

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL
MINUTES
FRIDAY, MAY 10, 2024**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council at 9:00 AM 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 9:00 AM for the Starke County Council Regular Session.

PARK BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Councilman Pearman explained there are two Park Board positions open and they have been looking for these appointments for awhile along with mentioning these appointments in past meetings. He advised the individuals who have applied are Kathy Norem who sits on the CVC Board as well as other boards and also Karl Swihart who facilitates sports for other parks as well. Councilwoman Gudeman advised Mitch Thompson as well who reached out about the Park Board. Justin Risner spoke about other platforms on social media that these positions could have been advertised on as well. Further discussion was held regarding how board positions are advertised and ways the county could advertise better for these positions. After this discussion the two current candidates for Park Board gave an introduction that included their life experience and why they would like to represent the Park Board. During the introductions period it was mentioned that political balance is needed for the Park Board. Kathy Norem advised she is the Republican Candidate for the Park Board and Karl Swihart represents the Democrat Candidate for the Park Board. After the candidates gave their speech Tom, Angelina, and Tracy from the Parks Department all made comments regarding why they would like these candidates appointed. Commissioner Binkley also gave his opinion and recommendations regarding the two candidates and why they would be a good fit for the Park Board.

Councilman Pearman asked the Council if they had any more information they wanted to discuss about the Park Board appointments. Councilwoman Hine, Councilwoman Gudeman, Councilman Leinbach, Councilman Black, and Councilman Bailey all gave a comment. It was mentioned that Mr. Pugh wanted to possibly be considered for the Park Board Appointment. Councilman Pearman asked Mr. Pugh if he would like to provide information about himself to be considered. Mr. Pugh stated he was not prepared to give a statement and he would like the Board to move forward today but he would consider applying when the next appointment comes up. Councilman Bennett made a motion to appoint Kathy Norem to the Park Board. Councilman Black seconded the motion. No further discussion was held and the motion was approved with 6 ayes and 1 nay from Councilwoman Hine. Councilman Pearman then made a motion to appoint Karl Swihart to the Park Board. Councilman Bailey seconded the motion. After no further discussion the motion was approved with 6 ayes and 1 nay from Councilwoman Hine.

Tracy Williams, Starke County Park Superintendent, came before the Starke County Council to give a report of the Park Department's progress. She advised last year they applied for the big federal grant through Land and Water Conservation. They were approved for this grant and have passed all of the State qualifications. The area was deemed historical so they do have to go through some more hoops than normal. The Troyer Group is the engineer for the project. This is a \$1.1 Million dollar grant to upgrade different areas of both the Beach and Campground area at Bass Lake. She advised that they are waiting for an answer to pass federal inspections the middle of June. They also received a grant from the Northern Indiana Community Foundation for all new garbage cans and all new grills. They also got a grill for Koontz Lake Beach area. Superintendent Williams advised that the Starke County Forest just had gravel put down on their walking trail. She advised that the Starke County Forest funds itself through the logging that is done in that area. She also advised they will be having an event at the Bass Lake Beach and Campground on June 5th for national environment day. They will have things for kids to do and they will have speakers and hikes. They will have a lunch provided. Superintendent Williams advised that they had received a grant for all the expenses for their environmental day on June 5th.

Councilman Leinbach stated that there was much discussion about the money and the cash and how it was to be handled. Superintendent Williams advised they have looked at several different things. She went to Tippecanoe State Park to see how they run their cash system. Tippecanoe County now has a computer system but she advised they did start with a cash register. The cash register can be

programmed and used to tally the days total. She advised they also purchased cameras outside and inside the entry gate house at the beach. She advised that in the grant they will have solar cameras around the area and it will be everywhere, not just at the beach area. Councilman Pearman asked about a computer system. IT Director Budd explained he does not have any hardware that he could use to build a computer system that would be able to connect to the system at the bank. Superintendent Williams also advised that they do take credit cards as well through the PayGov system. A discussion was held regarding the internet that is available at the beach as well and how much is paid towards the internet. Superintendent Williams advised that Jack Campagna brought in numerous loads of sand and he will also be redoing the driveway. She advised there has been a lot of flooding at the beach and the campground area due to the weather.

Angelina, with the Parks Department, advised that it is imperative that they get something expedited for picnic tables. The tables they have out there should not even be out there because they are in such bad shape. Councilwoman Hine suggested putting this information out for the public that they need donations for picnic tables and then there would be a plaque for that picnic table. Therese Pugh asked how many picnic tables are needed. Angelina advised they need around 200 picnic tables. Superintendent Williams advised that they have found its around \$160 per picnic table and they have to have certain picnic tables made for the Parks Department because of liability aspects. Councilman Leinbach mentioned using the Boy Scouts organization for volunteer aspects of the Beach and Campground area. Angelina mentioned that the kayak launch projects are coming along. June 13th they will begin the bids for the English Lake launch. They will be publishing the Notice to Bidders and the Auditors Office is going to help at handing out the bid packets. Bidders will have until July 9th to get the bid tuned in. They will like this tentatively be completed by October 31st. The SR 23 launch will be paid for by the Kankakee Valley River Basin Board. They will already be doing a road project there. This will be the second launch. Angelina advised that the pier installation was awarded to Steve Barrett. All but two of their 98 slips have been leased. The piers are not in at this time but they will be soon. They are supposed to be in two days prior to Memorial Day.

SOCIAL MEDIA GOVERNMENT PAGE

Councilman Pearman advised there is currently a trial of a Starke County Government page that is undergoing. He has had employees questions the page about it being closed and questioning some of the postings. The Clerks Department is also here to speak about a certain post. Councilwoman Hine advised she volunteered to admin the page. She stated that the page would be announcements, facts, and news. She explained she tried to make it into a group but she was having trouble preventing the comments. She tries to look for local things to post as well such as a recent INDOT closure. Councilwoman Hine went on to explain several things about the page she has been administrator of. Bernadette Manuel, Starke County Circuit Court Clerk, advised her employees that they were fooled because they thought it was a true Starke County Government Facebook Page because you had to join the page. If it was a true Starke County Facebook Page you should not have to join anything. Councilwoman Hine explained how the page works that she had agreed to maintain. Further discussion was held regarding the posts that have been posted on the trial Starke County Government Facebook page.

Councilman Pearman held a discussion regarding having a Facebook page that is manned by a specific Department such as the Auditor's Office. Tiffany, from Starke County Pit Stop, expressed her concerns about the comments made on social media about their business. Councilman Black advised he has gotten several complaints regarding Councilwoman Hines posts on private pages not the Starke County Government page. Councilman Pearman advised that he has been in discussing with the Boards of Commissioners and they have talks underway of the Auditor's Office taking over the main page for social media when it comes to the Starke County Government. Further discussion was held regarding how information can be disseminated to the public entity of Starke County Residents. Commissioner Binkley asked Councilwoman Hine to shut her page down so that the Auditor can start disseminating information. Councilman Pearman advised that is anyone has complaints about the council to please come forward at the next meeting. Councilwoman Hine agreed, she stated that she has heard negative comments about other council members as well.

OTHER BUSINESS

With no other business or public comment to come before the Starke County Council, Councilwoman Gudeman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:59 AM. Councilman Black seconded the motion and the motion was approved with all ayes.

MAY 10, 2024
STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL

Dave Pearman, President

Todd Leinbach, Vice-President

Kay Gudeman

Norman (Bruce) Bennett

Howard Bailey

Anthony Black

Cassandra Hine

Rachel Oesterreich, Starke County Auditor