

STARKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Starke County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on May 18, 2026, to conduct the business of county governance and fiscal oversight. The assembly serves to review departmental performance, authorize infrastructure expenditures, and manage statutory obligations for the delivery of public services to Starke County residents.

The meeting was officially called to order by President Mike VanDeMark, followed by the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

- **Present:**
 - Mike VanDeMark, President
 - Charlie Chesak, Vice-President
 - Don Binkley, Member
 - Teresa Trout, Auditor Pro Tem
- **Also Present:**
 - Justin, County Attorney
 - Rick, Maintenance Director
 - Mike Tolson, Community Services President
 - Jacqueline Ciboch, Community Services Board Member
 - Derek Arnett, Arnett Construction
- **Absent:**
 - Michaelene J Houston, Auditor/Secretary

Departmental reports and administrative business commenced following the establishment of a quorum.

II. EMS MONTHLY REPORT

The Board reviewed the operational status of the EMS Department, focusing on the strategic shift toward gas-powered vehicles to mitigate diesel-related maintenance issues and addressing the competitive friction with Tri-County regarding hospital transfers.

EMS checks:

Merchants & Medical for \$150.00

O'Hara Law Office for 472.84

Operations: Currently we are operating our normal 4 out of 5 (#6 out of service) ambulances at certain intervals 3 (3+ 1 transfer truck) at ALS level, when ALS

Staffing permits as well. Minimum of 1 ALS staff member at all times scheduled at Medic 3, Knox base, 87% of March staffing is minimum 2 ALS staffed ambulances.

Decrease of 4% from last month's coverage of 91%, ALS ambulances 100% is minimum staffing of 1 paramedic at Knox base, as continuing to operate ALS Non-transport vehicle on a 24-hour basis as needed to supplement staffing.

** Transfers: 53 total transfers out of 305 calls since last report which is an increase of Emergency calls. Transfers are currently 17.32 % of our call volume. Which is a decrease of 3.87%

Personnel: We have at this time no full-time openings for EMT's, 2 new part time employees hired. 2 part-time EMT applicants. 1 full time paramedic opening and 1 fulltime applicant offered a position which was accepted

Training: Now has been reworked into a weekly schedule with the field training officer with skills testing and going very well! Last Training was Burns

Safety: Last incident 07/23/2025 no reported injuries

Ambulance Maintenance:

3308-Grovertown (2021 Ford Gas Vin:1FXDE4FN2MDC16274) Current mileage: 173372 In service- current

4725 - Knox Reserve (2014 F450 Gas Vim IFDXE4FS8EDA90672 Current- At warehouse Current mileage 163848 In service awaiting on completion of 0086Frame rusted out at body mount to be retired

4726-Knox Base M3 (2024 F350 Gas Vim IFDXE4FNIRDD21556 Current Mileage: 47472 In service

New 0084 -Medic 1 North Judson base (2026 Ford E 450 Vin # IFDXE4FN9TDD14278) Current mileage 5582

In Service at North Judson

Old 0084 - (2008 Ford E 450 Vin # IFXDE45P38DA95523) Current mileage 80996 Currently at County Highway OUT of service indefinitely to be used as the next remount.

0085 Knox Base M2 transfer truck (2024 Ford Gas Vin. 1FDBR2XG7RKA58259 Current mileage: 38997 In service

0086 undesignated (2026 Ford gas Vim IFDXE4FN4TDD33935) Current

Mileage: 399 at Knox base awaiting install of powerload system

4149 Medic 41 Knox base Paramedic chase (2015 Ford Explorer VIN : IFM5K8ARXFGB91482) Current Mileage: 98643 m service

4747 EMS 1 (2019 Chevrolet Tahoe Vin: 1GNSKDEC2KR240900 Current mileage 103667)

*0514 (re-designated number from DHS) MIHI (2017 Ford Explorer)

Vin 1FM5K8AR1GGD30478) Current mileage 87238 at warehouse awaiting appointment at signal 10

Base Maintenance: Medic I North Judson- Need to have new grass service due to old service medical

Issues.

