

STARKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

1-21-25

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Commissioners and meet in regular session in the meeting room of the Starke County Annex #1, Knox, IN at 9:30 AM, with all members present. Four members of the council were also present-Todd Leinbach, Bruce Bennett, Dave Pearman and Bill Crase.

Charlie Chesak, President of the Board, made a statement of conduct. He is limiting public comments to one minute. Everyone needs to be heard but must be respectful. He wants no side conversations and no disruptions will be allowed. The meeting must stay respectful and constructive.

IN RE: SURF INTERNET

Jim Morris with Surf Internet is asking for support for a grant to allow them to serve more customers. They are hoping to do over 2,000 homes. He is asking for a tax abatement on the 1170 homes. Over 900 homes will be done on the way to the 1170. The state wants a letter of support from the county. They are bidding on all the addresses. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: EMS

Nancy Coad with EMS reported on collections from the collection agencies.

Don Binkley informed the rest of the board of the accident of one of the Ambulances. The rig was totaled, but fortunately it was the next rig up for replacement. The rig was hit by a Marshall County truck and the driver admitted it was his fault as he ran the stop sign.

IN RE: AUDITOR'S PAY

Mike VanDeMark moved to decline the auditor's pay at this time and bring it up at budget time seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: CAMERAS IN THE MEETING ROOM AND HALLWAY

Don Binkley brought up the need for new cameras in the meeting room, having them show the whole room on camera, including all board members. It was also brought up that there is much discussion in the hallway after the meeting and that there should be a security camera there as

well. Stanley Budd with IT is to get quotes for cameras and microphones per a motion by Mike VanDeMark and seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: MAMMOTH SOLAR/DORAL

Chris Kline with Mammoth/Doral brought up the Economic Development Agreement revision. There was much discussion regarding this. Mike VanDeMark wants information sent on how to get power production from the web site. Mike further stated he wants the EDA to remain as is.

Chris stated that the EDA revision was just to clarify and give money up front.

Justin Schramm, County Attorney, wants to know if the revision isn't accepted will the county have to return the \$100,000 already received.

The commissioners want the schedule revised and resubmitted. They want this on the next agenda.

IN RE: IT ASSISTANT

Stanley Budd, IT Director, submitted a performance review and commendation letter from an elected official regarding the IT Assistant, Luke Cook. Stanley is requesting he get a \$2,000 increase in salary effective January 1, on top of the 3% raise. Stanley stated that Luke has gone above and beyond Stanley's expectations. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Dave Pearman stated he thought they left it up to the supervisor's discretion.

The salary ordinance does not show a range and they will need to approve a salary range at budget time. Mike VanDeMark moved to rescind the above motion seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: EMA

Victoria Chessor reported that in 2023 an ambulance was loaned to the Knox/Center Twp. Fire Department for water rescue. She reported it has new tires and a new starter. She stated it is being returned in better condition than when it was loaned out.

Victoria would like to keep it as a mobile unit, storing it at the Glove Factory so that they can keep it plugged in. No extra money is required.

Mike VanDeMark wants pictures documenting its condition.

Don Binkley moved to approve Victoria's request seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: TREASURER

Kelly Graham, Treasurer, has proposals for items needed for her office (see attached). The commissioners want to table the camera portion of the request and have Stanley Budd, IT Director, get those quotes along with the meeting room and hallway cameras. Mike VanDeMark asked if the state had any requirements on the safe and was told they did not.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the list minus the camera seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Kelly stated that Lauri Venckus, Past Treasurer, implemented a payment plan agreement. The state informed Kelly that if anyone has missed 3 payments, the county does not have to honor the agreement. The commissioners go along with what the SBOA said. Kelly is going to send letters out to the people involved regarding this.

IN RE: HIGHWAY AND HIGHWAY BIDS

Bids were submitted for paving. Three were received.

Reith Riley – Base Bid \$821,005.75

Milestone Construction – Base Bid \$926,300.00

E & B Paving – Base Bid \$941,079.08

The engineer has the bids to examine and will review and make suggestions if needed.

Rachel submitted a report on the highway projects (attached). Mike VanDeMark stated That he had only received 2 mild complaints regarding the highway and that Rachel took care of them immediately.

Rachel is requesting matching funds for the community crossing grant to be paid out of fund 1173-MVH restricted. Bridge 137 is being paid out of CEDIT. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes. Rachel stated they need a letter of support submitted with the grant application.

Rachel reported that bridge 13 over the Robbins ditch is classified as historical.

Rachel would like a joint meeting of the commissioners and the council in order to see where they want to go with paving. The Auditor is to try and get a date set for the joint meeting.

