

STARKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

4-7-25

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 5:00 PM, with all members present. Also, in attendance were Councilmen Todd Leinbach and Dave Pearman and Councilwoman Kay Gudeman. The following proceedings were held to wit:

IN RE: NEXT ERA PERMIT GIVEN OUT BY PLANNING COMMISSION

Mike VanDeMark passed out copies of the February Planning Commission meeting. Mike explained what was going on at the meeting of the Planning Commission and stated that it may not have constituted a meeting as there was one member who was appointed erroneously which in turn didn't constitute a quorum.

Several members of the public voiced their concerns on the permit that was granted.

Mike VanDeMark explained that the whole permitting process is still a little vague to him.

Todd Leinbach stated that no permits used to be issued without the Surveyor's signature and he was the Surveyor for 4 years. Gwen Rentz, Surveyor, had refused to sign it as it wasn't brought to her until after the permit had already been issued.

Dave Pearman stated that the Economic Development agreement can't be approved after the first shovel goes into the ground. He also said he was speaking only for himself, not the whole council.

Mike VanDeMark stated that there is not a lot they can talk about due to pending litigation and that the situation could go on for months before it is resolved.

Todd Leinbach stated that we don't even know if this is going to stand and doesn't want to waste county money holding hearings. He also stated that he is speaking only for himself, not the whole council.

Justin Schramm, County Attorney, stated that until a petition is filed against the permit, it is legal.

Dave Pearman stated that the current ordinance for Dunn's Bridge includes battery storage.

Mike VanDeMark said that the ordinance is vague and needs to be updated.

The public continued to voice their concerns and ask questions.

Todd Leinbach discussed a threat made to an employee who got paid to stay home. He stated that this is ghost employment and he is going to contact the State Board of Accounts regarding this. Justin Schramm, County Attorney, said that this needs to be discussed in an executive session.

Don Binkley moved to close the public comment portion seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: OBSOLETE COMPUTERS AT THE JUSTICE CENTER

Jack Rosa, Sheriff; April Wilhelm, Matron; and Stanley Budd, IT Director reported that the computers that are obsolete need replaced. Quotes were submitted by Stanley and he recommends Baycom (Panasonic). In October the current ones are dead and it takes about a month to set up the new ones.

Don Binkley moved to allow out of Cum. Cap. Dev. the \$52,452 and Jack Rosa, Sheriff, will take the rest out of his commissary funds if any extra comes up. This is pending council approval and if Cum. Cap. Dev. has enough funds otherwise use CEDIT. The motion was seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: 250TH RIDE OF PAUL REVERE

Mark Rippy, committeeman for the Paul Revere Ride 250th, asked the commissioners to allow lights to be put up in the courthouse in commemoration of the ride. The lights were supplied by the committee. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: ROAD NEEDED FOR LANDLOCKED PROPERTY

Michelle Hamerla appeared via zoom requesting that a road be extended. The current road ends at another person's property, so that would mean that the road would have to go through that person's property. Mike VanDeMark stated he talked to the highway department about this and that Michelle would have to talk to the land owner about deeding them the property so the road could be

extended. Michelle then asked if maybe she could get access off of US 30. The commissioners informed her she would have to talk to the state on this and that they will probably say no as they are not allowing any more access off of US 30.

IN RE: TORNADO POLICY

Victoria Chessor, EMA, and Austin Fletcher presented tornado policies for the courthouse, annex 1 and annex 2. They stated that each department should have one. They can post it on the wall, give one to each employee or both. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: ID CARDS FOR ALL COUNTY EMPLOYEES

Nathan Caudill and Austin Fletcher wish to purchase a printer for the Auditor's office in order that ID cards can be issued to all employees. Cheaper cards that don't access the buildings will be given to new employees because there is so much turnover. The Justice Center will continue to do their ID cards and will take on annex 2. The Auditor's office would be responsible for employees at the courthouse and annex 1. This would then be part of the new hire process. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve out of Cum. Cap. Dev. the \$1,383.96 needed for the printer and the cards seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: SOLID WASTE BOARD VACANCY

The commissioners asked the Auditor to advertise that we need to fill a vacancy on the Solid Waste Board.

