

# **STARKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**

## **10-6-25**

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 the following proceedings were held to wit:

### **IN RE: REASSESSMENT BID OPENINGS**

Michelle Schouten, County Assessor, received 4 bids for the Reassessment.

Vision	\$625,985
MAK Valuation Consultants, LLC	\$760,000
Nexus	\$600,000
Accurate Assessments	\$742,400 (4 installments of \$185,600 per year.)

Michelle will review the bids and come to the next meeting for commissioner approval of one of the bids.

### **IN RE: FARMLAND LEASE AGREEMENT AT HAMLET INDUSTRIAL PARK**

The lease agreement was tabled until the next meeting so they can check with the USDA as to what parcel this pertains to.

### **IN RE: TREASURER'S BANK RECONCILIATION**

Kelly Graham, Treasurer, reported that they are still paused on the reconciliation and submitted reports. \$20,420.20 has already been spent. Crowe is supposed to have an estimate on what it will cost to complete this by the next meeting.

She stated she was without a deputy for a few weeks and could use some of that salary to help pay for the completion of the project.

She asked if Justin Schramm, County Attorney, had a chance to look into the bond issue for the previous treasurer. He has not as of yet.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve keys for Kelly's new deputy, Dawn, seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Kelly asked if elected officials could work from home. The county attorney stated that per law elected officials only have to report one day a year. The



commissioners said that elected officials could work from home, but only elected officials.

**IN RE: PRIVATE ROAD IN HAMLET INDUSTRIAL PARK AND FRONTAGE ROAD,  
CULVERT SOUTH OF ST. RD. 10 AND PHASE 1 OF MAMMOTH PROJECT**

Rachel Kinney, Highway Superintendent, stated that the Hamlet Industrial Park road would need pug mix if the county takes it over because there is too much traffic for anything else. It is approximately ¼ mile. If the highway department does the work, they will have to rent a pug truck. Rachel will come back with an estimate.

Rachel stated that taking over Frontage Road will not benefit the county. If the county wants to take it over, Joe Kraszczyk will have to deed the property over to the county and it would be his responsibility to do all the leg work. Rachel said this road would also need pug mix.

Rachel informed the commissioners that the culvert south of St. Rd. 10 received the lowest bid from Reith Riley using aluminum in the amount of \$195,262. United Consulting told Rachel that all bids were in order. Don Binkley moved to accept Reith Riley's bid seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Rachel reported that Phase 1 of the Mammoth project will be completed this year.

**IN RE: METAL DETECTORS FOR ANNEX #1**

Jack Rosa, Sheriff, and Austin Fletcher, Jail Commander, submitted quotes for metal detectors at Annex #1. There were 4 quotes.

Garrett Multi Zone	\$3,799.00
Metal Defender	\$3,999.88
Garrett PD	\$5,340.99
American Detention Supplies	\$7,266.00

There was much discussion on whether or not they can limit weapons or electronics in the annex.

The upstairs door would have to be locked or put in swipe access.

Mike VanDeMark asked if they could be closer to the wall as it is kind of a tight area there. Jack said it is not the ideal setup but they can make it work.

They were asked if it would mess with other electronics close by, such as the lift. Jack said it can be programmed not to interfere with other electrical items.



County Attorney, Justin Schramm, will research and see what we can and cannot do regarding weapons and electronics in the Annex.

Austin will check into narrower metal detectors.

#### **IN RE: DONATING SHERIFF VEHICLE TO THE HUMANE SOCIETY**

Justin Schramm prepared a resolution to donate a sheriff's vehicle to the Humane Society. It is a 2014 Ford Explorer that used to be used for the canine unit. This vehicle would be perfect for them. Resolution #29 of 2025 waives us from any liability once the vehicle is turned over to them. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve Resolution #29 of 2025 allowing us to give the Humane Society the vehicle at no charge seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION DINNER**

Teresa Trout, Deputy Auditor, informed the commissioners that the building the dinner is held in at no charge, only holds 150 people and there is usually around 135 employees who attend. It was brought up that some people wanted to bring their spouses, but there is not room.

Mike VanDeMark stated employees only seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: WATER TOWER ANNEXATION IN HAMLET, INDIANA**

Nathan, the Planning Commission attorney, is willing to take on the project and can start immediately as our attorney, Justin Schramm, has a conflict due to also being the town of Hamlet attorney. Justin said it is a pretty stream lined process. They are hoping to have everything by the next meeting. Don Binkley moved to move forward seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: FLOCK PROGRAM**

Leslie Baker, Prosecutor, and Austin Fletcher, Jail Commander, requested funding from the Opioid restricted fund in order to subscribe to the Flock Program. They will have cameras that are able to monitor license plates for investigations and we can also look at other counties to track the movements of those being investigated. It helps to build the case and is a huge resource. The annual subscription is \$33,000. Leslie stated that in the future it needs to be worked into the sheriff's budget. She stated that all board members agreed to this. Don Binkley moved to approve this request out of the Opioid Restricted Fund seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.



