



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

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 30, 2017 AT 6:30 P.M.**

(Please Turn Off All Cell Phones)

The Regular Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on October 30, 2017 at 6:30 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 Jeff Santana called the Meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Santana asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. President Santana asked that everyone, except emergency personnel, to please turn off their cell phones at this time. He also acknowledged the students in attendance.

ROLL CALL

Auditor Joie Winski took the Roll Call. Council Members present were Councilmen Garner, Kirkham, Mollenhauer, Novak, Santana, Sullivan, and Yagelski. A quorum was noted.

Sept October 30, 2017
APPROVAL OF THE ~~NOVEMBER 27, 2017~~ AGENDA

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Sullivan and seconded by Councilman Kirkham. Motion carried 7-0.

September 25th, 2017
APPROVAL OF THE ~~OCTOBER 30, 2017~~ REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Mollenhauer. Motion carried 6-0, with Councilman Kirkham abstaining.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Lynne Spevak, La Porte County Treasurer

Treasurer Spevak stated that over 200 liens were sold at the tax sale on October 26th and over \$900,000.00 was collected in delinquent property taxes. The pre-tax sale portion was handled by the Treasurer's Office

and the post-sale will be handled by the Auditor's Office. Owners can redeem their properties for one year. Many out of state investors came to the tax sale with the sole purpose of earning interest on their purchases when the owner redeems his or her property. Treasurer Spevak added that the fall installment of property taxes is due on November 13th, since County offices will be closed on November 10th for Veterans' Day. She suggested that if taxpayer's are going to mail their payments, to insure that the envelope is post-marked no later than November 13th; envelopes not stamped by the 13th will incur a late penalty. Councilman Garner asked how much tax money has been collected and Treasurer Spevak replied approximately \$10,000,000.00, with a goal of \$55,000,000.00. She also reminded taxpayers that only one tax bill is sent per year that includes two remittance slips.

Larry Butcher, La Porte County EMA Director

Mr. Butcher said the 800 MHz systems is up and working well. He added he would like to assist with questions regarding scanners for the new system. President Santana stated the current scanners are 800 MHz, 825 Phase I; the Phase I will work but will become obsolete when future changes occur and it will be necessary to have a Phase II scanner. He enquired about a phone application. Mr. Butcher stated that as the system is built out, more vendors will create scanning systems. However, his office or he will not recommend a specific type of scanner due to liability issues.

President Santana stated he understood that the public enjoys listening to the scanners but due to upgrading to the 800 MHz system, it is also necessary to upgrade to new scanners. Mr. Butcher said the cost of the scanner is approximately \$499.00, and it is important not to buy a less expensive scanner because it won't work with this system. Councilman Novak said it is necessary to keep up with technology and by doing so, there is no intent to keep the public from listening to radio calls. President Santana added that there are tactical channels that the public cannot hear, but that is for the benefit and safety of the emergency personnel.

Councilman Garner said that Sheriff Boyd is very pleased with how the system is working. Councilman Novak added the change from the old to new system was a very smooth transition.

Hearing or seeing no additional Department Heads, President Santana closed Department Head Reports

LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Kirkham said Jean Lawson from the Parks' Department retired. When he attended the AIC meeting, he spoke with a Lake County Council/Coroner Board member who said the concept of working with multiple County coroners for autopsies and toxicology testing would be advantageous. He also attended a Rolling Prairie Businessman's meeting on the 5th and a Government Affairs meeting hosted by the La Porte Chamber of Commerce on the 13th.

Councilman Sullivan had no report.

Councilman Novak attended Rail Committee and Sub-Rail Committee meetings regarding KIP and the Blue Ribbon Committee meetings regarding the Fairgrounds. He added that 4 out of 7 items on the agenda are his liaisons and he spoke with all of them. He attended the Veteran's Treatment Court, where Veteran's who've got into trouble turn their lives around; 22 veterans a day commit suicide, so these types of programs are extremely beneficial to this group of people.

Councilman Garner received a report from the County Recorder who has finalized the Fraud Alert program and is delivering information to local title insurance companies and financial institutions. Anyone

affiliated with a public service or community organization who is interested in a presentation should contact Recorder Sosinski. In addition, Laredo training for staff and other users was held by Fidler Technologies in Room 3 of the County Complex. Laredo is the software used by the Recorder's Office to search for document information. The Recorder's Office has deposited \$164,892.50 into the General fund, \$8,216.50 into the Elected Officials Training fund, and \$32,965.00 into the Surveyor/Coroner fund. He stated that Ron Heeg is in attendance to address overtime in the Sheriff's office. Lastly, he attended the Blue Ribbon Committee meetings, where things are slowly moving forward.

Councilman Mollenhauer attended a Workshop by Waggoner, Irwin & Sheele regarding salary analysis and a County Employee Insurance meeting with Barb Mossman, who is providing a report at tonight's meeting.

Councilman Yagelski attended a NICTD public hearing at Blue Chip Casino. There is still time to make public comment through NICTD's website. He asked for a small moment silence for a good friend and previous Auditor, Teresa Shuter. Attendees stood for a moment of silence.

