

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2024**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council at 4:00 PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman, Anthony Black, Kay Gudeman, Howard Bailey, Todd Leinbach, Norman (Bruce) Bennett, and Cassandra Hine, present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Dave Pearman at 4:00 PM for the Starke County Council Regular Session.

Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to approve the minutes from January 16, 2024. Councilwoman Hine seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**IV-E PRESENTATION**

Derrick Mason, Executive Director of the Public Defender Commission, came before the Starke County Council to explain the Federal Title IV-E Funding Opportunity. Director Mason advised that the Federal Government recently changed its policy to allow reimbursement for the costs for legal representation for parents in child welfare cases, as well as overhead costs and support staff, paralegals, investigators, peer partners, or social workers that support attorneys providing representation. These costs are no eligible for an open-ended entitlement which is referred to as Title IV-E Funding. The Public Defender Commission, through an agreement with the Indiana Department of Child Services is the state agency that passes these funds on to the counties. Director Mason explained that the first step in this process is signing the agreement with the Public Defender Commission. This agreement states that your county will submit accurate and complete public defense caseload and financial data each quarter. He stated an individual usually from either the court system or the auditor's office completes the forms. Each quarter they would complete the Commission's Request for Reimbursement. This form complies all public defense expenses and caseload information for your county. Using a weighted caseload formula, they then extract the information from your county form and apply the penetration rate (PEN rate) provided by DCS to determine the payment amount. Payments will then be made after the quarterly Commission meeting. In addition to the calculated payments during the first for quarters the Public Defender Commission would provide an additional \$1000 per quarter and in the second year that would drop to \$500 per quarter. Annually, they will then reach out to ask how the Title IV-E money was spent. Director Mason also explain that they can opt out of this program at any point in time. After further discussion it was decided that the council would like Director Mason and Auditor Oesterreich to reach out to Judge Hall to see if he would be interested in the program.

**BROAD SHOULDERS AWARD – COUNCILWOMAN HINE**

Councilwoman Hine recognized Billy Joe Gradowski Wotysiak and the work she does for many individuals. She advised that Billy Joe makes care packages for other chemo therapy patients. She said she deliveries sometimes up to 30 care packages per month. She advised it is a family effort and they have delivered over 275 care packages to residents of Starke, Porter, and Pulaski Counties. Councilwoman Hine thanked Billy Joe for everything she does for all these individuals.

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT – BUDGET APPROVAL & VEHICLE PURCHASE**

Frank Lynch, Starke County Health Nurse, came before the Starke County Council for the approval of the 1161 budget as well as approval for some vehicle purchases. Health Nurse Lynch explained the new health funding is a work in progress and it will change as we go. Councilman Pearman made a motion to approve the budget for 1161 as presented in the amount of \$263,825.27. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion passed with all ayes. Health Nurse Lynch advised that the Board of Commissioners approved the following two vehicles for his department at their meeting this morning: 2021 Ford Explorer from Lochmandy Ford in the amount of \$24,995 and 2021 Nissan Vera in the amount of \$15,078. After further discussion Councilman Bennett approved the purchase of those two vehicles up to \$40,000 from Fund 1168. Councilwoman Hine seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## HIGHWAY – MVH RESTRICTED/VEHICLE PURCHASE

Interim Superintendent Oesterreich then stated that Prior to 2019 (MVH) Motor Vehicle Highway was one fund. All State MVH revenue went into 1176. State legislation changed that December 18, 2018 to two funds. MVH 1176 and MVH Restricted 1173. MVH restricted can only be spent on construction, reconstruction, and preservation of roadways. Prior to 2019 the MVH Balance was fully executed during the year as it should be. Those funds should be put into the roadways. As an example, the carry over balance over the years have been the following when it was all one fund:

2016 = \$337,875

2017 = \$272,223

2018 = \$384,467

These are reasonable cash balances to carry over into the new year. Since the creation of MVH and MVH Restricted in 2019 we all have been learning how to use MVH Restricted through our audits. Currently MVH restricted has a balance of \$1.5 million. I would like to transition some of our CCMG matching grant money to come from MVH Restricted. This year we have applied for the 1st call of the CCMG grants and this consists of an HMA overlay on 600 N between 600 E and SR 23, 400 N between US 35 and Range Rd, and an HMA overlay in Johnsons Subdivision which is the subdivision we had to put almost \$200,000 into last year unexpectedly from a plat that was approved in 2010. The matching amount to this project is estimated at \$500,000. Normally, we would use CREDIT for grant matches but I would like to use \$500,000 of the cash balance in MVH Restricted to create a CCMG appropriation. These particular funds are not meant to sit and accumulate. These funds are collected from gas taxes and they need to be put back in the roadways.

