

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, JULY 19, 2021**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 9:30 AM, 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 9:30 AM.

**EMS MONTHLY REPORT**

Travis Clark, EMS Director and Nancy Coad, EMS Clerk came before the Starke County Board of Commissioners to present their monthly report. Nancy handed out the runs report to the Board and presented the collected reports to the Board. Commissioner Chesak advised they had collected \$658.19 from Attorney Jonathan O'Hara and \$125.00 from Small Claims. Director Clary then presented his monthly report. He advised they have had no changes in our operational status. They continue to operate 4 ALS ambulances out of 3 stations throughout our county. He has had two Full-Time Paramedics turn in their resignations over the last few weeks. They have one that will be with us until the beginning of August, and another who has already left our service. One Paramedic is moving on to another employer where she will receive a significant pay increase. The other is transitioning into a nursing role at a local hospital. It has been brought to my attention that we are one of the lowest paid EMS services in our area. I then reached out to local EMS Directors from Laporte, Pulaski and Newton counties who are comparable in structure. They do offer higher wages than our current EMT's, and Paramedics make. We currently pay our EMT's \$11.88/hr, and our Paramedics make \$17.43/hr across the board. Please see attached sheet.

Director Clary stated that they held our monthly audit & review with the local hospitals. He held more mandatory trainings with our new equipment. They have now placed our new ventilator in service, and the crews are impressed with it. They have also been getting compliments from the local hospitals who are very excited to see us having this upgraded piece of equipment. He stated they had one workman's comp case in the month of June. We had an employee get stuck with a "dirty" needle. It did puncture this employees' finger, and he was treated at the emergency department just after the incident. We followed all blood borne pathogen protocols, and no significant loss time was noted from this. He will continue the follow up appointments at 3, 6- and 12-month blood draws. They do this to get a baseline to see if the employee would have any changes in any areas that would be of concern with transmission from the patient. The patient was also tested with consent.

**Ambulance Maintenance:**

3308 (2021 Ford Gas Engine) goes in today for an oil change at Knox Ford.

4230 (2019 Ford Gas) was damaged by wind during a recent storm. The door was completely taken out of the hands of the EMT. It now is awaiting repairs from Mark's Body shop to fix the damage caused to the fender, and to get a new door since it was popped. Mark's did get the rig back in service following that weekend of storms. He was able to temporarily get it in working order. It goes in on August 5th for the permanent repair.

0514 (2015 Diesel) Had no major repairs needed.

0086 (2009 Ford 6.0 Diesel) had some starting issues. County Highway was able to come get the vehicle running. It has no engine codes popping after firing, and seems to be running fine. It is a truck that is started on M, W&F each week if it isn't in service. The truck currently sits outside of our Knox station as a back up unit.

0085 (2013 Diesel) had many repairs made, but the main issues were the DEF system on that unit once again. We had 0514 out with DEF related issues last month, but now this unit is out with similar issues.

0084 (2012 Chevy Diesel) No repairs needed.

4149 (2013 Ford Explorer) No repairs needed.

Director Clary advised they had replaced a failed GFI in our Knox base garage. Medic 5 in Grovertown was without power on a few different occasions over the last month. One occasion was for several hours once again. I have reached back out to Live Oak Electric who was approved to put a generator in at their station at a previous meeting. The generator remains on backorder until at least mid-August. He hopes to have it put in shortly thereafter. He also stated that in regards to the Community Paramedicine Grant- he completed the grant, and had a phone conversation with the State EMS Director Kraig Kinney about our

grant. I was very excited, and so were they. They went to award us the grant but it was then denied after their legal counsel stated that we didn't fit into IC 16-31-12-4(c) which states we have to be funded by a city, town or township. They were very apologetic and stated that we will be at the top of the list as they are trying to find us funding & thought we put together a great proposal.

## **J & K COMMUNICATION**

Ted Hurley from J & K Communications came before the Board of Commissioners to present a 2021 update. He advised that as of today we start off with the \$38,754 that Starke County pays for service contract. Starke County has used \$12,000 so far for 2021 so there is a remaining balance of \$26,754. They do need to PM the system, this will cost approximately \$3000, so that leaves about \$23,754 in the pot left for this year. He believes the system is more stable than it was last year. Mr. Hurley went through call-outs that they had completed in February, March, April, May, and June of this year. Councilman Pearman asked if these are VHF problems or 800 Mhrtz problems. Mr. Hurley stated these are all VHF problems, they do not deal with 800 problems, and those would all go through the state. He advised they work with the 800 hardware at dispatch that talk to the state system. This system does not talk to the units that are in the field. Mr. Hurley advised that the current contract is on all the VHF stuff not 800 stuff. Councilman Pearman stated that in speaking to the fireman, the fireman are not even really using the VHF system anymore except for paging. He stated that this system has never been as good as it has been with ERS, the machinegun noise is one of the big problems. He stated also seems to be things that are continually happening as well. Mr. Hurley made some comments regarding Councilman Pearman's allegations, he advised he agrees with what he is saying and no it was not in the contract but he understands when they the pages do go off better because of the narrowband. Mr. Hurley advised he could shut the sites down and put back up what we had before and then they can find out which is better.

