

**STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2024**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council at 4:30 PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with all members 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.

**IN RE: HAMLET FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Aaron Anderson, Hamlet Fire Chief, requested funds for communications for the fire department. Some of the radios aren't programmable and some had to be repaired. He is needing \$10,000 in additional funds. Bruce Bennett moved to approve the request for \$10,000 seconded by Anthony Black with six ayes and one abstaining (Todd Leinbach).

**IN RE: PURDUE EXTENSION OFFICE**

Julie Miller submitted the annual report for Purdue Extension. She stated that they had a membership increase of 8% last year and 3% this year.

**IN RE: SHERIFF/JAIL FUNDRAISER AND TRANSFERS (ordinance #26 of 2024)**

April Wilhelm from the Sheriff's office stated that per State Board of Accounts they need a policy in place to do a fundraiser. They would like to do a fundraiser for the K-9 unit and received permission from the commissioners to do so. They are asking for up to \$3,500 for seed money to purchase items to sell that will be reimbursed after the fundraiser. Todd Leinbach moved to approve the request out of commissary funds with the funds being reimbursed seconded by Cassandra Hine with seven ayes.

Bruce Bennett moved to approve the transfers from the Sheriff's budget to the Jail budget seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes.

**IN RE: CEDIT AND JAIL CEDIT**

Roberta Lee appeared before the council and stated that she thinks CEDIT and Jail CEDIT should not be used for salaries and that Capital Improvement Plans for both should be in place.

Todd Leinbach moved to close public comment seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes.

The council would like whoever has the authority to do so, revise the plans and let the council and commissioners know.

**IN RE: SHERIFF/JAIL ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS (ordinance #23 of 2024)**

Todd Leinbach moved to approve the sheriff's and the jail's additional appropriations seconded by Kay Gudeman with seven ayes.

## **IN RE: HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**

Rachel Oesterreich submitted her monthly report and informed the council that she needs to purchase equipment. The report and requests for equipment are on file in the Auditor's Office and included in the commissioners' minutes of 11-18-24.

Bruce Bennet wanted to know why they couldn't use pug for roads instead of hot mix. Rachel stated that they will still need the equipment even if they don't use hot mix.

The highway is required to have a 10-year road plan. Pug is for low volume roads and Starke County roads are low volume. With pug you can do more roads than with hot mix.

The council wants the purchase of a roller on hold until they see what's going on with the paving program.

Todd stated he is not in favor of purchasing anything until he knows the paving plan. Todd Leinbach moved to table the roller until there is a paving plan seconded by Cassandra Hine with seven ayes.

Rachel and Paul Thomason discussed the low boy, the new mowers and brush chopper purchases needed. They received quotes from John Deere. The council is requesting more quotes.

Rachel would like to hire United Consulting for the contractual services for the Culvert Replacement needed. There is enough in the Cum. Bridge fund to pay for this. Justin Risner asked if solar should have a hand in paying for this. The council is going to ask Mammoth about this. Todd Leinbach moved to approve paying this out of Cum. Bridge seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes. The report regarding the culvert is on file in the auditor's office and attached to the commissioner minutes of 11-18-24.

Rachel also submitted the INDOT report received regarding the us 30 Project (on file in the auditor's office and attached to the commissioner minutes of 11-18-24).

## **IN RE: COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025**

Todd Leinbach moved to make the meetings for 2025 every third Monday at 6:00 pm. If that Monday is a holiday it will be the Tuesday following at 6:00 pm with any changes being posted 48 hours in advance seconded by Cassie Hine with seven ayes.

## **IN RE: DRAINAGE BOARD ATTORNEY (ordinance 15 & 16 of 2024)**

Tom Schouten, Surveyor, requested an additional of \$2,978 and transfers for Drainage Board attorney fees. Cassie Hine moved to table the additional until she sees the contracts seconded by Todd Leinbach with seven ayes. Todd Leinbach moved to table the transfers seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes.

## **IN RE: PARK BOARD ADDITIONALS (ordinance #23 of 2024)**

Amie Flora, Park Board Superintendent, requested \$13,200 in additionals for repair and maintenance. Todd Leinbach moved to approve seconded by Bruce Bennett with 7 ayes.

