

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL
MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 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, and 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.

MINUTES

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the minutes from June 20th, 2022. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

SHERIFF – FUNDING REQUEST

Bill Dulin, Starke County Sheriff, came before the Starke County Council to request funding for one of his air conditioning units. Sheriff Dulin advised that one of their air conditioning units is leaking fluid on top of the roof. He had McGrath Refrigeration come out and gave them a quote on fixing the unit. He is requesting between \$8,000 and \$10,000 to be able to fix this unit. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the funding request up to \$10,000 for the air conditioning unit to be paid from the Cumulative Capital Development fund. Councilman Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

CIRCUIT COURT SERVICES – ARPA FUNDING REQUEST

Shawn Matraw, Director of Circuit Court Services, came before the Starke County Council for an ARPA funding request. Councilman Pearman explained that the Circuit Court Services has experienced a revenue loss of the last few years but it is not expected to continue. As they build up their consumers they should be back on track. Councilman Pearman explained Director Matraw is requesting the use of ARPA funds to help with their revenue shortfall. Director Matraw advised this money would be going toward health insurance payments and their insurance rates have risen over the last year. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the funding request for ARPA funds in the category of Lost Revenue up to \$7,000. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

SCEDF – UPDATES AND FUNDING REQUEST

Lisa Dan, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation and Mary Perren, Assistant Director came before the Starke County Council to present updates and for a funding request. Director Dan advised that their funding request consists of funding for marketing materials, printed materials, parking lot sign which has been cut in half when Edwards Jones moved in. Discussion was held regarding whether or not it was legal to cut that sign in half when another business moved in the Christos Plaza. Councilman Bailey asked who paid for the original sign. Director Dan believes the SCEDF paid for the original sign. Councilman Pearman stated it looks like they modified our sign without our permission. Attorney Schramm advised it would depend on what is in the lease or the contract regarding signage. Director Dan advised they did get a quote for the sign but if it is the responsibility of Christos Plaza they will talk to them about that. She advised they are also asking for funding for a laptop. They currently bring in their own personal laptops to be able to conduct zoom meetings in office but would like to purchase an office laptop.

Director Dan advised that the last part of the funding request would be for more marketing material through custom Partner Profile Pages from Life site platform. They received a quote from the NWI Life site and the Laporte County Life site but today in the Commissioners meeting it was decided that they would only be using a 6 month subscription on the NWI Life site. She advised the total requests amount is \$5,651.08. Councilman Pearman asked if they only received one quote on the laptop. Councilman Pearman advised he does not have a problem with a few of these requests but he would like to know what the contract is with the sign. Councilman Hazelton suggested taking the sign off of the request. Councilman Pearman would like the situation with the sign looked into prior to approving money for the

sign. Councilman Pearman advised that when the study was completed on the Economic Development Foundation one of the things pointed out was that they (as employees) were spread way to thin. He said that they already have their own website and are maintaining that so to have and pay for another website would be having the same thing twice. They also already work with several other entities that do this same kind of thing such as CVC, Tourism, and the Chamber of Commerce. He feels like spending \$2500 of taxpayer money on the NWI Life site would not be a good purchase.

Mary Perren explained that one benefits of going with the NWI Life platform is that they would come and cover certain events and provide photography services for the event which is a sharable item. Councilman Pearman stated that if anything, he would like statistics regarding this platform. Such as how many new businesses came to Pulaski County with this site? How many new businesses came to Laporte County with this site? Mary advised they can reach out and ask them to provide statistics and get back to the council with this information. She explained they are trying to think of different ways to broaden their reach. Director Dan said the one plus about this is that they have different events throughout the year in which they have to hire a photographer to take photos and this would include that. Councilman Pearman asked if they were planning on coming to every one of Starke County's events. Mary Perren advised they would not come to every single event, they would sit down and go through with them and choosing certain events to commit too. Councilman Leinbach feels that most of their requests are a part of doing business. He views this as he viewed the air conditioner for the SCILL center. We, as the county, do not own it. Councilman Hazelton stated that we hire Economic Development to do a job, so if you hire him to do a job would you expect him to come to you to buy the equipment? No.

A discussion was held regarding the Economic Developments budget and why they may not have the money in their budget to purchase these items themselves. Councilman Hazelton suggested removing the \$2500 until they can get more information on the statistics of how this platform has helped other entities and to remove the sign, from the request, until they figure out who is responsible for the sign with the lease or contract. After further discussion Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the \$927.26 for marketing materials from OTES. Councilman White seconded the motion and the motion was approved with 6 ayes and 1 nay. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to table the office laptop, signage, and the partnership with NWI Life platform until we get more information. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Director Dan congratulated Mary Perren as she was named as a finalist of the Northwest Influential Women of Northwest Indiana in the up and coming category for Economic Development. She stated they would like to show a quick video that was put together for their rural opportunity zone. The video was played for the Starke County Council and audience present.

