

**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 (via zoom), 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 4:30 PM for the Starke County Council Regular Session.

SCEDF – UPDATES

Lisa Dan, Starke County Economic Development Foundation Director and Mary Perren came before the Starke County Council to discuss some yearly updates. Director Dan spoke about the Ready 2 Grant and stated the projects they are looking into with this grant including the hotel project. Director Dan is working with a gentleman from the IEDC who says this could be a great portion of the destination development of the Ready 2 Grant. She advised she is also working on a housing development project in North Judson. There is a tax credit from the State in which four counties qualified for, Starke County being one of them. Director Dan also advised that they are working on additional kayak launches, two of them have already been funded. Mary Perren advised that she has been working with the Park Board for several years now trying to get a total of five kayak launches up and funded. She advised that two of the launches have already been funded by the CVC Board.

Ms. Perren advised that those two kayak launches will be constructed in the Spring. She stated that she is working with the Ready 2 Grant to get the remaining 3 launches funded. Those sites are located at 1100 E, SR 23, and 700 N. The total estimated cost would be \$143,440. They are asking for an available source of funding for this grant match in 2025. They are asking for \$25,000 in 2025. Ms. Perren advised they would need a commitment letter from the Starke County Council for this. Discussion was held regarding the progress that has been made toward the hotel investment. Further discussion was also held regarding the kayak launches and the \$25,000 figure that they are asking for from the county as well as the locations of these launches and how they will look. Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve the funding request as presented. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Further discussion was held regarding the process and land acquirement for the kayak launches. Director Dan advised that both she and Mary Perren were awarded Small Business Advocate of the Year. She advised Jim Morris from Surf Internet was here this morning to be introduced to the Board of Commissioners and advised he will be at meetings in the future to discuss the expansions being made in Starke County. Director Dan made a statement about her resignation as Director of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation.

SHERIFF – TRANSFER REQUEST/SALARY CHANGE

Jack Rosa, Starke County Sheriff and April Wilhelm, Matron of Starke County Sheriff Department, came before the Starke County Council to discuss a transfer request and a salary change. Matron Wilhelm advised of the reasonings for the transfer request for both the 1000 and 1114 series. After further discussion Councilman Leinbach made a motion for the following transfers:

An additional appropriation in the following: 1000.10300.000.0005 in the amount of \$2000, 1000.10601.000.0005 in the amount of \$18,500. A reduction in appropriation in the following: 1000.10705.000.0027 in the amount of \$1000, 1000.10901.000.0027 in the amount of \$3000, 1000.11400.000.0027 in the amount of \$7000, 1000.31050.000.0027 in the amount of \$1500, 1000.31102.000.0027 in the amount of \$3000, 1000.21200.000.0005 in the amount of \$4000, 1000.31103.000.0027 in the amount of \$1000.

An additional appropriation in the following: 1114.11400.000.0027 in the amount of \$18,200, 1114.10502.000.0027 in the amount of \$3000, 1114.11602.000.0027 in the amount of \$4000. A reduction in appropriation in the following: 1114.20500.000.0027 in the amount of \$14,200, 1114.21100.000.0027 in the amount of \$4000, 1114.30804.000.0027 in the amount of \$7000. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with 6 ayes and 1 nay.

Matron Wilhelm brought up the salary change request. They would like to take the pay difference between a Road Sergeant and Deputy and split that difference into two different Corporal Positions. She advised the pay difference is \$2642, so each position would receive \$1321 per Corporal. After further discussion Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the pay change as presented, this would take effect 1/1/24. Further discussion was held that the Road Sergeant position is being eliminated with this request. Councilwoman Gudeman 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. He has requested a transfer into the Ambulance Equipment account as he needs power lift systems in the ambulances. Two of the ambulances already have power loading system but he would like to add three more to his ambulances. Director Garner advised the cots are \$23,982 each and the cable to anchor it to the vehicle is \$242 each. He also needs to purchase a Lucas CPR device which is \$15,000. Battery charger and the power supply add up to \$89,569. Then you have \$32,738 for the Pro Care for 72 months of cot repairs and also 60 months of the Lucas CPR device which is \$6,876. The remaining of the money will go into restocking the ambulance. Councilman Bailey asked where the money is coming from for the transfer. Director Garner advised that they have money left from not having a fully staffed paramedics this year. Councilman Bailey is concerned we will not be able to afford to staff paramedics. Director Garner assured the council that they will have enough money to fully staff the allotted paramedics if they find employees for the positions. Councilman Pearman advised that most of this left over money is from the staffing issues they have had.

