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# Starke County Board of Commissioners

## Regular Meeting Minutes

2025003993

MANDY THOMASON, RECORDER

STARKE COUNTY, KNOX, IN

RECORDED AS PRESENTED

12/18/2025 08:58 AM

0.00

**Date:** November 3, 2025

**Time:** 5:00 PM (Central)

**Location:** Starke County Annex Building, Knox, IN

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### I. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at approximately 5:00 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

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### II. Roll Call

**Present:** Commissioners Charlie Chesak, Donny Binkley, and Mike VanDeMark

**Also Present:** County Attorney Justin Schramm, Auditor Michaelene J. Houston, Department Heads, and members of the public.

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### III. Agenda Items

#### 1. Starke County Economic Development Foundation – Land Swap Discussion

Mikie from the EDF presented a **land-for-land swap agreement** for parcels within the **Hamlet Industrial Park** to improve marketability.

Attorney Schramm advised that:

- A **resolution** must accompany the land swap per the State Board of Accounts.
- A **public hearing** is optional but recommended for transparency.

The Board agreed to **table the item until December 1, 2025** to allow for publication and a public hearing. Mike VanDeMark moved to approve seconded by Donny Binkley with 3 ayes..

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#### 2. Planning and Zoning Procedure Clarification

Mikie requested procedural direction regarding **variance or rezoning requests**.

Attorney Schramm clarified:

- **Variances and special exceptions** go directly to the **Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)**.

- **Rezoning and ordinance amendments** begin with the **Commissioners**, then move to the **Plan Commission** for public hearing and return for final adoption.  
The Commissioners agreed that future inquiries should first come to their office for direction.

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### **3. Courthouse Security / Metal Detector Discussion**

Sheriff Jack Rosa and Austin Fletcher advised that, due to the **building layout**, installing metal detectors at the Annex 1 entrance is **impractical** without major renovation.

Alternative ideas (manual wanding, external vestibule) were discussed but deemed **cost-prohibitive**.

Consensus: **No further action** unless future employee demand or funding changes.

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### **4. Treasurer's Office – Reconciliation Status**

Treasurer **Kelly Graham**, reported that reconciliation from **May 2023 through present** remains incomplete.

She proposed rehiring **former Deputy Rhonda Graves** part-time to perform reconciliations at **\$15.65/hour**, paid from her existing budget.

**Kay Chaffins** offered independent contracting services at **\$30/hour**, requiring bonding. Discussion included cost, legality, and timeline (estimated 6 months).

Action: **Tabled** until next meeting for both parties to present written proposals and timelines per motion by Donny Binkley and seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes..

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### **5. Office Space Request – Park Department**

**Parks Superintendent Amie Flora** requested temporary workspace in the **Auditor's Office** during the winter due to lack of heat and plumbing at the Bass Lake Beach facility.

**Auditor Michaelene J. Houston** approved. Commissioners authorized temporary use of an existing desk, contingent upon installing a **partition wall** if available from county storage per motion by Donny Binkley and seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes. Amie was also granted **annex key access** for after-hours work.

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### **6. Park Department – Electrical Review**

Tom Busch and Amie Flora reported ongoing **electrical evaluation** at **Bass Lake Park** with multiple contractor quotes pending.

The Board recommended consultation with **Building Inspector John McCurrie (Planning Commission Director)** to verify any safety code issues and develop a **prioritized plan** for

**compliance** before spring 2026.  
No immediate violations reported.

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## **7. Financial Approvals**

- **Vendor Claims:** \$531,458.87 – Donny Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.
- **Payroll Claims:** \$330,274.20 – Donny Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.
- **Minutes from October 20, 2025:** Mike VanDeMark moved to approve seconded by Donny Binkley with 3 ayes.

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## **8. Other Business**

- **Road Vacation Request:** Joe Kraszczyk reiterated interest in deeding part of his property as a county road; awaiting attorney follow-up.
- **Health Insurance Renewal:** Commissioners scheduled a **special meeting** later that week with First Choice Health Insurance Representative **Holly** to finalize 2026 coverage.

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## **9. EMS Department – Updates**

Director **Jim Garner** presented two items:

1. **Ambulance Electrical System Upgrade:**
  - Replacement of entire wiring system due to incompatibility.
  - Cost: **\$9,095**, covered within 2026 budget.
  - **Donny Binkley moved to approve seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes.**
2. **Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Vehicle Purchase:**
  - Purchase of 2016 Ford Explorer for **\$9,200** (from MIH grant funds).
  - Vehicle to be marked “MIH Program” and used for community health outreach and crisis response. **Mike VanDeMark moved to approve seconded by Donny Binkley with 3 ayes.**

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## **10. Plan Commission and BZA Appointments**

Discussion regarding **board vacancies**:

- Roberta Lee’s resignation created openings on both **Plan Commission** and **BZA**.
- Commissioners agreed that vacated seats require **formal reapplication**.

- Advertisement for open board positions to begin, with **appointments scheduled for January 2026.**

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## 11. Data Center Inquiry

Commissioners addressed public concern regarding rumors of a **proposed data center project.** Chair Chesak stated:

- No offers, zoning changes, or private meetings had occurred.
- Any future proposals would require **Plan Commission hearing and public notice.** Attorney Schramm confirmed that the Plan Commission intends to hold a **public hearing later in November** regarding a potential moratorium on data center zoning. Commissioners emphasized transparency and public involvement in any future development discussions.

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## IV. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned per motion by Donny Binkley and seconded by Mike VanDeMark with 3 ayes at approximately **6:15 PM.**

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### Submitted by:

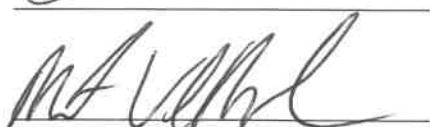
Michaelene J. Houston, Auditor and Secretary to the Board of County Commissioners.

**Approved by:** Starke County Board of Commissioners on 12-1-25.

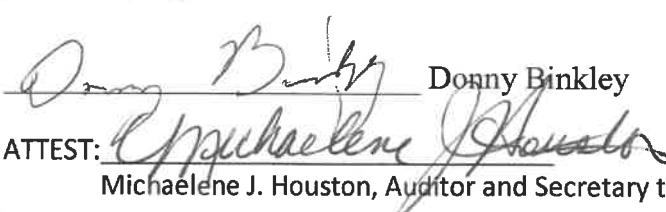
### Signatures:



Charlie Chesak, President

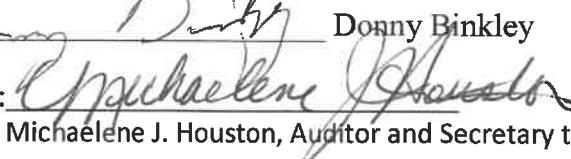


Mike VanDeMark, Vice President

  
Donny Binkley

Donny Binkley

ATTEST:

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