Medic 3 No known issues, continuing upgrades paint completed, lights switched to led

Medic 5 Grovertown- No changes from previous report

Equipment update-

Currently; 4726, 0084, 3308 are primary ambulances in service. 4725 is only for non-emergent transfers and due for retirement

2 out of service units old 0084 broken-retired possible remount, old 00514 sold in auction

New Ambulance to be placed into service as of 05/20/2026.

** *Grant Updates

Grants/ Funding requests:

Second MIH grant applied for due to excess of funds in the amount of \$50,000 with a short window and a 30-day purchase for equipment. No word as of yet still

Donations: No new donations acquired

T-shirts are currently available for public purchase.

PPE: In good standing.

- **Vehicle Readiness:** The department reported that five primary units (47, 26, 84, 33, and 08) are currently in service. Unit 86 has been returned to the shop for a leak and 4725 for rusted fender mount repairs and is restricted to non-emergency use.
- **Staffing:** Staffing levels for March reached a 91-100% minimum threshold. The department maintains at least one paramedic at the Knox base at all times. Two ALS non-transport vehicles remain operational on a 24-hour basis.
- **Hospital Transfers:** Transfers accounted for 17.32% of total volume (53 transfers out of 305 calls). Management noted that hospital staff frequently bypass the county in favor of Tri-County Ambulance. Weekly meetings with the hospital CEO have been established to resolve these coordination issues.

- **Recruitment:** No full-time EMT openings exist. Two part-time hires were finalized, and two additional applications are under review.

Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program The MIH vehicle is currently stored in the warehouse awaiting light installation. The department has secured an MOU with all Health Link locations and has three full-time patients. Multiple grants are pending. The Board noted that any potential hospital partnership for the MIH program must be contingent upon the return of hospital transfer volume to the county.

Capital Expenditure - Ambulance Quotes The Board evaluated the following quotes for unit replacement:

1. **McLean/PL Custom:** \$473,081 (Estimated delivery: 28 months).
2. **North Central:** \$314,650 (Excludes power load system and cot).
3. **Demo Unit (Current Line):** \$289,996 (Gas engine; available February 2027).

The department recommended the gas-powered demo unit for its reliability in cold weather and lower relative cost.

Regulatory Compliance Per DEA requirements effective March 9, the department must secure an independent DEA license. This requires the installation of narcotic boxes at an estimated cost of \$38,000.

Official Action A motion was made to fund the narcotic boxes via the Restricted Opioid Fund. (Formal motion and vote deferred to a later session pending meeting schedules).

III. STARKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

The Foundation provided an update for March and April on workforce development objectives and the 2026 legislative outlook.

Monthly Report — Starke County Economic Development Foundation

Reporting period: March - April 2026

Prepared by: Mikie Stogsdill, Executive Director

Date: May 18, 2026

Executive Summary

Overall status: Continuing the overall process.

Key wins

Hosted "Pitch Perfect" Business workshop on 3/26/26.

Successful meeting on CDL with Ivy Tech.

Held 2026 Starke Tank on 4/25/26. (\$12k Hannah's Greenhouse, \$6k CB Makes & Bakes, Oregon — Davis \$800, North Judson \$400)

Outlook for next month: Continuously implementing BR&E techniques and launch follow-up outreach/training to maintain momentum.

Major Accomplishments

• 2026 Starke Tank Event

Was able to secure 5 CDL place grants to High Star Traffic.

Took 37 credit hours towards my economic development certification. • Joined NWI Biz Magazine Board of Directors

Projects in Process

Project Judson — Late Initial phase; permitting, soil boring and water testing, looking into ERA.

Next BZA Meeting— May 13, 2026.

This project's timeline is moving forward.

Project Power On — Preliminary phase; looking for building for office space and to offshoot material and house products.

Stakeholder Communications

March

Project Power On expansion talks, will revisit in June.