IN RE: E-911 JOB DESCRIPTION CHANGE

Stacey Noonan, E-911 Coordinator, requested that there be a job description change. She requested that one of the dispatchers be retitled as E-911 dispatcher-Communications Deputy. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS GRANT

Shawn Matraw, Community Corrections, requested that the commissioners sign a letter of support for their grants. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: COPIER CONTRACT FOR PURDUE EXTENSION

Julia Miller with Purdue Extension requested that the commissioners approve the contract for their new copy machine. The money is already budgeted for in their budget, so they are not asking for any funds, just approval of the contract. Don Binkley moved to approve the contract seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes. The old copier is to be sent to the warehouse for a future auction.

IN RE: EMS LETTER FOR RECEIVING MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENTS

EMS asked the Auditor to bring a letter before the commissioners to approve in order for them to get their Medicaid Reimbursements from the state. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: COMMISSIONERS' CERTIFICATE SALE

Don Binkley moved to approve \$150 minimum bid for the Commissioners' Certificate Sale to be held in approximately 2 months seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes. Julie Fox with SRI stated that for a \$1 fee per parcel, they could notify adjoining property owners if they would wish to purchase.

IN RE: VENDOR AND PAYROLL CLAIMS

Mike VanDeMark stated that the Auditor employees did an awesome job providing him with all the information he requested regarding the claims and moved to approve the vendor claims seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Don Binkley moved to approve the 3-21-25 payroll claims. Mike VanDeMark stated that they need to go back and make it clear in the employee handbook about time off. Charles Chesak moved to amend Don Binkley's motion to have the person use 2 vacation days and to talk to Justin Schramm if we can even do that seconded by Don Binkley with 2 ayes, Mike VanDeMark abstained.

Don Binkley moved to approve the 4-4-25 payroll seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: GIS AGREEMENT TO SHARE DATA

Don Binkley moved to approve the agreement with Arcadis US, Inc. to share GIS data seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: COMMUNITY SERVICES AGREEMENT

Don Binkley moved to approve the community services agreement to provide them with \$10,000 seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: MINUTES

Don Binkley moved to approve the 3-17-25 meeting minutes seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: CONVENTION AND VISITORS BOARD

At the request of the CVC board Don Binkley moved to approve ordinance #11 of 2025 amending the membership of the board from 9 to 7 members seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: OTHER BUSINESS

Don Binkley stated that economic development wanted to trade some acreage with the county. Don stated that he had a map and would bring it to the next meeting, so this was tabled until then.

Mike VanDeMark reported that he had asked the highway department to put a map on our web site of what roads they would be working on and the schedule for them. Rachel Oesterreich had reported to him that she hoped to have had it by this meeting, but had been busy, but will have it by the next meeting. Mike VanDeMark moved to have permanent security in annex 1. Dave Pearman, Councilman, suggested an alarm as well and suggested using CEDIT (he stated he is speaking for himself not the whole council). Don Binkley seconded the motion with 3 ayes.

Mike VanDeMark reported that Tony Black was going to help with the cop cars and that he would work with him on this.

Mike VanDeMark stated that a couple of storms went through and there was only one guy working on cleanup. Mike said he was doing a great job but should not be working alone on this. He would like to work with Tori Chessor, EMA, on creating a storm team for cleanups. Mike said he would talk to Rachel and Tori about this. There may need to be safety training and he would like a list of people for this and to check with Carrie Block on insurance coverage.

Deb Wappel asked about the property donated to the Park Board by Dr. Walter Fritz. The commissioners said it was mostly handled through the Park Board. Deb asked why it wasn't brought to a commissioners' meeting to be accepted. Mike VanDeMark questioned this also and would like proof on how this should be handled.

Stanley Budd updated the pricing on the social media archiving which was tabled to a later meeting.

Dave Pearman, Councilman, stated that there are a lot of areas in Starke County that have no cell phone reception and that there is a need to work on getting something started to remedy this. The commissioners would like to look into it more and Mike VanDeMark stated that he would try to go to a Marshall County Commissioner meeting and see how they are handling this problem.

Deb Wappel asked where Surf internet funding is coming from. A lady from Surf stated that they get money from the state and donations-such as from Starke County. She also stated that they have applied for grants that are pending. She stated that when the grants are received they will put out a press release on this.

Dave Pearman, Councilman, stated that there are rumors going around that they are pulling the plug on Next Era solar because there is no federal funding. That is just a rumor as solar does not receive federal funding.

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

Charles Chesak, President

Mike VanDeMark, Vice President

Don Binkley, Member

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