

MONDAY, MAY 11, 2020

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 9:00AM 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 9:00AM.

OCRA PUBLIC HEARING CDBG GRANT

Commissioner Chesak opened the public hearing at 9:01 AM for the ORCA Community Development Block Grant. Edwin from KIRPC explained that this public hearing will give an opportunity for the public to voice any comment, questions, or concerns regarding the CDBG grant. He explained the grant amount is \$75,000 with no local match required. The county should have gotten the grant agreement, on May 7th, to sign and submit to the State. Once that is submitted it usually takes about two weeks to get all the State signatures required. Auditor Oesterreich advised that the grant document was signed and submitted on May 7th. Commissioner Chesak asked for any public comments or questions regarding the CDBG grant. Auditor Oesterreich advised she has not had any public comments or questions come in. Attorney Lucas advised that we will ask for written comments/questions or comments/questions can be phoned in as well. He advised that this particular grant is dealing with the mobile food delivery. Edwin advised we will have to have a second public hearing sometime after we get the release of funds because it is required we have two. Commissioner Chesak closed the public hearing at 9:05 AM for the ORCA Community Development Block Grant.

SEARCHER DISCUSSION

Recorder Thomason advised that she has been working on a plan to allow searchers back in the building which includes sanitizing and making sure everyone is protected with PPE gear. She believes her office is prepared for it but it would be up to the Board of Commissioners to make a decision. Commissioner Cavender asked how many searchers we are letting in at a time. Recorder Thomason would like to set up 2 searchers per day. One being in the morning, her office will then have time to sanitize after the morning appointment before the afternoon appointment comes in. Commissioner Norem advised that the email Recorder Thomason sent out regarding this manner was very well thought out and listed specifics. She also advised that as long as those parameters are followed, the searchers are required to wear a face mask, and they abide by the social distancing then should would be okay with having the searchers make an appointment to come in. Commissioner Norem made a motion to allow searchers to come into the Records Office by appointment only. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

COVID-19 STIMULUS MONEY

Auditor Oesterreich explained when we first received the stimulus money, the State advised we could use it for any purpose even put it in the Rainey Day Fund. However, since then State Board of Accounts have made a ruling that it must go into a certain fund and be spent on COVID-19 related items. Currently, we have a little over \$4,000 in invoices from the EMS and Health Department for purchases made on COVID-19 related materials. She is requesting the Boards permission to use this money on those purchases. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve that request. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

MOBILE MEAL SERVICE UPDATE

Auditor Oesterreich advised the mobile meal service has been in operations for two full weeks now and this week will be our third full week of deliveries going out Monday through Friday. She advised that beginning next week she would like to take the program down to two days a week. She explained there is a few reasons for that. One being that the Starke County Government employees are back to work full time in office and they may not be able to handle the workload of the deliveries on top of their existing workload. Secondly, by going to two days a week residents will still be able to get a bag of groceries every week and we would be able to preserve the program longer. That way if we have another surge in “need” we would be able to provide for residents again in the future. Commissioner Norem asked if we

went down to two days a week would that change anything on the grant. Attorney Lucas advised that within the grant application they did not specify details of how the program would operate. He does not believe there would be any harm in this and he believes this would be the right decision right now as there was a need in the very beginning. This need has been addressed to some extent. Right now the need is not growing that fast in this community and hopefully it will stay that way, but it is nice to have something in reserve in case it becomes more serious. Best case scenario it is likely to drag on for a while and pacing it seems like a good decision. Commissioner Norem advised she is ok with that. She is torn between an overwhelming need and the desire to prolong it as just because the state is opening up does not mean the virus has gone away. Attorney Lucas stated the other thing about this program is the impact on the restaurants is lessening as things are opening back up as well. He stated in the worst case scenario we may see a surge in two or three weeks when things start opening up. We could be ready for this it is were to happen.