Hosted meeting with Linback's and Representative Kendall Culp at SCEDF. • Meeting with Shawn Boren Union Membership Development Director, IBEW Local 531

Adult Ed Meeting with Ivy Tech

Power Up Indiana Information Session with Department of Workforce Development

• Meet with the owner of North Judson Zoo

Held the following Committee Meetings: Executive, Full BOD. April

Adult Ed meeting with Ivy Tech — proposed 5 grant spots to High Star Traffic

Linback Meeting

OUEDI

Held the following Committee Meetings: Executive and Finance

Planned for May

Building, Sites, and Infrastructure - voting on survey to be complete

Linback's BZA meeting

Budget Review meeting w/ Finance – Contract meeting w/ KCS

June

Top Priorities

Finalizing budget

Site Development Workshop

Power Up Indiana Initiative

Implications and Opportunities for Starke County

Power Up Indiana is a new statewide workforce development initiative launched by Governor Mike Braun and administered through the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD). The program is designed to help Indiana employers train, upskill, and promote existing employees into higher-paying positions through state-supported reimbursement grants.

The initiative reflects a major shift in Indiana's economic strategy. Rather than focusing solely on recruiting new workers, the state is emphasizing workforce advancement, productivity, and wage growth among current employees. State leaders have repeatedly framed the program around the idea that Indiana is at or near "full employment," meaning future economic growth will depend on improving workforce quality and career mobility.

Under the program:

- Employers may receive up to \$5,000 per employee trained
- Employers may receive up to \$50,000 annually
- Employees must generally receive at least a 25% wage increase
- Post-training wages must exceed the regional median wage
- Eligible training includes:
 - technical certifications
 - apprenticeships
 - leadership development
 - reskilling/cross-training
 - industry-recognized credentials

The program is open to employers of all sizes and industries, including manufacturers, healthcare providers, logistics firms, agribusinesses, and Main Street employers.

Programmatic Achievements

- **Stark Tank 2026:** On April 25, the Foundation awarded \$12,000 to Hannah's Greenhouse (1st place) and \$6,000 to CV Makes and Takes (2nd place).
- **Junior Stark Tank:** Oregon Davis High School defeated North Judson High School in the competition.
- **Workforce Training:** Secured five CDL training grant placements through Ivy Tech.
- **Power Up Indiana:** This state initiative offers \$5,000 per employee (up to \$50,000 per company) for technical certifications and leadership development, provided the training results in a 25% wage increase.

Legislative Review The Board reviewed several 2026 bills:

- **HB 1210:** Updates to DLGF reporting and TIF allocation.
- **HB 1205, HB 1058, SB 59:** Annexation reformation.
- **SB 6:** Water and wastewater main extensions.

IV. COMMUNITY SERVICES FUNDING REQUEST

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04/23/26
Accrual Basis

Community Services of Starke County, Inc.
Profit & Loss
January through December 2025

Ordinary Income/Expense	Jan - Dec 25	Possible 2027 Budget
Income		
4101 Federal Grant Income		
FDNCBG-CSV	257.97	230
FDNCBG-PER	32,972.03	33,000.00
4101 Federal Grant Income - Other	276,132.73	277,000.00
Total 4101 Federal Grant Income	309,362.73	310,230.00
4102 State Grant Income	47,004.61	50,000.00
4104 Local Cash		
LCSE18 SMH	2,500.00	2,500.00
4104 Local Cash - Other	118,911.97	120,000.00
Total 4104 Local Cash	121,411.97	122,500.00
4105 Cash Match Income	13,945.68	14,000.00
4109 LCCASH Interest Revenue	820.91	850
4105a - Gain on disposal of assets	2,350.00	0
4105b - Project Income	12,485.15	12,000.00
4110 - Rental or Lease Income	4,150.00	4,200.00
Total Income	511,531.05	513,780.00
Gross Profit	511,531.05	513,780.00
Expense		
5101 Salaries	305,502.01	355,600.00
5102 Employee FICA	22,654.83	25,000.00
5103 Unemployment Comp.	1,142.23	1,200.00
5104 Worker's Comp.	2,029.00	2,050.00
5105 Health Insurance	41,224.68	48,000.00
5106 Life Insurance	1,100.00	1,100.00
5155 PROFESSIONAL&TECH SERVICES	21,272.40	15,000.00
5201 FACILITY RENTAL	50.00	100.00
5202 REPAIRS/MAINTENANCE	7,524.41	7,500.00
5205 BUILDING GROUNDS MAINT.	9,149.20	6,000.00
5206 BUILDING INSURANCE	12,892.00	13,000.00
5251 HEAT/LIGHT/POWER	20,747.68	21,000.00
5253 TELEPHONE COSTS	12,212.57	12,000.00
5255 WATER, SEWAGE & DISPOSAL	7,886.20	8,000.00
5258 LEASEHOLD IMPROVEMENTS	8,572.50	0.00
5303 VEHICLE REPAIR OVER \$500	16,049.53	12,000.00
5304 VEHICLE REPAIR UNDER \$500	4,211.65	3,500.00
5305 VEHICLE INSURANCE	20,558.00	20,000.00
5306 FUEL	12,981.49	13,000.00
5307 VEHICLE LICENSE	251.52	250.00
5311 OIL & LUBRICANTS	2,140.74	2,200.00
5350 DEPRECIATION	17,227.04	17,000.00
5351 PROGRAM EQUIPMENT	57.82	100.00
5353 OFFICE EQUIPMENT	712.56	100.00
5355 FURNITURE & FIXTURES	1,235.48	0.00