Along this same discussion (LRS) Local Road and Street 1169 is a fund that prior to 2019 was use mainly for aggregates. When they changed the MVH funds they tweaked LRS in that its use was going to be for purchasing Trucks and Other Road Equipment. The carry over balances for the last few years in LRS have been the following:

2016 = \$16,402

2017 = \$16,431

2018= \$85,061

This fund now has a carryover balance of \$532,500. I believe the highway funds have not been utilized correctly for the past few years. I would like to spend \$200,000 of that carry over balance toward a new single axle international dump truck and also a \$48,600 pick-up. The department has not had a new truck purchased in several years. When I was at the department years ago I remember we used to budget for 1 new tandem, 1 new single axle, and at least one new pick-up every year. These funds are meant to be spent on equipment to help the department to maintain roadways. In conclusion, Interim Superintendent Oesterreich advised she is looking for approval for a \$500,000 appropriation in MVH-Restricted to be used on CCMG projects, a \$200,000 appropriation for a single axle dump truck and their permission to purchase a pick-up in the amount of \$48,600. Councilman Leinbach advised he agrees with everything as stated except the Johnson's Subdivision project. Attorney Schramm advised that because we have been receiving INDOT roadway funds beginning in 2010 we are required to construct and maintain the roadway.

Councilman Leinbach made a motion to use the \$500,000 in matching fund from MVH-Restricted towards 600 N between 600 E and SR23 and 400 N between SR 35 and Range Rd. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion approved with all ayes. Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve the quote from Oliver-Ford for \$48,600 for the pick-up and for the single axles dump truck in the amount of \$208,850. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. After further discussion Councilman Bailey made a motion to take \$500,000 out of MVH-restricted to pay for the matching grant of the 2024-01 CCMG project which includes Johnson's Subdivision. Councilman Black seconded the motion and the motion was approved with 6 ayes and 1 abstention. Councilman Leinbach made a motion to resind his 1<sup>st</sup> motion of the \$500,000 in matching fund from MVH-Restricted towards 600 N between 600 E and SR23 and 400 N between SR 35 and Range Rd. Councilman Black seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **STELLAR PATHWAYS**

Mary Perren, Assistant Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation, and Bob Aloï with Territorial Engineers came before the Starke County Council to discuss the Stellar Initiative. He explained how much money and the projects the money went to during the last round of Stellar when we were 2nd runner up. He explained that the next phase of Stellar is called Stellar Pathways. He stated it is very similar but there are some differences. Mrs. Perren advised in order to be eligible a county wide entity must lead the Stellar Pathways effort. This would be county government or a non-profit that serves the county. That lead must also partner with at least two additional municipalities. She advised North Judson and Hamlet already stated that they wanted to do this. All of the participating communities must participate five years to the program. Mr. Aloï went through the different areas of eligible projects, this includes enhancing qualities of space, stormwater and wastewater projects, gateway beautification, human wellness, healthy food markets, health and wellness, substance use and abuse initiative, and strengthen local economy. After further discussion Councilman Bailey made a motion to support the members of Stellar Pathways to move forward learning more about the grant program and further information about the grant program. Councilman Bennett seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **EMS – EMR DRIVER FULL TIME PAY**

Jim Garner, Starke County EMS Director, came before the Starke County Council to discuss pay for a Full Time EMR Driver position. Director Garner explained that he currently has 13 EMT Full Time positions and 11 paramedic Full Time positions. He would like to turn 2 of the Full-Time EMT positions into a Full Time EMR Driver position. The pay scale will be the current pay scale used for the Part Time EMR Driver position. Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve as presented. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **PERF INPRS**

Councilman Pearman brought up the PERF INPRS discussion that was approved in the Board of Commissioners meeting this morning. He advised that every position in the county is allowed to participate in PERF INPRS other than the council and he would like to change that so that the council can participate as well. After further discussion Councilman Black made a motion to include the council in the PERF INPRS ordinance. Councilwoman Hine seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Councilman Pearman advised as a council he would like to make a request to HR to send out an email reminding Department Heads surrounding the rules relating to Ghost Employment and Working From Home. Councilman Pearman reviewed a few House Bills that would be important to our area. Councilman Pearman advised that the Board of Commissioners have approved a motion up to \$25,000 for a pick-up for the Parks Department. Discussion was then held regarding the use of the remaining ARPA funds including a discussion from Councilman Bailey in providing money for the Coroner's Department. After further discussion Councilman Black made a motion to use up to \$25,000 of ARPA money towards a purchase of a truck for the Parks Department. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with 6 ayes and 1 nay.

Councilman Pearman advised that representative is here tonight from the San Pierre Fire Department in regards to asking for a pledge towards the construction of a new Fire Department. He advised they have already raised \$200,000 and will be raising more money. They are asking for \$250,000 from the county toward this project. This will be built on the side of Tierney Park in San Pierre. He advised the group will also be going to Next Era for a pledge as well. After further discussion Councilman Pearman made a motion to pledge \$250,000 towards the construction of a new fire house all to be paid from ARPA. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Discussion was held regarding the Starke County Fair and the carnival the Fair Board is getting for the fair this year as well as possible funding for the carnival at the fair.

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:09 PM. Councilman Pearman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**FEBRUARY 20, 2024**  
**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Dave Pearman, President

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Kay Gudeman, Vice-President

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Todd Leinbach

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Norman (Bruce) Bennett

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Howard Bailey

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Anthony Black

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Cassandra Hine

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Rachel Oesterreich, Starke County Auditor