

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL
MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council at 4:30 PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman, Anthony Black, Kay Gudeman, Howard Bailey, Todd Leinbach, Norman (Bruce) Bennett present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Dave Pearman at 4:30 PM for the Starke County Council Regular Session.

STARKE COUNTY YOUTH CLUB – IRENE SZAKONYI

Irene Szakonyi came before the Starke County Council to provide a yearly update regarding the Starke County Youth Club. She advised there were 288 children in their program last year and they have already gone over that number this year. She advised they have funding shortfalls that equal around \$90,000 for next year as the grant does not fall on her fiscal year. Councilman Pearman asked how short she will be next year. She advised after looking into other funding options she will be short around \$40,000 total for next year. Councilman Bailey asked if the employees of her program receive a livable wage. Irene stated that yes the employees do currently receive a livable wage and they want to be able to sustain that. Further discussion was held regarding the skills and different programs the Starke County Youth Club provides. Councilman Pearman advised since because they would not need this funding until July he would like to speak with the Board of Commissioners to make sure they are on the same page as well. Councilman Pearman asked Irene to get on the next Commissioners agenda so she can provide the Commissioners with the updates she has given the council today. Councilman Pearman advised to come back to the council no later than March of this year so they can revisit the request.

SHERIFF – COMMISSARY PURCHASE

April Wilhelm, Matron for the Starke County Sheriff's Department came before the Board of Commissioners to talk about a Commissary Purchase. She explained that on October 17th she had to pay a \$89 fee on the Tractor Supply Credit Card Account because there was a bill that was not paid from March and she did not know about the bill nor the \$29 charge that kept being racked up each month. She is formally asking permission to use Commissary Funds to pay that fee. After further discussion Councilman Pearman made a motion to approve the \$89 fees that had to be paid to Tractor Supply from Commissary. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

CORONER – ON CALL PAY

Coroner Wilhelm came before the Starke County Council to discuss on-call pay for the Deputy Coroner's. She would like to use the 10% raise the county is putting in place to up their pay to \$105 per run rather than \$95 per run. Coroner Wilhelm also advised that she would like to give the deputies on call \$2.00 per hour on Saturday and Sunday as well. She advised that Pulaski County pays their Deputy Coroners \$15.00 per hour to be on call during the weekends. Councilman Bailey made a motion to accept Coroner Wilhelm's proposal as presented increasing the run pay to \$105 and adding the on-call pay at \$2.00 per hour on weekends. Councilman Bennett seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

EMS- TRANSFER REQUEST

Jim Garner, Starke County EMS Director, came before the Starke County Council to ask for a transfer request. Councilman Bailey asked if this would affect the Shift Captains. Director Garner advised that he had a surplus in the Shift Captain line and this transfer will not affect employees in any way. After further discussion Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the additional appropriations requested in 1000.30403.000.0020 in the amount of \$12,500, 1000.30805.000.0020 in the amount of \$5,000, 1000.31000.000.0020 in the amount of \$300, 1000.20205.000.0020 in the amount of \$1,500, and 1000.20800.000.0020 in the amount of \$38,000; with a reduction in appropriation in 1000.10750.000.0020 in the amount of \$57,300. Councilman Black seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PARKS DEPARTMENT – CLAIMS TRANSFER REQUEST

Tracey Williams, Starke County Parks Superintendent, came before the Starke County Council to ask for a claim transfer request for grant expenses and also the lift station. Councilman Pearman made a motion to pay for the lift station from the CEDIT fund. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Pearman made a motion to pay for the invoices presented for Troyer Group from the fund that the grant match was approved. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

PURDUE EXTENSION – TRANSFER REQUEST

Julia Miller, Purdue Extension Director, came before the Starke County Council for a transfer request. Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve the transfer request as presented that includes an addition appropriation in 1000.20100.000.0021 in the amount of \$589 and a reduction in appropriation in 1000.30100.000.0021 in the amount of \$9 and 1000.30404.000.0021 in the amount of \$580. Along with an additional appropriation in 1000.30204.000.0021 in the amount of \$1000 and a reduction in appropriation in 1000.10550.000.0021 in the amount of \$1000. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

CLERK – TRANSFER REQUEST

Bernadette Manuel, Starke County Circuit Court Clerk, came before the Starke County Council to talk about the transfer request and courthouse remodeling. Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to approved the transfer request as follows: an additional appropriation in 1000.10300.000.0001 in the amount of \$800 and a reduction in appropriation in 1000.20200.000.0001 in the amount of \$800. Councilman Black seconded the motion and he motion was approved with all ayes. Clerk Manuel then presented the council with the Apportionment of Municipal Genera Election Costs in Counties Using Vote Centers in the amount of \$16,948.30. She advised that the Auditor will verify that her numbers are correct and then the City of Knox will get this bill. Councilman Pearman stated he did not know they were replacing furniture as well with the remodeling they are doing on the 2nd floor of the courthouse. He expressed his concern in not staying with the same historical look as it is now. He questioned why the furniture bill was over \$12,000. Clerk Manuel explained that it is for the table for the conference room, a table for her room, chairs for the conference room, chairs for all of her employees, and seven desks. Clerk Manuel also explained that the company will be setting it up as well.

