

**STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024**

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 Don Binkley, Charles Chesak, and Mark Gourley, present and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order by Commissioner President Don Binkley directly at 9:30 AM.

**PROSECUTOR – JOB DESCRIPTION & FUNDING REQUEST**

Leslie Baker, Starke County Prosecutor came before the Board of Commissioners to request approval for a full-time job description for a Deputy Prosecutor. She advised that she does not have the job description prepared as she believed there was already a job description on file and it has never changed. Auditor Oesterreich advised that a few years ago Prosecutor Baker gave up the full-time position for deputy prosecutor in lieu of adding an additional clerk in the child support office. She advised during the budget workshop the Starke County Council approved the funding for the full-time position pending the approval for the budgets from the DLGF and approval of the Job Description from the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners asked Auditor Oesterreich to put this on the agenda for the first meeting in February. Prosecutor Baker then informed the Board of Commissioner about the funding constraints she is facing with her Pre-Trial Diversion Fund. After further discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the support for funding to the Starke County Council for Prosecutor Baker. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**SAFE KIDS NORTHWEST INDIANA**

Jennifer Homan from Safe Kids Northwest Indiana came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss funding for PulsePoint. PulsePoint Respond is a 911-connected app that alerts CPR/AED-trained individuals to someone nearby having sudden cardiac arrest. PulsePoint Respond supports multiple responder types, including community members, healthcare professions, and public safety personnel. She advised that if we had this active in our area when a call would come in for a victim the 911 center initiates PulsePoint alert. Nearby PulsePoint subscribers alerted simultaneously with emergency responders. PulsePoint responders directed to the victim's location and notified of nearest AED's. After further discussion the Board of Commissioners are interested in this program but would like Jennifer to meet with EMS and the Sheriff's Department regarding the program and if this is something they would agree too as well. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to table this discussion. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**HWY – FUEL CONTRACT**

Eric Fier from Starke County Co-Op came before the Board of Commissioners with Interim Superintendent Oesterreich to discuss the possibilities of a fuel contract with the Starke County Highway Department. Eric explained the differences between Premium Diesel and #2 Diesel. He explained that they could do a contract for up to 18 months. He put some numbers together for the rest of 2024. He explained the contract process and how the pricing works for the lock in price per month. He advised there is a two cents upcharge for winter blend fuel. He advised their summer blend fuel is good for 1 degree above and their winter blend is good for negative 13 below. Mr. Fier also explained the penalty for not getting fuel in the months that have been contracted. The Board of Commissioners asked Mr. Fier to put the contract together during the meeting and then they will revisit at the end of the meeting.

**SCCF – DIRECTOR RYAN**

Jacque Ryan, Director of the Starke County Community Foundation, came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss updates going on in the Foundation. She advised they are looking at establishing a committee to oversee some wellness funds that have already been established They would like Commissioner representation on this committee as well. They have an existing wellness fund that will strengthen and improve wellness throughout Starke County. This committee would oversee funds related to community health and wellness and right now as far as make-up of the board they are looking

to have an active Starke County Position, Health Nurse, hospital representations, federally qualified health center like Healthlink, mental health and recovery, Commissioner, Council Member, Courts, and representation from the Northern Indiana Community Foundation. Commissioner Gourley advised he would like to be the Commissioner Representative. Director Ryan stated that they will keep them posted as far as how this committee develops.