### **IN RE: CALIFORNIA TOWNSHIP CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Sheri Bartoli, California Township Trustee, submitted her Capital Improvement Plan, Resolution #2025-3, that was adopted by her advisory board on September 16. Don Binkley moved to accept the plan seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: PETITION TO VACATE A PUBLIC ROADWAY**

Adam Sworden, Attorney at Law, submitted a petition to vacate a public roadway. The petition was submitted to the clerk on 9-19-25. Justin Schramm, County Attorney, said we need to set up a public hearing and advertise it for November 3. All persons on the roadway agree. They would be responsible for all costs and sending out the notices. Mike VanDeMark moved to go forward with the hearing seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: CARDIAC MONITORS**

Jim Garner, EMS Director, submitted a quote from Stryker for \$348,074.08. Over time, he has gotten the price down from over \$400,000, and with no changes in the product.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve subject to council approval out of Cum. Cap. Dev. in 3 equal payments of \$116,024.69 seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: MIH PROGRAM**

Jim Garner, EMS Director, is requesting \$60,000 out of Opioid funds for the MIH program. He is asking for \$20,000 out of the Restricted fund and \$40,000 out of the unrestricted fund. Their board agreed. Don Binkley moved to approve \$40,000 out of the unrestricted fund and \$20,000 out of the restricted fund subject to council approval seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

### **IN RE: VACATION OF SHEWSKI ROAD AT BASS LAKE**

Bob Harper requested Shewski Road at Bass Lake be vacated. He is willing to buy it. It is his only access to his home and it is a mud hole right now. Donny Binkley does not want to vacate. Mike VanDeMark would like to talk to Rachel Kinney, Highway Superintendent. The commissioners are requesting that Rachel go out and check this out.

A member of the public complained about losing the access.



Mike will get with Bob after the meeting in order to get more information. Donny said that they would work with him.

The same member of the public thanked the commissioners for not vacating the road. He stated that there has been encroachment on both sides and that a lot of people use this road.

#### **IN RE: COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ADVISORY BOARD**

Don Binkley moved to appoint Matthew Topelian to the Community Corrections Advisory Board seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

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

Don Binkley moved to approve the 10-6-25 vendor claims seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the 9-5-25 payroll seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Mike VanDeMark moved to approve the 9-19-25 payroll seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

Don Binkley moved to approve the 9-15-25 commissioner minutes seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: TRAVEL TO MICHIGAN CITY FOR CONFERENCE**

Mike VanDeMark moved to not allow payment for overnight stays as it is less than 50 miles seconded by Don Binkley with 3 ayes.

#### **IN RE: PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD**

Mike VanDeMark reported that there are still appointments needed for the Planning Commission Board.

Mike also stated that their attorney is working on the moratorium and is drafting something regarding Carbon Capture and Data Center.

#### **IN RE: VOTING EQUIPMENT**

Bernadette Manual, Clerk, submitted a contract to the commissioners for the voting equipment. Two of the payments will be outside of her term and she



would like the commissioners to sign with her as she doesn't feel comfortable signing alone with 2 payments outside her term.

#### **IN RE: PARK BOARD ELECTRIC AT CAMPGROUND AT BASS LAKE**

Tom Bush with the Park Board would like to look at design quotes for the electric at the campground. Bruce Bennett and Todd Leinbach were to contact the commissioners about this. Charlie Chesak said that Todd did contact him. The commissioners said they will get with Bruce and Todd regarding this.

Tom Bush would like to be on every commissioner agenda until something is done with the electric at the campgrounds. The commissioners had previously approved United Consulting's quote, but the county council requested that Todd Leinbach work with the commissioners on coming up with an RFP.

Teresa Trout, also with the Park Board, stated that the insurance carrier informed her that if anything happens, the county will be responsible and they already have melted wiring.

Amie Flora, Park Board Director, is working on more quotes.

The commissioners asked Lee Nagai if he could do design work.

There was much discussion on the problem. The commissioners said they will contact Todd and Bruce. Don Binkley said that he will call Todd.

Mike VanDeMark would prefer shutting it down until it is taken care of.

Gene Pugh, Interim Planning Commission Director, went out and looked at it.

Mike VanDeMark is concerned about the cost and would like to see a long-term plan.

#### **IN RE: PUBLIC COMMENTS**

A member of the public asked the difference between a public access and a fire lane. Lee Nagai, a public surveyor, stated that it depends on what the plat says.

Another member of the public asked about survey markers and was told by the commissioners that the County Surveyor, Gwen Rentz, is working on the markers.

Anna Beam, who appeared before the commissioners in June, wants answers in writing about her complaint against 911. Don Binkley said they were supposed to have it to her within the next week.



## **IN RE: FIDLAR SOFTWARE**

Teresa Trout brought up the situation with the Fidar software in the recorder's office. She stated that the commissioners told her to return it to the way it was and it still has not been done. The recorder made a separate log in for only one person to print. When they are busy, it is almost impossible and wondered why the commissioners aren't in control of her contract. The commissioners stated that they still want it to go back to the way it was before.

Stanley Budd, IT director, said he is willing to take over the administration of Fidar. The commissioners are in favor of giving administration rights to Stanley.

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