

# **STARKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

**March 3, 2025**

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 5:00 PM, with all members present along with one councilman, Dave Pearman, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

## **IN RE: BUILDING MAINTENANCE**

Rick Green, Maintenance, stated that the Annex 2 sealed bids are still in the hands of the architect. Don Binkley moved to table until the next meeting seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Rick also submitted quotes for annex 1 and 2 concrete. He feels the size of the concrete pad for the bison will be big enough. He refurbished 5 benches for the courthouse. Charlie Chesak prefers the north east corner for the Bison.

Don Binkley moved to approve the bison for the NE corner along with two of the benches there as well. Motion died for a lack of second as Rick stated they would need to locate sewer lines.

Don Binkley moved to approve the courthouse lawn after determination of where the sewer lines are. Motion died for lack of a second.

Dave Pearman reported that several artists will be working on the bison. The goal is hinged on when the concrete will be ready, but around April for installation. Rick reported that 811 should be here within 3 days to locate electric, etc. They are planning on natural colors for the bison with an American flag on each side.

There was much discussion on the concrete. Don Binkley moved to go with Hurford Concrete, excluding the bison pad and the annexes 2 curbs in the back for now, and not doing brick, only concrete, with a cost of \$12,590. Mike VanDeMark seconded the motion with 3 ayes.

Rick stated that he is working on prices for the handrails for the walkway on the west side of Annex 1. He also reported that he is getting quotes for seamless gutters with leaf guards.

Rick reported that a tree at the courthouse is getting worse and leaning toward the electrical. It has a huge split and needs to come down. Commissioners would like to have it replaced with another tree.

Don Binley moved to take care of this now as it is an emergency seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes. The cost will be taken out of Rick's budget and replaced with Cum. Cap. Funds after council approves funds.

### **IN RE: COUNTY AUCTION**

Rick Green stated that other counties recommended Gov. Deal for the auction. He further stated that they only charge the bidder, not the county. We get the total amount received. Mike VanDeMark stated that he talked to Marshall County and they recommended Gov. Deal as well. Rick also reported that there is a full list now for the auction.

Mike VanDeMark moved to move forward with the auction with Gov. Deal seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: RECORDER'S NEEDS FOR MORE SPACE AND SHELVING**

Mandy Thomason, Recorder, submitted quotes for her office renovations and her shelving. She stated that they could split the shared area for the new shelving. She could fit 11 shelves there. SBOA gave an opinion on whether this could come out of her perpetual fund stating she should get county attorney opinion. Justin Schramm, County Attorney, stated that he feels it would be ok to use the perpetuation fund as it is for county records.

Mary Beever stated that the area was not a shared area, it just had the joint copy machine there.

Rick Green's quote for the construction was around \$500.

Mike VanDeMark moved to table for more consideration seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Mandy stated that she will be doing 10 more books before the end of the year and it takes 2-3 months to get them back. She stated the shelves would come in right away once ordered.

#### **IN RE: TREASURER'S RECONCILIATION**

Kelly Graham, Treasurer, submitted quotes from Baker Tilly; Greene, LLC out of Chicago; and Crow LLP out of Indianapolis for reconciling the bank records. The quotes are on file in the Auditor's Office.

She wants to get completely caught up and done. She stated that they will also train her in how to keep up with it.

JoAnne Bailey said that Kay Chaffins offered to come in and do the reconciliation. Mandy Thomason stated that Kay would need a bond for the Treasurer's office. Kelly said that Low told her Baker Tilly helped LaPorte do 2 years of reconciliation. Kelly guarantees the commissioners that it won't be behind when she leaves office.

Don Binkley moved to approve Crow up to \$12,475 out of Cum. Cap. pending council approval of the funds seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: TREASURER'S LOCKBOX**

Kelly Graham, Treasurer, reported that Rick and Randal installed the new drop box.

#### **IN RE: TAX SALE FEES**

Mike VanDeMark moved to leave the tax sale fees at \$150 seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: CODIFICATION**

Mike VanDeMark moved to table the codification seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

## **IN RE: PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENT & BZA IC 36-7-4-902 SEC. A**

Mike VanDeMark moved to appoint Roberta Lee as the republican replacement for Todd Jackson's term seconded by Charles Chesak with 2 ayes 1 nay (Don Binkley).

