

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2020**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 6:00PM, in person at the Starke County Annex Building, Knox, Indiana, with Charles Chesak, Kathryn Norem and Bryan Cavender 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 6:00PM.

### **2021 HEALTH INSURANCE QUOTES**

Holly Horan and Debbie Rykovich from 1<sup>st</sup> Source Insurance came before the Board of Commissioners to present 2021 Health Insurance Quotes. Debbie explained that Cigna initially came in with a 19% increase. However, they went to market and quoted with Anthem and United Healthcare. After they received the rates from Anthem and United Healthcare they went back to Cigna to negotiate a further reduction of only a 4% increase. Debbie advised that Anthem's quote is a 4.29% increase and United HealthCare's quote was 31.24% increase which was way too high. Debbie then discussed the renewal history over the last five years as well as the benefits offered with Cigna in the current plan, renewal, rate relief, and plan 2 of the Cigna proposal. Debbie then presented Anthem's Option 17 Rx T1 and Option 22 Rx T1 plans. However, she is not recommending to automatically accept Anthem's proposal as Cigna knows what we currently have in health. She would recommend at this time renewing with Cigna. Holly explained that they did go to market with United Healthcare but as the rates came back they did not even give it a second look. She explained that each year they work with our government to make sure that we meet the affordability. She advised that this year the affordability did change to a 9.83% and they will go through this with the Auditor's Office to confirm that all of the employees meet this standard.

Holly explained that they were pleased that this year they had an offer from MetLife. They were able to match the rates of all the ancillary products, meaning vision, life, dental, and short term disability. She explained that this is allowing them to move to an online platform called GIS. This online platforms provides reports and an ease for employees when going through the enrollment process. This is going to allow employees to go online and makes changes themselves. Moving to the MetLife products is what allowed us to receive this portal at no cost. There are many added features with MetLife including wills, general estate planning, and Employee Assistance Programs. She explained there are several ways for employees to participate in the MetLife applications. It can be done through the phone, web, and mobile apps. With MetLife there is a much larger network of dentists that will be available as well. They will be educating the employees on how to search for providers. Debbie explained that they offer many value-added solutions that come at no cost such as COBRA, Administration, Client Services, HR lawyer on retainer, and wellness programs. Commissioner Norem asked both Holly and Debbie when they would like a decision by. Debbie advised that they will need to customize the new website for the open enrollment for employees so as soon as possible. Commissioner Norem advised there was someone else at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour that came in claiming that they could save us 25-50% in health insurance costs. It was a gentleman from Indianapolis that must have read in the newspaper that they were concerned about the 19% increase and how they were going to cover that with the reduction of revenues that they were given.

Commissioner Norem advised that if there is some product out there that would save that much money and other counties are using it, especially when you are talking about 1.5 million dollars, then the Board of Commissioners are at least obligated to look into the source. Commissioner Norem asked if there was anything in the presentation regarding the HRA program and if they wanted to change the HRA program. Debbie advised that they did not address HRA tonight but they could always look into making changes. Commissioner Norem advised she would like to see some different option regarding HRA, higher deductible, and increased co-pays. She would like to know how this would affect the county's rates. Commissioner Norem advised the Board would be remiss in their responsibilities in at least hearing what this guy has to say. She advised he will be at their joint meeting in two weeks and advised 1<sup>st</sup> Source is welcome to come back at that time as well to present their updates as well in how we can save some money. Commissioner Norem advised Auditor Oesterreich to contact the other gentleman and advise him he can give his presentation at their next meeting.

### **HIGHWAY MONTHLY REPORT**

Stephen Ritzler, Starke County Highway Superintendent came before the Board of Commissioners to give his monthly report. He advised they have been tracking their revenues since the COVID pandemic and they had estimated a 5 to 15% loss in revenue. However, their loss for MVH has only been 5.71% and for LRS it is at 5.07%. So they are at the lower end of the loss. The roadway operations have been pretty successful because of their chip seal operations and all of the grindings they have had. They were also very fortunate this year to get the grants to be able to do 13 miles of hot mix roads. Superintendent Ritzler advised that the COVID effect on their highway operations. If they would have asked him in April he would have said that the funding would have been a problem and that they were not going to get their road program done. They weathered both of those storms. What they found was the effects of internal communications. The guys work directly from home with their trucks, fewer meetings, mask restrictions, and social distancing. They have had to put extra effort into keeping their employees informed and engaged.

