

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in Regular Session at 5:00 PM, in person at the Starke County Annex Building, Knox, Indiana, with Charles Chesak, Mark Gourley, and Don Binkley, 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 5:00 PM.

HIGHWAY – BRIDGE 137

Amanda Fentress, Office Manager for the Starke County Highway Department, came before the Board of Commissioners to request right-a-way signature for Bridge 137. The Board of Commissioners signed the paperwork as presented.

SHERIFF – LOCK REPLACEMENT/VEHICLE QUOTES

Chief Deputy Jack Hudgens came before the Board of Commissioners to request ARPA funds for lock Replacements and also to talk about vehicle quotes. Chief Deputy Hudgens advised the replacement of (6) existing Corbin-Russwin PoE locks at the detention center will be a total of \$48,915. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the \$48,915 needed for the locks and to pay that from ARPA funds. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Chief Deputy Hudgens advised that they would like to purchase two new vehicles as their current fleet is running on high mileage vehicles. The Board of Commissioners asked for three quotes in regards to the vehicle request. Chief Deputy Hudgens will be added to the next agenda to present the quotes to the Board of Commissioners.

CLERK – UPDATES TO THE 2ND FLOOR COURTHOUSE

Bernadette Manuel, Starke County Circuit Court Clerk, came before the Board of Commissioners to request updates to the second floor of the courthouse. Her office has not been touched since the 1960's. She is looking for at least new flooring and new paint. The Board of Commissioners would like to see quotes for the work she is requesting. They advised Clerk Manuel to work with Rick, the Maintenance Director on getting quotes and then presenting those at one of their future meetings.

EMS – MONTHLY REPORT

Larry Brock, Starke County EMS Director, came before the Board of Commissioners to request money to be able to replace the furnace at the North Judson station. He advised the unit is 20 years old and parts are no longer available. It will cost \$3,800 for the replacement of both the heating and cooling unit at the Judson base. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the purchase of \$3,800 to be paid from the Cumulative Capital Development Fund. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley advised Director Brock that he is concerned about the patient transfers from the hospital and he wants to know how are we doing on our staffing. Director Brock advised that staffing looks good and the May schedule just came out and it is full. Commissioner Gourley asked if we have it sorted to get paramedics where they need to be. Director Brock advised we still have one paramedic in the community and this is because of the funding and the cost of a paramedic right now. Director Brock advised they still complete emergency transfers if the helicopter does not fly. Sometimes the hospital will send a nurse with the transfer but if they are unable to send a nurse the EMS Department will send the only paramedic they have in the county.

CALIFORNIA TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE – FUNDING REQUEST

Sheri Bartoli, California Township Trustee, came before the Board of Commissioners to request funding for a Safe Haven Baby Box. She gave the Board of Commissioners packets containing information on what it is, where you install it, and how it is used. This is something for mothers as a last resort to give up their baby's instead of abandoning them. Sheri advised that she is requesting \$18,000 which would include the initial purchase fee, installation, electrical and alarm hookup as it has to connect to the 911 dispatching system. The annual recertification fee and the monthly alarm fee would be paid for by the California Township Trustee. Commissioner Binkley asked what the liability would be for the county

with the installation of the baby box. Carrie Block advised they will be checking into this with Bliss McKnight. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to table this discussion for one month, he would like Carrie to check into the liability and have Sheri look into any grants that may be available. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

FIRE DEPARTMENT DISCUSSION

Councilman Bennett came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss concerns with the Fire Departments. A discussion was held regarding the first responders and how they respond to medical calls as well as the new position that was created for the EMS Department being the Medical Transport Driver. It was also discussed how each fire department chooses the medical calls they go out on because they are not required to go out on medical calls. Director Brock advised that a fire fighter will report to him what calls they want to respond to. Every fire department all agreed they wanted to go on certain calls. Councilman Bennett advised his purpose was to bring attention to the fact regarding how many medical calls the firemen attend. Commissioner Gourley suggested to schedule a special working session with the fire departments and anyone who also wants to be involved. Councilman Pearman suggested going through LEPC committee as well. They will get a list of the LEPC committee members from Tori the EMA Director.

