

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL
MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 16, 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 (via zoom), Kay Gudeman, Howard Bailey, Todd Leinbach (via zoom), Don Binkley (via zoom), 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 April 18, 2022. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilman Pearman advised that he has been working with Sysco as far as what happens with the Sysco property. They had several conversations about the property, they did accept the offer of \$225,000 for 90 acres and they will pay for the survey of the property. Councilman Pearman advised this is 2 million dollars of property for \$225,000.

SCEDF – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL

Lisa Dan, Director from the Starke County Economic Development Foundation came before the Starke County Council to request additional funding from the money that was set aside earlier this year. She advised they are requesting a total of \$8,699. \$5,000 of which would be for a Starke Tank sponsorship. With this contribution from the county it will be the Starke County Government and Starke County Economic Development Starke Tank event. Director Dan advised that the second item would be the website redesign, this would cost \$699.00. They found someone fairly local to redesign their website. The other item would be \$3,000 for a video. They did do a grant request to the CVC Board as well. It will be a one minute video highlighting all the good things about Starke County. Councilman White made a motion to approve the additional funding requests of \$8,699. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Director Dan advised when they are redesigning their website they hope to gather information from the county, the city, and towns regarding incentives they can put on their website as far as this is why they would want to relocate to start county. She stated that they are working with a local company who would like to start a small machine shop. They are trying to find them land or a building. Norton is exercising their option to purchase and are expecting to close within the next month. She advised she had a meeting with Greg Norton a couple weeks ago and he was asking about the fire well and how it is managed. Director Dan stated there is an interested party in the Saber property, the whole facility, they are supposed to go the the Knox City Redevelopment Commission Wednesday to discuss the property. They do expect a closing on the toll property sometime this week.

HWY – TRUCK LEASE

Councilman Pearman advised that Dan Dipert was going to come before the Starke County Council about truck leasing. Councilman Pearman stated that Superintendent Dipert got approval from the Commissioners to lease two vehicles but he is going to be working with Attorney Schramm on the proper bidding process of leasing a vehicle. The other thing was a request from the ARPA money for road improvements. He advised that at the Commissioners meeting they agreed to put it on the wish list for possible future projects.

BZA- FULL TIME POSITION

Bob Troike, President of the Board of Zoning Appeals, Mary Beaver, and Secretary to the Board of Zoning, Pamela Starkey, Office Manager of the Planning Commission, and Boz Williams, Planning Commissioner came before the Starke County Council to request the Part Time Secretary to a full time

Secretary position. Councilman Pearman advised he did speak with State Representative Jim Presell about the idea of letting part time individual buy into the INPRS retirement system. This will be looked into in their next legislative session. Bob Troike explained they are concerned that Mary is looking for a full time position, he would like to make the position full time to retain her in her position by making the position full time. They feel that she is an asset to the county. Pam advised that Mary does a lot with the Planning Commission as well. Mary stated she has been here for 8 years and she has invested a lot of time gaining knowledge in that office and it is something that is not easily obtainable in that office. She feels like she would be a good investment for the county to invest in her for that office. Boz advised that the county is growing and they are busier everyday with requests. Two days a week is not enough time for the BZA secretary to work. Councilman Pearman advised that he went to see the Planning Commission on Friday to try and work things out ahead of time. He learned she was not wanting full time for the whole benefits package she really wanted it for the PERF program, for the retirement package.

He advised this is why he has been talking to the State. He went to the Auditors Conference and the State was talking about ways to retain employees. He has advised Auditor Oesterreich to put in 5% for raises for 2023 and if we don't get approved will dial it back. Councilman Pearman stated the one thing that concerns him is that we have a hiring freeze and this would be creating a position for retention. He advised they have other jobs within the county that are open from time to time, this is government this not private and it would not be in the best interest of the taxpayers to do this to retain her, but of course we want to retain her. He spoke with Auditor Oesterreich about being more forgiving with their budget this year to be able to allow her to work more this year other than the two days a week. The suggestion he made with the hiring freeze is that at the budget workshop they would put it in the budget for her to be able to work more hours per week for 2023 and then in 2024 make that position full time as we will have more money coming in from the solar companies. Councilman Pearman felt that in the Commissioners meeting today he felt that it was an all or nothing thing.