Superintendent Ritzler advised that Francis Tibbs is completing his annual “final pass” of the County. He also completed the last mowing of the landfill as they do about 4 passes a year on this. We had the brush crew out many days last month and are mostly caught up on the areas that needed attention. He advised the following updates on the following bridges:

Bridge 137 – CR300E over the Yellow River, just South of CR50N. Estimated completion date, fall 2022. We are currently scoring the letters of interest based on the INDOT prescribed rating system. He will be presenting the results for the Board at their next meeting and ask for their approval of the selected consultant.

Bridge 7 – CR1200E over the Yellow River is in design. Estimated completion date is fall of 2021.

Bridge 59 – CR700S over Bogus Run, the grant application being submitted for this replacement. Estimated completion date, fall 2022.

Superintendent Ritzler advised that for the bridge structural inspections, United Consultants is in Phase II and it is nearing completion. The bridge maintenance inspections are done on their own and they have a bridge maintenance work list that has been created based on these inspections. Dale did a good job last week to get most of those done while he was gone. The culverts are going good, they have 2 culverts that they have to replace this fall, the one on 300E by 800N and another one over on 800W. He advised they have received his draft of the updated county map. They are reviewing the county roads now and WTH also sent it to Knox, North Judson, and Hamlet and they are reviewing their portions as well. He advised that Bill Crase is reviewing the ditches. He advised that they have found a few things that will need to be corrected, and he estimated he should be able to have his section reviewed by Thursday. Ritzler stated that with the Community Crossings grants they thought they were done with this but the two projects came in under bid and they have about \$40,000 that could be available to get. The projects that were applied for are:

1. Pipe replacement on 300E just North of 800N.
2. Hot mix asphalt paving on 600E between 800N and 900N.

He advised that the INDOT call for projects was today. He will be working on this for the next month in getting the applications in. These are much more involved applications and only certain roads are allowed to be done as well as certain bridges. 500N between US35 and 700E is eligible for this grant. He did speak with Hamlet and Hamlet will do their portion of the match. He is applying for the Bridge 59 under this round as well. He advised they had snowplow training on October 14<sup>th</sup> with the Assistant Superintendent of Kosciusko County. Grader Operator training is November 10<sup>th</sup> as they will be needing to have more guys trained as a grader operator. Superintendent Ritzler advised that Bill Crase, Marty Lucas, Terry Stephenson, Mary Perren, and he all met to discuss the driveway permits. He advised Marty is working on the Ordinance and he is working on the actual permit itself. He advised that his two sign guys have revised all the stop ahead signs to high reflectivity throughout the county. The stop signs were finished a couple months ago and now they will be working on the double arrows. After the double arrows will be the chevrons on curves.

Superintendent Ritzler advised that they have a request from the Washington Township Trustee to install “No Parking Signs” at the helicopter landing area. The last couple of times the medivac helicopter attempted to land at the landing pad there were cars in the way. The trustee is asking the highway department to install signs around the landing area. Auditor Oesterreich advised they would have to pay for the signs as well as the labor for installing the signs. The auction is November 24<sup>th</sup>, they have 10

vehicles ready to go as well as some equipment. He advised that the Verizon GPS were supposed to be done last month but they were not able to so they will be coming this month to upgrade all the GPA units on their trucks. This will be free of charge. He advised they spoke with the generator people today and the generator has been ordered. He stated that for their winter operations the sanders are on the trucks, salt sand is full and ready, brine is ordered, plow blade stock is ready, and the summer paving equipment has been moved to the glove factory. He also advised that he has been working with KIRPC and the roadway safety planning grant. Commissioner Norem asked about the Koontz Lake Access that was discussed at their last meeting. She would like Ritzler to verify that that parcel is in fact an easement and not one that was a previous lawsuit. If not, then put a sign on it giving them two weeks to move the pier and if they don't then they will have to have someone remove it. Commissioner Norem made a motion for the sign placement and the removal of the pier after a two week period. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Norem also advised that she had an individual contact her about receiving a certified letter in attending a Zoning Board meeting or planning commission meeting. She said apparently the solar panel people are asking for a variance from the planning commission to change the zoning to the R2 residential to agricultural. The location is on the edge of the lake where there are subdivisions and everything. This is so that they can put in solar farms. She advised that she thought spot zoning was frowned upon and she is certainly hoping that the planning commission doesn't start spot zoning things just to allow solar farms to come in here because the Board of Commissioners did an ordinance specifying that they need to follow the ordinance. The other thing that was discussed was that when the towers were put in by NIPSCO there was quite a few roads that didn't get fixed. She advised that Superintendent Ritzler stated they did fix the roads that did get damaged. Ritzler advised there were certain roads that NIPSCO was required to take and they fixed those roads that needed to be fixed. He explained that if the road was rated a 5 or 6 they did not pay for the road to be fixed to a 10, NIPSCO paid to restore it to the prior rating. Commissioner Norem asked Superintendent Ritzler to let her know where 700E and 750E (North Bend Township) is in his road improvement plan. Superintendent Ritzler advised that 700E is one of his next Community Crossings grant applications, he plans on applying for 700E between SR8 and the County Line. Commissioner Norem advised that the Board of Commissioners need to voice their opinion to the planning commission about not allowing spot zoning just for the use of the solar farms.

