

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2020**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council and meet in Regular Session Joint Meeting with the Board of Commissioners at 5:30 PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman, Brad Hazelton, Kay Gudeman, Howard Bailey, Don White, Freddie Baker, Robert Sims, Charles Chesak, Kathryn Norem, and Bryan Cavender present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Dave Pearman at 5:30 PM.

### **AUDITOR BUSINESS**

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the minutes from September 21, 2020. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the minutes from September 25, 2020. Councilman Baker seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

### **WORKONE/NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD**

Linda Woloshansky from the Workforce Innovations came before the Starke County Council and Board of Commissioners to discuss the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board. She explained they are the agency who supports Workone service and the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board. They launched in 2000 in Starke County, previous to that it was Kankakee Valley Workforce Development Services. The Workone services include adult education, helping with job search assistance, assessing the needs of individuals, sending and paying for a lot of people to go onto school, and for years they have worked with the SCILL center. She explained they also have youth services. They have worked with the school systems with a program called Jobs for America's Graduates. This program has been operating in the Knox and North Judson school system for a number of years. She explained that the graduation rate is about 92% - 93% for those students who are in the JAG program. The services they offer are pretty broad from young people in school up to dislocated workers. They are continuing to build relationships with businesses within the community keeping long standing relationships with businesses such as MPI and JW Hicks. She advised the reason she comes before the boards today is first to explain a little bit about Workone and to answer any questions they may have regarding Workone services but also about the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board, which is a group of community and business leaders who oversee day to day operations and set governance on how to utilize services and funds.

Woloshansky stated this service has not cost the county anything from the budget, the funding largely comes from the Department of Labor. This board requires the participation of local or regional elected officials. Several years ago one Commissioner from each county in the Northwest district being Lake, Porter, Starke, Pulaski, Newton, Jasper, and LaPorte, came together to work together in this regional approach. She explained that in 2015 Kent Danford signed to work in collaboration with the other six counties on your behalf but it is now time to renew that relationship and take a look at the agreement and see if everyone still wants to continue in that direction. The board of the regional local elected officials typically meets every six months, sometimes more frequently. The board met on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, they had a quorum and had unanimous approval to continue the relationship. She advised she is hoping the County Commissioners with the support of the County Council wants to continue that relationship. Further discussion was held regarding the information in the packet that was handed out to both boards. Commissioner Norem advised she has served on the board for many years over the 12 year span of being a County Commissioner, she said it is interesting to see how the other areas do in relationship to ours and she believes they provide a valuable service for us here in Starke County. She would like to see the relationship with the SCILL center be a little bit closer than what it is, she believes right now they simply provide an educational service in which they make referrals too. Linda Woloshansky stated that is correct. Commissioner Norem advised they have had a review recently of the Economic Development portion but not the SCILL Center portion.

Woloshansky advised that the SCILL Center has been a valuable resource because what it does is provides the technical skills a lot of areas need, welding being one of them, that are not available in close proximity. They have also provided the SCILL Center with different labor market information. Commissioner Norem asked if, when they refer students to the SCILL Center does Workone pay for those students. Woloshansky stated that is correct. She advised that folks will also receive counseling and coaching in determining what their skill sets are and what their interests are. They will then pay for

the referring of the training, pay for the costs of the training, as well as paying for some of the costs of the supplies and equipment that might be needed. Further discussion was held with Councilman Pearman and Councilman Hazelton regarding the tools used in how Workone determines what type of workforce is needed for Starke County. Commissioner Norem advised that the results of the Starke County Economic Development review will take place October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 6:00 PM at the Nancy J Dembowski Community Center. Commissioner Norem agrees that SCILL provides a lot of valuable information but she is not sure if they fully utilize the information that is provided to them and incorporates it into their planning. Councilman Hazelton stated that the recommendations that were brought up, in the Economic Development review, were anything that was currently covered by the SCILL Center. Commissioner Norem advised that the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board is a very valuable resource for Starke County, in terms of Woloshansky asking if we want to continue our relationship and sign another agreement, she would see no reason why the board would not want to do this. She advised it requires a Commissioner to be on that and the meetings are not necessarily convenient because they usually met in Valparaiso, but they have done some telephone conferencing, but she thinks that because it is not necessarily convenient is why they have not had much participation from here.