## **WASHINGTON TWP TRUSTEE**

Kathy Benko, Washington Township Trustee, came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss them funding a fence for the tower in their township. She advised that she has a problem with kids climbing the tower during events. She stated she can't sit there and babysit the tower all the time. She is requesting funding for the fencing. Commissioner Gourley asked if they have the duty to enhance the safety measures around the structure since it is a county owned structure. Attorney Schramm agreed and explained why we would be responsible. Discussion was held regarding 4' and 6' fencing as well as the vendor being a registered contractor with the county. Discussion was then held regarding what type of fencing it was and if it wraps around the tower itself. After further discussion regarding the type of fencing Commissioner Chesak made a motion to approve the quote from House to Home in the amount of \$800.64 as long as he gets registered and to be paid from the Cumulative Capital Development Fund. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **EMS MONTHLY REPORT**

Nancy Coad, Starke County EMS Clerk, came before the Board of Commissioners to provide the financial report for EMS. Commissioner Binkley advised they received \$352.00 from Johnathan O'Hara. Jim Garner, Starke County EMS Director, came before the Board of Commissioner to provide his monthly report.

Operations: Currently we are operating 3 out of 6 ambulances 1 at ALS level 100% with 2 operating ALS when ALS Staffing permits along with full time Paramedic chase car staffed at 100% of the time, 1 Paramedic/ EMS Director car running as a backup as well as 1 Transfer truck also available as an additional Ambulance when not doing transfers. Minimum of 1 ALS staff member at all times scheduled at Medic 3, Knox base, 58% (increase of 22%) of November staffing is 2 ALS staffed ambulances. 29% coverage of 3 paramedic as well as 3 % ALL bases had paramedic and chase car. NW Starke was contacted and advised of emergent and non-emergent transfers have resumed as well as returning to routine transfers.

Transfers: As of last monthly report in December 48 out of 48 requests, with a total of 58 transfers completed 8 emergent from Pulaski Memorial and 2 to Memorial South bend

Personnel: We have at this time no full-time openings for EMT's (12 on schedule) with 5 part time applications received and 2 new part-time EMT hired, 1 new applicant received applications, 4 current full-time paramedics as well as 6 paramedic full-time openings and 3 new part-time Paramedics hired.

Training: 2024 training schedule being written

Safety: Last injury reported was on 08/05/2023

Ambulance Maintenance:

3308-North Judson M1 (2021 Ford Gas Vin:1FXDE4FN2MDC16274 Current mileage: 110003)  
Scheduled for service 01/22/2024

4925- Knox Base Medic 2 (2014 F450 Gas Vin: 1FDXE4FS8EDA90672 Current mileage 136,201  
Currently being utilized as Transfer truck

4926- Knox Base M3 (2024 F350 Gas Vin: 1FDXE4FN1RDD21556 Current Mileage: 3402 In service  
0514-Reserve (2015 Ford Diesel Vin:1GB6G5CL5F1268834 Current mileage:202,105) Out of service.  
At Hand S Emergency Fleet services getting power load cot system in stock, returning to service  
01/16/2024

\*0085 Grovertown Base M5 (2013 Diesel Vin:1GB6G5CL4D1146446 Current mileage:202156)  
Currently in service, needs a rear step replaced, current step rusted and repaired with new step being built. Scheduled for H and S Emergency Fleet service for Power load cot install and step repair on  
01/19/2024

0084-Knox Base M3 (2012 Chevy Diesel Vin:1GB6G5CLXC1117256 Current Mileage: 126 399)  
Currently in Plymouth for repair.

4149- Knox base M-41(2013 Ford Explorer Vin:1FM5K8ARXOG844160 Current Mileage:1288911).  
Explorer is currently in use and stocked as a functioning ALS non-transport vehicle as registered with state EMS and staffed by Shift Captains used as a Paramedic Chase Unit.

4747 EMS -1 (2019 Chevrolet Tahoe Vin: Current mileage: 72008 Directors car as well as fully stocked and state registered ALS non-transport Paramedic unit.

Base Maintenance: Awaiting 1 more estimate for 2 outside outlets to be installed at all medic bases for Spare ambulance to be plugged in. New door entry systems (key card entry) Still in progress.

Grants: Grants are currently reopening for the 2024 year. Still no new development on the Indiana Senate bill 169 which establishes the rural community ambulance grant pilot program and fund. SIA foundation has graciously invited us to apply for their grant program for the 2024 year after denial for 2023. As always searching for grants, donations have become part of a daily routine.

