

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2023**

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 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 9:30 AM.

PUBLIC HEARING- VACATION REQUEST SAN PIERRE

Commissioner Chesak opened the public hearing for the vacation request of an alleyway in San Pierre. Mr. DeCola stated that he filed a Petition to vacate an alleyway. He advised he has noticed all the individuals that were required to be noticed. He is requesting to vacate a section of Clay Street where his property parcel is located. An individual from the public, Donna, asked what Mr. DeCola plans on doing with the property. Mr. DeCola stated that he will be putting a house in that location. He then went on to explain the areas and the vacation he is requesting. Further discussion was held by the Board of Commissioners and several residents who have received the Certified Mailing for his requests of vacation. The following discussions and considerations were held: future utilities may need the reserved county right-of-way, it would require substantial deviation from the current plat, there was no benefit offered by the petitioner to the county via vacation request, there were concerns expressed by neighboring property owners, Petitioner expressed wanting to add a roadway in the future, but the area in which the roadway would be located was not part of the vacation petition request, which would require further vacation proceedings. After this discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to close the public hearing at 9:46 AM. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Binkley also made a motion to leave the area as is and denying the vacation request. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

EMS MONTHLY REPORT

Nancy Coad, Starke County EMS Clerk, handed out the financial report to the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Chesak advised they have received \$245.17 from Attorney Johnathan O'Hara and \$1,061.74 from Merchants and Medical. Jim Garner, Starke County EMS Director came before the Board of Commissioners to give his monthly report. He advised:

Operations: Currently we are operating 3 out of 4 ambulances at certain intervals 3 at ALS level, when ALS Staffing permits as well. Aug 5, we went to 2 ambulances owned and a loaner donated by Lutheran until September 15, as BLS transfers had been suspended. We had various help from other services for 3 days 8/5-8/8/2023, Lutheran, Pulaski, Northwest and Culver EMS. Minimum of 1 ALS staff member at all times scheduled at Medic 3, Knox base, 38% of August Staffing is 2 ALS staffed ambulances. 6% coverage ALL bases had paramedic. ALS ambulances 100% is minimum staffing of 1 paramedic at Knox base, I am operating ALS Non-transport vehicle on a 24-hour basis as needed to supplement staffing. NW Starke was contacted and advised of emergency suspension of transfers.

Transfers: have been suspended at this time.

Personnel: We have at this time no full-time openings for EMT's (12 on schedule) with 3 part time applications, 3 applicants received application, 4 current full-time paramedics as well as 5 paramedic full-time openings and 2 applicants in process for interviews.

Training: Accumed (our billing company) did not clear anything up, it did however show our employees what is needed for correct documenting. October 5, 2023 Bliss Mcknight is doing an EVOC class for EMS at 6 pm

Safety: August 5, 2023 1 EMT Fatal Line of duty death, 1 Paramedic off also with no determined release date. Last injury reported was on 04/07/2023

Ambulance Maintenance:

3308-North Judson M1 (2021 Ford Gas Vin:1FXDE4FN2MDC16274 Current mileage: 98945) Up to date and in service

4926- Not Designated Future Grovertown base M5 (2014 F450 Gas Vin: 1FDXE4FS8EDA90672 Used purchase delivered on September 6, 2023 Current mileage 125,648

4925- Not Designated Future Knox Base M3 (2024 F350 Gas Vin: 1FDXE4FN1RDD21556 estimated delivery date September 18th, 2022-September 22, 2023 Current Mileage: 20 Needs stocked, setup, radios and striping

0514 (2015 Ford Diesel Vin:1GB6G5CL5F1268834 Current mileage:201638) Out of service. Emissions system, low power mode. Also recommended replace wheel simulators to repair lug nut issue. (part still not available currently).

*0085 Grovertown Base M5 (2013 Diesel Vin:1GB6G5CL4D1146446 Current mileage:194,314) In service

0084-Knox Base M3 (2012 Chevy Diesel Vin:1GB6G5CLXC1117256 Current Mileage: 118285) Currently back in service.

4149 (2013 Ford Explorer Vin:1FM5K8ARXOG844160 Current Mileage:123886) Lower control arms were replaced as well as being serviced, tires and alignment are highly recommended as tires are showing extreme wear. Explorer is currently in use and stocked as a functioning ALS non-transport vehicle as registered with state EMS and being used as an additional Paramedic Unit when needed. Lutheran Loaner Ambulance being returned September 15th, 2023

*4230- Total Loss 08/05/2023 being removed from this list

Base Maintenance: 2 outside outlets to be installed at all medic bases for Spare ambulance to be plugged in. New door entry systems (key card entry) in progress.