Linda Woloshansky advised they can work further with Starke County and the Economic Development Board in regards to if we have companies that we are trying to attract and we don't have the skilled workforce; that gives them an opportunity to jump in and work with SCILL, work with Ivy Tech and see what kind of development needs to take place to get people ready for those jobs. Councilman Pearman asked how that interaction takes place, does the Economic Development Foundation contact Workone? Woloshansky advised yes they can do that, she advised that they have mostly contacted us on welding and the fact that there has been so many welding. Councilman Pearman stated he is interested on how they work with this on the industry side, they want industry to come into Starke County and people to be able to get jobs. Linda Woloshansky stated that if the company, Commissioners, Council, or Economic Development foundation contacted them directly they would meet with the company and start looking at what their needs are, they then can begin the search and recruitment process for candidates as well as being able to develop the training. She advised that she brought a contract tonight that she would like the Board of Commissioners to approve and sign. Commissioner Norem advised that it may be a good idea to come before the boards annually to keep them updated and also that Linda Woloshansky may make the suggestion to the SCILL board that a member of the Board of Commissioners may be helpful to have on the board. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the Agreement between the Chief Elected Official of the Seven Counties of Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, Porter, Pulaski, and Starke. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **EMA-MONTHLY REPORT**

Jean Nier, Director of Starke County EMA, came before the Board of Commissioners to give her monthly update and to talk about a J & K Communications bill. Councilman Pearman asked if any of the Council or Commissioners are aware of the J & K Communications bill or what it would be for. It was noted that no one had seen this bill prior to the meeting tonight. Councilman Pearman advised that back to Councilman Hazelton's question, aren't we in a contract with J & K Communications as to where we would not be receiving these bills like this. Director Nier stated she is coming into this on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour. Councilman Pearman asked for a motion to table the J & K Communication bill discussion. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to table. Councilman Baker seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Pearman asked for this item to be put on their next joint meeting. Councilman Pearman advised that he is on the EMA Board and LEPC with Director Nier and it came to his knowledge that they had missed the FEMA grant deadline. Just for clarity he had a question about the grant administrator role because he was a part of the crew that made the decision to make the EMA Directors position full time. A few discussions that happened during that time was that it would pay for itself. He advised that everything she is doing for the fire departments is great but he wants to make sure that her first alliance is with the county. Director Nier agreed. Councilman Pearman stated that if she is administering or working with a grant and there are other people involved, at least for future reference, if for some reason someone looks like they are not going to make a deadline, the board expects the EMA Director to do that. For example, if someone forgot, the EMA Director needs to reach out to them. Councilman Pearman wanted to make sure Director Nier understood that her first alliance is with the county and that the fire departments and trustees are separate from our local government entity.

Councilman Pearman stated that he is getting mixed messages from FEMA and asked if she told Auditor Oesterreich that she was not allowed to administer the CARES grant. Director Nier stated that is correct that had to be through the county. Councilman Pearman advised that for the future it would still be

expected of the EMA Director that even if they are not in charge of it they would be around to nurture it and to make sure that it gets done. Councilman Pearman asked if this would be a fair expectation from the Auditor's Department. Auditor Oesterreich asked if Director Nier was supposed to take care of all grants as part of being the grant administrator. Councilman Pearman advised he believes so. Director Nier stated that she was not allowed to work with the CARES grant as it has to go through the Auditors Office. Auditor Oesterreich asked why she believes she is unable to handle those grants. Director Nier stated that is how it was put forth. Auditor Oesterreich advised she has not heard of this rule and there is nothing on the forms that are submitted that she needs to sign. Only Commissioner Chesak signs the forms. Auditor Oesterreich advised that we need someone to look out for these grants and search for these grants. Commissioner Norem stated that was one of the problems with the CARES grant was because no one in the Auditor's Office nor the Board of Commissioners knew there was CARES money available until Councilman Pearman happened to go to a conference or a meeting and they said hey Starke County why have you not applied for this. Commissioner Norem stated that the board expected Director Nier to at least notify them letting them know that there are certain grants available and out there even if she is unable to administer the grants she would be able to notify the departments who could.

Director Nier advised that she was told that the departments were already notified about the grant opportunities. Commissioner Norem advised that if Director Nier knew about these she should have at least notified the departments or the Board of Commissioners. Councilman Pearman advised from a functionality side they need to have better cohesion with the information stream so we don't miss out on any grants or deadlines. Commissioner Norem advised that if Director Nier is working with someone and she is getting down to the deadlines but they are not providing her with the information requested, Director Nier needs to contact a member (or all three members) of the Board of Commissioners so they can step in and speak with the department that is not turning in the information as requested. Councilman Pearman then advised to move on to the monthly report. Commissioner Norem had a question on the performance grant salary reimbursement. She stated that she sees that it did get submitted on August 3<sup>rd</sup> but we have not received anything yet. She would like to know the status of that. Director Nier advised that particular grant has been tied up somewhere at the State level. She stated that it is at the grant department and it basically depends on how quickly they move through the grants department. She advised they have not given her any information on the LEPC grant that she had submitted for \$15,000. Councilman Pearman advised that in the earlier days of grants we would have an entire page of grants just for one year and the chart presented incorporates a total of three years. Commissioner Norem asked what the State Homeland Security Grant \$91,881.00 was for. Director Nier stated that is for the Sheriff's Department for a license plate reader and night vision cameras.

