

TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2020

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 3:00PM via Zoom, Knox, Indiana, with Kathryn Norem (via Zoom), Bryan Cavender (via Zoom and In Office), and Charles Chesak (via Zoom) 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 3:00PM.

TEMPORARY OPERATIONAL POLICIES

Commissioner Chesak brought up the temporary operational policies. Commissioner Norem advised that the Commissioners need to extend their temporary operational policies to be compliant with the Governor's order which would be another two weeks until April 20th. Commissioner Cavender agreed. Attorney Lucas explained that under the FFRCA all employees get an immediate two additional weeks of sick pay if they fall within the categories that fall within the first part, people that are quarantined under a physician's order, self-quarantined pending determination by a medical professional on whether they have COVID-19, or someone who is taking care of someone who is under quarantine, these employees would get their regular pay for a period of two weeks. The second category includes people who are taking care of children who are going to be at home because of closure of schools and daycare centers. This classification would get 2/3 of their regular pay for a period of two weeks. He explained there is also additional FMLA after a 10 day waiting period. He then explained we have another category of people who are under Starke County local rules who are a little different, these are people who are in a high risk category but are not able to work from home. These people will still be paid their normal pay and will also be considered "on call". Commissioner Norem then advised that the employees who are covered under the category of Starke County local rules would be able to come to work if they are called out. However, the employees who have a doctor's note would not and they would be subject to the FFRCA sick policies. Attorney Lucas agreed and stated that merely being in a high risk category does not qualify you under the FFRCA. The individuals who are in the high risk category fall under the local policy of the Board of Commissioners, he advised the high risk category is regulated under the local policy not the FFRCA. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the Temporary Operational Policies, Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

AUDITOR'S BUSINESS: MINUTES, VENDOR CLAIMS DOCKET, PAYROLL DOCKET

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the Claims Docket in the total gross amount of \$215,959.96. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and it passed with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the Payroll Claims Docket for the pay period ending on 03/21/2020 with a pay date of 03/27/2020, in the total gross amount of \$256,692.07 and deduction amount of \$75,799.09. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion passed with all ayes. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2020, March 16, 2020, March 17, 2020, and March 23, 2020 meetings. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion passed with all ayes.

3RD FLOOR RENOVATIONS POSTPONED/DLZ BID CANCELATION

Commissioner Norem explained that we had just went through the advertisement for bid process for the 3rd floor renovations when all this came up, because of the COVID-19 virus we really could not proceed. She advised it is temporarily on hold until we get beyond this. The plans are drawn and everything is ready all the board needs to do now is bid the project. She advised the money is appropriated for this year and she hopes that when all this is lifted regarding COVID-19 we will be able to get this project done.

ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY UPDATE

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to retract the previously scheduled Election Day holiday on May 5th, and now schedule the Election Day holiday for June 2, 2020. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

Commissioner Norem advised that they will need to do something about the broadband grant as this is an OCRA grant and they will need to finish it. She has not had the chance to read the documents that were sent about an hour ago regarding the broadband plan but she would like for the board to read those documents and respond to this at the next Commissioners meeting.

Commissioner Cavender questioned whether or not the Board of Commissioners should be approving an ordinance closing the beaches and the campgrounds within Starke County. Attorney Lucas advised that the board can close those places in compliance with the Governor's orders and give notice of that. Attorney Lucas is to draft an executive order for Partial Park Closure during the COVID-19 Local Disaster Emergency.

Auditor Oesterreich requested to amend the credit card ordinance to allow for purchases relating to the COVID-19. Commissioner Cavender made the motion to accept the amendment. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Attorney Lucas advised the Stellar Committee is working with Troyer to cancel the contract and come up with a new set of terms in regards to the work they have already done and the work they may still do for us for the funding we already have coming.

Commissioner Norem questioned whether or not we should declare an emergency, she advised if we were to declare an emergency we may be eligible for potential federal funding. She advised one used of these funds would be to help those individuals who have been quarantined and need to have groceries delivered to them. Health Nurse Lynch advised right now there is only a handful of people but this could become much more and if we can get ahead of this now and figure out funding now it would help. Commissioner Norem advised because we do not have a grocery delivery service here in Starke County we need to figure out what we can do to help with that. Attorney Lucas advised there is a stellar survey going around now regarding possible uses for the money that they have received being a runner up. One of the questions on the survey is relating to COVID-19 and he stated that if this is what they decide to do it would not only pay for the delivery of the supplies but the supplies as well. Commissioner Norem advised she was hoping use this money for park spaces being upgraded so people could enjoy them. She asked Attorney Lucas if they did use the stellar funds for the purpose of COVID-19 would the stellar funds be able to be replenished if there were federal funds to pay us back.