Auditor Oesterreich does not disagreed that this is needed but the county has no money to fund this position. Councilman Pearman advised they are \$1.6 million in the red right now in county general. We get or first draw in beginning of June and we will be back in the black until the last week in July at which time we will be back in the red. Councilman Pearman advised that when he spoke with State Representative Presell he even said that he does not believe in deficit spending and that is what we do. Councilman Bailey asked Councilman Pearman that what he is purposing is to make a compromise that she would be able to increase her work hours for the remainder of the year and for 2023 and then in 2024 make the position full time. With the understanding that we are this position right now he asked Mary if this is something they could compromise on right now. Mary advised that when you look at what she makes hourly she could go to McDonald's and make more than that. Auditor Oesterreich advised that it is not just Mary that is in this position, there are many part time employees that work for the county that is in this same position. Mary advised she is in the situation where she needs something full time.

Councilman Pearman advised that there are other positions within the county that are open that are full time. After further discussion Councilman Bailey stated we are in a position and willing to compromise to give Mary more work hours and they are trying to work with her. They could then revisit the idea in 2024 to make this a full time position. Councilman Binkley advised that with the hiring freeze at this time they could not hardly do anything, this will create a bad spot for us. He agrees with Councilman Bailey that we offer more hours. Councilman Hazelton agrees with both Councilman Bailey and Councilman Binkley. Councilman Leinbach agrees with Councilman Binkley and Councilman Bailey. After further discussion Councilman Bailey made a motion to extend the hours of the part time of the BZA Secretary. Councilman Hazelton seconded the motion. The motion was approved with all ayes.

SHERIFF DEPARTMENT-911 SHORTAGE

Pam McDonald, Matron of the Starke County Sheriff's Department and Stacy Noonan, Chief 911 Dispatcher came before the Starke County Council to talk about the 911 shortage. Matron McDonald explained our expected deposits from the state for the rest of 2022 will total around 250,400.00 with the budget still expecting to spend 295,358.00 without any variation. Leaving us around 44/45k negative. One dispatcher for the rest of the year should add up to around 26,134.00. If we were to move two employees to another source of funding that would still leave us with only a positive of 7k. I believe the overtime will exhaust that as well before the end of the year. I am asking to move three employees instead, for a total of 78,402.00.

We have hired the added position of the floater but she is still training along with another employee that replaced an employee that left, setting us back to having to fill spots again with overtime. Councilman Pearman advised they need to come up with a proposal to request money from the two towns and the City of Knox to pay for the shared expense of a dispatcher.

Councilman Hazelton advised that if we are going to do this we need to let them know ASAP so they can budget it for 2023. After further discussion it was agreed upon that City of Knox would pay 50%, the Town of North Judson would pay 30%, and Town of Hamlet would pay 20% of the total of \$39,970, which is the cost of payroll for one dispatcher. Councilman Pearman has requested that on behalf of the Starke County Council for the Auditor to send the requests to the City of Knox, the Town of North Judson, and the Town of Hamlet for those amounts. (Auditor issued notices on May 23, 2022). Councilman Hazelton made a motion regarding this request and in addition that the payment of three dispatchers can be taken from ARPA for the remaining of the year. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

IT-DOMAIN CHANGE

Richard Franks, IT Director came before the Starke County Council to discuss the upcoming domain change. He advised that our county will be going from co.starke.in.us and getting issued domains and certificates and will be more compliant with the state when it comes to applying for grants. We will become starke.in.gov. The co.starke.in.us will be held until May of 2023 but we will be transitioning over to starke.in.gov prior to May of 2023. This transition will make up more compliant and more secure.

OTHER BUSINESS

Auditor Oesterreich gave the Starke County Council the quotes as requested for the purchase of chairs for the Board Members for the meeting room. After some discussion Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to purchase 14 chairs at \$389.99 per chair for a total amount of \$5,459.86, with the five year warranty, to be paid from the ARPA funds. Councilman Hazelton seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilman White made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:22 PM. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

MAY 16, 2022 STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL

Dave Pearman, President

Brad Hazelton, Vice-President

Kay Gudeman

Don White

Howard Bailey

Don Binkley

Todd Leinbach

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