President Santana said Mr. Butcher from EMA is coming before the Council for permission to spend. Tony Hendricks and Duane Perry from the Surveyor's Office are also in attendance for an additional appropriation. President Santana spoke with Rich Gramarossa from Building Maintenance and said he always keeps him informed. President Santana added that Mr. Gramarossa is looking to fill custodial positions in the Maintenance department.

NEW BUSINESS

2018 Budgets for Kankakee and Hanna Township – Attorney Brad Adamsky

Mr. Adamsky stated that, three years ago, a statute was passed that said any township board that had a majority of volunteer firefighters could not approve its own budget and would have to obtain approval from the County fiscal body. Both Kankakee and Hanna townships have held public meetings; Kankakee's budget is the same as last year and Hanna added a debt fund for a debt incurred in 2015.

A motion to approve Kankakee's budget was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Sullivan. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion to approve Hanna's budget was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilman Kirkham. Motion carried 7-0.

President Santana said he spoke with Senator Bohacek regarding legislation that may reverse this type of statute. Mr. Adamsky felt that the statute was most likely created due to abuse in another county in Indiana.

Consider Approval of the 2018 Health Insurance Premiums – Barb Mossman

Barb Mossman said that claims are approximately \$880,000.00 less than expected, which will translate to a reduction of 7/10ths of a percent in 2018 premiums. She explained that due to an error in how contributions were calculated in 2017, premiums were not computed correctly by General Insurance in 2018 and the employee premiums will be higher than originally determined. The \$600.00 deductible will increase by \$7.00 for employee only; \$27.23 for employee/spouse; \$26.88 for employee/children; and \$16.15 for employee/family. Councilman Yagelski said benefits and raises are proportionate. Councilman Mollenhauer clarified that employees on the \$600.00 deductible plan were paying less for their premiums

than they should have been for the past year. Ms. Mossman agreed and said the current percentage being withheld for the \$1,000.00 deductible is actually 87% instead of 85%, which will cause an additional increase to the employee when it is adjusted back to 85%. She added that Open Enrollment begins on Monday, so a decision on premiums has to be made at tonight's meeting.

Councilman Yagelski asked if there is a way to change the insurance calendar year in order to avoid having to make emergency decisions. Auditor Winski said the calendar is driven by the providers but Councilman Yagelski asked if it could be changed or adjusted. Ms. Mossman said it could be changed but not for this calendar year. Councilman Yagelski said the Commissioners would have to also be consulted.

Councilman Novak said the two issues are to make up for this year and return the County percentage to 85%. Councilman Yagelski asked how much the County percentage would increase if the County absorbs the premium increases. Ms. Mossman was unable to determine an exact percentage.

A motion to keep the County/Employee percentage at 85/15 for the base plan (Plan 1) was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Garner. Councilman said it is prohibitive to give employee raises and absorb the premium increases. President Santana said raises will be determined at the November 27th Council meeting. Those raises may assist with the additional premiums that will have to be paid by the employees. Motion carried 7-0.

Consider Authorizing Financial Commitment Local Match Letter for Safety Realignment Project for Lofgren Road/150 N and Financial Commitment Local Match Letter for Construction Funding for Bridge 186 – Mitch Bishop

Attorney Friedman said that these items should be addressed separately. Mr. Bishop said that INDOT has a call for projects with a deadline of next Friday. In order to apply, a financial commitment must be received by the fiduciary body of the County. The two projects are Bridge 186 for \$1.6 million and the realignment of project for \$1 million. Councilman Yagelski said there have been three proposals that have come from the Council on the 150 North Road, so he asked how this particular road was chosen. Mr. Bishop replied that there have been some accidents there and the line of sight is poor, in addition to the fact that not all areas are eligible for the INDOT grant. This was applied for three years ago, but it was not received. The priority would be Bridge 186 and the second priority would be 150 North; additional areas could also benefit. Councilman Yagelski said additional roads should be considered in order to deter the idea of favoritism. Mr. Bishop said that a survey was completed as to which roads require improvements/repairs.

A motion to approve the 150 North Road Local Match letter was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 7-0.

A motion to approve the Bridge 186 Local Match letter was made by Councilman Sullivan and seconded by Councilman Garner. Motion carried 7-0.

Consider Authorizing the Creation of a Distribution Fund for the Coroner to Pay Pathologists from Fees Received from the Indiana State Prison

Coroner Robert Cutler said the money from Indiana State Prisons has already been received. Auditor Winski added that reimbursements are now received from autopsies performed on inmates. If a fund is not created, the money will have to be put in the unappropriated general fund. A separate fund is being requested for checks to be deposited and from which pathologists would be paid. Councilman Kirkham clarified that it would still be under the jurisdiction of the Coroner. Councilman Yagelski said these funds were previously eliminated but Auditor Winski stated this is what the state requires. She explained funds

that are dormant for three years are eliminated. A motion to authorize the creation of a distribution fund for the coroner to pay pathologist fees from the Indiana State Prison was made by Councilman Sullivan and seconded by Councilman Mollenhauer. Motion carried 7-0.

