STARKE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

DATE: June 30, 2026 **LOCATION:** Annex 1 Meeting Room **TIME:** 5:30 PM

The following minutes constitute the official administrative record of the Starke County Planning Commission. The maintenance of accurate meeting minutes is a legal prerequisite for local government operations, ensuring that all deliberations, votes, and procedural actions are documented with transparency and regularity. This record serves as the primary evidence of the board's adherence to its jurisdictional mandates and provides a historical narrative of the Commission's decisions. With the establishment of procedural order, the meeting transitioned to its formal opening.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was officially called to order by Chair Mike VanDeMark. Following the opening of the session, the board and those in attendance stood for the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Call to Order serves a critical strategic role in government proceedings; it marks the precise moment when the board transitions from an informal gathering to a seated deliberative body. By invoking this formality, the Commission establishes its legal jurisdiction for the duration of the session, ensuring that all subsequent business is conducted within the bounds of its official authority. Following this declaration, the Commission moved to verify attendance and the presence of a quorum.

ROLL CALL AND QUORUM VERIFICATION

A formal roll call was conducted to determine the presence of board members and staff.

Present:

- Mike VanDeMark, Chair
- Mark Allen, Vice-Chair
- Gwen Rentz
- Todd Leinbach
- Kenny Eagle
- Crystal Keller
- Dale Turner
- Therese Pugh

Also Present:

- John McCurrie, Director of Planning and Building

Absent:

- Robbie Blodgett
- Commission Attorney

The verification of a "Quorum"—the minimum number of members required to be present—is fundamental to the validity of any official action taken by the board. Without a quorum, the body lacks the power to pass motions or make binding legal decisions. The confirmation of a quorum in this session ensures that all votes regarding personnel and policy are legally enforceable. With a quorum established, the board proceeded to the primary items of business.

I. PERSONNEL APPOINTMENT: NEW HIRE SELECTION

The Commission addressed the vacancy within the department. After a comprehensive review of several applicants, the board narrowed the field to three primary candidates: Candidate A, Candidate B, and Candidate C. The board engaged in a deliberative discussion regarding the qualifications and the selection process before moving to a formal vote.

- **MOTION:** Gwen Rentz moved to move forward with candidate A (Kassandra Speicher), seconded by Mark Allen.
- **RESULT:** Passed unanimously.

Following the vote, the Chair stated that he would coordinate with Director John McCurrie to extend the job offer to Ms. Speicher. In the event the candidate declines the offer, the Commission established a contingency plan to convene a subsequent meeting to determine the next steps for the vacancy.

From an administrative perspective, this appointment is vital for maintaining the department's operational capacity and ensuring that building and planning services remain uninterrupted for the county. The inclusion of a contingency plan reflects proactive management, mitigating the risk of extended vacancies and ensuring the department remains functional regardless of the candidate's response. With the personnel matter resolved, the meeting moved to administrative updates.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS & FUTURE PLANNING

The Commission discussed the scheduling of the upcoming meeting for the following week. Several members noted potential scheduling conflicts, specifically participation in a local ceremony for the reading of the Declaration of Independence. Despite these conflicts, the board surveyed the members present to ensure continuity of operations.

A quorum for the next scheduled meeting was tentatively confirmed based on the responses from Kenny Eagle, Crystal Keller, Mark Allen, Dale Turner, and Mike VanDeMark. While some members expressed attendance conflicts due to the aforementioned ceremony, the current consensus indicated a sufficient number of members would be available to proceed. The Director noted that he would reconfirm the meeting status via formal communication approximately forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled time to ensure no last-minute conflicts would impede the session.

Maintaining a consistent meeting schedule and performing proactive quorum checks are essential components of government transparency. These actions ensure that the public is aware of when decisions are made and that the Commission remains productive. Proactive communication regarding attendance prevents "lost" meetings, thereby preserving the continuity of county business. The board then moved to the final phase of the session.

III. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business or public comment presented, the Commission moved to conclude the session.

- **MOTION:** Dale Turner moved to adjourn, seconded by Therese Pugh.
- **RESULT:** Passed unanimously.

The adjournment marks the official end of the record and the cessation of the board's deliberative authority for this specific session. Once adjourned, no further official actions can be taken until the next properly noticed meeting. The record is now concluded and submitted for authentication.

SIGNATURE BLOCK

Mike VanDeMark, President

John McCurrie, Secretary