom stated he is concerned about the grant money, because a grant can not be transferred to another project, and that it could be lost revenue. He also inquired of Mr. Nagai if they would still need IDEM and DNR approval and Mr. Nagai replied no not if the hydraulics aren't changed.

Marty Lucas did advise the project would need to be bid out. Steve Siddall advised the amount paid for the engineering expense would be lost.

Don White, of the audience, inquired about the bridge on CR500S. The Commissioners advised the bridge was closed because it is too dangerous, and presently it is not scheduled for repair. Commissioner Norem made a motion for the commissioners to move ahead with the engineering, and sign "The Agreement Between Owner and Engineer" for Bridges # 9 and #62, with the Butler, Fairman and Seufert Co. of Indianapolis, IN. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed with all ayes and the paperwork was signed. A copy of the engineering consultants agreement is on file in the Auditor's office.

Commissioner Bridegroom stated he was concerned about the rising cost of fuel and how it will affect the county highway department, and he would like to see a report comparing last year's fuel expense to this year.

Mr. Awald inquired as to the status of Bridge # 9, at CR500E & CR700N . Mr. Sidall stated the State report has not been completed yet and in that particular bridge the wooden pillars on the bridges super structure have dry rotted and need to be replaced.

Commissioner Bridegroom inquired if the orange closure signs have helped more than the yellow signs, and Steve believed they somewhat had.

Commissioner Norem made a motion to allow the County Highway Department to sell two culverts, and corresponding bands and bolts, to the 4 County Drainage Board, for the same price the highway department paid for that equipment three years ago. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion and the motion passed with all ayes. Steve advised he would get that price information to Commissioner Norem.

**RE: ELECTION BOARD**

Evelyn Skronski and Jim Henriott of the Starke County Election Board appeared before the Board with a revised resolution of the election board to move Precincts I, II, III & IV to the Knox Community Center and reduce the total number of election workers. Mrs. Skronski advised the resolution had been prepared with the assistance of Marty Lucas. Commissioner Norem inquired of the representatives of her party that were in attendance, if they agreed with this resolution, and they acknowledged they did. Commissioner Norem then made a motion to accept the Resolution from the Starke County Election Board, seconded by Jennifer Davis. The motion passed with all ayes. A copy of the resolution is on file in the Auditor's office.

**RE: REQUEST FOR FULL TIME DEPUTY TREASURER**

The Treasurer, Linda Belork appeared before the Board regarding her request to make her part time help into a full time deputy. A discussion was held regarding how the appropriations could be transferred to the deputy treasurer line item. The Treasurer is willing to transfer \$ 3000.00 from her budget, line item 003-2000.02 tax statement, also line item 003-1000.03, and the balance left in the part time help as of April 30, 2011. The Commissioners had stated that \$5,600.00 could be transferred from their budget to the deputy treasurer line item but that would make the account for deputy treasurer still short for the year by \$ 3571.74. The total cost to convert the part time help to full time deputy effective May 1, 2011 would be \$ 18,571.86. In the course of the discussion Ms. Belork stated she is holding a check in her safe that had been processed in December, 2010, made payable to ProForma (the company that prints and mails the county's tax statements), in the amount of \$ 4,335.00. She advised it was paying for the services that were first going to be completed in 2011. The Commissioners noted that if the Treasurer could specify a particular line item, then they would make the recommendation to the County Council for the approval of her request. Ms. Belork advised the remainder of the funds she would need could come out of line item 003-3000.01, the postage account. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve her request, seconded by Commissioner Davis. The motion passed with all ayes. Commissioner Bridegroom then reminded Ms. Belork about the SBOA audit of the fiscal year 2009, and how she needs to be in compliance with the filing of the Treasurer's Form 47TR.

Commissioner Norem stated since the form is required to be filed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month, she would like to see that presentation be done at the monthly meeting of the Commissioners, that is held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. They would also like the Treasurer to submit to them all of the 47TR reports for the year 2010, and the first three of 2011 at the next meeting on April 18th.

**RE: HEALTH DEPT.**

Frank Lynch and Dr. Alexander, President of the county health board , appeared before the Board and submitted their monthly report. Dr. Alexander inquired if a pre-employment drug testing policy is in place, since they do have someone to hire. The Commissioner advised that Dona Hoban, Deputy Auditor, has received her training to administer the drug screening tests, and is just awaiting county authorization to begin the program. Commissioner Norem advised the testing would be pre-employment, random, and post accident. Marty Lucas suggested striking elected officials, the judicial employees, which would include the probation officer, and the highway department, who has DOT testing. But, the testing would include the county correctional office. Commissioner Norem stated she had composed the drug testing policy. Marty Lucas stated he has reviewed it, and approves it. The policy should be added to the Starke County Employee Handbook. Commissioner Davis made the motion to pass the county's drug testing policy with the exemptions as noted, seconded by Commissioner Norem. The motion passed with all ayes, and the testing could begin immediately.

**RE: WELLNESS PROGRAM**

Commissioner Norem reported that the employee insurance Wellness Program is ready to go and should officially be approved, in two steps.

