



*LaPorte County Auditor  
Joie Winski  
555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 205  
LaPorte, IN 46350-3490*

**MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL  
DECEMBER 20, 2016 AT 5:00 P.M.**

*(Please Turn Off All Cell Phones)*

The Special Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on December 20, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. (local time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex located at 809 State Street, La Porte, Indiana, 46350.

**CALL TO ORDER**

La Porte County Council President Terry Garner called the Meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Garner asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. President Garner asked that everyone, except emergency personnel, to please turn off their cell phones at this time.

**ROLL CALL**

Auditor Winski took the Roll Call. Council Members present were Councilmen Bernacchi, Garner, Kirkham, Novak, and Santana, and Councilwoman Sosinski. Councilman Yagelski was absent. A quorum was noted.

**APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 20, 2016 AGENDA**

A Motion to approve was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Bernacchi. Motion carried 6-0.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

*Mike Seitz, President of La Porte County Chamber of Commerce*

Mr. Seitz told the Council he is leaving his position at the Chamber of Commerce but said it was an honor and privilege to have worked with the Council for the last 15 years. He also thanked Councilman Kirkham for serving on their Governmental Affairs Council. President Garner thanked him for keeping politics out of the job.

*Rich Mrozinski, 2303 E 150 North, La Porte, IN 46350 and Commissioner-Elect*

Mr. Mrozinski stated that Veterans' Service Officer, George Watkins, will be retiring within the next year. Therefore, he suggested that a part-time person be brought in to train and attend training in Indianapolis. In addition, after working with Mr. Watkins, the part time person could work in Michigan City so the

Veterans do not always have to travel to La Porte. It would also be an opportunity to determine the validity of having a VSO in Michigan City.

Councilwoman Sosinski asked how long the part time person would have to train with Mr. Watkins. Mr. Mrozinski replied training with Mr. Watkins could continue for approximately one month and then the part time person could spend two days in Michigan City and one day with Mr. Watkins in La Porte. HIPA laws specify that certified VSO must complete certain tasks, while the part-time person can perform the less important duties. Mr. Mrozinski also clarified that the part-time employee would work approximately two days in Michigan City and one day in La Porte with Mr. Watkins, while also attaining his/her certification. However, once Mr. Watkins retires, the part-time employee would take over the full-time position.

President Garner asked from where this part-time salary would be paid. Auditor Winski replied the Commissioners have \$2,703.00 in an unutilized clerk budget and \$500 in a season position budget. In addition, she said Mr. Watkins' yearly salary is \$36,720.00. Attorney Biege added that the money could be appropriated in 2017 out of the chosen fund and when the employee was hired and the wages determined. However, a vote of support should be completed at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Mrozinski stated that the Veteran's Advisory Committee would convene to determine qualifications, so the process would take a few months.

A Motion of support was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Kirkham. Motion carried 6-0.

Councilman Santana expressed concern that there would be two people being paid when there is technically only one position necessary. Attorney Biege replied that it is a unique position that requires specific training. Councilman Santana questioned if it is the first time this would be occurring. Mr. Mrozinski replied that when Mr. Watkins was hired, the previous employee was also paid a full-time salary for six months of training. In addition, this situation will provide the information on whether or not a part-time employee would be helpful working in Michigan City.

Councilman Santana asked if hiring of this employee would go through Human Resources. It was determined that the position is appointed and there is a comprehensive hiring process.

Hearing or seeing no additional Public Comment, President Garner closed Public Comment.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, REQUESTS**

#### La Porte County Haz-Mat

Requesting Permission to Transfer

from 4101-20200-000-0537 to 1152-20200-000-0589 \$1,000.00

from 1000-20001-000-0174 to 1000-20050-000-0174 \$400.00

Office Supplies to Haz-Mat Supplies

from 1000-30022-000-0174 to 1000-31018-000-1074 \$600.00

Radio Maintenance to Radio Account

Jeff Hamilton, Director of Haz-Mat, stated that he does not typically come before the Council for transfers. However, he explained that it is necessary to repay an account from which he borrowed funds. Councilman Santana asked for an explanation from which and to which the transfers are being made. Auditor Winski clarified the individual funds. Councilman Santana then asked for the purpose of the borrowed funds. Mr. Hamilton explained that he was previously able to pay for items out of this fund. After an audit, he was told he could no longer continue that practice so he needed to repay the fund. Councilman Santana asked for the owed amount. Councilman Novak added he has seen the list of \$40,000.00 expenses and all are considered to be Haz-Mat items. Councilman Novak and President Garner both agreed to that fact.

