

STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022

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 Charlie Chesak, Mark Gourley, 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 Charlie Chesak directly at 9:30 AM.

EMS MONTHLY REPORT

Nancy Coad, EMS Clerk, came before the Board of Commissioners to present their monthly financial report. Commissioner Chesak reported the amount received from Johnathan O'Hara is \$934.35.

HWY MONTHLY REPORT

Dan Dipert, Superintendent of Starke County Highway Department came before the Board of Commissioners to present his monthly report. He asked for signatures on the United Consulting Contract for Bridge No. 7. Superintendent Dipert discussed the Bridge 7 Temporary R/W Acquisition, SW Corner, Sturman property-request for additional cost to cure compensation. He advised they worked out a cost of \$500. Mark Wilson is asking for approval for this cost to cure by the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Chesak advised that the trees are the only thing that is holding this project up. After short discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve an additional \$1000 for cost to cure for the R/W Acquisition for this project. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Superintendent Dipert handed out the bids he had received for the three month fuel contract as discussed in their last meeting. He advised he has received a bid from Starke County Co-op and from Co-Alliance. The bids were presented as follows:

Starke County Co-op

Unleaded Gasoline with Tax \$3.88

On Road Diesel with Tax \$4.58

Co-Alliance

Unleaded Gasoline with Tax \$3.43

On Road Diesel with Tax \$4.25

Superintendent Dipert advised as a reference if they were able to bring a tanker of fuel in today is would be \$4.57 a gallon for Diesel and \$3.52 a gallon for Gas. Commissioner Cavender advised that he does not think it is a good idea to contract prices with as high as they are right now and he thinks they should keep bidding it out every time they need fuel. Commissioner Chesak confirmed they will not be executing a contract for fuel at this time. Superintendent Dipert advised that they currently have 12 full time CDL drivers, 4 part time CDL drivers, 2 mechanics, and 2 part time with CDL permits. They will be advertising for part time summer help for the mower crew. He advised in their budget they have a line for a Shop Foreman. He would like to do away with that position. Currently they have three levels of mechanics the lead mechanic, journeyman mechanic, and apprentice mechanic and they are all at different pay. If he has an opportunity to pick up a third mechanic they would have to pay that mechanic at the apprentice rate of \$17.51 an hour. He would like to pay a third mechanic at the journeyman rate. He would like one top mechanic and two journeyman mechanic. After further discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to remove the shop foreman position and make a recommendation to the council to create a salary range for the apprentice position of \$17.51 to \$21.21. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Superintendent Dipert advised that they are still waiting to hear on the CCMG2022-1 as far as if they have been awarded any money. He advised for the CCMG 2021-2 they will be having a preconstruction kickoff meeting. They just purchased a used service truck for the shop, 2008 Ford F-450 with a service box and a 2 ton crane. They also purchased a used total patcher, with 926 hours on it. He advised on Thursday they are going to have a meeting with INDOT about Bridge 137 and 7. For bridge 59 they are waiting to send out the RFP. He advised they came up with a list of all the gravel roads and have been working on getting all the roads graded for the first time. They also have been hauling stone out to the bad locations and trying to fix them up. Superintendent Dipert stated they have been cleaning and

organizing along the south fence line. They are in the process of moving some of the aggregate piles and reorganizing them along the south fence line. He stated that they have taken delivery of 583 tons of salt to fulfill our contract for 21/22. He will be going into contract 200 tons of salt for 2022/23. They had 22 trees go down Thursday from 2:20 to 7 PM. We are continuing to cut brush back in Oregon Township. He advised they have a scheduled LTAP training in May for drainage control and chainsaw safety. He then presented an updated map to the Board of Commissioners for the Mammoth Solar Projects and explained what will be happening at certain sites. Superintendent Dipert advised that the road usage agreement has been signed by Next Era and the road assessment should take place in 4-6 weeks. A discussion was then held regarding the possible use of ARPA funds and cutting down trees that need to be cut down in the county right-of-ways.

SCEDF MONTHLY REPORT

Lisa Dan, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Board of Commissioners to give her quarterly update. She advised that last week they met with the North Judson Town Council to discuss their goals. They decided that their main focus will be on the development of the downtown area. They are looking to find a developer for the Shane Good property where co labs moved out of. They are still looking for a small manufacturer to go into that building. Common Co Labs does have leased space in the Gary Poppins building, they do expect employment of 30 plus people during the third phase. They are working on the inspection of the fire wall between Poppins and co labs. Director Dan advised they continue to communicate with three different interested parties in the toll building. Two of those three are also interested in the 53 acres north of the toll building for future expansion. She advised that Norton Packaging in Hamlet is exercising their option to purchase all of their property there. They expect the transaction to be complete by end of April or beginning of May. They will be meeting with a developer this week about the Saber property whose business is similar to Kruze and partnering with Kruze.

Director Dan advised she met with an investor from Windham Resorts who is very interested in purchasing the Astoria from Mike Garba. Unfortunately Mike believes he is sitting on a gold mine and will not sell. He did advise us that the hotel would be renovated and open for business by September 7th of this year. She advised they are still continuing to work with Windham Resorts as they are interested in a new build in a few different locations. She advised they are definitely needed, we need to get accommodations going within our county. Director Dan advised she was also contacted by a local resident interested in a building to open a small manufacturing business. They are looking for a pole building with high ceilings and would like to be located within the city limit of Knox if possible. They will be employing about 5 people. She advised tomorrow they will be co-hosting a job fair with work one in the Knox High School all purpose room from 10AM to 6PM. There will be about 20-25 companies in attendance. She advised that Starke Tank has been within the North Judson area the last couple of years and the Economic Development Foundation Board said that this needs to be a countywide event so they are working to put together a sponsorship committee. Director Dan advised they continue to work on the six county ag initiative with five other rural counties.