Consider Resolution Evidencing Intent to Support and Fund a Job Skills Training Assistance Program – County Office of Economic Development

Mr. Mike Seitz explained that the resolution is to establish a local job training fund that will provide support for a project received from the Indiana Office of Economic Development. Project Clean Up is a retention plan program and Project Splatter is to expand local jobs. The jobs are above the \$18.00 per hour average County wage rate. Phil Woods from Vision Financial Services stated his company provides call center services and administrative and operational support to health care providers and not-for-profit health care plans. The company's primary challenge was acquiring skilled talent for various positions. To answer the challenge, their extensive training program needs to be funded so 40-45 of call center representatives and auditor positions can be filled. The training takes place in the La Porte office of Vision Financial Services, with training from approximately March to July. The call center representatives are typical customer service positions geared around non-profit health care plans. Auditor positions are validating and correcting data.

Attorney Friedman explained that the program is modeled after an existing one in West Lafayette. The resolution allows the program to be set up with a qualified non-profit to administer it and trigger points to insure the Council that job skill training is taking place. Mr. Woods stated that classroom training is one to two weeks and then the candidate is paired with an existing employee that can last from three to eight weeks. Tim Conrad from Stimulus Economic Development Advisors said this program mirrors a state program and reimbursement can be determined by the non-profit, the company and the County. Mr. Woods said the urgency is with the current project but additional future projects are anticipated. Attorney Friedman added that an Interlocal Agreement would have to be completed, but this is just a statement of intent from the Council to support the job skills training program. Councilman Novak asked if regular reports can be built into the agreement and Attorney Friedman replied affirmatively.

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilman Kirkham. Motion carried 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Councilman Yagelski asked about the overpayment from a department that was discussed at the last meeting. Auditor Winski said she did not have an answer but will note it again. Councilman Yagelski asked that it be put on the Agenda for next month's meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

None

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, REQUESTS

La Porte Superior Court No. 1

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191) or Win Tax (4220)**

For Evaluations – Medical/Doctors’ Account **\$20,000.00**

A motion to approve out Win Tax (4220) was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 7-0.

La Porte Circuit Court

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191) or Win Tax (4220)
For Purchase of New Stenograph** **\$5,039.94**

A motion to approve out of Win Tax (4220) was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 6-1, with Councilman Kirkham voting Nay. Councilman Kirkham felt this item should be budgeted, but it was determined that replacement is only necessary approximately every 20 years so it is not a budget item. Councilman Novak added that alternative ways of funding the cost of these items were researched.

La Porte County Sheriff’s Department

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191) or Win Tax (4220)
For Overtime for Sheriff’s Department** **\$25,000.00**
And Overtime for Court House Security **\$ 5,000.00**
Total **\$30,000.00**

A motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilman Kirkham. Motion carried 7-0.

La Porte County Surveyor

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191) or Win Tax (4220)
For Sick/Vacation Pay for Retired Employee** **\$7,840.89**

A motion to approve out of Win Tax (4220) was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Novak. Motion carried 6-1, with Councilman Kirkham voting Nay.

La Porte County EMA

**Requesting Permission to Spend
From Emergency Reserve Fund (1186)
For Amplified Antenna System for Jail/800 MHz Project** **\$139,410.00**

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Sullivan and seconded by Councilman Garner. Motion approved 7-0.

La Porte County Adult Probation

**Requesting Permission to Spend
From Probation User Fees (2102)
For Office Furniture for La Porte Circuit Court** **\$934.50**

Councilman Novak said this is for furniture in Judge Alevizos' Office. Motion to approve was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Sullivan. Motion carried 7-0.

La Porte Juvenile Services Center
Requesting Permission to Hire
For Replacement Unit Leader

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Novak and seconded by Councilman Sullivan. Motion carried 7-0.

COUNTY COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Councilman Yagelski said Auditor Winski did a great job with the Agenda for this meeting.

Councilman Kirkham stated he attended the AIC meeting in Southern Indiana where he had the opportunity to learn about the new law that will garnish a person's state tax return if delinquent taxes or traffic fines are unpaid. On November 11th, there is an event to benefit Arts in the Park at the Civic Center.

Councilman Mollenhauer said it is important to remember that the 800 MHz system is for officer and public safety, and the inability for the citizens to listen on their scanners is of secondary importance.

Councilman Novak attended a Region 1 event in Merrillville. This weekend, the Veteran's Association is having a breakfast at the DAV from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. A parade will follow at noon.

President Santana said over the last few months that there have been transfers for sick and vacation pay out of Riverboat. He feels there should be a specific fund for this purpose and doesn't think that is part of why the Riverboat fund was created. He would like Auditor Winski and Attorney Friedman to determine if that is possible.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilman Novak and the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL this 27th of November, 2017.



Councilman Terry Garner



Councilman Cary Kirkham



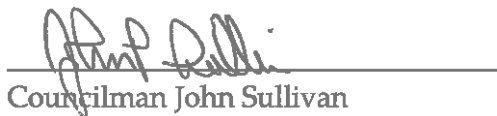
Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Randy Novak




Councilman Jeff Santana



Councilman John Sullivan


Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST. 
Joie Winski, La Porte County Auditor