## **GRANITE CONTRACT**

Richard Franks, Director of IT came before the Board of Commissioners to advise the he and Auditor Oesterreich had a company approach them regarding being able to save us time, money, and billing concerns through CenturyLink services. Matt with Granite Government Solutions then came before the Board of Commissioners and explained that they are America's largest wholesaler and consolidator for voice management data lines. They currently work with the Department of Defense, Department of Treasury, local municipalities and school corporations. He advised that one of the frustrations that Richard had shared with them is the ability to get ahold of CenturyLink. Matt explained that other than consolidation they provide gold level customer service. One of the things that Richard would receive is a single point of contact. He advised that any problems Rachel or Richard would have would go to a single point of contact at Granite and then Granite would handle everything with CenturyLink. Full transparency of all of the interactions between Granite and CenturyLink is given through a web portal called Rock Reports as well. Matt explained that the first phase they see in front of them tonight is just the analog lines. He explained that everything is month to month. This means that the county would not enter into any long term contracts. Commissioner Norem asked how much does Granite charge for this type of month to month contract. Matt explained that they charge \$0. Commissioner Norem then asked how they got to be a billion dollar company if they don't charge. Matt explained that their profit margin is based into our savings. He explained that they get paid part of the savings that they are showing. Commissioner Norem stated as she reads the first phase proposal they are going to save \$5.00 per month for a total of \$58.00 annually. Matt advised that is correct. Commissioner Norem asked what type of contract is it that they have. Director Franks stated it is a month to month contract so we would be able to cancel the next month if we are unhappy. Commissioner Norem verified with Matt that the county would never have to pay Granite anything. Matt agreed. Commissioner Norem asked Matt is their savings margin improves will the county get a better savings cut. Matt agreed. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to accept Granite's contract. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **AUDITOR BUSINESS**

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the payroll docket in the amount of \$267,289.69, including deductions in the amount of \$81,032.79 for the pay period ending on 10/17/2020 and pay date of 10/23/2020. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Norem made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$743,594.89. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD**

Attorney Lucas advised he has prepared a Complaint to be filed in Starke Circuit Court to attempt to protect the county's interest in the property which is set for auction on November 11<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this Complaint is to get a Lis Pendens Notice filed on the property so that whatever happens to the property, our interest would be attached to the property itself. Commissioner Norem advised that as the executive body they need to do everything they can to protect the county's interest because there is a lot of money involved. Commissioner Norem made a motion to proceed with the lawsuit against Bau Midwest and file the complaint as soon as possible in an effort to protect the county's best interest. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Norem advised that Jean Nier submitted her resignation and in it made some accretions that were not true. She advised she gave a two weeks' notice but she advised her not to come back. What needs to be decided is whether or not they pay her for those two weeks. Commissioner Norem also advised that it is up to the EMA Board to hire the EMA Director. However, it is up to the Board of Commissioners and Council to decide if the position should be part time or full time. Commissioner Norem made a motion to pay her for those two weeks. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Auditor Oesterreich presented the WTH map to the Board of Commissioners. She asked the Board what type of font, bolding, and shades of color they want. The board decided on the same font and bolding. They also decided that the colors should all change and become a little lighter shade.

Commissioner Norem advised that they will need Bob to prepare a bid package for the sidewalks around the courthouse located near and around the Veteran's Memorial. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to bid out the proposed sidewalk reconstruction. Commissioner Norem seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Norem advised that she has been getting a lot of complaints from the public entity that the restaurant workers are not wearing their masks or not wearing them properly. The Board of Commissioners agreed to have Commissioner Norem speak with Frank to have him issue a reminder to businesses about wearing masks.

Commissioner Norem advised that the Veteran's Monument Dinner has been postponed until Memorial Day. They will still hold the unveiling ceremony, of the monument, on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

A discussion was held between Attorney Lucas and Terry Pucel regarding the Sysco properties. With 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 the motion was approved with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.

**NOVEMBER 2, 2020**

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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