

**April 21, 2014**

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Council and meet in regular session at 5:30PM in the Annex Building Meeting Room, Knox, Indiana, with Dave Pearman, Tony Radkiewicz, Mitch Semans, Marvin McLaughlin, Robert Sims, Bryan Cavender, and Freddie Baker present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Dave Pearman. Councilman Semans made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Councilman Baker seconded the motion and it passed with all ayes.

**RE: CREDIT APPROPRIATION REQUEST**

Starke County Economic Development Foundation Director, Charlie Weaver, appeared before the Council to request the following appropriations from the CREDIT Fund, 1112:

30712 Hamlet Fire Well	\$ 12,000.00
30610 County Bridges, carryover from 2013	903,754.70
30610 County Bridges, 2014 CREDIT	635,775.28
Total Appropriations Requested	\$1,551,529.98

Councilman Semans made a motion to approve the appropriation requests, seconded by Councilman McLaughlin. The motion passed with all ayes.

Auditor Chaffins inquired as to the status of the negative balance of the Hamlet Project Grant and Director Weaver advised he has been in contact with representatives from Sysco. Director Weaver stated he was advised they have submitted a claim to their bond trustee and the County should be seeing a check for the amount of \$194,000.00 within the next couple of weeks. Councilman Radkiewicz inquired as to the status of the Sysco Project. Director Weaver advised he is in touch with Sysco at least every two months but it is still unknown as to if and when they would be coming to Starke County.

**RE: PLANNING COMMISSION REQUEST OF CREDIT APPROPRIATION**

Planning Commission Board President, Dennis Estok, appeared before the Council to request the appropriation of \$20,000.00 of the CREDIT Fund, 1112, line item 30506, County Commissioners' portion. He advised the request is in regard to their plan to proceed on an ordinance that was originally passed in 2009 which deals with the abandoned houses in the County, of which the majority are owned by mortgage companies. He noted this will be their seed money to get the project started in their attempt to clean the County of blight and abandoned and neglected houses. Councilman Semans made a motion to approve the appropriation of the CREDIT Fund, seconded by Councilman Baker. The motion passed with all ayes. President Pearman noted this was an example of only appropriating the CREDIT funding as it is needed.

**MARSHALL-STARKE REPORT**

Mike Littner and the Chairman of the Board of Marshall-Starke appeared before the Board to give a brief report of the services provided by Marshall-Starke and some statistics of the participants of the program. Director Littner advised their services cover three counties, Marshall, Starke and Fulton and they receive some funding from all three counties. He thanked the Board for the County's funding of their program.

**STATUS OF THE CREATION OF A PARK BOARD**

President Pearman inquired as to the status of the creation of a Park Board. Councilman Radkiewicz advised a committee has been formed to look into the possibility. Commissioner Kathy Norem advised she is on the committee and they are currently working on the creation of a mission statement, but it has not yet been completed. Councilman Radkiewicz noted there aren't many members of the Council that are in favor of the creation of a Park Board. County Attorney, Marty Lucas, advised it is the County Council who would create a Park Board. President Pearman advised he would like this addressed at the next meeting by voting on the creation of a Park Board, but would like the committee to give a presentation to the Board prior to the vote.

**POSSIBLE CREATION OF A COUNTY WHEEL TAX**

County Highway Superintendent, Rik Ritzler, appeared before the Board to discuss the possibility of the County creating a County wheel tax. He advised the County has an Asset Management Program in order to maintain the four main assets of the County: Roads, Bridges, Equipment, and Personnel. He stated road mileage now compared to previous years is tremendous. He advised the Highway Department has a five year plan to replace bridges, and a plan to increase the miles of roads improved. He stated the roads are getting better in Starke County but the County is still behind in their road repairs. He noted the farmers in the county are asking for better roads in their area. He advised 47 out of the state's 92 counties currently have a wheel tax and are now receiving more revenue for the maintenance of their roads. Superintendent Ritzler noted currently Starke County is fifth from the bottom of the list of counties due to the conditions of the roads in Starke County. He advised a wheel tax is actually a user fee, and advised the fee could range from between \$5.00 to \$40.00 per vehicle depending of the classification of the vehicle, and the fee would be collected by the BMV. He noted some of the county roads are cracking due to the weight of some of the traffic on the roads. He stated Toto Road, between US35 and CR625E is extremely bad. President Pearman advised IC 6.3-5.5 requires the County to hold a public hearing so

