

STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 5, 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 (via zoom), 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.

EMA – UPDATED ADA PLAN

Victoria Chessor, Starke County EMS Director, came before the Board of Commissioners to request approval for the Title VI Implementation Plan and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan be approved. Commissioner Gourley made the motion to approve the Title VI Implementation Plan and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

KIRPC – ROAD SAFETY PLAN GRANT

Shawn Cain from KIRPC came before the Board of Commissioners to request a letter of support for a grant match. She advised that the grant is called Safe Streets and Roads for all Grant. It is a grant program from the US Department of Transportation to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. She stated that they are attempting to go in as a region, which involves 8 counties, to request a Regional Street and Road Safety Plan. She advised what they will have to have is a 20% grant match. They are looking at Starke providing \$23,750 for the match amount. At this time Jasper, Carrol, Benton Newton, Warren, and White counties have already joined KIRPC for this proposal. It would not be until 2024 when Starke County would have to provide the matching funds. From 2017-2021 there was 691 fatalities in our region and they are looking to try to find different avenues to try to get that number to zero. This can lead to an implementation grant for each county to make different changes to the roadways within their county. In order to get the implementation dollars, you will need a Regional Street and Road Safety Plan in place. She would like a letter of support from the Board of Commissioners to be able to move forward with the grant and also a letter advising they will be providing the local match. Shawn advised that this amount could be substantially less, they will not know until they do the procurement. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the grant match and grant support letters. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

CALIFORNIA TOWNSHIP – BABY BOX & SMOKE ALARMS

Sheri Bartoli, California Township Trustee, came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss the baby box and smoke alarms. Shari explained that she would like to go with Menards when it comes to the smoke alarms. They have better pricing when you purchase in bulk. She explained they would like to get these smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectives, and batteries for all residents of Starke County for fire prevention week. Commissioner Binkley advised he feels the fire departments should all do their own thing with this and within their own budgets. Councilman Pearman asked about the hardwire smoke detectors and whether or not we would be setting up our own liability if we handed out these devices. Commissioner Gourley advised he is not purposing any action to move along with the smoke alarms. Commissioner Chesak then moved into the baby box discussion. Sheri advised that she checked with safe haven baby boxes and once the baby is put into the baby box the county is not liable the safe haven baby box would take on the liability. However, she did find out that the baby box has to be within one mile of the hospital. The only place that would be close enough would either be the Center Township Fire Department or the Knox EMS Base.

Commissioner Gourley asked is anyone got the process started for the \$10,000 grant that was recently available. Sheri advised that grant was for if your entity had already purchased everything and were seeking reimbursement. Commissioner Binkley advised that there should be more grant money out for this type of situation and he would like more research done on possible grants. Sheri will research this and provide an update at one of their future meetings. Sheri then advised that she would like to ask for funds to sponsor and EMR class for fire departments across the county. As you are well aware, emergency medical responders are first responders who provide emergency care to those who have

experienced an illness or injury. EMR's have the knowledge and skill to provide lifesaving interventions until higher-lever emergency responders such as EMT's or Paramedics arrive.

Sheri stated that the class would be held at the Bass Lake Fire Department, the cost would be \$250 per student which would include all textbooks and materials for the class. The EMR class would meet twice a week for three-four months in durations. She advised she is estimating that this class would have 15 participants with a total cost of \$3,750. Commissioner Chesak advised that there may be a grant available for something like this as well. Commissioner Gourley advised that grants are still being created out of the unused ARPA funds that will be available for local governments and other units. Commissioner Chesak advised to add Sheri to the agenda for the end of July to revisit this request.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$287,008.75 including deductions in the amount of \$76,769.52 for pay period ending 05/27/2023 and payroll date of 06/02/2023. Commissioner Binkley 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 \$352,268.76. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$295,203.43 including deductions in the amount of \$79,043.85 for pay period ending 05/13/2023 and payroll date of 05/19/2023. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes for May 26, 2023. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes for May 15, 2023. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Chesak advised that the next thing on the agenda is the solar discussion, they had a meeting on May 31st with citizens and council members. A cap or a moratorium was discussed during this meeting. Commissioner Chesak asked the public to speak on the issue. A public discussion was held including concerns regarding what effect the solar farms would have on environment, wildlife, and the decommissioning plan. A discussion was held regarding putting a cap in place and possibly putting a moratorium in place until they decide on a cap amount. The public discussion continued with concerns regarding the mineral rights to the properties they are taking over, animals getting caught in the fencing that will surround the properties, removing trees from the property, and the toxicity of the panels. Director Dan gave some information regarding what is driving solar farms. She stated the power companies are the ones who are switching from coal fire power to green energy. She also advised the two main power grids that serve the entire United States run through Starke County.

This is why Starke County is being considered for these projects. Director Dan also advised of the money we will be seeing from the solar projects. Commissioner Chesak advised that the county will not see money from the solar projects until the projects are finished. Director Dan advised it will not be until the end of 2024 or possibly even 2025. Public discussion was also held regarding how the solar companies begin their process. Some of the public feel like they are going to property owners prior to coming to the county for permission. Another public individual stated he started getting letters from solar companies a few years ago whereas many of these people did not receive any notifications. Councilwoman Hine advised that the public is asking for a moratorium because it is a pause in allowing these companies to come in. Maybe they will decide it is a good thing and a beneficial thing but they would like the pause to make these decisions.

Public discussion was also held regarding property values and the possibility of being next to a solar farm how that may affect an individual assessed value of their home. After further public discussion someone asked what the Commissioners are going to do about all of this. Commissioner Gourley advised it depends on what is purposed and put before the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Chesak asked Attorney Schramm about a moratorium or a cap. Attorney Schramm stated that if the Commissioners want to look into a cap then they could most likely declare a moratorium which will put a freeze on any filings for any permits while they decide what that cap will be. The one thing they will have to figure out is how to treat Hoosier Solar. The reason Hoosier is the only one he is concerned about is because they have been giving the county updates for over a year now. He advised we do not want to say we are freezing all efforts including yours (Hoosier) even though they have been keeping the county up to date for over a year now. Attorney Schramm advised the Commissioners could give

Hoosier Solar 30 or 60 days to submit for any permits and then put a moratorium in place. He believes this should be a consideration. This is not to advocate with Hoosier this would be to keep up out of a lawsuit. Commissioner Binkley asked about putting a cap in place. Attorney Schramm advised we could put a cap in place but we have to have a justifiable reason for that cap. He will draw up a few different moratorium options and present them at the Commissioners next meeting.

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to appoint Jerry Smith as the EMS Director. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to appoint Steven Hoy as the IT Director. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approve with all ayes.

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the engagement letter with Wyland, Humphry, and Clevenger. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

With there being no further public comments and no further business, Commissioner Gourley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 PM.

MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2023

Charles Chesak, President

Mark Gourley, Vice-President

Don Binkley, Member

Rachel Oesterreich, Auditor and Secretary to
the Board of Commissioners