In step one, Norem stated the Wellness Program incentives will offset the rates that will go into effect in 2012. They are as follows:

Employee only coverage: currently at 13.64% of the premium changed will be increased to 15% in 2012. Employee/Spouse coverage: currently at 17.88% of the premium will be changed to

22%. Employee/Child coverage: currently at 17.81% will become 22% in 2012. Employee/Family coverage will go from 16.84% currently, to 22% in 2012. Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve these increases, seconded by Commissioner Norem. The motion passed with all ayes. In the second step, Commissioner Norem announced the points that an employee could earn by participating in the Wellness Program. The points could be used to offset the employee's cost for their health insurance in 2012. Less than 20 points earned would give a 0 rebate, Level 1: 20 points earned=1% rebate; Level 2: 30 points earned = 2% rebate, and Level 3-- 50 or more points: = 4% rebate offset. If the employees received the maximum number of points, the employee's contribution for single coverage, would only be 11% and the three other coverages would be 18%. The program will be starting in May. Kathy Norem made a motion to approve the Wellness Program, seconded by Jennifer Davis. The motion passed with all ayes.

#### **IN OTHER BUSINESS:**

Marty Lucas advised, in reference to the county option dog tax, that the issue had previously, at one time, came before the county council but was not approved. He did advise the tax could be used towards animal care facility, animal control and reimbursing farmers for lost livestock due to dogs. The Commissioners advised it needs to come before the Council, since there are fees involved. Commissioner Bridegroom advised the Auditor to place the issue on the Council's agenda for their April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

In reference to the ordinance banning weapons from county buildings, Marty Lucas advised since there is a penalty associated with the ordinance, it needs to be advertised for two weeks in the newspaper. The Commissioners instructed the Auditor to follow through with advertising the ordinance for two weeks, and then can revisit it at their first meeting in May.

The next issue to come before the Board were two requests for keys to the Annex Building. The request for Savannah Simpson, the newly hired BZA secretary was approved, and the request from Allen Kurtz, of the Extension Office was tabled for now until more information could be provided by Mr. Kurtz on his request. The motion was made by Commissioner Norem and seconded by Commissioner Davis. The motion passed with all ayes.

Commissioner Bridegroom announced he received paperwork from IT Director, Robert Smith, requesting their signature on the Century Link Sales Solution, which would provide routine, preventive maintenance on the 911 system. It is a twelve month contract and cost \$ 7,296.12. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the signing of the contract, seconded by Commissioner Davis. The motion passed with all ayes.

Commissioner Bridegroom announced he will be signing newly prepared Quit Claim Deeds. The deeds were originally prepared by the SRI Company all being made out to the Purchaser. The newly completed deeds now record the individual's name.

Commissioner Davis advised Mr. Lausten will be going in to see the Surveyor, Dennis Estok when the weather improves and also visit the original attorney, who had worked on the case. Mr.Lausten stated he would like to see the project completed in his lifetime.

Commissioner Norem announced the Biometrics Screening for all county employees will be held on May 11<sup>th</sup>, at the Community Center, starting at 7:00am. Norem was donating the rental of the center, that her husband, Mr. Norem had won during an auction. A minimum of forty employees need to participate in the screening. Any family member, over the age of 18, and is covered by the county insurance, could participate in the screening. The employee needs to set up a time and that part of the screening is a fasting blood test. Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve the Biometrics Screening, seconded by Commissioner Norem. The motion passed with all ayes.

Commissioner Bridegroom announced a walk through needs to be completed, of the Bass Lake Beach before it opens up for the season. He requested the Auditor contact Brian Callahan.

Mr. John Kohles, of 7955 E. Tippecanoe Dr., Koontz Lake appeared before the Board. He advised he is an actual resident of Starke County and was inquiring if the Board would consider selling to Mr. Kohles, the ten feet of property that extends from his property to the lake. Marty

Lucas advised he has been previously involved with the situation at Koontz Lake. He stated the county does not have deed to that property, but they act as the trustee to that public area. He believes the county could abandon the dedication of that public area, but can not sell the land, since the county doesn't own it.

Pam Starkey, of the Planning Commission appeared before the Board, representing Bruce Williams, to discuss filling the position of part time inspector. The position has an annual budget of \$ 2,000.00. There are two applicants. The Board reviewed the documents on each candidate, and Commissioner Norem made the motion to approve the hiring of Terry Stephenson for the position. Jennifer Davis seconded the motion. The motion passed with all ayes. They informed Ms. Starkey that Mr. Stephenson does need to complete the pre-employment drug screening.

Marty Lucas did announce in reference to the County's travel policy, the policy would need to be approved by the County Council. The Commissioner's requested the Auditor place that on the Council's agenda. Commissioner Norem made a motion to recommend the passing of the travel policy to the council, seconded by Commissioner Davis. The motion passed with all ayes.

Commissioner Norem made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Davis. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 12:25pm.

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Dan Bridegroom, President

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Kathy Norem, Vice President

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Jennifer Davis

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Katherine Chaffins Auditor &  
Secretary to the Commissioners