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Starke County Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, November 17, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Starke County Annex 1 / Commissioner Meeting Room

2025004003

MANDY THOMASON, RECORDER

STARKE COUNTY, KNOX, IN

RECORDED AS PRESENTED

12/18/2025 09:28 AM

0.00

Council Members Present:

- President Todd Leinbach
- Vice President Bruce Bennett
- Howard Bailey
- Dave Pearman (Zoom)
- Kay Gudeman
- Bill Crase

Others Present:

- Justin Schramm County Attorney
- County Employees
- Various members of the public

Call to Order & Quorum:

Meeting was called to order at **6:00 PM** by Council President Todd. Quorum was confirmed and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda:

Agenda was adopted as presented, with commitment to adhere to the schedule.

1. Kelly Graham County Treasurer - update

- 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.

2. Tori Chessor – EMA - Transfer

Discussion:

Request made to transfer \$2,000 from Education & Seminars to EMA Director's Salary.

- Justification: Funds unused due to missed conferences; impending winter work expected to increase hourly demands.
- Additional **\$1,000** shortfall projected and requested from **General Fund** via additional appropriation.

Councilman Bill Crase moved to approve \$2,000 transfer – Seconded by Councilman Bruce Bennett. Motion passed unanimously.

Councilman Bill Crase moved to approve \$1,000 additional appropriation from General Fund pending advertisement and formal approval. Seconded by Councilwoman Kay Gudeman. Motion passed unanimously.

3. CF-1 Form – Mammoth Solar Compliance Discussion

- Mammoth failed to submit the **CF-1 compliance form** by the May deadline.
- Form submitted late following public notification of the deficiency.
- Legal implications under Indiana Code IC 6-1.1-12.1-5.9.

Discussion:

- Council discussed whether to accept late submission or enforce compliance through formal procedures.
- Transparency and precedent emphasized.
- Some council members favored leniency due to strong ongoing relationship with Mammoth; others insisted on adherence to process.

Motion: Councilman Todd Leinbach moved to deny acceptance of late CF-1 and request to schedule a public hearing. Seconded by Councilwoman Kay Gudeman. Motion passed 4 to 2 as council members voiced reluctance but stressed need for accountability and transparency.

Hearing Date Set:

- **Public Hearing scheduled for December 15, 2025 at 5:00 PM.**

4. IT Director Stanley Budd Salary Adjustment Request

Background:

- IT Director Stanley Budd received an outside offer from Pulaski County for \$82,000.
- Current Starke County salary as of Jan 1st 2025: \$59,552.
- IT Director Stanley Budd would like to remain at Starke County contingent on counter offer.

Council Deliberation:

- Discussion on fairness, comparable, other county department heads' salaries.
- Importance of retaining qualified internal candidates emphasized.
- Concerns raised about setting precedent for other departments.
- Noted IT Director Stanley Budd works more annual hours than other department heads.

Motion: Councilman Bruce Bennett moved to offer Stanley Budd \$72,000 effective January 1st, 2026. Seconded by Councilwoman Kay Gudeman. Motion passed unanimously.

- Formal acceptance pending IT Director Stanley Budd's decision, due Monday, November 24th, 2025.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes for 10/20/2025

Motion: Councilwoman Kay Gudeman moved to approve the meeting minutes from 10/20/2025, Seconded by Councilman Dave Pearman. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Ordinances and Resolutions Approved

Additional Appropriation Ordinance 30-2025:

- Councilman Bill Crase moved to approve the additional appropriation of \$116,025 for cardiac monitors. Seconded by Bruce Bennett. Motion passed unanimously.

Additional Appropriation Ordinance #31-2025:

- Councilwoman Kay Gudeman moved to approve the additional appropriation for Credit \$79,442, Jail Credit \$102,183, Innkeepers Tax \$48,128.53. Seconded by Councilman Bill Crase. Motion passed unanimously.

Transfer Ordinance #32-2025:

- Councilman Howard Bailey moved to approve the Transfer of EMS Health Insurance savings to Building Maintenance \$16000 and Ambulance Supplies \$9,000. Seconded by Bruce Bennett. Motion passed unanimously.

Transfer of funds Ordinance / Resolution# 34-2025:

- Councilwoman Kay Gudeman moved to approve the transfer of dormant WIC funds back to County General and other fund clean-up. Seconded by Councilman Howard Bailey. Motion passed unanimously.

2026 Salary Ordinance #33 – 2025

Issue Identified:

- Salary ordinance for Planning Commission showed 4 positions; only 3 needed.
- Outdated personnel listed.

Motion:

- Councilman Bill Crase moved to table the salary ordinance until updated job descriptions and pay amounts are submitted. Seconded by Councilman Bruce Bennett. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Tablets for Council Members – Discussion

Proposal:

- Councilman Bruce Bennett proposed use of county-issued tablets to access minutes, financials, and meeting documents.
- IT Director Stanley Budd confirmed technical feasibility using Google Workspace and VPN access.
- Issue to be explored further pending budget approval.

9. Economic Development & Solar Fund Strategy

Public Comment:

- Emphasized need for a **formal long-term strategy** for use of solar EDA funds.
- Raised concern that over \$800,000 in funds have been received but with no structured investment plan.
- Suggested creating a **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** in light of **Senate Enrolled Act 1** deadlines by 2027.
- Recommended revisiting establishment of the **Internal Controls Committee** for better oversight.

Council Response:

- Acknowledged delay in planning and importance of financial transparency.
- Todd agreed to push for fund reports to be included in all meetings.

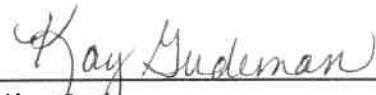
Adjournment:

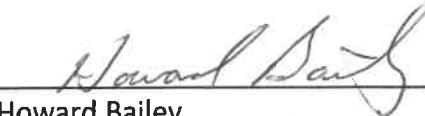
No additional public comments. Councilman Bill Crase moved to adjourned the meeting. Seconded by Councilman Bruce Bennett. Motion passed unanimously.

STARKE COUNTY COUNCIL

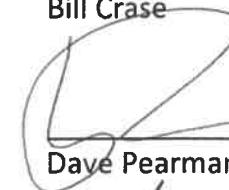

Todd Leinbach, President

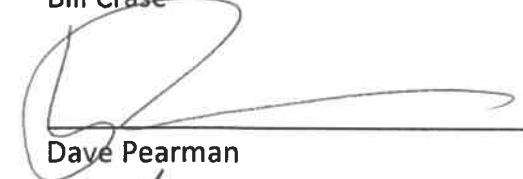

Bruce Bennett, Vice-President

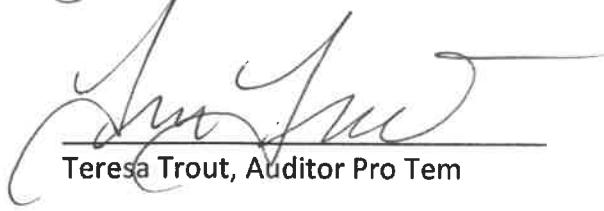

Kay Gudeman


Howard Bailey


Cassandra Hine


Bill Crase


Dave Pearman


Teresa Trout, Auditor Pro Tem