Donations: Starke County EMS was also one of the The Starke County Community Foundation's Ambassadors Club recipients and presented a donation of \$1000 as part of the series of pop-up grants to local first responders.

PPE: The standing is good for most all personnel protective equipment. Winter coats awaiting delivery from back order.

Director Garner stated that he would like to take two already assigned positions that are allocated for full time paramedic and turn them into an EMT Driver Full Time position. He stated this is cheaper and they could go straight to a transfer truck. Commissioner Gourley advised that he believes Director Garner has 6 full time paramedic positions available and if they were to do this they will still have 4 full time paramedic positions available. Director Garner advised he has two people in mind and they are drivers right now and will be out of EMT school in May. Auditor Oesterreich asked if they are going from 11 full time paramedics and 11 full time EMT's to 9 full time paramedics and 13 full time EMT's. Commissioner Chesak made the motion to change the 11 full time paramedics and 11 full time EMT's to 9 full time paramedics and 13 full time EMT's. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **HWY – FUEL CONTRACT**

Eric Fier came before the Board of Commissioners to advise that it takes 24 hours to have the fuel contract printed out after acceptance. He presented the Board of Commissioners with the fuel prices for each month of the expected contract. After reviewing the numbers Commissioner Chesak made a motion to approve the fuel contract with Starke County Co-Op. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **SHERIFF – VEHICLE REQUEST/ORDINANCE AMENDMENT**

Jack Rosa, Starke County Sheriff and Jack Hudgens, Starke County Chief Deputy came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss the possibility of two vehicles purchases. He presented four options being: 2017 Ford Explorer Police AWD, 37,704 miles at \$21,995; 2017 Ford Explorer Police AWD Dual Partition, 44,842 miles at \$21,795; 2018 Ford Explorer Police AWD, 65,564 miles at \$16,795; and 2015 Ford Taurus Police AWD, 45,279 miles at \$14,995. He advised they will be receiving an insurance check for one of the vehicles that was in an accident. He advised this will go back into county general. They are looking to be approved for two used vehicles. After further discussion Commissioner Chesak made a motion to approve up to \$46,000 for the purchase of the 2017 Ford Explorer Police AWD in the amount of \$21,995 and the 2017 Ford Explorer Police AWD Dual Partition in the amount of \$21,795, to be paid from the Jail CEDIT Fund. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Sheriff Rosa and Jennifer Reitow, Starke County Sheriff Jail Secretary came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss the possibility of amending the Golf Cart Ordinance. Mrs. Reitow advised that the ordinance she would like to change is the 2013 Gold Cart Ordinance under page 3-part b which stated the Starke County Sheriff Department will inspect the vehicle. They are looking to change this wording so that they no longer do inspections of the old cart itself but rather the public would fill out a form advising the golf cart has all the working mechanisms it is required to have to be legally be on the road. She explained past years processes of golf cart inspections and then discussed how it will work in the future. The Board of Commissioners discussed the changes and advised Attorney Schramm will amend the golf cart ordinance as requested and this amendment will be heard at their first meeting in February.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION – CELL PHONE & ONLINE PERMITTING**

Mary Beaver, Starke County Planning Commission Administrator, came before the Board of Commissioners to discuss a cell phone for the Code Enforcement Officer and Online Permitting. She stated she is requesting that she would like to put the Code Enforcement Officer on the county cell phone plan. Commissioner Gourley asked what the justification is for giving her a cell phone. Mrs.