Mary Beever stated that the BZA board is in limbo right now. She further stated that Roberta Lee can hold both positions, as one member of the Planning Commission members can also sit on the BZA board.

Justin Schramm, County Attorney, stated that there should be a form to fill out for people requesting appointments, such as party affiliation and qualifications. It needs clarification also on conflicts. Appointees also need to inform the boards of any changes, such as party affiliation, new address, etc. These forms will be made available in the County Auditor's Office and the County Planning Commission office.

Mike VanDeMark moved to rescind the motions putting Tom Schouten and Chase Penrod on the Knox City Planning Commission, seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes. The commissioners requested the Auditor to notify Tom Schouten and Chase Penrod of their inability to serve on the Knox Planning Commission as they don't live or own property in the 2-mile jurisdiction.

County Planning Commission appointments must live out in the county and not within any corporation limits-City of Knox, Town of North Judson or Town of Hamlet.

Mike VanDeMark moved to have Roberta Lee fill both the BZA and the Planning Commission seats on those boards seconded by Charles Chesak with 2 ayes 1 nay (Don Binkley).

The commissioners requested that the Auditor continue advertising for 2 City Planning Commission and 2 County Planning Commission seats.

Marcia Bedrock asked if she could reapply as a member for the BZA with the form Justin Schramm will be making and was told yes.

### **IN RE: STARKE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD APPOINTMENT**

There were two submissions for the library board, Ashlee Reed and Rebecca Despot. Stanley Budd stated that Ashlee Reed worked at the library for a long time. JoAnne Bailey and Marcia Bedrock stated that Rebecca Despot had been a Principal, a Vice Principal and a teacher in an elementary school.

Mike VanDeMark moved to appoint Rebecca Despot to the Starke County Public Library Board seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: COUNTY WIDE OFFICES GOING TO A TIME CLOCK PROGRAM**

Stanley Budd, IT Director, stated that the time clock is going to cost us either way. April Wilhelm, Sheriff's Matron, stated that they budgeted for it in the future. She also stated that they really like the system.

Stanley stated that it would be \$10,000 to start and \$1,500 to install. There would be a yearly charge and charges for updates. April stated they also pay a monthly fee. The Sheriff's department pays \$9,300 a year subscription fee and \$75 a month.

Jim Garner, EMS, stated that they have a demo set up with the company for EMS.

Don Binkley moved to table seconded by Mark VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: HIGHWAY**

Rachel Oesterreich, Highway Superintendent, stated that she needed the commissioners' signatures on the CCMG2024-2 contract. She further stated that everything had already been approved and she just needed the signatures.

She informed the commissioners that INDOT has less funds than projected for the Bridge 13 grant and she won't get the funding until 2030. She stated that it is a deficient bridge and is inspected yearly. There are only 2 deficient bridges in Starke County.

There is a set amount of \$415,000 for the engineer and she is recommending a 50/50 split with the state instead of an 80/20 for 2029-2030. She stated that the engineer, United Consulting, has to be hired out as the highway department

doesn't have an engineer. They have to let the state know by March 12 if we are willing to pay the 50% for the engineer.

A special joint session for the commissioners and the council on bridge 13 will need to be held on either Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup> or Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup> in order for Rachel to get this back to the state.

Mike VanDeMark moved to table this until the joint session seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: VENDOR CLAIMS, PAYROLL CLAIMS AND 2-28-25 COMMISSIONER MINUTES**

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

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

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the 2-18-25 commissioner minutes seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: SHERIFF VEHICLES IN STORAGE**

Don Binkley stated that he is worried about the vehicles in storage.

#### **IN RE: ANNEXATION REQUEST FROM TOWN OF HAMLET**

Dave Kasvormas and Christy Pitts came before the board requesting to annex a piece of agricultural property into the town of Hamlet. A developer wants to build several single family, mid-range affordable, stick-built homes on foundations there. The property is 1000 feet wide and they would add the roads to their inventory for maintenance, repaving, and potholes. They have engineers researching sewers, etc. They want to start immediately. Dave explained everything to the commissioners.

Don Binkley moved to table until the next meeting as they want to go out and look at the property seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

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

**March 3, 2025, Commissioner minutes**

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Charles Chesak, President

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Mike VanDeMark, Vice President

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Don Binkley, Member

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