Auditor Oesterreich also advised that the form stays open for about 13 minutes every morning because there are so many requests that come in at once. She stated most of these requests are the same people requesting services every day and there is no room to add new individuals in need as they currently cut the form off at 75 as this is all the delivery drivers can handle for the day. Commissioner Norem advised she would like to see this program spread out so there is more folks able to use it. Clerk Manuel advised she would be in favor of this because several of the phone calls her office receives are from individuals who are unable to get on the program because they do not call in soon enough. The Board of Commissioners then had a discussion on what the food boxes currently have in them now and what would needed to be added to them to make them sufficient for one delivery per week. Jackie with "The Leader" asked if the Board of Commissioners would like for the media to put out a request for the need of volunteers for delivery drivers for the food program. Frank Lynch advised that the only issue with this would be liability. Commissioner Norem stated that we should have something in our existing coverage that would handle this. She feels that there may be people out there that would be willing to help with the delivery for this program. Commissioner Norem asked Auditor Oesterreich to call our liability insurance company to find out information regarding what are options are as far as coverage and if we did go to volunteers what their suggestions would be to make sure our liability would be covered. Frank Lynch suggested the possibility of using the high risk employees who are still at home on-call to make some food deliveries. Commissioner Norem agreed and she stated this could be a possibility for a pool of prospects going forward for deliveries.

OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

Commissioner Norem advised that "Starke County Government" received the \$41,000 in stimulus money from the federal government in relation to COVID-19. She explained that we have had essential workers working such as the EMS, Sheriff, and Highway Departments. She is wondering about using that \$41,000 for those employees who have had to work when everyone else stayed at home and received their regular pay. This would give those employees a little premium. Auditor Oesterreich stated she could get a count from each department to at least get an idea in mind of how many employees we are talking about. Commissioner Chesak asked if it would be for employees who worked from home as well. Commissioner Norem stated it should only be for employees who had to come to work and put themselves at risk for exposing themselves. Frank Lynch advised that as an employee and a member of the public and someone who has exposed himself, he would say hold on to that thought for a while because we have no idea what is going to come up with COVID-19 in the future. He explained that \$41,000 may need to go toward COVID-19 related expenses in the future as opposed to the employees who have been working an extra \$300 bucks. Commissioner Norem advised his opinion on that is very valuable and she appreciates him chiming in because out of all the employees, except maybe EMS, Frank has been the most exposed to this virus. Both Commissioner Cavender and Commissioner Chesak agreed.

Clerk Manuel advised that the Secretary of State is going to send the Clerk's Office a whole bunch of PPE supplies for the election. She has received confirmation that the National Guard will be delivering those supplies to them on Wednesday.

Attorney Lucas advised that they had the public hearing for OCRA on the expenditure regarding the \$333,000 they had been awarded through Stellar Communities. He believes they are well on their way to seeing those fund come in. He advised there is a lot of support for doing some doing some park projects at Knox, Bass Lake, North Judson, and Koontz Lake. This would include amenities such as restrooms and parking areas, to make the current amenities we have more useful. Commissioner Cavender questioned what a Trail Head is, that is going to be put at Bass Lake. Attorney Lucas explained that at

the southwest corner of the lake, near the access point, (450E & CR210) a trail head is going to be built. Superintendent Ritzler advised the trail head would consist of two bathrooms and a small office. It would be a jumping off point to get to the area trail and to bike around the lake. Bike racks would be there and a potential for rentals to be there and also better parking. Commissioner Norem asked who would be manning that station. Superintendent Ritzler advised that when they put together the application last year he spoke to the Board of Commissioners about using one of his part-time workers to do that. Auditor Oesterreich asked where that money would be coming from to pay the part-time worker because they would not be able to use MVH funds. Superintendent Ritzler stated it could possibly come from CEDIT funds. Commissioner Norem advised she does not exactly remember that and it probably would have to come out of the CEDIT funds and she is not saying that is a bad thing but no one foresaw this COVID-19 thing either. One of the things everyone needs to keep in mind is reduction in the CEDIT funds that is going to be coming. It would be up to the Board of Commissioners that essential services are funded first. It was also discussed that possibly a business could rent the building and take care of the building if they wanted to use it for bike rentals or kayak rentals. Commissioner Norem advised that this is something the park board could take a look at. She then asked Attorney Lucas if this would qualify to be under the jurisdiction of the park board. Attorney Lucas advised they have not gotten that far yet and there should be no reason the park board and the highway department could not work together. Superintendent Ritzler agreed. Auditor Oesterreich advised she is not against the highway department and the park board working together but under the State Board of Accounts rules anything funded out of the MVH fund has to pertain to roadways and road right-a-ways. Superintendent Ritzler advised that some other counties use the MVH funds for expenses pertaining to park boards. Auditor Oesterreich advised she has an email from the State Board of Accounts stating if work is done by the highway department, MVH would have to be reimbursed for that work that does not pertain to roadways and road right-a-ways.

A discussion was held about the Phased Re-opening Policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the Phased Re-opening Policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved 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 9:57AM.

MAY 11, 2020

Charlie Chesak, President

Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender

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