

2025002858

MANDY THOMASON, RECORDER
STARKE COUNTY, KNOX, IN
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STARKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

9-2-25

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 and one council member, Kay Gudeman, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

IN RE: COUNTY INSURANCE-WORKER'S COMP. AND PROPERTY & CASUALTY RENEWAL

Carrie Block with First Choice Insurance presented the binder with insurance renewal information and cost. She stated that Worker's Comp. claims were minimal. With the deductible remaining the same, Worker's Comp. insurance is automatically increased 5% each year. We received a refund for 2025. All information is in a binder and available for view in the Auditor's Office.

Auto coverage options are available. Right now, the deductible for auto comprehensive and collision is \$1,000 per incident. If we had a higher deductible, \$2,500, this would create a \$16,000 a year savings. She stated that the cost of repairs has skyrocketed.

There are two options for large mobile equipment and small mobile equipment. Option 1-lowering deductibles on mobile equipment to \$10,000 which is a premium cost of \$7,000. Option 2-larger mobile equipment at \$10,000 deductible and smaller items, such as EMS mobile items and voting machines, at a deductible of \$1,000. This would be an increase of approximately \$9,200.

If considerable claims coming in, it could increase the premiums, but we could go back to the original way at any time.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the proposal with the \$2,500 auto deductible and option 2 for the mobile equipment seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

The total renewal will be \$806,788.

IN RE: OPIOID AGREEMENT

Don Binkley moved to opt in for the Opioid Agreement for settlement funds seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

IN RE: INDUSTRIAL PARK ROAD IN HAMLET

Mike VanDeMark stated that Rachel Kinney, Highway Superintendent, didn't want this on her road inventory, but Don Binkley thinks we should. Mike would like Rachel to discuss this at the next meeting.

IN RE: COUNTY OWNED FARM GROUND IN HAMLET

Discussion on whether or not we have to bid out the use of the farm ground was held. Justin Schramm, County Attorney, stated that this would not have to be bid.

Don Binkley stated that we need to let the farmer know what we want to do.

Mike VanDeMark stated that maybe we could bid out some of the other ground with a one-year rotation, but still be 5 years for the farmer using the part he has. This farmer has planted hay and this needs to be 5 years. Mike feels he should pay for the use of the ground next year.

Don Binkley said to give him 3 years and then bid it out, but Mike would like to see some compensation.

Justin Schramm stated that whatever we decide, the farmer needs notified by December. He further stated that this could fall under an executive session.

Don Binkley said he would get with the farmer about an executive session, hopefully on a meeting day.

IN RE: 2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Holiday schedule was approved as follows with a motion by Don Binkley seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

New Year's Day	Thursday	January 1, 2026
Martin Luther King Day	Monday	January 19, 2026
President's Day	Monday	February 16, 2026
Good Friday	Friday	April 3, 2026
Primary Election Day	Tuesday	May 5, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday	May 25, 2026
Independence Day	Friday	July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday	September 7, 2026
Columbus Day	Monday	October 12, 2026
General Election Day	Tuesday	November 3, 2026
Veterans Day	Wednesday	November 11, 2026
Thanksgiving	Thursday	November 26, 2026
	Friday	November 27, 2026
Christmas	Thursday	December 24, 2026
	Friday	December 25, 2026

COURTHOUSE & ANNEX BUILDING OFFICES WILL CLOSE AT NOON-1:00 PM ON:

ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS' DAY WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026

BOSS' DAY FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2026

IN RE: EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DAY

Mike VanDeMark approved December 12, 2025, at 1-4 pm seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

IN RE: VENDOR CLAIMS AND PAYROLL CLAIMS

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

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

IN RE: 8-7-25 JOINT MEETING MINUTES & 8-18-25 COMMR. MINUTES

Don Binkley moved to approve the Joint meeting minutes for 8-7-25 seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Don Binkley moved to approve the 8-18-25 commissioner minutes seconded by Charles Chesak with 3 ayes.

IN RE: TREASURER'S BANK RECONCILIATION

Don Binkley reported that Crowe, who is doing the Treasurer's bank reconciliation, is already way over their quoted amount and they are only up to May of 2023. Don thinks we should call Kay Chaffins and see if she is still willing to help with the bank reconciliation.

Mike VanDeMark stated that we may need to sit down with Kelly Graham, Treasurer, and asked Justin Schramm, County Attorney, if it could be an executive session. Justin feels it needs to be public.

The commissioners feel something isn't right and would like Kelly on the next agenda.

IN RE: KOONTZ LAKE BRIDGE TO THE ISLAND

Mike VanDeMark stated that the Koontz Lake bridge is not on the county inventory and that all the property on the other side is private property, including the road. He feels we should not take it on and keep it in private hands. Mike feels if we take it on, we will need to take on the road as well.

The commissioners would like Justin Schramm, County Attorney, to help them out with a decision.

Justin stated that there was a similar situation from years past that actually went on for years. His worry is that if we are receiving funds for it and it is not on the inventory, and we are not taking care of it. They requested Rachel Kinney, Highway Superintendent, at the next meeting to discuss this as well.

IN RE: 5 JUNK SQUAD CARS IN STORAGE OFF COUNTY PROPERTY

Mike VanDeMark asked Justin Schramm, County Attorney, whatever happened with the 5 junk squad cars in storage. Justin will look into it and let them know at the next meeting.

IN RE: PUBLIC ACCESS TO LOW PROPERTY RECORDS

Mandy Thomason, Recorder; Jennifer Madsen, Deputy Recorder; and Melissa Jack, with Sandy Acres Research; appeared before the commissioners regarding them being locked out of the public access to Low property records. She stated that they have the only public access computer.

The Auditor stated that they have a public computer and so does the Assessor.

Mandy stated that the researchers need her public station for research.

The Auditor stated that the Recorder's Office was given public access during COVID and it should have been removed after the crisis was over.

Mandy had locked the Auditor's office from printing from her Laredo software stating that they were giving copies to the public causing her loss of copy fees. The Auditor stated that they were not giving copies to the public.

The commissioners asked if there was a charge for the Auditor's Office using Laredo, and Mandy stated that there was not. There was much discussion back and forth.

Mike VanDeMark feels we should go back to how it worked for the last 5 years and help the public as best we can.

Mandy wants something signed saying we will not print documents for the public. The commissioners feel word of mouth is enough.

The Recorder and the Auditor both agreed to go back to the way it has been for the last 5 years.

9-2-25 COMMISSIONER MINUTES

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

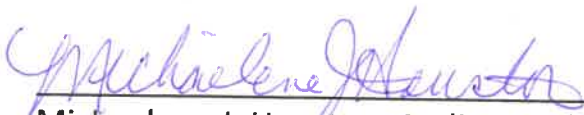
Charles Chesak, President

 9-15-25

Mike VanDeMark, Vice President



Don Binkley, Member



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