Councilman Pearman asked what is left at the courthouse to remodel after this because it seems like we have spent a lot on the courthouse over the last several years. He also questioned why the one quote was almost half the cost of the other quote. He hopes that they are getting the same services. Maintenance Director Green provided the specs that each contractor was told to quote. Councilman Pearman advised he just wanted to make sure it was apples to apples. Further discussion was held on what the drop ceiling will look like. Councilman Pearman made a motion to take the \$169,000 for remodeling and the \$12,000 for furniture from CEDIT. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER DISCUSSION

Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the minutes from October 16, 2023. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve an additional appropriation for the following funds:

Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the Additional Appropriation Resolution Ordinance for the following funds and amounts:

- 1135 Cumulative Bridge in the amount of \$35,000
- 1114 Jail CEDIT in the amount of \$459,000
- 1112 CEDIT in the amount of \$200,000
- 1138 Cum Cap in the amount of \$25,000
- 8950 ARPA in the amount of \$310,000
- 1112 CEDIT in the amount of \$25,000
- 1237 Restrictive Opioid in the amount of \$59,500
- 4112 Sysco in the amount of \$175,000

Councilman Bennett seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

HIGHWAY DISCUSSION – TRANSFER REQUEST- FUNDING REQUEST

Interim Superintendent Oesterreich advised that the NOFA Grant is open, NOFA is Notice of Funding Availability through the Federal Bridge Program. The funding is an 80/20 match. He advised the \$206,400 for utility relocations was built into the estimate but mostly likely will not be needed. The \$309,600 for Bridge Construction Inspection is needed because with federal projects you are not allowed to use your own Bridge Construction Inspector. She advised this is for Bridge #13 which is the wood bridge on 600 N over the Robbins ditch. The prices are inflated for 2023 and there is a contingency plan in place. She advised they would know the first week in February if we were awarded the grant. Bridge #13 is one of our deficient bridges. She explained that the letting for this Bridge would be in 2029 and she would like the council's approval to use \$605,000 of CEDIT money in 2029 for this project. After further discussion Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve \$605,000 from the CEDIT budget of 2029 towards this project. Councilman Bennett seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Interim Superintendent Oesterreich provided a spreadsheet with a list of all the overdue highway bills and she advised she also brought a copy of all of the invoices that are listed on the spreadsheet. The total of the overdue bills comes to \$427,493.06. She also presented two transfer sheets that have nothing to do with the overdue bills. Councilman Bailey asked if the overdue bills were made without an available appropriation amount to cover them. Interim Superintendent Oesterreich agreed. She also stated that in her capacity as Auditor she does not see the purchases all departments are making until they actually turn in a claim for payment. Councilman Pearman stated the he believes the office employees at the highway department were actually telling the previous superintendent to stop spending because he was out of money. After further discussion on the issues at the highway department Councilman Bailey asked Attorney Schramm what the repercussions are for not paying our bills. Attorney Schramm stated that the Highway Superintendent had apparent authority to contract with these vendors that we owe money to and we would be liable and also even be liable for bad faith damages with could triple the costs.

Councilman Bennett asked if there is anything they could do to the past employee that put them in this position. Attorney Schramm advised he will be reporting all of this to the State Board of Accounts and it would be up to their investigation as far as criminal charges that may or may not be placed on anyone. After further discussion Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to pay for the past due bills as presented in the amount of \$427,493.06 from the ARPA fund. Councilman Pearman seconded the motion. Councilman Bailey wants to know how this was done and why this was done. He would like to see this situation to be further investigated. Councilman Bennett agreed. After further discussion the motion was approved with 5 ayes and 1 abstention. Interim Superintendent Oesterreich provided two transfer requests she is needing to clear up all of the negative accounts in the MVH funds. Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve the following transfers:

An Additional Appropriation in:

1176.11400.000.0533 in the amount of \$3,000
1176.12500.000.0533 in the amount of \$4,000
1176.21100.000.0533 in the amount of \$14,000
1176.11400.000.0531 in the amount of \$6,000
1176.10211.000.0533 in the amount of \$15,000

A Reduction in Appropriation in:

1176.10804000.0533 in the amount of \$3,000
1176.10804.000.0533 in the amount of \$4,000
1176.21501.000.0533 in the amount of \$2,500
1176.30103.000.0533 in the amount of \$2,300
1176.21200.000.0533 in the amount of \$3,900
1176.21401.000.0533 in the amount of \$1,000
1176.10804.000.0533 in the amount of \$1,400
1176.10903.000.0533 in the amount of \$500
1176.11003.000.0533 in the amount of \$500
1176.31603.000.0531 in the amount of \$400
1176.31405.000.0531 in the amount of \$1,500
1176.21400.000.0531 in the amount of \$6,000

1176.31405.000.0531 in the amount of \$3,000
1176.30405.000.0531 in the amount of \$4,000
1176.21600.000.0531 in the amount of \$15,000

Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilman Bennett made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 PM. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**NOVEMBER 20, 2023
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Dave Pearman, President

Kay Gudeman, Vice-President

Todd Leinbach

Norman (Bruce) Bennett

Howard Bailey

Anthony Black

Cassandra Hine

Rachel Oesterreich, Starke County Auditor