the public has a chance to voice their opinions and concerns. Councilman Semans advised he is against the creation of a wheel tax. Councilman Baker noted the people are taxed to death already. President Pearman advised he would like to see a committee formed to look into this tax and then hold a community meeting of awareness. Commissioner Norem advised they should hold the committee meeting first so there is an understanding of the process and to establish the goals, calculate how much could possibly be generated and specifically state what it will be funding. The following volunteered to be on the committee: Councilman McLaughlin, Councilman Baker, Councilman Sims, Commissioner Norem, and Superintendent Ritzler. Councilmen Cavender and Baker stated they would like to hear from the public who are in attendance at the meeting. President Pearman opened the meeting for public comment. Marty Bedrock stated according to WKVI the Council was going to decide on the creation of the wheel tax at this meeting but he could see they are going through the process first. Manuel Prater inquired if they would consider only implementing a tax per individual and not per vehicle for those who own more than one vehicle. Matt Gourley stated possibly then the County could pave the unpaved roads in the county. Superintendent Ritzler advised he will contact the member of the committee and set a meeting date.

#### EMS DEPARTMENT UPDATE

EMS Director, Paul Mathewson, and EMS Clerk Mary Lynn Ritchie appeared before the Board to discuss the expansion of the ALS service in the County. Director Mathewson stated Alliance is no longer running the transfers from IU Health-Starke so the number of transfers for Starke County will increase and there is a possibility the paramedic will be on the ALS transfers. He stated they are proposing establishing an additional paramedic based out of the North Judson base, as they have twice as many calls as the Grovertown base at this time. He noted the expense for a paramedic, for a six month period, is approximately \$21,000.00 and they would be able to absorb the cost from their current budget. Director Mathewson noted they have reduced the amount of payroll expense by utilizing more part time employees instead of full time, and by working on the reduction of overtime hours. Clerk Ritchie advised she had worked with Auditor Chaffins to complete the 2013 report for Medicaid reimbursement. She noted the reimbursement reports had been submitted for the years 2011 and 2012, and are still waiting to hear when the County will receive those amounts. President Pearman reminded them when the proceeds are received the revenue will go into County General but is not adjusted in their budget figures. Director Mathewson noted they are looking at a proposed June 1<sup>st</sup> implementation of the paramedic service in the North Judson area.

President Pearman then gave a brief update of the situation with the Oregon Township fire department. He advised he had attended a meeting at Koontz Lake and they had advised the fire department to program their pagers with dual tones so they would not have an issue of not receiving any calls.

#### DORMANT FUNDS

Councilman McLaughlin inquired as to the status of the County's dormant funds and if they could be transferred into the County General Fund. Auditor Chaffins advised she had been in contact with Tammy White of the SBOA who had advised any dormant funds received from donations could still be spent by the appropriate department, but any dormant funds received from grant proceeds the department will need to contact the agency who issued the grant to see how they want the remaining funds handled. Auditor Chaffins advised the departments are looking into the dormant funds that pertain to their department.

#### STATUS OF THE INNKEEPERS TAX

Attorney Lucas advised he is still researching if campsites would be allowed to be taxed. He noted campsites will be included in the ordinance if it is legal with the State to do so. He advised once he has confirmed the status he will circulate the information to the Board once it is received from the State. Also, as of right now, the State is still collecting the innkeepers' tax. Debbie Mix stated she had attended the last CVC meeting and noted she understands the County Council had agreed to locally collect the tax but had not imposed a penalty clause at that time. Attorney Lucas advised in order to implement an additional penalty the Council will need to follow the whole process, including advertising and holding a public hearing.

There being no further business, Councilman Semans made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Baker and passed with all ayes. The meeting was adjourned at 6:38PM.

**April 21, 2014**

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Dave Pearman, President

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Mitch Semans, Vice President

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Bryan Cavender

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Marvin McLaughlin

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Tony Radkiewicz

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Robert Sims

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Freddie Baker

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Katherine Chaffins, Starke County Auditor and  
Secretary to the County Council