HAUSER – TOWING DISCUSSION

Steve Hauser came before the Board of Commissioners to review his concerns with how towing is broken up at this time at the Sheriff's Department. He stated that the Sheriff's Department has taken his completely off any county calls for towing and the reasoning is because he has a contract with the City of Knox so he receives all the calls from the City. He requested to be put on county calls, not just calls from the City of Knox. Commissioner Chesak reviewed the towing report that was provided by the Sheriff's Department and he advised from January 1st until the end of April Collision had 26 calls, Hauser had 38, Howards had 40, Pit Stop had 30, and TNT had 41. Hauser stated the thing about these calls is that some of his calls have been a jump start or pulling an ambulance out but the accidents is where you make your money. Commissioner Gourley stated after reviewing the traffic accidents it seems pretty equitable between the different towing companies. After further discussion Commissioner Binkley advised that the towing right now is under the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Department. He also advised Hauser that he should offer his ideas to the Sheriff himself. Commissioner Chesak advised Hauser to get in contact with the Sheriff and continue speaking with him about his towing concerns.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$292,277.42 including deductions in the amount of \$77,898.56 for pay period ending 04/15/2023 and payroll date of 04/21/2023. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$284,898.13 including deductions in the amount of \$76,464.52 for pay period ending 04/29/2023 and payroll date of 05/05/2023. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$474,653.20. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes for April 17, 2023. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Auditor Oesterreich advised that the Board of Commissioners will be voting on the re-establishment of the Cumulative Bridge Fund at their next meeting. She has set the tax rate at \$0.0160 which is what it was established at for 2022.

Councilman Pearman advised they have been trying to figure out a way to improve the disparity we have for pay for the county employees. The Council has decided that instead of increasing LIT tax we would instead use the ARPA fund to fund this for 2024 and then have further discussions in the future of how to fund this for 2025. Auditor Oesterreich advised the total they have estimated in using for the raise and also the shortfall for the 911 fund would be about \$1 million dollars. After discussion was held regarding the across the board raise Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the use of APRA funds in an estimated amount of \$1 million for 2024. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Auditor Oesterreich advised Tom Busch has resigned from the Park Board and the Board of Commissioners will be looking for an appointment. Commissioner Binkley asked Clerk Manuel if she would be interested in serving on the Park Board. She agreed. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to appoint Circuit Court Clerk Bernadette Manuel to the Park Board pending information from Attorney Schramm as far as if Clerk Manuel can legally serve on the Park Board.

Auditor Oesterreich advised that she is going to be looking for approval for the new handbook at their next meeting on May 15th, 2023.

Auditor Oesterreich advised that the Maintenance Director and the IT Director came to her for a proposal in purchasing computers. The Maintenance Department has very old computers but does not need brand new machines. They would like the Auditor’s Office to purchase two new computers for the Auditor’s Department and then two of the Auditor’s existing computers would go to the maintenance department. After further discussion Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the purchase in the amount of \$1,798.38 from Dell and to be paid from the Cumulative Capital Development Fund. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Jay Troike advised he was at their last meeting requesting a cap on solar and he is wondering if the Board of Commissioners has an answer regarding that matter. Attorney Schramm advised that this is probably doable but the county needs to do a lot of leg work before they can issue a cap on solar acreage. Attorney Hine asked if the county could do a moratorium. Attorney Schramm advised it would be the same kind of thing, the county would need to see what their goal is behind the moratorium. He advised this request is probably possible because there is not a lot out there yet (case law) because solar is such a new thing in Indiana, if it is not prohibited by local government then we can do it. But we need to tie it to something and need to be able to say why a certain amount has been set at the cap.

Auditor Oesterreich asked the Board of Commissioners if they would like to have a County Auction this year. The Board stated that they do want to have an auction and would like Auditor Oesterreich to look into Lestinsky Auction Service and Kraft Auction Services.

Commissioner Gourley was asked to look into the space at Annex 2 Bottom Level as far as how much the Extension Office is using and what we may be able to take back over.

PUBLIC COMMENT

With there being no further public comments and no further business, Commissioner Binkley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 PM.

MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023

Charles Chesak, President

Mark Gourley, Vice-President

Don Binkley, Member

Rachel Oesterreich, Auditor and Secretary to
the Board of Commissioners