1:52 PM
04/23/26
Accrual Basis

Community Services of Starke County, Inc.
Profit & Loss
January through December 2025

	Jan - Dec 25	Possible
5359 COMPUTER SOFTWARE	367.88	15.00
5401 BENEFICIARY FOOD	8,955.72	9,000.00
5451 GENERAL LIABILITY	8,160.25	8,200.00
5454 DIRECTOR'S & OFFICERS	1,072.00	1,100.00
5501 OFFICE SUPPLIES	2,847.01	2,800.00
5503 COPIER SUPPLIES	3,305.08	3,300.00
5504 PROGRAM SUPPLIES	6,062.59	4,000.00
5505 CLEANING SUPPLIES	283.83	300.00
5601 STAFF TRAVEL	3,850.36	2,000.00
5702 POSTAGE	652.00	700.00
5703 DUES & REGISTRATIONS	532.00	550.00
5704 SUBSCRIPTIONS	386.98	150.00
5706 PRINTING	1,403.46	500.00
5708 EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT	482.90	400.00
5710 MISC. OTHER COSTS	7,499.32	2,000.00
5107 - Accrued Salary & Benefits	6,178.14	6,000.00
6560 - Payroll Expenses	0.00	0.00
Total Expense	601,425.06	624,715.00
Net Ordinary Income	-89,894.01	
Net Income	-89,894.01	

The Board evaluated a request for emergency funding following a 30% reduction in federal and state grant support.

Financial Hardship Evaluation The organization projects a \$90,000 shortfall. In response, the Knox senior site has been closed, and executive staff hours have been reduced to four days per week. The North Judson senior site remains active, serving as a critical social hub for the county's elderly population.

Service Impact Last year, the organization provided 73,000 miles of transportation, served 4,286 people through the food pantry, and assisted 500 children via the "Hope for the Holidays" program.

Official Action

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak moved to fund Community Services in the amount of \$70,000, to be drawn from CEDIT/Economic Development funds.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley. (Legal counsel confirmed no conflict of interest regarding Commissioner Binkley's volunteer status).
- **RESULT:** Passed (2-1). Commissioner Mike VanDeMark voted Nay

V. CORONER'S OFFICE FACILITY UPDATE

The Coroner reported that death investigation call volume has increased from 44 to 90 annually. The current facility suffers from storm damage (gutters, trim, exterior lighting) and permitting conflicts with the City.

Proposed Solution Due to the shift in funding from ARPA to County General, the previously approved \$50,000 addition is now a fiscal concern. The Board discussed building a new structure via solar funds and repurposing the existing office for maintenance storage.

Official Action

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Don Binkley moved to table the matter, so Commissioners can view the current building and further investigation of construction.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak.
- **RESULT:** Passed unanimously.

VI. JAIL ROOF INSPECTION AND REPRESENTATION

Derek Arnett of Arnett Construction proposed a storm damage inspection of the jail roof to facilitate a claim against the carrier, Chubb.

Legal and Contractual Provisions County Attorney requested that the "venue preference" in the contract be struck to avoid local judicial conflicts if a dispute arises. The Board noted the need to determine if this constitutes a service contract or a public works project requiring formal bids.

Official Action

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak moved to engage Arnett Construction for inspection and representation, subject to striking the venue preference.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley.
- **RESULT:** Passed unanimously.

