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STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING MINUTES

2025 NOV 19 09:59:44
MANDY THOMASON, RECORDER
STARKE COUNTY, KNOX, IN
RECORDED AS PRESENTED
12/18/2025 08:58 AM
0.00

Date: November 17, 2025 – Regular Session

Location: Starke County Annex 1, Commissioner Meeting Room

Date: 9:30 AM

Call to Order:

The Meeting of the Starke County Commissioners was called to order and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance led by the presiding commissioner.

Roll Call:

Present:

- Vice – President Commissioner Mike VanDemark
- Commissioner Donny Binkley
- Auditor Pro Tem Teresa Trout

Also Present:

- Justin, County Attorney
- County Employees
- Various petitioners and members of the public

Absent:

President – Commissioner Charlie Chesak

I. EMS MONTHLY REPORT – Director Jim Garner

- Four of six ambulances remained in rotation; ALS staffing improved to 92% for October (up from 87%).
- Transfer operations: 51 transfers out of 276 calls; overall call volume decreased from the previous month.
- Staffing: Fully staffed for EMTs and paramedics; continuous applications being received.
- Training: Attendance high; continuation hour requirements being met.
- Maintenance: All ambulances in service except the newly remounted unit. New ambulance delivery expected January; remount unit now scheduled for February.
- Grants:
 - MIH Grant from IDHS approved for \$40,000.
 - Subaru Grant (\$15,000 request) denied.
 - Community Foundation request pending; decision expected late December/early January.
- New MIH vehicle onsite awaiting lettering (Dec. 15).

- Handtevy Software: Annual cost increases 7%; three-year contract reduces increases to 3%. 1st year \$5056.01, 2nd year \$5207.69, and 3rd year \$5363.92.

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to approve, seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

RESULT: Passed unanimously.

II. PURDUE EXTENSION – ANNUAL CONTRACTUAL SERVICES AGREEMENT

- Proposed contract amount: \$54,010 (approx. 3% increase from prior year).
- Position vacancy—Health & Human Sciences Educator—expected to be filled within weeks.

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to Approve annual Purdue Extension contract for \$54,010, Seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0). Signatures executed.

III. KELLY GRAHAM – COUNTY TREASURER

- New hire: Rhonda—drug test, onboarding, and payroll setup completed.
 - Scheduled for system training with LOW
 - Expected workload: 10–15 hours weekly (part-time threshold not exceeded).
- No action required.

IV. MIKIE STOGSDILL DIRECTOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (EDF) – CONTRACT REQUEST

- Request to increase contract from \$89,800 to \$130,000 (two-year term).
- EDF reported:
 - Workforce development and adult education programs expanded.
 - New training pathways through Ivy Tech partnership.
 - Recent QuickBooks training for 13 county businesses.
 - Planned AI/Marketing program for January.
- Public input raised concerns:
 - Lack of county Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
 - Need for measurable benchmarks, transparency, quarterly reporting.
 - Impacts of SB1 limiting property-tax return on large industrial development.
 - Need for targeted small-business growth, tourism alignment, and post-SB1 strategy.
- Commissioners' discussion:
 - Chair not present; hesitation to approve two-year contract without full board.
 - Suggestion of one-year renewal with modest increase for 2026.
 - Proposal to table for Commissioner Charlie Chesak participation.

MOTION: Commissioner Mike VanDemark moved to Table EDF request to December 1st meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Don Binkley.
RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0).

V. RIGHT-OF-WAY VACATION PETITION – KOONTZ LAKE

Petitioners: William (Bill) Briggs, Mark White, and one additional owner (absent).

- Request to vacate platted, unused right-of-way (30 ft width) behind residential lots.
- Area primarily wetlands; no utilities or county improvements.
- Adjacent family trust with no objection; confirmed alternative access exists.
- Historical partial vacation occurred 15–20 years prior.
- County attorney Justin Schramm confirmed public notice requirements satisfied through prior council hearing.

MOTION: Commissioner Mike VanDemark moved to Schedule a Commissioners' public hearing for December 15th commissioner meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Don Binkley.

RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0). Hearing to allow 20-minute allotment.

VI. CLAIMS & PAYROLL APPROVALS

VENDOR CLAIMS:

Total: \$941,246.73

Notable Items:

- U.S. Bank jail project lease-rental payment: \$529,500 (biannual).

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to Approve vendor claims. Seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0).

PAYROLL:

Total: \$313,689.94

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to Approve payroll. Seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0).

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to approve the meeting minutes from 11/7/2025, Seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0)

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

- Recognition: Recorder Mandy Thomason received AIC Outstanding Reporter of the Year (second consecutive year).
- Industrial Park Road:
 - Discussion to assume road into county inventory (800 ft × 40 ft).
 - Historically requires owner contribution; decision deferred pending owner discussion.
- Bridge 13 Update:
 - Bridge rated deficient; INDOT discourages county self-build option due to approval risks.
 - Grant application (Dec. 1 deadline); estimated cost \$3M (county match ~\$615k).
 - Potential long-term cost inflation noted.
- Strategic Plan:
 - Attorney requested clarification after public comment.
 - Commissioners to review draft materials individually; discussion scheduled for December.

• **Plan Commission Attendance Letter:**

Motion to approve sending official non-attendance notice.

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to send the letter of non-attendance notice to the planning commission board member. Seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0).

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

MOTION: Commissioner Don Binkley moved to adjourn, Seconded by Commissioner Mike VanDemark.

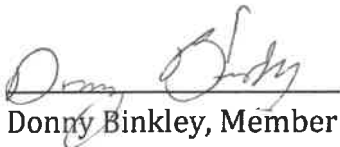
RESULT: Passed unanimously (2-0)



Charlie Chesak, President



Mike VanDemark, Vice-President



Donny Binkley, Member



Teresa Trout Auditor Pro Tem