

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 6:00 PM, 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 6:00 PM.

PARK BOARD/PARK SUPERINTENDENT REQUEST

Rik Ritzler, member of the Starke County Park Board came before the Board of Commissioners to request their blessing to hire a Park Superintendent. He advised that they has found this year that using the current park manager that is not a long term situation and that just got us through this season, they were able to keep the beach open because of this, and they did not want to have to close the beach. They have revenue projections for next year and the park board feels they need to replace that park manager with a full time park superintendent that not only takes care of Bass Lake Beach but can take care of all county owned parks and coordinate with other parks in city boundaries as well. He advised he has received approval from the council for the salary of the position and they would also like the Board of Commissioners blessing as well. They would like to post this position now so that they can have someone hired for when the current contract of the current park manager ends. This would take place either late September or early October. Rik handed out the Park Superintendent job description and the IC code that governs the Park Superintendent position. Commissioner Gourley advised he would like to see this play out like the EMA Director where they come the the Board of Commissioners with a potential candidate. Rik stated that according to the IC code the Park Board actually hires the Park Superintendent but he is willing to come to their Board meetings over the next few months to provide the Commissioners with updates. Commissioner Gourley made a motion that the Park Board proceeds in accordance with the cited state code. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

JOANNE BAILEY/SAN PIERRE ARPA MONEY REQUEST

Joanne Bailey from San Pierre Parks Society came before the Board of Commissioners to request the use of ARPA money. Members of San Pierre are requesting that \$125,000 be set aside for Railroad Township San Pierre's Tierney Park Building. This is to provide an enclosed pavilion. This will provide a boost to the community and provide additional space for venues, weddings, reunions, birthdays, anniversaries. This will also provide additional space for festivals, Township and county meetings and many other county functions. She explained that this will enhance San Pierre significantly. She advised they have been slowly but surely revitalizing their town parks. They have been doing what they can to uplift their town park. Joanne also mentioned their new Tierney Park sign that they just installed as well. Auditor Oesterreich advised that the Board of Commissioner and the Starke County Council are somewhat reserved in when they will be spending this money as they do has until December of 2024 to allocate the money and December of 2026 to actually spend the money. The Board of Commissioner did express interest in this project and thanked Joanne for coming to present their request from San Pierre.

SCEDF/REDUCING SCEDF BOARD MEMBERS AND SCEDF/SCILL SEPARATION DISCUSSION

Lisa Dan, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Board of Commissioners to give an update regarding reducing the SCEDF Board Members. She asked if the Board would consider an option but if not they have until September 1st to come up with a final plan for a reduction to their board. They are requesting them to leave their board in tact as is for the following reasons: their board is made up of volunteers who receive no financial compensation so therefore it is not a budgetary concern, their meetings are very well attended especially this year and sine COVID started. Director Dan stated that since the beginning of the year they have reduced their membership from 28 members to 23 members. She stated that they do expect that amount to decrease at the end of the year as well because some terms are expiring. Commissioner Chesak advised he would like to see who is currently on their board and their positions on the board. Commissioner Gourley asked Director Dan how many at large members there are. She stated they have 10 at large members and the rest are

representative members. Director Dan will send the Board of Commissioners the list of who are on the SCEDF Board. Another thing that was suggest that we look at is the separation of the SCEDF and SCILL. She explained that the foundation and SCILL are separate businesses entities with each entity filing their own entity report. SCEDF is a 501C6 and SCILL is a 501C3. The 501C6 status means that charitable contributions are not tax deductible. The finances for each entity are separate but they do share the same bookkeeper. They each have separate bi-laws and the foundation office is no longer housing any SCILL staff. Director Dan advised that as an economic development organization they will always have an overlap with SCILL regarding workforce development.

Director Dan advised that a couple years ago the county paid someone a lot of money to organize the county ordinances, the county did not get much from this service. So a few years ago the SCEDF came to the county and offered to hire an intern to organize the ordinances with the Economic Development foundation would pay half and the county paying half for these services. She advised the project is done and the total bill was \$4582.50. They had sent a claim to the county for their portion of \$2291.25. She advised that the ordinances are all up online. Director Dan advised that these are planning commission ordinances only.

MARK ALLEN/KOONTZ LAKE FIRE/ARPA MONEY REQUEST

Mark Allen along with Koontz Lake Fire and Koontz Lake Association came before the Board of Commissioners to request use of the ARPA money. He advised that the Koontz Lake Fire Department and the Koontz Lake Association have tried to get a grant from Stellar in the past for a building that serves two purposes including fire protection, community projects, and any type of involvement. He stated that right now Koontz Lake does not have an isolated building. Last fall they did get some funding to build a temporary Band-Aid for additional space. There is no real place for the influx of people can go for a community space. They have worked together with Territorial Engineering that came up with an estimated cost for a new building. He presented the Board of Commissioners with the estimate from Territorial Engineering along with the design, with a cost of \$2,143,086. Mark advised that he, the Koontz Lake Fire and Koontz Lake Association wanted to present this to the Board of commissioners for consideration with the use of ARPA funds. The Board then heard public comment from Ed Reiss and Mike McKenna. Both Commissioner Chesak and Commissioner Gourley advised this is a good idea they just have to consider the funding but will definitely keep in contact with them throughout this process.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Councilman Pearman advised that on behalf on the council he wanted to make clear the timelines for the ARPA funds. The intention of that funding is to close the gap they are going to see in revenue. They are still working all of that out. They are currently in a holding pattern and do not plan on making a decision for a couple years for funding that is not in regards to the county government. State Representative Jim Presell also made a public comment stating he thinks this is awesome that they got a great turn out like this with community members coming to the Commissioners Meeting. He advised that Joanne has done a great job with the San Pierre projects. The San Pierre project for a building in Tierney Park is a great project and even the Koontz Lake Fire/Community building is a great project. The Koontz Lake building has a huge price tag so he understands were Councilman Pearman is coming from. He also stated it is awesome that the Council participates in the Commissioners Meeting regarding the ARPA funding. He advised other communities have put together boards to look at what they are going to do with the ARPA funding but he respects that Starke County elected officials are having these conversations rather than a board.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$470,982.60. 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 \$251,285.85, including deductions in the amount of \$75,202.51 for the pay period ending on 07/24/2021 and pay date of 07/30/2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes from July 6th and July 19th, 2021. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Auditor Oesterreich asked permission for the Starke County Government to host a blood drive. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the hosting of the blood drive and for Rachel to work out the logistics. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Troike made a public comment regarding the solar farms and the rezoning for the solar farms. He believes they have made a mistake because this thing has been exploding. He feels his property values will be decreased and damaged because he now lives in a zone of industrial solar farm.

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 7:10 PM.

MONDAY, AUGUST 2, 2021

Charlie Chesak, President

Bryan Cavender, Vice-President

Mark Gourley, Member

Rachel Oesterreich, County Auditor
& Secretary to the Board