VII. MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT SERVICE TRUCK

Maintenance Director Rick requested a dedicated service truck with a work bed to transport tools for repairs across EMS, Sheriff, and Highway departments.

Official Action

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Don Binkley moved to authorize up to \$20,000 from the Commissioner's Fund for the purchase of a service truck.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak.
- **RESULT:** Passed (3-0).

VIII. OFFICE SPACE AND REASSESSMENT TEAM CONSOLIDATION

Kelly Graham came before the Board to request taking the IT office to be used for her office and the IT Server room as a counting room. The Board addressed office flow and public accessibility regarding the Reassessment team's space requirements.

Official Action:

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak moved to relocate staff member "Luke" to the front office to improve workflow and directed Attorney Justin to review security protocols and camera requirements for the back room to ensure the safety of financial transactions.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley.
- **RESULT:** Passed (3-0).

Michelle Schouten: Stake County Assessor stated that the reassessment team that occupies the front office are in the office a minimum of 3 days a week and that the contract states that we provide office space for the Nexus team.

The Board conducted a walkthrough to address space requirements for the reassessment team, which requires two workstations, eight filing cabinets, and a mapping table.

RESCINDED MOTION:

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak moved to rescind the earlier motion regarding the IT officer's move to the front office.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley.
- **RESULT:** Passed (3-0).

NEW MOTION:

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak moved to consolidate the IT department's two-room footprint into a single workspace.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley.
- **RESULT:** Passed (3-0).

It was also stated by the commissioners that even if this is short term fix, it is a step in the right direction.

IX. VETERANS AFFAIRS AND FINANCIAL APPROVALS

Veterans Affairs (IDVA) Report The Board received the biannual report regarding 2025 accreditation standards. Key requirements include:

- **PIV Card:** Acquisition of Personal Identity Verification cards for federal VA record access.
- **TRIP Training:** Completion of Training Responsibility Implementation and Preparation of claims.
- **Mandatory Training:** Attendance at the four-day annual training conference in Franklin, IN.

Financial Approvals

- **Miscellaneous Revenue:** The Board noted the receipt of \$472.84 from O'Hara Law Office and \$150.00 from Merchant and Medical.
 - **Vendor Claims:** \$491,589.44. **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak, **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley. **RESULT:** Passed.
 - **Payroll Claims:** \$356,347.14 (Period ending 5/9/2026). **MOTION:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak, **SECOND:** Commissioner Don Binkley. **RESULT:** Passed.
 - **Minutes Approval:** May 4, 2026, Minutes. **MOTION:** Commissioner Don Binkley, **SECOND:** Commissioner Mike VanDeMark. **RESULT:** Passed.
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Public Comments

Gwen Rentz Starke County Surveyor inquired about the Treasurer office Reconciliation – Kelly Graham stated that the Reconciliation is going great and that Rhonda Graves is currently in the month of February of 2025.

Commission VanDeMark asked if there was ever a time that Rhonda was in the building by herself and how did she get in the building by herself and how did she

leave? Kelly Graham stated that she lets Rhonda in the building and that Rhonda is locked in and the door locks behind her when she leaves. Commissioner VanDeMark asked if there was an ordinance regarding someone being in the building alone? Commissioner Chesak stated that workman's comp allows for certain circumstances where someone is working alone. Commissioner VanDeMark asked when the reconciling will be complete, Kelly stated July 1st. Kelly also stated that once reconciling is complete that daily balancing should only take 15 minutes in the morning of every day.

Councilman Todd Leinbach asked about House Bill 270, which is the township consolidation bill. The Board reviewed HB 1315 and SB 270. It was noted that four specific metrics (the "four points") can trigger mandatory dissolution of a township. The Board expressed concern regarding the 2029 deadline, noting that if townships do not voluntarily reorganize, the Commissioners must designate mergers, which includes the complex transfer of cemeteries and poor relief responsibilities.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

- **MOTION:** Commissioner Don Binkley moved to adjourn the meeting.
- **SECOND:** Commissioner Charlie Chesak
- **RESULT:** Passed (3-0).

Mike VanDeMark President

Charlie Chesak Vice-President

Don Binkley Member

Teresa Trout Auditor Pro Tem: