

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 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 Charles 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 Charles Chesak directly at 9:30 AM.

EMS MONTHLY REPORT

Nancy Coad came before the Board of Commissioners for the monthly financial report. She handed out the financial report for the Accumulated totals and Commissioner Chesak advised they had received \$174.32 from Jonathon O'Hara, \$25.00 from Small Claims. Nancy advised that Eric was doing a transfer at the moment and would not be at the meeting to present his monthly report but will be emailing it out.

HIGHWAY MONTHLY REPORT

Dan Dipert, Starke County Highway Superintendent, came before the Board of Commissioners to present his monthly report. He advised that they have 15 full time CDL drivers and they only have 2 open positions to fill. They have 3 part time CDL Drivers, 2 mechanics, and 4 people out mowing. They will be opening bids today for the CCMG 2022-1, paving Range Road from 300 S. to 250 N. The second call for Community Crossing is open this month and will extend through August. They have \$284,000 to apply for yet. The paving project on 700 E is 100% done. Superintendent Dipert advised they are still working on getting quotes from tractors and mowing units. They are having trouble finding companies that have tractors. They can get mower decks but not the tractors. They are also shopping around for a used semi-tractor. He advised that all bridges have been swept, washed, and weed eaten, and the next step would be to crack seal all bridges. He stated they are trying to grade every road at least once a month. They currently have laid a total of 6.75 miles of asphalt grindings with the paver, completed over 7 miles of chip seal so far, and they are starting to pave with cold pug mix. They do not have anything scheduled for training in July or August.

Superintendent Dipert advised they are continuing to grade and patch for the solar areas. They did get permission to add 7-8 loads of stone to the intersections of 400 E and 700 S, they are doing more work on the west side of US 35. With Next Era there are 3 culverts needing to be replaced and he is waiting to hear back from them. The estimated total cost for material and labor for all 3 culverts would be around \$18,200. Next Era did sign a Road Use Agreement with White County for 1.4 million in road improvements. They are also working on the Koontz Lake requested traffic study. Commissioner Gourley asked if Superintendent Dipert has requested any new information about the railroad crossing request. Superintendent Dipert advised he did talk to him and the offer is still at \$60,000 plus the grant from INDOT. Commissioner Gourley advised given the feedback he will make a motion to reject the request to close the crossing on 225 S. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Chesak advised they will now open the bids for the CCMG 2022-1 paving project on Range Rd. from 300 S. to 250 N.

Attorney Schramm verified with Auditor Oesterreich that all bids were received in a timely matter and sealed. Auditor Oesterreich agreed. Attorney Schramm read the bids as follows:

1. Milestone Contractors North Inc, 24358 SR 23, South Bend, IN 46614 for a total bid amount (base bid and alternatives) of \$2,176,000.
2. E & B Paving, 310 Blacketer Dr., Rochester, IN 46975 for a total bid amount (base bid and alternatives) of \$1,978,245.33.
3. Rieth –Riley Construction Co. Inc., PO Box 1828, LaPorte , IN 46352 for a total bid amount (base bid and alternatives) of \$1,685,256.55.

Superintendent Dipert took the bids to review the specs and will return with his recommendations.

CIRCUIT COURT SERVICES– FUNDING REQUEST

Director Shawn Matraw with the Circuit Court Services came before the Board of Commissioners to request the use of ARPA funding for his department. He advised with the revenue loss that have faced during Pandemic 1 and Pandemic 2 they are needing assistance in helping pay for employee benefit items such as health insurance. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the request of \$7,000 for Circuit Court Services funding request as presented. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

MAINTENANCE – VEHICLE REQUEST

Jim Coad, Director of Maintenance came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss a vehicle request. He stated that he talked to Chris about the vehicle and he would like the Board of Commissioners to keep in mind that his department may need a vehicle down the road for their use instead of them using their own vehicle. Director Coad also mentioned the possibility of having a bigger shed so that they could store more of their equipment on sight rather than having to go get it at the warehouse. Commissioner Gourley asked the Sheriff about the DRMO vehicles he has that would possibly be available. Sheriff Dulin advised there are time frames and they have to keep them a certain amount of time but they had plans with those, they were going to auction those off and then use the money to purchase a new vehicle. He did say they may have a vehicle that he could possibly give the maintenance department but it is not 4-wheel drive or anything. Discussion was then held regarding the use of the lot on the west side of the courthouse that is owned by the county for the purpose of placement of a shed/small building for equipment storage. The Board of Commissioners agreed this would be a good thing to look into but possibly at a later time based on the prices of the materials now. So possibly look into the shed situation next year.