Grants: Awaiting further discussion from the Opioid Abatement committee for the Ambulance power load system for the 2 ambulances without the system 0084, 0514. Northern Indiana Community Foundation has awarded a \$ 20,000 grant to assist in purchase of winter gear, remaining balance of used ambulance and personnel items as shirts, beds, winter coats. No response as of September 15th as to grant applied for with Subaru for purchase of Lucas Cpr device. No new development on the Indiana Senate bill 169 which establishes the rural community ambulance grant pilot program and fund. Searching for grants, donations have become part of a daily routine.

Donations: Northern Indiana Community Foundation has reached out to me on Friday with information of an anonymous \$15,000 donor. Additional \$100 donation was made in the name of Mike Wilcox

PPE: The standing is good for most all personnel protective equipment. Winter coats will be needed and grants have been applied for.

Director Garner presented the Board of Commissioners with a new job description and title. He would like to create an EMS Training Officer position. He would like to make the range of pay between \$16 and \$17.50 per hour. It would come out of the budget he already has. Commissioner Gourley asked if this is to convert one of his existing employees. Director Garner agreed. He also stated that Knox High School asked his department to participate in all the High School Varsity and Middle School Football Games. He advised he has made an agreement with the High School to provide two individuals that will be present at the games, this will be considered the special events team. This team would be available for any special events that these services would be requested. After further discussion Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the request for the new position as presented. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

HIGHWAY – MONTHLY REPORT

Dan Dipert, Starke County Highway Superintendent, came before the Board of Commissioners to present his monthly report. He reported that his Office Manager has resigned. He is now moving the current Asset Manager into the Office Manager position and hiring an individual for the Asset Manager position. He advised he is still fully staffed. He stated the part time driver positions will end for the season this Thursday. He will finish up the mowing duties with full time employees. Superintendent Dipert advised he is still waiting for the CCMG 2023-002 results, it should be announced next week. He advised the CCMG 2023-001 project has been completed. They did a total of 27 miles of chip and seal with 18 miles being double coated. He advised that a new John Deer tractor and mower, that they ordered back in December of 2022, is supposed to be delivered on September 29th. Superintendent Dipert advised that they had an opportunity to purchase new trucks come before them. He stated Western Star has two build spots that have opened up. He handed out the quotes he has received from Sourcewell. He advised the Western Star price is guaranteed and has a bigger motor and heavier transmission but they are \$21,000 more than the Freightliners they were looking at. He advised these trucks will be built within the next two weeks.

After further discussion Attorney Schramm advised it is the same contract that was presented the last time and he would like to see a section regarding the locked in price. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the purchase as long as they provide a statement regarding a locked in price. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Further discussion continued about the financing options. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to choose option 2 for the financing. Payments would begin October of 2023. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Superintendent Dipert then presented the Board of

Commissioners with the right-a-ways they need to purchase for Bridge # 137, which is on 300 E South of Highway 8. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the right-a-way compensation as presented. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Superintendent Dipert advised that they have been grading gravel roadways and will continue until they get them all done. He stated that they are down to 2.5 miles left of chip sealing. They have also been working on low hanging branches that have been hitting school buses. Superintendent Dipert advised 45% of Mammoth panels have been installed and over 50% have been delivered. They have also been working on the roadways in the Next Era area.

COMMUNITY SERVICES OF STARKE COUNTY

Cindy Benke, Director of Community Services of Starke County, came before the Board of Commissioners with a quarterly update. She stated that they continue to have the joint get together with North Judson and Knox senior citizens. Last month they did a type of carnival gathering with those individuals. They just finished their major audit with INDOT and received their compliance letter. They are up to six drivers now. Director Benke advised that she sat down and did a comparison from January to August 2022 and January to August 2023. She advised they have 749 more people this year in that time period than last year. She did advise they need canned soup. Director Benke advised that the Energy Assistance program starts in November. Also, in November their radiothon will be held on November 10th. She advised they are trying to be more family and community oriented. The fun fair was a big success. She advised that she does sit on a board that addresses homelessness in Starke County and that committee will be meeting tomorrow.