IN RE: APPOINTMENTS

Don Binkley moved to reappoint Phyl Olinger to the P.T.A.B.O.A Board, to appoint Tom Schouten to the Knox City Planning Commission Board, and to reappoint Brandie Ecker to KIRPC seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: PAYROLL AND VENDOR CLAIMS

Don Binkley moved to approve payroll claims seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Don Binkley moved to approve vendor claims seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: 1-6-25 MINUTES

Don Binkley moved to approve the minutes seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: PUMP AND WELL AT BASS LAKE

Don Binkley wanted to know about the well and the pump at Bass Lake. The donation from Doral should go to the Park Board.

Justin Schramm, County Attorney, stated that he can't formulate an agreement until the commissioners take action on what they want.

Mike VanDeMark wants to know our legal obligation in this matter. Chris Kline with Doral will send me the agreement to forward to Justin so he can research it.

Mike VanDeMark moved to table until the next meeting seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Tom Busch with the Park Board would like to be informed on everything regarding this.

IN RE: COUNTY VEHICLES

Don Binkley stated that there are 8 junk cars-5 are in storage and they want to charge us a storage fee. The other three are at the highway garage. They want to know the cost of the storage before they proceed.

The commissioners requested the Auditor to contact Carrie Block with our vehicle insurance to get a quote on passengers who are not county employees riding in county vehicles.

IN RE: EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Mike VanDeMark would like the handbook updated. The commissioners are requesting input from all department heads on what they would like considered, changed or added. The deadline for this is the next commissioner meeting, Monday, February 3, 2025, at 5:00 PM.

IN RE: GPS IN COUNTY VEHICLES

Mandy Thomason, Recorder, would like to know why GPS isn't in all county vehicles. Right now, the only ones who have it is the Sheriff's department, Highway and EMS. Rachel Oesterreich with the highway department is going to check with Fleet Complete GPS for a quote on the rest of the county vehicles.

IN RE: COUNTY AUCTION

Mike VanDeMark met with Rachel Oesterreich at the highway and decided that there should probably be an auction in 2025. The Auditor is to contact the department heads to see what equipment they may have that needs gotten rid of, and submit the list to the Auditor by the 2nd meeting in February (Tuesday, February 18 at 9:30 AM). The Auditor is to work with Rick Green with maintenance on getting an auction prepared.

IN RE: VPN CONJUNCTION USAGE POLICY

Stanley Budd, IT Director, asked about remote working at home. Right now, department heads are allowed. The commissioners told him that if anyone other than department heads requested working at home, he should call the commissioners for approval.

IN RE: HIGHWAY BIDS

Rachel Oesterreich came back with the highway bids and stated that all paperwork and requirements are in order. The commissioners asked if we pay an engineer for reviewing and Rachel stated yes and that it is paid out of CEDIT. Rachel said we have a contract with the engineer.

Mike VanDeMark moved to table the bids, because he doesn't believe 30 minutes to review the bids properly was enough time seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: MEALS ON WHEELS

Frank Lynch, County Health Nurse, would like permission for a chest freezer to be placed in the health department to help with meals on wheels. They need drop points. County Action will supply the freezer and the only cost to the county would be utilities. It will be located in the far corner of the meeting room. It would not be in anyone's way and there would be no issues for them for it to be there.

Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: OTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD

Roberta Lee mentioned about finding the Economic Development Plan Agreement. She stated that if we can't find it a new one should be created in its place.

Justin Schramm, County Attorney, wants the commissioners and council to submit projects or things they want to come out of CEDIT. This can be changed every 2 years but has to be in place at least 2 years before it can be changed.

IN RE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bruce Bennett stated that a group of farmers met at Economic Development looking for economic help in order to stay involved with the Highway 30 project.

IN RE: COURTHOUSE WEST DOOR

Mark Barlog reported that just inside the west door of the courthouse where the officers' station is, there is a loose pipe that needs repaired.

IN RE: TREASURER

Kelly Graham, Treasurer, reported that Low came in to train the deputy treasurer on property tax and they are coming back to train her on the financial side.

IN RE: BUILDING KEYS

Rick Green, Maintenance, submitted requests for keys for newly elected officials and one new deputy as follows: Kelly Graham, Treasurer; Amber Janson, Deputy Treasurer; Mike VanDeMark, Commissioner; and Gwen Rentz, Surveyor.

Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: COUNTY ATTORNEY

Justin Schramm reported to the commissioners that he gets calls from the public wanting information on meetings and legal advice, etc. He is only obligated to the boards he serves on and wants the commissioners to be aware of the problem if they get calls regarding this.

There being no further business to come before the board Don Binkley moved to adjourn seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES

1-21-2025

Charles Chesak, President

Mike VanDeMark, Vice President

Don Binkley, Member

Michaelene J. Houston, Auditor and
Secretary to the County Commissioners