

STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL

2026 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

8-14-25

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council and meet in special session for the 2026 budget public hearing with Bruce Bennett and Bill Crase absent and the following proceedings were held to wit:

IN RE: 2026 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

Dave Pearman moved to open the hearing for public comment seconded by Cassandra Hine with 5 ayes.

Kelly Graham questioned the Auditor's salary. She doesn't want the auditor to make \$10,000 more than her.

Todd Leinbach doesn't want to make changes until the whole board is present.

Gwen Rentz, Surveyor, spoke on how the auditor lost a deputy and that pay should be divided between the 3 remaining.

Todd discussed the Planning Commission not needing a third full time person because the pier permitting never came about.

Howard Bailey discussed people who applied for the Planning Commission Director. He stated that none seem to be qualified for the position. Howard said that Gene Pugh understands that it may take a while, and he will help out whoever is hired.

Roberta Lee said that they are changing 2 full time and 1 part time to just 3 full time. Todd Leinbach stated that 2 part time are cheaper than 1 full time.

There was much discussion on the Planning Commission employees.

Todd Leinbach stated that there should be pay ranges for clerks and deputies in the county offices and let the office holder decide if they deserve to go to the top pay scale by their job performance. It would give the employee an incentive to do a better job.

Todd Leinbach and Howard Bailey both stated that they are not in favor of adding any new taxes.

There was much discussion on all budgets and if additional appropriations affect the budget, which they do affect budgets.

Lee Smith with the Airport Authority, along with Tammy Bailey, Jim Long and Lionel Smead, were there on behalf of the airport's budget. Lee Smith informed the council who the board members and employees are at the airport. He informed the council of what has been going on there in detail. He further stated that the federal government pays 95% of all projects because they want every city to have an airport. 2.5% of the projects are paid by the state and 2.5% is paid by the airport authority.

Their board meetings are the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 5 PM.

Roberta Lee said that they took things out of the Planning Commission budget and she wanted to make the council aware. She also asked if there was an executive session before or after a regular Planning Commission meeting, should they get paid for two meetings. They are only to get paid for one and the same for the BZA.

Tod Leinbach reported that the Solid Waste Board voted unanimously to approve the Solid Waste Budget.

JoAnne Bailey wanted to know about recycling and she was informed that there are bins at the highway garage.

There was much discussion on solid waste and the public was informed that they are open Monday to Friday from 8 am to 4 pm and on Saturday from 8 am to 12 noon.

Dave Pearman moved to close the public hearing seconded by Kay Gudeman with 5 ayes.

Kay Gudeman moved to approve the \$16,416,109 budget for 2026 subject to further cuts or adjustments seconded by Cassandra Hine with 5 ayes.

2026 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES 8-14-25 con't.

There being no further business to come before the board Cassandra Hine moved to adjourn seconded by Howard Bailey with 5 ayes.

Todd Leinbach, President

Kay Gudeman

Howard Bailey

Cassandra Hine

ABSENT

Bruce Bennett, Vice-President

Dave Pearman

ABSENT

Bill Crase

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