NORTHERN INDIANA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Jackie Ryan, Director of the Starke County Community Foundation, which is a branch of the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, came before the Board of Commissioners to take about a possible endowment for Starke County Government and the Save the Hospital funds. She stated that the intentions of a fund like this would help strengthen the community. She advised that this could be things such as improving access to resource and services, addressing mental health, recovery, and general community wellness. Director Ryan handed out a packet that contained information on a snapshot of Starke County's Health Statistics. She also gave examples of some of the grants the North Indiana Community Foundation has given out over the past 25 years. She also handed out information on the proposed committee structure that could include: Active Starke County Physician, Starke County Health Nurse, Representative of a mental health organization, Representative of a Starke County Health organization, Starke County Council Member or their appointee, Starke County Commissioner member or their appointee, Community Foundation Members (majority).

Commissioner Binkley asked if they would be interested in an 8th or a quarter of the balance of the Save the Hospital Fund rather than the whole thing all at once. Director Ryan stated they would be interested in any amount, it is not an all or nothing type of situation. He explained that any fraction of that money would help get a jump start on the initiatives they want to achieve. Commissioner Gourley asked what the revenue is for the hospital fund. Auditor Oesterreich stated the quarterly payments for the lease is the revenue in that fund. Dr. Fritz stated that years ago when the hospital was managed by a for-profit company, they all came together and wanted LaPorte to take over the lease. That money came from those two entities as payment for LaPorte to take over the operating lease. However, the real estate and the building is still owned by Starke County Government. There was a serious question of the length ability to operate a hospital. The money was earmarked to ensure there would still be a hospital for a long time to come. Now we are 20 years later the agreement and management of the hospital seems to be working well. They would like to disperse some of this money where it is needed in health care throughout Starke County.

Dr. Fritz advised this agreement with the Save the Hospital funds was set up over 20 years ago with three entities, Starke County Council, Board of Commissioners, and the Hospital Board With all requiring a super majority vote in deciding what to do with the money. Dr. Fritz advised that there are benefits with investing with the Northern Indiana Community Foundation as their philosophy is to preserve the principal amount and they have the ability to invest in a much greater return. This is why the hospital board has investigated the proposed use of this money and has made that recommendation to move forward. After further discussion Commissioner Gourley would like to investigate further into the Trust Indiana that was mentioned before prior to making a decision.

WABASH VALLEY – EASEMENT REQUEST

Wabash Valley came before the Board of Commissioners to request an Easement on Parcel # 75-03-20-300-061.000-009 in the amount of \$7,700 and Parcel # 75-03-20-300-055.000-009 in the amount of \$4,430. They are requesting a 30-foot easement because they are going to build a transmission line. After further discussion regarding the easement and what the easement will be used for Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the Easement request as presented in in the amounts of Parcel # 75-03-20-300-061.000-009 in the amount of \$7,700 and Parcel # 75-03-20-300-055.000-009 in the amount of \$4,430. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

SCEDF – RURAL OPPORTUNITY ZONE & SURF INTERNET

Lisa Dan, Director of Starke County Economic Development Foundation, came before the Board of Commissioners to talk about new opportunities regarding the Rural Development Zone and also SURF internet. Director Dan introduced Roy Anderson to the Board of Commissioners, he has property in the Rural Opportunity Zone over at Grovertown. He would like to set up a small research and development business. Once that is set up they would like to put \$5.1 Million dollars into the expansion and over the next few years they would like to put a total of \$151 Million into the business. This will eventually become a large distillery with no waste production. Mr. Anderson explained that the majority of his production right now is in Florida but he would like to move all operations here. Commissioner Binkley asked when they would start building. Mr. Anderson advised as soon as possible. Attorney Schramm advised he will start looking into the process as far as what needs to be done to change the zoning in the area in question. After further discussion Director Dan then introduced Scott Franco who is with SURF Internet, he explained that they have already began working within the limits of the City of Knox and the Town of North Judson. They are also working on the Koontz Lake area and the Town of Hamlet. He handed out some information regarding their services that will be available in Starke County.

AUDITOR BUSINESS

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$354,618.71. 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 \$295,134.21 including deductions in the amount of \$77,332.96 for pay period ending 09/2/2023 and payroll date of 09/8/2023. Commissioner Binkley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the minutes for August 31, 2023 and September 5, 2023. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the Amended Travel Expense Policy. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve the closure of Starke County Government Buildings on December 8th from 1-4 PM. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Commissioner Binkley made a motion to approve annex keys for the BZA part time employee. Commissioner Gourley 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 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 7:03 PM.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

Charles Chesak, President

Mark Gourley, Vice-President

Don Binkley, Member

Rachel Oesterreich, Auditor and Secretary to
the Board of Commissioners