A Motion to approve was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilwoman Sosinski. Motion carried 5-1, with Councilman Santana voting Nay.

La Porte County Animal Shelter

Requesting Permission to Transfer from 1000-30105-000-0156 to 1000-10130-000-0156	\$4,250.00
Vet and Hospital to Part-Time Help from 1000-30106-000-0156 to 1000-10130-000-0156	\$2,790.00
Animal Removal to Part-Time Help from 1000-20025-000-0156 to 1000-10130-000-0156	\$1,100.00
Gas and Fuel to Part-Time Help	

President Garner asked for clarification on which funds are incurring transfers and Auditor Winski explained. Councilwoman Sosinski asked if it is permissible to transfer from a 300 account to a 100 account and Auditor Winski replied that it was, with Council approval. It was determined that the money was already expended and the fund was \$6512.50 in the negative. President Garner added that this unusual for Mrs. Bernard to be in this position, but some Council members questioned why she didn't inform the Council about this sooner.

A Motion to approve the three transfers was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Kirkham.

Councilwoman Sosinski said that, normally, requests regarding additional part-time help are made prior to the expenditure. President Garner said he understands the transfer needs to be approved but that he doesn't want the Council to set a precedent. Motion carried 4-2, with Councilman Santana and Councilwoman Sosinski voting Nay.

Councilman Kirkham said he received a text from Ms. Bernard and stated she had previously sent a letter to the Auditor/Chief Deputy Auditor, so Ms. Bernard was told her attendance at the meeting was unnecessary.

La Porte County MS4

Requesting Permission to Transfer from 1000-30135-000-0161 to 1000-10130-000-0161	\$600.00
Professional Services to Part-Time Help	

Attorney Biege said that he recalls there was a previous discussion about Part-Time help that indicated that if an entity needed Part-Time help, the Council would arrange for it. This occurred during budget hearings and is why he believes these requests have been presented.

A Motion to approve was made by Councilman Bernacchi and seconded by Councilman Santana. Motion carried 6-0.

La Porte County Surveyor  
Requesting Permission to Hire

Tony Hendricks began by commending Diane Allen for 36 years of service to the County and explained her value as an employee. Due to her retirement, Mr. Hendricks is asking for approval to find a replacement.

President Garner said there have been discussions with Human Resources, but Mr. Hendricks said he can choose whether or not to have a Chief Deputy. President Garner questioned why a Chief Deputy would be hired over making Mr. Hendricks a full-time employee. Mr. Hendricks replied that the salary of a typical Surveyor would be approximately twice his current salary, therefore the person who would act as Chief Deputy would complete the majority of the office tasks and work as his assistant. In addition, he stated that the position being replaced would be advertised through Human Resources.

A Motion to approve was made by Councilman Santana and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 6-0.

La Porte County Community Corrections  
Requesting Permission to Hire

Dick Buell, Director of Community Corrections, asked to fill a Field Officer position that was vacated by a retirement. He added that the position would be open in the middle of February but that he wanted to get approval so the interview process could be initiated. The position will be advertised through Human Resources.

A Motion to approve was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Bernacchi to approve.

Councilwoman Sosinski clarified that if a person is promoted or moved from within, this would be the only opening being filled. Motion carried 6-0.

2017 Salary Discussion and Vote

A Motion to reopen the Budget Hearings was made by Councilman Bernacchi and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 6-0.

President Garner explained that a Motion for the Insurance was made at the last Meeting. Attorney Biege stated there is confusion as to what was approved, but after watching the replay of the meeting several times, it was approved that the Council would absorb the increase and continue the Council/employee contribution at the same percentage of 85/15. He added that a resolution was drafted to clarify the amount being funded as \$776,965.00. He recommends that the Council enters the Resolution to insure that there is a clear record of the events.

Auditor Winski reminded the Council that the money for insurance is coming from the Riverboat Fund and that raises would come out of the General Fund.