They have identified 15-20 local companies to visit and complete an assessment of the company and see how they fit into the rural economic development model. The results will be compiled by the Purdue Center for Regional Development. They are hoping this will assist in the supply chain issues that we are having. She advised for the Wabash Valley Power Easement for the Kankakee Valley Power substation, the contract has been filed for the purchase of the easement. For the rural opportunity zone indicative they are in the final phase of their marketing video. She advised last week she met with Mark Gourley, Dave Pearman, and Brad Hazelton to discuss the possibility of the county increasing funding for the foundation and also about the possibility of extending their contract to a multi-year contract to accommodate a three to five year strategic plan. She stated they also discuss possible projects for ARPA funds including county wide broadband infrastructure, the establishment of a revolving loan fund for small businesses, and also water and sewer infrastructure between Knox and Hamlet. She advised they also talked about the \$40,000 that was set aside for Economic Development opportunities and SCILL opportunities. Director Dan advised they did hire a new SCILL director, Jim Hernandez, she explained that Jim is Janice Hernandez's husband and she is now off the SCILL board due to Jim being appointed the new Director. He believes that Dave Howell from REMC will switch Janice spots so that they still have the representation.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$343,971.32. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$270,415.81 including deductions in the amount of \$77,723.01 for pay period ending 04/02/2022 and payroll date of 04/08/2022. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes for April 04, 2022. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Auditor Oesterreich advised that many years ago the county used to partner with a mental health care facility to provide services to county government employees such as a few free sessions. She presented the Board of Commissioners a quote for a partnership with Bowen Center. The quote consisted of 3 different plans they are offering:

Employee Assistance Plan

4 session EAP @\$1.75/employee/month X 220 employees = \$4,620 yearly

*4 session EAP Plus @ \$1.95/employee/month X 220 employees = \$5,148 yearly

6 session EAP @\$2.05/employee/month X 220 employees = \$5,412 yearly

*6 session EAP Plus @\$2.40/employee/month X 220 employees = \$6,336 yearly

8 session EAP @\$2.45/employee/month X 220 employees = \$6,468 yearly

*8 session EAP Plus @\$2.80/employee/month X 220 employees = \$7,392 yearly

Commissioner Gourley asked if the health insurance budget would be able to handle the 8 session EAP Plus @\$2.80/employee/month X 220 employees = \$7,392 yearly amount. Auditor Oesterreich advised yes she believes we will be able to take on this expense. After further discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve 8 session EAP Plus @\$2.80/employee/month X 220 employees = \$7,392 yearly. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Auditor Oesterreich presented the Starke County Policy Establishing Insurance Requirements for Prospective Vendors as prepared by Attorney Schramm. After review by the board, Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the Starke County Policy Establishing Insurance Requirements for Prospective Vendors as presented. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Chesak asked to speak about possible changes to the nuisance ordinance. Attorney Schramm advised that Boz had called him last week because he and Commissioner Cavender had a discussion about the nuisance ordinance. Boz was wanting feedback on the nuisance ordinance. Attorney Schramm advised he had emailed the Board of Commissioners some examples of what he has done for some of the cities and towns. He does see where there is a confusion with the Planning Commission and how they come into things. Normally the Planning Commission is not the board that enforces action. However, under the current ordinance it specifically says the planning commission is the hearing authority but changes to the ordinance should come from the Commissioners. The Commissioner will take the time to review the current ordinance and some of the examples ordinances they were given. They will discuss updates to the ordinance further in future meetings. Commissioner Cavender asked if the Code Enforcement Officer would be with BZA than Planning Commission. Attorney Schramm advised that because it is stated that the Planning Commission is the hearing authority then it would be the Code Enforcement Officer that would go out and sight people. He said it is not bad how they have it set out but since they are an advisory planning commission they should not be the one saying this is how the ordinance needs to read. They can make a recommendation but the Board of Commissioners are the governing body over the nuisance ordinance.

Commissioner Cavender also asked Attorney Schramm about the unsafe building fund. He stated that the fund was started with only a certain amount of money and they have not been able to collect much to replenish the fund in order to do these enforcements. Surveyor Crase stated that a lot of these properties that they clean up go on the certificate sale and they lose all the money that may be owed to them. He would like to know if the planning commission could take possession of the property. Attorney Schramm advised there is a couple of different stances under the unsafe building law and building

codes. Attorney Schramm will look into the unsafe building code and create a draft a memo for the planning commission.

Attorney Schramm then advised that he would like to talk about the Stellar Communities. He advised that the lowest bidder “misunderstood the nature of the bidding instructions” and our position is that they were pretty clear. The lowest bidder is saying that it is their mistake and that we could go to the next lowest bidder which was Brown & Brown. The question arose if we should levy on their bid bond, which is 5% of the project, somewhere around \$5,000 to \$10,000. After further discussion the Board of Commissioners did give Attorney Schramm approval to move forward in the process of levying the bond of the bidder that was chosen and backed out of the project.

Bernadette Manual, Clerk of Starke Circuit Court Clerk commended Attorney Schramm in the work that he has done in court for the Starke County Election Board. She also advised she is still seeking and will continue to seek the approval for a full time spot for elections. Currently her elections clerk is a part time position.

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 11:09 AM.

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022

Charlie Chesak, President

Mark Gourley, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender, Member

Rachel Oesterreich, Auditor and Secretary to the Board of Commissioners