After further discussion between Councilman Pearman and Mr. Hurley, Rick Clark, Fire Chief from Washington Township Fire stated that 2 weeks ago, Dave came out to their area and traveled around. They found that they can transmit out but they cannot receive. This is the same for their sirens and pagers. He advised that when a technician came out last year he found that they don't have any signal out there. He explained it as they are under two umbrellas and both signals are fighting with each other and that is where the static is coming from. After further discussion it was decided that Councilman Pearman, Richard from IT, EMA Director, Mr. Hurley, and their technician will meet for a day to go through different sites to test the system.

## **PROSECUTOR – FULL TIME POSITION REQUEST**

Prosecutor Baker and Sheri Derrickson, IV-D Supervisor came before the Board of Commissioner to request and additional full time position for the IV-D office. She advised that everything in the child support department is either funded through incentive funds or if paid through county general it is reimbursed at 66% by the state. Sheri advised that they have a case load that is over 1000 and it requires, according to the state, three full time people. She advised for the last three years in July, the part time person came into her office and gave their two weeks' notice. She advised the complaint is always that there is not enough pay, it's not full time, and they do not get benefits. Sheri explained that they will be going to an entirely new system in November of 2022 but in the mean time for their office to go paperless and have their files scanned into a whole new system that invest can retrieve the information from is very costly and time consuming. They could outsource this but it would cost .17 cents per page. Councilman Pearman asked if this request is for next year as the DLGF will not allowed for any additional appropriations to the existing 2021 budget. Prosecutor Baker stated she would love to see this happen tomorrow but she would agree to this position beginning 1/1/2022. Auditor Oesterreich agreed that the DLGF would not approve an additional appropriation in County General at this time due to our decreased revenues. Auditor Oesterreich suggested for Prosecutor Baker to go to the council meeting tonight to try to get this addition added to her 2022 budget. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the additional 3<sup>rd</sup> full time position request to the child support section beginning January 1, 2022. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **PARK BOARD/ARPA MONEY REQUEST**

Stephen Ritzler with the Starke County Park Board and the Stellar Committee came before the Board of Commissioners to request the use of ARPA money. He advised that the Stellar Committee started an application process several years ago and they have had over 40 different events that included public engagement meetings. He explained the response from the public expressed a number one need for an

outdoor recreation area and a place to take their families. They would like to renovate or replace the Bass Lake Beach house, the idea is to have a multi-use facility. Ritzler advised of the following projects that have been listed for Starke County overall being Bass Lake Beach, Connecting Trails, Starke County Health & Wellness Plan, Scale Model of our Solar System, Owner-Occupied Housing Rehabilitation, Hamlet Town Park improvements, North Judson Housing, Knox Housing, Hamlet Housing, Knox Downtown Revitalization, Knox Wythogan Park Improvements and Knox 8 S. Main Façade. He explained they have done a lot of these things without Stellar grant money. The committees are asking the Board of Commissioners to consider the use the ARPA money for the use of upgrades to Bass Lake Beach including the Beach house and park improvements. He advised that the new Beach House was estimated to cost \$1 million dollars. Commissioner Cavender agreed that one of the things they want to do is improve the parks systems, but they are holding off as they do have time to allocate the money. Auditor Oesterreich explained that the council's one big reserve is we don't know how our LIT money will be impacted until future years. Councilman Pearman agreed that the council is on board with revitalizing the parks systems in Starke County but the county does have to come first and we may not even know until mid-next year what the county needs as far as lost revenue. Commissioner Cavender stated since we have taken over the beach we would like to see what kind of profit making the beach has as well.

Auditor Oesterreich asked Ritzler if he will be mentioning the Park Superintendent position as well as Park Board member Kathy Norem will be going to the council tonight for the funding request. Ritzler stated that the Park Board feels they need permanent park superintendent, to develop the Starke County Parks. He advised this will be paid for from the Park Board fund and no extra money would be needed from the county. He advised that the salary they are thinking of is around \$40,000. Commissioner Chesak advised this is entire thing is so fresh that it may be better to wait until next year to do this. Commissioner Gourley asked what they will be doing with the current manager at Bass Lake. No Comment was made. Commissioner Gourley advised that it is obvious that we need to create some type of parks department. Attorney Lucas advised that it is in the current ordinance that a Park Superintendent is mentioned. After further discussion it was decided that Ritzler will be back at their next meeting with a job description to present to the Board of Commissioners.

## **SHERIFF-ARPA MONEY REQUEST**

Starke County Sheriff Bill Dulin and Matron Pam McDonald came before the Board of Commissioners to request the use of ARPA funds for a body scanner. Sheriff Dulin advised that they have a problem like any other jail in the state with new intakes. They are other ingesting drugs or putting the drugs in other places and once they come in they will either overdose or give it to the other population. He is asking for a body scanner to be purchased with the ARPA money. Sheriff Dulin advised the body imager will cost between \$180,000 and \$220,000. Auditor Oesterreich suggested using Jail CREDIT for this purchase as Jail CREDIT is specifically designed for the jail and Capital Purchases. The Sheriff would then not have to wait for ARPA money. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to recommend to the council the purchase of this item and to be able to use jail CREDIT. Commissioner Gourley 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 \$338,858.95. 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 \$261,369.29, including deductions in the amount of \$78,071.03 for the pay period ending on 07/10/2021 and pay date of 07/16/2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes from June 21<sup>st</sup> and June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

## **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 10:56 AM.

**MONDAY, JULY 19, 2021**

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Charlie Chesak, President

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Bryan Cavender, Vice-President

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Mark Gourley, Member

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Rachel Oesterreich, County Auditor  
& Secretary to the Board