

# **STARKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

**6-2-25**

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 via zoom was Councilman Todd Leinbach. The following proceedings were held to wit:

## **IN RE: ELECTION EQUIPMENT**

Bernadette Manuel, County Clerk, submitted info on election equipment needed and why she can't interchange it. They are looking at \$157,235. 96 to upgrade or over \$2 million for all new equipment.

Mike VanDeMark researched this and feels this is the best scenario. Justin Schramm, County Attorney, said in this case, if Bernadette says this is copyrighted material, we'd have to defer to her.

For security reasons, we need to update this. They are giving us a few ways to pay.

Mike VanDeMark asked for comments from audience. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve paying in 3 parts (the first year would be \$79,000 and the next two years would be \$39,500 each), subject to council approval, seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Bernadette stated that there would not need to be another update for 10 or 12 years.

## **IN RE: BELLA VITA MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

Frank Lynch, Health Dept., came before the board with a memorandum of understanding for Bella Vita. It's been advertised the whole month of May to give them \$15,000 for pregnancy and prenatal care and providing formula. Don Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes. This does not need council approval.

## **IN RE: PICKUP TRUCK FOR MAINTENANCE EMPLOYEE AT THE JAIL**

Jack Rosa, Sheriff, requested to purchase a used pickup for the maintenance employee at the jail. They will put \$5,000 towards it from the commissary fund. There were 3 quotes – a 2017 Ram with 84,822 miles for \$16,500; a 2014 Ford with 66,743 miles for \$18,999 and a 2013 Chevy with 166,946 miles for \$14,990. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the Ram pending Council approval to be paid out of Cum. Cap. Charles Chesak seconded it with 3 ayes and 1 nay (Don Binkley).

#### **IN RE: VENDOR AND PAYROLL CLAIMS**

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.

#### **IN RE: MINUTES**

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the 5-19-25 commissioner minutes seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the 5-23-25 commissioner minutes seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: PLANNING COMMISSION AND BZA APPOINTMENTS**

Mike VanDeMark moved to table the Planning Commission and BZA appointments seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: 2026 COMMISSIONER AND CUM. CAP. BUDGETS**

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the commissioners 2026 budget seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the Cum. Cap. 2026 budget seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: PLANNING COMMISSION VACANCIES**

Mike brought up the resignations in the Plan Comm. Gene Pugh volunteered to fill in the gap part time until we can get someone. Mike said to divide out the total salary into hourly and pay him that way. They are not creating a new position just

bridging the gap until someone new is hired. Don Binkley moved to approve pending Planning Commission approval seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Gene stated that he would like a flexible schedule, 2 or 3 days a week. He was told he has to do the background check and fill out paperwork in the Auditor's office. Justin Schramm, County Attorney, stated that he needs to fill out an application and that he may need to resign from BZA board (Justin is checking on this to be sure). Mandy Thomason suggested maybe he could appoint a proxy in the meantime.

#### **IN RE: PLANNING COMMISSION PERMITS**

Justin Risner wants to know who made the decision to close the Planning Commission. Mike VanDeMark stated that they didn't close, just said no permits could be issued per Don Binkley and Mike VanDeMark. Sabina does not have permission from Planning Commission to issue permits. Justin Risner said Sabina should be able to take over in the meantime as she has been there for 18 months. Mike said the Planning Commission will meet at 7 PM and they can discuss this. Justin Risner said if she can't do the job she shouldn't be paid full time. The Commissioners decided, which Justin Schramm, County Attorney, said they can do in an emergency as long as it is ratified in the next meeting. Mike VanDeMark moved to ratify the decision to stop permits until the Planning Commission makes a decision seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Mandy Thomason, County Recorder, wanted to know if we could have a PR (public relations) person to let people know what's going on in situations like this. Such as letting the media know, posting on the facebook page, and the webpage.

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

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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