Commissioner Norem advised that is a nice reimbursement there, she stated there is a small reimbursement listed as \$399.00 for HMPC Hazardous Materials. Director Nier advised that is connected to the LEPC grant. Councilman Pearman stated he had suggested that Director Nier keep minutes for the EMA and LEPC meetings. He asked if she has had a chance yet to get with Auditor Oesterreich in regards to how minutes are taken. He advised when they come to the future meetings, what he would like to see is that they are more prepared to talk about what they talked about the last time and how it has progressed. Director Nier stated she got a thumb drive and she needs to get it to Richard because it is a special format. She advised notes were taken as well during that meeting. Councilman Pearman advised they will need those minutes for the November meeting. Commissioner Norem stated that if we are getting grant money I am sure we need some sort of minutes to have for documentation. Councilman Pearman advised they have never had minutes they only have recordings. Director Nier advised that Jackie usually takes minutes for the LEPC meetings. Commissioner Norem advised that they cannot expect Jackie Ryan to take minutes when she is just a volunteer for those boards. She commended Jackie Ryan for what she has done in keeping minutes but advised Director Nier that she may need to type those herself. She advised that Director Nier had applied for four grants this year. Two have been paid and two have not been paid. She understands that she has a lot of meetings but she will need to carve out some time to type minutes. Director Nier agreed. Councilman Pearman asked who will be in charge of contacting J & K Communications regarding the billing. Director Nier advised she has been in contact with them and they are supposed to write her up something but Jim is on a big job right now. Councilman Pearman advised Director Nier will be back next month with a monthly report. He also asked that when the minutes are finished from the last meeting they had to copy those minutes to the Commissioners. He will be looking into the grant administrator part of her job position as well.

## **COMMISSIONER TRANSFER REQUEST**

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to make a reduction in 1112.30306.000.0000 SCILL Center in the amount of \$28,000.00 and an additional appropriation in 1112.10450.000.0027 Security Officers in the amount of \$28,000.00. Councilman Baker seconded the motion and the motion passed with all ayes.

## **AUDITOR NEGATIVE FUND CLEAN-UP REQUEST TWO**

Auditor Oesterreich advised that on the 2019 Federal Audit this year the county had a second finding for not getting these negative funds cleaned up yet. The money would have to be taken from county general. She advised that the 1174 Medical Care for Inmates has been negative since 2017, 9119 WIC Program #2 has been negative since 2012 and she has no records on this fund, 9134 operation pullover has been negative since 2013 and was manned by an officer that is no longer with the Sheriff's Department, 9140 was a grant that was overspent in 2014, and then there is 9400 WIC 2019. She advised that something she learned today through a conference call with the State of Indiana WIC Division is that WIC has an approved budget every year and if they go over their budget the county has to make up for the overspent funds. WIC does have an opportunity to request an additional amount from the State so that the county would not have to make up the difference but in this case for the \$2,138.84 it was not completed in time, therefore the county is responsible for that amount. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the outstanding balances in funds 1174, 9119, 9134, 9140, and 9400 be paid from County General. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **BUDGET CUTS DISCUSSION**

Auditor Oesterreich advised that the county will be needing to cut County General budget by \$345,000, Assessor's Budget by \$2,000, and Health Department Budget by \$2,000. She also advised that 1<sup>st</sup> Source Insurance, who does the county's health insurance, came back with a 19% increase from Cigna. However, they have not gone to market yet or explored options of changing the deductible, raising copays, and stuff like that to try and keep up where we are now. She explained the 19% increase is not set in stone and we will not know how much of an increase to expect until the first meeting in November. Commissioner Norem asked how much of an increase was budgeted. Auditor Oesterreich advised the county approved a 10% increase to the health insurance for 2021. Councilman Pearman advised he had sent out emails throwing ideas around. Auditor Oesterreich advised they will have to move the \$50,000 they budgeted in county general back to jail CEDIT. She also explained that when they had to cut the budget in 2018 for 2019, that is when they transferred a lot of expenses for the jail from county general to jail CEDIT. Commissioner Norem asked when this would have to be decided by. Auditor Oesterreich stated January 1, 2021. Councilman Bailey asked if we have the ability to shop for another type of health insurance. Councilman Hazelton advised that is what 1<sup>st</sup> Source is currently doing, they go to market and bring in several different quotes.

