

STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL MINUTES

4-21-25

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council and meet at 6:00 PM in the Annex Building #1 meeting room, Knox, Indiana, with Cassandra Hine absent and Commissioner Mike VanDeMark in attendance and the following proceedings were held to Wit:

IN RE: SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Jack Rosa, Sheriff, and Stanley Budd, IT Director, submitted the quote of \$52,452 for the computers in the patrol cars as the current ones will be obsolete in October and will not be able to be used. Bruce Bennett moved to approve out of Solar and try to replace it however we can, seconded by Kay Gudeman with 6 ayes.

Nathan Caudill and Austin Fletcher submitted their quote for the ID printer and cards that the commissioners approved for all county employees. Howard Bailey moved to approve the printer and cards for employees out of Cum. Cap. Dev. as he feels the safety of our employees is very important, seconded by Bill Crase with 6 ayes.

IN RE: ADA REQUIREMENTS AND CONCRETE PAD FOR BISON

Rick Green, Maintenance, submitted the renovation and concrete quotes and specs. that the commissioners approved this morning for the ADA ramps and ADA accessibility for the memorials along with a concrete pad for the bison placement. This also includes steps and handrails to the parking lot. Bruce Bennett moved to approve seconded by Dave Pearman with 6 ayes.

The renovations at annex 2 in order to build extra space for community corrections, due to the space they gave to the health department, quote is \$240,624. Bruce Bennett stated that he is not comfortable with this and Todd Leinbach agrees as so much is needed and funds are being cut due to Senate Bill

1. Bill Crase would like this tabled until July after the house decides. Bill Crase moved to approve tabling until July seconded by Kay Gudeman with 6 ayes.

IN RE: STARKE COUNTY YOUTH CLUB

Mark Vendl and Irene Szakonyi from the Starke County Youth Club gave a report on what they have accomplished in the last year. A report is attached. They have also been hosting a lot of enrichment programs for students and some of their parents.

They also explained the grant cycle through the Indiana Department of Education. The secondary grant no longer exists which created a shortfall of \$90,000.

May 2nd is their radiothon and they are hoping to raise \$55,000 and are requesting the council's support.

The council would like them to get approval from the commissioners for a donation as they would like to donate to this.

IN RE: HIGHWAY

Rachel Oesterreich, Highway Superintendent, and John San Giorgio, with United Consulting, submitted a presentation on the Bridge Inventory for 2024. The report was completed in October and the complete report is on file in the Starke County Auditor's Office.

Rachel submitted air compressor quotes. The commissioners approved the Bobcat quote and she has the funds in LRS. Bruce Bennett moved to approve the purchase seconded by Bill Crase with 6 ayes.

Rachel stated that she needs an additional appropriation for stone gravel aggregates. It was discussed about reusing, but we would have to have a milling machine. She needs \$200,000 for Central Paving to make pug which would add more mileage. She stated that it was definitely not going to be used for solar roads. Howard Bailey moved to approve the \$200,000 for improvement of county roads out of the MVH Restricted fund seconded by Bruce Bennett. Howard

wanted to justify his motion because this fund can ONLY be used for road improvements. There were 6 ayes to this motion.

Rachel reported to the council that when raises were given for this year, part time highway help didn't get the 3% increase on salary. The council will discuss at budget time.

IN RE: OTES BUILDING IN NORTH JUDSON

Donna Osborne and Nan Wellman from OTES wanted to know if anyone had questions and submitted information received from the Center of Workforce Development. She explained everything regarding the sale. They want to know where the county stands on the purchase of this building.

Donna and Nan informed the council that Kelly Shepherd, North Judson-San Pierre School Superintendent, would like to use the building for skills training. Nan stated that she would donate all the equipment in the building with the sale. Nan stated that a lot of people support this. Bruce Bennett stated that we are several months away from making any commitment and doesn't know if it is the right move for the county.

Todd Leinbach wanted to know who would be responsible for all the expenses involved.

Bruce further stated that it would take at least 3 years to build a curriculum.

Bill Crase would like to see a 5-year plan.

Howard Bailey supports it, but there needs to be a 5-year plan—some kind of structure—because it is a lot of money. There was much discussion regarding this.

Todd Leinbach would not want to entertain a joint purchase with another municipality and he stated that the council has never seen a plan or anything in black and white. He would like Kelly Shepherd to submit a plan.

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING OF SALARY ORDINANCE AMENDMENT #9 OF 2025

Bill Crase moved to open the Public Hearing on the Salary Ordinance Amendment.

Bruce Bennett moved to table until budget time seconded by Bill Crase with 6 ayes.

Bruce Bennett moved to close the Public Hearing on the salary ordinance.

IN RE: PUBLIC HEARING OF ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE #8 OF 2025

Kay Gudeman moved to open the Public Hearing for the additional appropriation ordinance seconded by Bill Crase with 6 ayes.

Bruce Bennett moved to approve the additional appropriations for Cum. Cap. Dev. in the amount of \$13,275 seconded by Bill Crase with 5 ayes (Todd Leinbach abstained).

Bill Crase moved to close the public hearing on the additional appropriations.

IN RE: 3-17-25 COUNCIL MINUTES

Dave Pearman moved to approve the minutes from the 3-17-25 meeting seconded by Bruce Bennett with 6 ayes.

IN RE: SOCIAL MEDIA ARCHIVING

Stanley Budd, IT Director stated there are two options regarding social media—either archive it or get rid of all the Face Book accounts. Stanley has a line item in his budget for contract services and has enough to pay the contract, so basically the council does not need to act as the commissioners approved the contract and no additional money is needed.

IN RE: PLANNING COMMISSION ORDINANCE PRESENTATION

Mike VanDeMark, County Commissioner and Planning Commission Board Member, informed the council that there is a company called Carameda and they are willing to come in and do a presentation to help develop a new ordinance for the planning commission. He said Tim Bookwalter's people could probably do one as well.

Carameda submitted a quote of \$10,000 depending on what all they need to do. The council stated that it was worth looking at the presentation.

Howard Bailey who is also on the Planning Commission Board said that the Planning Commission attorney said they need the new ordinance by February. Roberta Lee stated to remember battery storage when preparing it.

The presentation could be a Planning Commission, Commissioner and Council Joint meeting and some could zoom in, but it would still need to be posted.

IN RE: NEXT ERA'S SOLAR PERMITS

JoAnne Bailey asked about Next Era's solar permits. Todd Leinbach stated that the council has no jurisdiction over permitting.

IN RE: 2027 AMBULANCE CHASSI

Jim Garner reported that the commissioners approved him purchasing a 2027 ambulance chassi using the insurance reimbursement from the wrecked ambulance, but he would still need an additional \$100,000. Dave Pearman moved to approve the \$100,000 for the new chassi out of Cum. Cap. Dev. seconded by Bill Crase with 6 ayes.

There being no further business to come before the board, Kay Gudeman moved to adjourn seconded by Bill Crase with 6 ayes.

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Todd Leinbach, President

Bruce Bennett, Vice-President

Kay Gudeman

Dave Pearman

Howard Bailey

Bill Crase

ABSENT

Cassandra Hine

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