## **IN RE: EMS ADDITIONALS FROM CEDIT (ordinance #23 of 2024)**

Jim Garner requested additionals from CEDIT for EMS in the amount of \$104,500. Bruce Bennett moved to approve seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes.

**IN RE: 10-21-24 COUNCIL MINUTES**

Todd Leinbach moved to approve the 10-21-24 council minutes seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes.

**IN RE: TRANSFER ORDINANCE 26 OF 2024**

Cassandra Hine moved to approve the IT department transfer of \$17,290.97 seconded by Kay Gudeman with seven ayes.

Dave Pearman moved to approve the Circuit Court transfers of \$1,003.73 seconded by Tony Black with six ayes one abstaining (Cassandra Hine).

**IN RE: ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION AND SALARY ORDINANCE AMENDMENT  
TABLED FROM 9-16-24 (ORDINANCE 15 & 16 OF 2024)**

Todd Leinbach moved to again table the request for the commissioners' 1<sup>st</sup> deputy until the next meeting and until further information is received seconded by Cassandra Hine with seven ayes.

**IN RE: NEW FSLA LAWS CONCERNING SALARIES AND 2025 SALARY ORDINANCE**

Sara Dingman, Payroll Clerk, Informed the council of possible increases and needs for additional to fund the new FSLA laws governing salaries.

Justin Schramm, County Attorney, informed the council that he received notice today that there is a nationwide ban and that it should revert back to how it was as it was stated that it wasn't constitutional. If the nationwide ban is approved it will go back and this won't be needed. Sara Dingman received the same notice.

Todd Leinbach moved to approve the 2025 Salary ordinance as is until we know for sure about the new FSLA laws seconded by Tony Black with 7 ayes.

**IN RE: 12-16-24 PUBLIC HEARING FOR NEXT ERA**

Todd Leinbach said it is a waste of time and money to hold this hearing and moved to postpone the hearing until we see what is happening with the moratoriums seconded by Cassandra Hine with seven ayes.

**IN RE: COMMISSIONERS' MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Todd Leinbach stated that he was accused of calling someone a name during a commissioners' meeting via zoom and denies having done so. He further stated they needed to discuss conduct during a meeting.

**IN RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Darren Lee asked about needing access to our own low boy. He thinks we should have one.

Justin Risner stated that if we couldn't keep our 10-year road plan it should be revisited. The council stated that the commissioners are over the highway, the council just does finances.

Teresa Pugh stated that she thought there was supposed to be a payment from Mammoth Solar by the end of the year. She wants to know when we will be receiving it.

Justin Risner asked how many commissioners and council have signed for solar.

Roberta Lee read something about solar agreements and government bodies needing to approve. She feels it is limiting the county's ability to do some things that are needed regarding solar.

There was much more discussion regarding solar, such as council and commissioners not disagreeing with anything the solar companies do per the clause in the contracts.

Howard Bailey stated that he did make a motion to do a moratorium that didn't go anywhere.

The council wants the clause removed requiring their support.

Todd Leinbach stated he hasn't had anyone contact him about the EDA agreements.

### **IN RE: HIGHWAY DISCUSSION**

It was stated that pug vs. hot mix will be discussed at a commissioners' meeting in January. The machine will be fixed so pug can be used. Roberta Lee stated that there should be a containment center and do pug responsibly.

Todd Leinbach stated that with pug you can do more miles than with hot mix. Cassandra Hine said that when she and Tony were at the highway about the oil spill, they overheard Don Binkley saying that they were going to stop using pug and the council was taking care of it. They stated that they knew nothing about stopping pug at that time.

Paul Thomason stated that the low boy is not just for paving and they do have a tractor large enough to move a larger low boy.

There being no further business to come before the board, Cassandra Hine moved to adjourn seconded by Tony Black with seven ayes.

---

Dave Pearman, President

---

Todd Leinbach, Vice-President

---

Kay Gudeman

---

Norman (Bruce) Bennett

---

Howard Bailey

---

Anthony Black

---

Cassandra Hine

---

Michaelene J. Houston, Starke County Auditor  
And Secretary to the Starke County Council