Beaver explained that the Code Enforcement Officer is out of the road quite a bit and she take photos with her personal phone. She is working on the photo portion, they would like her to get her an iPad to take the photos with. Commissioner Gourley suggested just getting a tablet device as that would have the ability to be used as a cell phone as well. After further discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve a tablet device, as chosen by the IT Department. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Mrs. Beaver advised that she would like to go to Online Permitting for the permits they complete in the Planning Commission Office. She advised it would be a web-based application. She provided a list of other surrounding counties that have access to online permitting. She advised the total cost per year would be \$6,587.00. After further discussion Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the iWorks costs proposal as presented with the annual subscription fee of \$6,587.00 and this year, \$3,087.00, would be paid for from the Cumulative Capital Development Fund. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Chesak made a motion to appoint Matthew Lawrence to the Planning Commission Board. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **HWY – MONTHLY REPORT**

Interim Superintendent Oesterreich advised that they have had a mild November and December so during the first week of January we decided it would be a good idea to do a “dress rehearsal” plow day where the drivers would put their plows on the trucks and then run through their areas at plowing speed looking for areas that may need plow markers and memorizing where their recently chip roads were. It looks like January will be relatively mild. We have been having a hard time finding #11 stone lately, we wanted to start hauling the last few weeks of December but with an area shortage in #11 stone it has been difficult. On the days we are not treating out area for future snow events and plowing we have been patching all areas and keeping up on any complaints/work orders that we receive. Purdue Road School March 12-13th – Purdue Road School Transportation Conference & Expo. I was actually on one of the committees to choose the financial classes for Road School. I will be attending as representation for our Highway Department and also for the Indiana Auditors Association. She advised the APWA Snow Conference will be held in Kansas City, MO this year at the end of April 2024. Although I believe this is a very beneficial conference for both the Superintendent and the Foreman to attend we will be waiting until it is a little closer to Indiana. They should be having one in Michigan in future years.

She advised this year she plans on implementing training requirements for the drivers. LTAP currently has a Road Scholar Program which was designed to serve as a core knowledge base for those actively involved with Indiana's local roads. This program provides attendees with foundational information about road care and allows opportunities for networking with peers and industry leaders. Participants attend 12 core courses, elective conferences and workshops to accrue credit hours. Once the 12 courses are complete and 300 credit hours have been obtained, participants are awarded the title of Road Builder. The title of Master Road Builder is awarded once 600 credit hours have been accrued. The 12 core Road Scholar courses are offered on a rotating basis over periods of approximately two years. Each time a course is offered, the presentations are tailored to the most relevant and current material for the subject. Interim Superintendent Oesterreich advised on January 4th I had spoken with Steve Sanders with Next Era. He let me know that beginning the week on January 8th they will have a crew grading and patching roadways 2 days a week, every week. This is a major improvement to the timeline that was occurring. In addition to their 2 days a week I still plan on having my crew out there when needed.

She stated that they have purchased a motor for truck #9, this is a 2005 Sterling Dump Truck. The cost for the motor was \$8,500 with a \$1,500 core refund. #9 will become a spare truck when it is finished. We have also purchased old truck #16, this is a 1997 Tandem Dump Truck. This was sold at the auction in 2020. Old truck #16 has many new parts but the motor is bad. We will be taking the motor out of the twin sister to this truck #17 (which is out of service due to the bed falling apart and is no longer safe to drive), and putting the motor in old truck #16 and also using the dash from truck #17 to fix truck #30. All of this adds up to less than \$15,000 after the core charge and will give us 2 spare tandems and fix the dash/heater on truck #30.

**AUDITOR BUSINESS**

Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the vendor claims docket for a total in the amount of \$264,393.51. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Chesak made a motion to approve the payroll claims in the amount of \$331,242.76 including deductions in the amount of \$89,946.23 for pay period ending 01/06/2024 and payroll date of 01/12/2024. Commissioner Gourley seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Commissioner Gourley made a motion to approve the minutes for January 2, 2024. Commissioner Chesak seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Commissioner Chesak made a motion to approve the Food inspector and the Preparedness Job Description as presented by Health Nurse Lynch from the Health Department. 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 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 11:21 AM.

**MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024**

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Don Binkley, President

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Charles Chesak, Vice-President

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Mark Gourley, Member

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Rachel Oesterreich, Auditor and Secretary to  
the Board of Commissioners