A Motion was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by President Garner, after clarifying he was allowed to second a Motion.

Councilwoman Sosinski inquired as to if the money was available in the designated fund and Auditor Winski replied yes. Councilwoman Sosinski added that the Waggoner, Irwin & Scheele study is preliminarily completed, so any raise given tonight would be an effort to make employees whole but additional adjustments may need to be done in the future.

Councilman Santana stated that Councilman Yagelski is opposed to a 2% but would support a 1% raise. He added that money will be coming into the General fund from CAGIT that could be used for the raises. He continued that he intends to support a more conservative raise of 1% in order to instead enrich the funds and reassess raises in the next year.

Councilman Novak said he attended the Personnel Committee meeting and viewed the preliminary study. He explained that giving a 2% raise was not excessive and would actually close the gap so that next year the amount needed for raises would not be as substantial. He continued that intention of the Council was to follow the study as much as possible and was part of why the Council chose to fund it. Therefore, the 2% raises are in line with the results of the study.

Councilman Santana took issue with Councilman Novak and said not having the finished report is actually a reason not to give 2% raises.

President Garner clarified that the part of the report that states La Porte County salaries are actually 5% behind is not going to change and that implementing a 2% raise would make a step closer to closing the gap.

Councilman Santana said he heard that the percentage was 4 and not 5 and asked for verification from Councilwoman Sosinski who referred to Barb Mossman. Ms. Mossman stated that the percentage was anywhere between 3 ½ to 5 but no one was below 3. Councilwoman Sosinski said the study still requires adjustments that may affect some of the salaries and is why it is not considered complete.

A roll call was taken and the Motion was approved 5-1 with Councilman Santana voting Nay.

#### **COUNTY COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS**

Councilwoman Sosinski explained that at the September 19, 2016 Council Meeting, a Motion to approve the addition of an HVAC employment position to the salary schedule was made. This position was given a classification for 2017. Therefore, there is a request to approve the HVAC position, a STEP 1 increase to 2% which would have gone into effect after 6 months on the job, and approval of the pay increase of \$36.11 per pay period beginning at the July 1<sup>st</sup> through December 16<sup>th</sup> pay (13 pay periods) for a total of \$469.43. The Maintenance Department confirmed that they have the funds available and do not have to ask for an additional appropriation.

Attorney Biege stated that this is a raise for next year and that there can be an appropriation after the first of the year. However, he is concerned about the lack of advertisement.

Barb Mossman approached and explained that due to the vacancy of a position in Maintenance, there is additional money for 2016 to cover the HVAC position.

Attorney Biege said that is permitted for 2016, but there cannot be a budget increase for 2017. Instead, there would need to be an appropriation in January to cover the gap. It could not be done now because it was not advertised.

A Motion was made by Councilwoman Sosinski and seconded by Councilman Novak to transfer the \$463.43 to pay the STEP increase. Motion carried 6-0.

Attorney Biege added that the issue will have to be readdressed in 2017, so President Garner asked that Auditor Winski add it to Agenda for the first Regular Council meeting in January 2017.

Councilwoman Sosinski said she would update the Council when the Waggoner, Irwin & Scheele study was updated and complete.

Councilman Novak wished Jerry Cooley best wishes and a speedy recovery. President Garner agreed.

Councilman Kirkham acknowledged Councilman Bernacchi and the great job he's done as a member of the Council and appreciated his hard work. He added that his grandson won his second state football championship in Michigan.

Attorney Biege said that he will be leaving his position as attorney for the Council and is moving into the position of counsel for the Commissioners. He said it's been an honor to serve the Council. President Garner thanked him.

A Motion to adjourn was made by Councilwoman Sosinski and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 6-0.

EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL this 23rd day of January, 2017.

Absent  
Councilman Terry Garner

Cary Kirkham  
Councilman Cary Kirkham

Randy Novak  
Councilman Randy Novak

Jeff Santana  
Councilman Jeff Santana

Lois Sosinski  
Councilwoman Lois Sosinski

John Sullivan  
Councilman John Sullivan

Mark Jagelski  
Councilman Mark Jagelski

ATTEST: Joie Winski  
Joie Winski, La Porte County Auditor