SCEDF – UPDATES AND FUNDING REQUEST

Lisa Dan, Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundations and Mary Perren, Assistance Director came before the Board of Commissioners to present updates and a funding request. Director Dan stated that she is requesting additional funding for partnership with Great Life News. This includes custom Partner Profile Pages for SCEDF on the NWI Life and LaPorte County Life websites, along with free publishing of our press ready content, social media inclusion and assistance, and event coverage with article and photo creation. They only cover positive news. The cost of \$5,500 for an annual membership. Director Dan advised they are requesting money for some marketing materials and have reached out to OTES for a few different items. They are also requesting money to update their parking lot signage on the Christos Plaza sign. The last request is for an office laptop. They do a lot of Zoom meetings they also use their own laptop, they would like an office laptop. With some discussion Commissioner Gourley suggested going with the one network for 6 months for the amount of \$2,500 for the partnership with Great Life News and advertising with NWI Life not LaPorte County Life.

Commissioner Cavender agrees with Commissioner Gourley about the 6 month term rather than the full year with Great Life News and advertising with NWI Life not LaPorte County Life. Commissioner Chesak agrees as well. Commissioner Chesak asked what the banners would be used for. Director Dan advised their banners are out of date and they take these banners on the road with them when they go to events. She advised that the note cards would be for printed materials with their information and more specifically thank you cards. Commissioner Chesak does not agree with the coffee mug ideal. Commissioner Cavender made the motion to approve \$5,651.08 which would include going to the 6 months for the amount of \$2,500 for the partnership with Great Life News and advertising with NWI Life not LaPorte County Life and removing the request for the coffee mugs. Commissioner Gourley 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 Board of Commissioners and audience present. Director Dan advised a purchase agreement is in place to sell 2 acres of the 43 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. The Board of Commissioners requested that Director Dan set up a meeting between one of their board members and Norton to discuss how to move forward with

the Firewell and the property. Director Dan spoke about the six county AG strategy and how that is moving along for Starke County. 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. Commissioner Gourley gave Director Dan about information he received on Broadband Grants that have come out recently. Director Dan explained that they have had this on their radar and will do what they need to do to keep this assistance moving.

CLERK –FULL TIME POSITION REQUEST

Bernadette Manuel, Clerk of Starke Circuit Court came before the Board of Commissioners 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 Board of Commissioners 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. Commissioner Gourley asked what current positions she has now. Clerk Manuel explained she has 4 full time employees and 2 part time employees. She would like to turn one of the part time position into a full time position.

After further discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to eliminate the part time election position and approve to create the full time election position with the job description effective 1/1/2023. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley spoke about the possible remodel to the Clerk's Office. Clerk Manuel stated that paint and hard wood floor would go a long way with her employees. Commissioner Gourley would like to continue the discussion of remodeling the second floor with ARPA funds in the future. He has started exploring options as far as proposal to start the process of things.

SHERIFF – FUNDING REQUEST

Bill Dulin, Starke County Sheriff came before the Board of Commissioners for requesting funding. Sheriff Dulin advised that one of their air conditioning units, the unit itself was only made for two years and it has been leaking oil on the roof. They have to maintain the jail at a certain degree otherwise they would have certain legal obligations. They had a business come out and give them a quote, it will be about \$8,000 to \$10,000 to fix it. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the funding request for the air conditioning unit up to the amount of \$10,000 to be paid from the Cumulative Capital Development fund. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

HIGHWAY – BID SELECTION

Superintendent Dipert came back with his recommendation. He advised they had went through all the bids and they would like to go with Rieth-Riley and the base bid of \$1,120,678.95. Reith Riley also had the lowest overall total bid amount but they will be only going with the base bids and no alternatives. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to accept the base bid of \$1,120,678.95 from Reith-Riley. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$282,292.49 including deductions in the amount of \$81,486.73 for pay period ending 07/09/2022 and payroll date of 07/15/2022. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$232,213.56. Commissioner Cavender seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to approve the minutes for July 5, 2022. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the annex keys request as presented for Teresa Trout, Tina Holly, and Victoria Chessor. Commissioner Cavender 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.

Karl Swihart, Park Board Member, came before the Board of Commissioners to ask that they allow their part time employee to use the county issued cell phone until they have hired a new Park Superintendent. Commissioner Cavender made a motion to allow the part time employee Angelina to use the county issued cell phone until they hire a new Park Superintendent. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Mandy Thomason, Starke County Recorder, came before the Board of Commissioners to update them on the scanning project she has going on and to make sure they do not have any questions.

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 11:08 AM.

MONDAY, JULY 18, 2022

Charlie Chesak, President

Mark Gourley, Vice-President

Bryan Cavender, Member

Rachel Oesterreich, Auditor and Secretary to
the Board of Commissioners