Councilwoman Hine questioned the money received for the ambulance accident and if they received any money from the ambulance accident. Auditor Oesterreich advised they had received around \$137,000 in insurance money and that is what was used to purchase the two ambulances that the EMS Department recently purchased. She advised there was also money received from the insurance company for supplies that were lost in the accident as well. Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve an additional appropriation in 1000.20800.000.0020 in the amount of \$155,000 with a reduction in appropriation in 1000.10216.000.0020 in the amount of \$148,000 and 1000.11301.000.0020 in the amount of \$7,000. Councilwoman Hine seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilman Pearman advised they did get the appraisals back on the Zip Thru property. He would like to suggest that in January they have an executive meeting to discuss the Zip Thru property, they could possibly hold the executive session one hour prior to their normal session. Councilman Pearman gave an update about the Next Era solar area. He also gave an update regarding the 2nd floor renovations of the courthouse. Councilwoman Hine advised that she would look into the new legislative option in which the county can come up with a circuit breaker tax credit for individuals who are of a certain age. She would like to move forward on possibly implementing this as an ordinance and she handed out the senate bill digest for everyone. She will get with Attorney Schramm to figure out what the next steps are. Councilwoman Hine also spoke about the revolving door laws, she would like the county to possibly do something similar with county officials. In conjunction with that she would like to also purpose that members of boards or a CEO of a certain companies and organizations have future employees sign an agreement that they are not going to accept employment opportunities elsewhere or they will not be able to receive future funding from the county. Something similar to a convenience not to compete. Councilwoman Hine also went through several citizen concerns she has had come up at her town hall meetings.

Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve the 2023 Amended Salary Ordinance as presented. Councilwoman Gudeman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Leinbach made a motion to approve the 2024 Salary Ordinance as presented. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Councilman Bennett advised he would like to thank the Starke County Community Foundation for the \$5,000 grant that was awarded to the Starke County Highway Department for Hi-Vis equipment. Councilman Pearman had advised that Councilman Leinbach will be appointed as the official liaison for the County Highway Department. Discussion began regarding the spending limit at the highway department. Auditor Oesterreich advised she does not disagree with the spending limit put in place but we need a plan in place for when the highway department needs diesel fuel or aggregates before the next council meeting.

After further discussion Councilman Leinbach made a motion to modify the original motion of the \$10,000 spending limit at their November 20th, 2023 meeting. It will be that the county highway is not subjects to limits of payroll and we will remove the limit for fuel, for other materials for aggregates and salt the limit will be \$25,000. Anything else outside of those limits that are non-emergency will continue to be subject to the \$10,000 limit. Councilman Pearman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes. Interim Superintendent Oesterreich advised they have a CAT loader that needs a transmission repair. When she first got to the department she found that they had been renting a John Deere loader for \$7,000 a month. She has stopped that rental and sent back the piece of equipment. They have a Dooson loader as well but the CAT loader is the only loader that has forks on it. The transmission repair will cost \$30,000 which will come from the LRS Fund and she advised that there is enough money in the fund for the repair. After further discussion Councilman Bennett made a motion to approve the request for the transmission repair up to \$30,000. Councilman Leinbach seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

Public Comment was held regarding the meeting times and making the meetings more assessable to the public entity. With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 PM. Councilman Pearman seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

**DECEMBER 18, 2023
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Dave Pearman, President

Kay Gudeman, Vice-President

Todd Leinbach

Norman (Bruce) Bennett

Howard Bailey

Anthony Black

Cassandra Hine

Sara Dingman, Deputy Auditor