

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council at 4:30 PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman, Brad Hazelton, Kay Gudeman, Howard Bailey, Todd Leinbach, Don Binkley, Don White present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Dave Pearman at 4:30 PM for the Starke County Council Regular Session.

**AUDITOR BUSINESS**

Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 22, 2022. Councilman Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR CONFIRMATORY RESOLUTION**

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to open the public hearing at 4:35 for the public hearing for the confirmatory resolution. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. With there being no public comment, Councilman Hazelton made a motion to close the public hearing at 4:36. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Pearman asked if the council has any comments prior to the approval. With there being no comments Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve A Confirmatory Resolution for the Establishment of an Economic Revitalization Area and The Granting of Assess-Value Deduction for the Dunns Bridge Energy Storage, LLC a/k/a Nextera Solar Project by the County Council of Starke County, Indiana. Councilman Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**STARKE COUNTY YOUTH CLUB**

Irene Szakonyi with the Starke County Youth Club came before the Starke County Council to talk about the radiothon that will be coming up. She explained that the Starke County Youth Club provides after school and summer school enrichment programs. She talked about their academic content and how the kids enjoy the math and science programs they provide. This year the Youth Club has also taken an expanded look at arts and culture. Irene also explained about the curriculum they have to help kids cope with everyday stressors that occur in their lives. She believe these programs are a security net for the kids so that our community as a whole can be stronger. She advised that the radiothon is coming up on May 6<sup>th</sup> and she hopes everyone will tune into WKVI from 10 AM until 4 PM. They are currently serving just over 300 kids this year with their programs.

**SHERIFF VEHICLE PURCHASE**

Bill Dulin, Starke County Sheriff came before the Starke County Council to discuss the vehicle purchase options available. Councilman Hazelton advised that the quote from Oliver Ford Lincoln is as follows:

MSRP \$43,500.00 per vehicle  
Starke County Commissioner Price \$38,667.00 X 2  
Total for 2 \$77,334.00

Councilman Hazelton stated that as he understands it we can get hybrids from Oliver for \$3000 less than what we can buy regular from Bozack. Sheriff Dulin agreed. Councilman Hazelton asked the Sheriff if he would rather go with the hybrids. Sheriff Dulin advised either would be good. A discussion was held regarding their current inventory and what they would be replacing with these two new vehicles if approved. Sheriff Dulin advised they had contacted the Chevy dealer in town several times and still do not have a quote from them. Councilman Bailey asked about the Ford dealership in town and Sheriff Dulin advised they have done that in the past but they are very hard to work with trying to get a quote from as well. Councilman Pearman suggested taking this from APRA in the lost revenue section. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the purchase of two vehicles, not to exceed \$77,334.00 and this is to be paid from the ARPA funds in lost revenue. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **SCEDF – QUARTERLY UPDATE**

Lisa Dan, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Starke County Council to give her quarterly update. She advised 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 in Hamlet. 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. She stated she was also approached by a local resident who with her husband is looking to open a small manufacturing business and they are looking for space, a poll building type with a high ceiling. They want to stay within the city limits if possible. 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. There is another option the foundation owns 11 acres on the corner of 500 N and US 35 but it sits in a flood plain. The problem they have is that there are no municipal water and sewer in that location. She stated it would help with development if they could put water and sewer right down 35 to the 500 N location. It would be an expensive project but worthwhile.

Director Dan 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. Starke Tank will be September 17<sup>th</sup> this year. She advised the solar farms are coming along and they are starting to put fencing up as well. They are going to put together a tour for the Dunns Bridge solar project. They are working on the six county ag strategies with other rural counties in the area. In the ag initiative, 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.

Director Dan advised that they also talked about the ARPA funding and things like broadband infrastructure or the possibility of the revolving loan fund for small businesses. She also mentioned she did not know if the county is interested in purchasing any of the property near the justice center with the understanding that the county can only pay for land at market rate. 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. A discussion was held regarding the building that the EZ Blockchain is renting. The county would like to take back over the property for a possible area for fire department training structure. Director Dan will contact EZ Blockchain and see if they would like to get out of their lease with the county early.

## **HIGHWAY- CHANGES TO SALARY ORDINANCE**

Dan Dipert, Starke County Highway Superintendent came before the Starke County Council to discuss a change in their salary structure. He advised he has a shop foreman position that pay a salary of about \$47,000 per year that they are not using. He is asking for a change in pay range for the apprentice mechanic position. Councilman Pearman asked why they would pay an apprentice the same as a journeyman mechanic. Superintendent Dipert stated the way it is structured right now he can only have one lead, one journeyman, and one apprentice mechanic position. So by chance if he has an opportunity

to get a second journeyman that has more skill than an apprentice they would like to give them the proper pay. Councilman Pearman advised he thought that the Commissioners changed to 2 Journeyman and 1 lead. Auditor Oesterreich advised that no the Board of Commissioners kept the apprentice position and requested a pay range for that position. Superintendent Dipert said based on their skills and who he hires they would have flexibility on the 3<sup>rd</sup> mechanic. Superintendent Dipert presented purposed rate for each of the positions being \$26.27 for lead mechanic, \$23.21 for Journeyman and from \$17.51 to \$23.21 for the apprentice. If they were to raise the apprentice rate for the remainder of the year it would cost \$8202, the raise for the rest of the year for lead and journeyman mechanic would cost \$5760 and a total of \$13,968 which they would use the shop foreman position of \$47,379 to pay for these raises. After further discussion Councilman Leinbach made a motion to change the classification names to lead mechanic and mechanic and to change the purposed rates for the lead mechanic will be \$24.27 to \$26.27 and the mechanic from \$17.51 to \$23.51. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilman White made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:41 PM. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**APRIL 18, 2022  
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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Don Binkley

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Todd Leinbach

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