Director Dan advised a purchase agreement is in place to sell 2 acres of the 53 acres that they own in the Knox Industrial Park. A local couple would like to construct a small machine shop. They hope to break ground in October. She stated that Norton option to purchase is complete. She has contacted Norton about the Firewell and taking over the maintenance payments on that. She would like to know how the county would like to proceed as it is county property where the Firewell is located. She ran this by the Board of Commissioners in their morning meeting and they stated they would like to have a meeting with a Commissioner, Norton, and someone from the Council. So she will be setting up a meeting regarding how to move forward. Director Dan advised the AG strategy is moving along and they are identifying sectors to fill gaps, this would be food warehousing. This would include finished materials or raw product depending on the geography of the six counties that are participating. They are looking at a couple areas in Starke County that would be available for this type of warehousing. She advised they met with a broker who has a prospect in North Judson that is looking at the remaining acreage in the North Judson Industrial Park. That prospect is interested in bringing in materials via rail and then trucking it to the industrial park.

Director Dan advised they will be honoring their industry of the year for the Manufacturers Day and Achievement Events. They will plan to alternate the awards. They will give an Industry of the Year award this year and a Robert E Hamilton award next year. They are bringing back the HR round tables, they will bring all area HR Directors to talk about issues facing industry. Jim Hernandez will introduce himself to talk about the SCILL programs and they will have a representative from the United Way of Northwest Indiana. They will try to do those HR meetings quarterly. Director Dan advised they are working on one more marketing video, they did get a grant from CVC to help with that video. That video will be premiered at the Starke Tank Event on September 17th. Next Era, to their knowledge, plan on starting phase 2 in Railroad Township after harvest. She advised Mammoth Solar is also going well. They are working on a hotel feasibility study and would like to ask the Board of Commissioners and

Starke County Council for letters of support. They are working with the City of Knox and others to try to get the feasibility study in place. Director Dan advised they have provided a letter of support for the American Discovery Trail and the Toto mural project is complete. They would like to promote a mural trail. She stated that they submitted a closing the gap grant for the assistance of providing child care to Starke County. The grant would provide \$350,000 in possible funding opportunities for bringing child care to Starke County. SCEDF would be the fiscal agent for the grant and would receive a nominal administrative fee. Mary Perren advised that Starke Tank has really taken off, they have already more than double the amount of money that was given to them by Starke County Government. Starke Tank is a county wide event this year and have had a lot of inquiries about participation. They believe this will be a really great event and has already received a lot of media coverage. The event will be at 6:00 PM at the North Judson San Pierre High School on September 17th.

CLERK – FULL TIME POSITION REQUEST

Bernadette Manuel, Clerk of Starke Circuit Court came before the Starke County Council with some updates and a request for a full time position. Clerk Manuel advised she may be moving her personal office from where it is now to where they hold the election equipment. She explained that the Secretary of State decided that the VRE machines must have a certifiable paper trail. So the VVpat machines are here to stay and she will be getting 26 more machines, the state will be paying for this equipment, but with these come new cases for the MicroVote machines. Due to these changes she needs more room to store all the equipment. The only place to store this equipment would be her current office and this is why she is thinking about moving her personal office. This is just an idea she is throwing around at this time. Clerk Manuel spoke about her attic and how it needs to be cleaned. There are materials that are stored up there for several other departments, including the EMS Department from the 1980's. She spoke about the scanning project that is going to be starting in her office. She explained there is a couple ways she can completed the scanning project. She can get almost everything scanned that she can't scan herself with that money. She would be able to get the first 3 years of access completed and she can have the indexing completed by other companies.

However, if she can keep this indexing in house and have her employees do it because every item that someone else indexes is going to cost a \$1.00 per item. Clerk Manuel advised that in talking with Fidler and after her employees would be trained in indexing they would have the ability to index 65-75 items per hour. She is purposing to make her current part time elections position a full time position which would add the duties of scanning. She presented the Starke County Council with the current job description of the part time elections position and then a job description for the full time elections position. This would save money and allow her the ability to use the \$50,000 that she was awarded through ARPA for her scanning project. She is already short a full time position in her office. She had one full time individual in her office that was actually a court employee (fully funded by the court) that had transferred to the Clerk Office in one of her full time positions she had open. Clerk Manuel does not believe that the court will be filling that position, at least not allowing the employee to work in her office as they had for the past 3 years. She said the court position was considered a liaison between the court and the clerk office. After further discussion Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the full time election position as presented by Clerk Manuel. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the CVC Board budget of \$40,000. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

A discussion was held regarding the Park Board part time employee pay. Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve all part time employees of the Park Board to be at the rate of \$13.15. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to approve the appointment of Heather Harty to the Koontz Lake Regional Sewer District until the expiration date of December 31, 2026. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Hazelton made a motion to table the County Take Home Vehicle Policy discussion. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Attorney Schramm advised that he has been receiving a lot of request for public documents being the Freedom of Information Requests. He has created a form for departments to use when they get these requests and he would encourage the use of these forms to filter out any requests that are not legitimate.

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilman Hazelton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:51 PM. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

JULY 18, 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