Councilman Bailey asked why the EMS revenue is down. Auditor Oesterreich advised it is because of COVID and their transfer/run volume. Councilman Pearman asked to have EMS give a report to the council next month. Commissioner Norem advised that instead of having EMS come before the Board of Commissioners during their first meeting next month, move them back to the joint meeting to give their monthly report. Councilman Hazelton asked if the transfer rig is making the county money. He asked if the report they give the Commissioners each month show what each rig is making. Commissioner Norem advised it does not. Councilman Hazelton stated he wants to know what the transfer rig is making in revenue. Commissioner Norem advised they can request this in their breakdown for the next meeting. After further discussion regarding the 2021 budget cuts Councilman Hazelton advised that they need to do a hiring freeze for the time being as they cannot afford to hire anyone else. Commissioner Norem agreed. Councilman Pearman advised that the hiring freeze would be on the creation of new positions not rehiring for already existing positions. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to put a hiring freeze on all newly created positions. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Councilman Pearman stated that the Sysco property is going to be going up for auction on November 11<sup>th</sup> with no reserve. He stated that he then spoke to Attorney Lucas and to Director Wickert about the situation. Director Wickert advised that he has folders that have information about the transactions regarding the Sysco property if Attorney Lucas would like to take a look at any of them. Councilman Pearman advised that this entire process with Sysco began around 2005, and they are looking at \$1.6

million dollars with about \$1 million of that being spent by the county. He feels that they should tie up the property a little bit with something like a mechanic's lien. Councilman Bailey advised that whoever purchases the property should not be purchasing the property with a clean title until the county is paid back their money. Councilman Pearman agreed. After further discussion regarding why Sysco pay have kept the property for so long Commissioner Norem asked if the property would be sold in sections. Councilman Pearman advised the property will be sold as one parcel, 320 acres. Councilman Baker suggested taking a vote contingent on what Attorney Lucas finds out in regards to a placement of a lien on the property. Attorney Lucas then suggested making a motion in regards to the placement of a lien upon the signature of the Board President. Councilman Baker made a motion in regards to this suggestion. Councilman Hazelton seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the payroll docket in the amount of \$263,430.34, including deductions in the amount of \$80,073.00 for the pay period ending on 10/03/2020 and pay date of 10/09/2020. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$278,763.98. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the minutes from September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the minutes from October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

A discussion was held regarding straight ticket voting. Clerk Manuel advised that they have had 1,354 people so far for in-person absentee voting and 1,784 mail ballots have come in so far in as of today.

Commissioner Norem advised that the Veteran's Memorial project is on time and the stone is coming tomorrow. They will be having a dedication ceremony on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This event will be open to the public. To follow, they will have a ticketed dinner at the Community Center. The tickets are available for \$25.00 each. They also invited several news stations from South Bend, Gary, Hammond, LaPorte, and many more. Commissioner Norem advised that the Board of Commissioners did engage an outside company to review the practices of our Starke County Economic Development Foundation. The Board decided that because there is a lot of information it would be necessary to have a special joint meeting with the council. They have invited the City of Knox, North Judson, and Hamlet. It will be held at the Nancy J. Dembowski Center on Wednesday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 6:00PM. The presentation will be live streamed.

Auditor Oesterreich advised the Board of Commissioners that the WIC Office would like to close to the public but the State of Indiana advised her that she would need the Board of Commissioners approval. Commissioner Norem made a motion to allow the WIC Office to close to the public. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Dennis Suglich came before the Board of Commissioners to notify them about a problem on an easement off of Tippecanoe Drive in the Koontz Lake area. They stated they have an easement with a safety concern with a pier that was erected on the easement. The right-of-way is called Owena Lane. He advised that all summer long there were boats that were there and no one knew who owned the boats. He also believes there have been several narcotics deals that have transpired on the pier. They are here tonight because they were told that no one is allowed to erect a pier on county property and this is county property. After further discussion regarding the activities on this pier Commissioner Norem asked for the address so that they can take a look at the area. She advised they will have to first confirm that this is a county easement. He gave Commissioner Norem his name and address and showed the Board the map of the property in question. Commissioner Norem advised they will have this matter looked into by the next Commissioner's Meeting. Commissioner Norem also advised that if they feel threatened in any way they need to call the Sheriff's Department. Mr. Suglich asked what the practice is for a situation like this. Commissioner Norem stated that lots of times the neighbors will cooperate with each other and as long as everyone is happy and no one complains the Board will not do anything with easements. But if trouble arises and it can't be worked out that is when the Board will step in. She stated that if they are unable to determine who put the pier in they will post a sign stating by order of the Board of Commissioners the pier will need to be removed by a certain date or the county is going to remove it.

After having no public comments made Councilman Baker made a motion to adjourn at 7:30PM. Councilman Hazelton seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**OCTOBER 19, 2020  
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Dave Pearman, President

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Brad Hazelton, Vice-President

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Kay Gudeman

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Don White

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Howard Bailey

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Robert Sims

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Freddie Baker

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Rachel Oesterreich, Starke County Auditor and  
Secretary to the County Council

**OCTOBER 19, 2020  
STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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Charlie Chesak, President

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Kathryn Norem, Vice-President

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Bryan Cavender

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