Attorney Lucas advised OCRA is scrambling about what to do and he is not sure the status on this. At the very minimum they could fund some immediate COVID-19 relief with their Community Block Development Grant. He explained that if we do this it does not disqualify us in seeking future grants. What is hard to know is how a recession like this is going to affect funding both at the local level and the Community Block Development Grant level. Commissioner Norem advised she did understand that OCRA is providing some grant funds to do some of the things we are talking about which we would need to do a letter of intent. Attorney Lucas stated they are developing that now. Attorney Lucas spoke about the \$250,000 that was discussed with OCRA involving COVID-19 relief and how that may relate to the stellar runner up monies that were awarded. Commissioner Norem verified that the stellar committee is currently putting something together to be able to help our elderly population and our at risk population in terms of getting supplies and groceries and that is part of what the stellar committee is doing. Now, whether that be from stellar funds or from the new OCRA grants that are being offered is still in question. Attorney Lucas verified that is correct and the stellar committee will need to verify with OCRA of whether that uses up their stellar funds or this will be related to the new grants being offered relating to COVID-19.

Commissioner Cavender relayed information regarding the emergency declaration from Pulaski County: "Pulaski County has declared a public health emergency. A resolution declaring the emergency was approved by the county commissioners Monday. Community Development Commission Executive Director Nathan Origer explained that it will make Pulaski County eligible for federal reimbursement for certain COVID-19-related expenses."

"If we need to obtain face shields, masks, sanitizer, etc., plus mileage, overtime, those sorts of things, those costs incurred directly related to this, this will get the county eligible for reimbursement," Origer explained.

Commissioner Cavender stated we should declare a health emergency in Starke County. Commissioner Norem made a motion for the Declaration of Local Disaster Emergency due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jackie Ryan from The Leader asked if she could make a comment about the stellar survey. She stated just to build on what Commissioner Norem was speaking about, a lot of the public is feeling very similar about the stellar money and they would rather have it go into a physical project. She advised that as part of the executive committee their line of thinking was that they did not want only their opinions to go into the decision and that was the reason for the survey. The way they are awarding the money, the stellar monies are separate from the COVID-19 response programs. She advised as Attorney Lucas had mentioned they could apply up to \$250,000 per municipality. However, we would not get that money as quickly. She also stated that if they put the quarter of a million toward a physical project they may not see that money until 2021 or potentially even later. This is why their way of thinking was that this was the quickest way to use the funding on COVID, unfortunately they would most likely not be reimbursed for that. Commissioner Norem asked what is the wisdom of the State coming out saying we are going to provide you with emergency funding, but you can't have it until next year. Jackie Ryan stated that the emergency funding would be available to us more quickly but we will still have to jump through hoops and do public engagement because that was a part of the stellar program but the COVID money would come in within the next couple of months. Any kind of physical project money would be put on the back burner and that funding would not be available as quickly.

Commissioner Norem asked Attorney Lucas about the possibility of Starke County borrowing money for COVID relief with the anticipation of it being paid back from the emergency granting agency. This would help people now rather than in two or three months. Attorney Lucas advised that OCRA was open to discussing things like this and he believes they are serious about the first phase of the COVID relief happening quickly. He advised that would could ask OCRA if they can commit to this and if they can they advise that we do have some money in the rainy day fund that we could possibly borrow with the contingency of paying it back within 60 days. Commissioner Norem asked if they could explore this possibility rather quickly because if we are going to do something we need to do it now so these people are not suffering, especially the shopping for the elderly and confined. Attorney Lucas advised they should have more answers by Thursday and they should also be able to establish the letter of need. Commissioner Norem asked Attorney Lucas to advise the stellar group that this is something the Commissioner feel strongly about and we want to get on it now. Commissioner Norem advised, as well as Commissioner Chesak, that they would rather use the rainy day fund, for COVID relief, with the understanding that the money would be paid back rather than using the stellar project money. Commissioner Cavender agreed as well.

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 3:52PM.

APRIL 7, 2020

Charlie Chesak, President

Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender

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