



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

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
MAY 29, 2018 AT 6:30 P.M.**

(Please Turn Off All Cell Phones)

The Regular Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on May 29, 2018 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 Randy Novak called the Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Novak asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. President Novak asked that everyone, except emergency personnel, to please turn off their cell phones at this time. President Novak asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of Memorial Day.

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 29, 2018 AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 23, 2018 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Michael Seitz, La Porte County Office of Economic Development

Mr. Seitz distributed the final report for 2017 to the Council members. He added that there are pending major leads in Kingsbury and Pinola and a business expansion in Northern La Porte. He said that a member of Economic Development would be coming before the Council for approval of tax abatements.

Councilman Yagelski inquired into the status of 2018 tax abatements and Mr. Seitz said he would give a report at the next Council meeting.

Jeremy Sobecki, Superintendent, La Porte County Parks Department

Mr. Sobecki thanked Building Maintenance for their assistance with their heating and air conditioning, specifically Doug who helped them save money on repairs. He also thanked the Highway Department for cutting some dangerous trees over trails and paving a small area in front of one of the rental facilities which made it ADA compliant. Mr. Sobecki added that there is a new \$65,000.00 bridge at Red Mill County Park which connects two trails over the wetlands. It was made possible by a donation from decedent Margaret Burger. There will be a dedication on June 23rd at 10 a.m. where there will be activities at the wetlands and refreshments in Smith Hall. Also, improvements were made to the Environmental Education Center.

Joe Golec, La Porte County Veterans' Service Officer

Mr. Golec said he was before the Council to attempt to persuade the four previous dissenting members to reconsider the part time Veterans' Service Officer for Michigan City. He added that we remembered our Veterans on Memorial Day and hopes that they will also be remembered today. He stated that in attendance is Mr. Tom White from the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs. He then explained that whatever is brought in by the VSO Office for compensation, pension claims, etc. is federal money coming in to not only the State but also the County.

Mr. White detailed his background in the military. He said he feels a lot of gratitude working with thousands of Veterans. He receives Veterans' benefits for his 100% disability and says the \$3,600.00 he receives stays in the County in which he lives. He stated that between Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties, there are over 64,000 veterans. He discussed other Counties with more and less Veterans and the money that is received by them. He also explained how the claims process works and the how much knowledge a VSO must have to function effectively in his/her position. The challenge is getting Counties to insure that Veterans and their families know what services are available. He said it is vital for there to be VSOs who understand the language of the military who can best serve the veterans. If an additional part time VSO is added, he believes that the County would see a significant increase in assistance to the veterans in La Porte County.

Councilman Santana asked if it would be incumbent for the County to have a part time person to bring in the same funds that are currently being brought into the County. He said one individual has handled it for years, trained Mr. Golec, and was going to retire. Therefore, does having a part time VSO impact how much money the County will receive. Mr. White said that in the last six years, training has improved and increased.

Mr. Golec said he doesn't know what the Council is looking for. He added that revenues are going up every year. Councilman Yagelski said there are hundreds of service organizations such as VFW, DAV, and American Legion. These organizations are advantageous and are a tool to get information to the public. He also feels that volunteers can be used to inform other veterans of what resources are available through the Veterans' Service Office but still have the VSO give out the more detailed information. Councilman Kirkham said he is in full support of the part time VSO. He believes the County has been underserved and the increased numbers are a direct reflection of adding the VSO in Michigan City. Mr. White said there is an endless amount of veteran issues that cannot be answered by service organizations and can only be addressed by a trained VSO. Councilman Mollenhauer clarified that the Council does not want to eliminate the full time VSO and that he is greatly appreciated. He said the question is whether or not a part time

VSO is needed. It is his feeling that one full time person can handle offices in both Michigan City and La Porte. In addition, a majority of communication is over the telephone.

Councilman Santana said that last year, the Veteran Service Office received 4.8 calls in a 4-hour period; in April 2018, there were 94 visits/telephone calls. In Michigan City, there were 21 calls/visits over a period of 8 days. He stated that the Council is tasked with the fiscal responsibility to the County and he has heard throughout the County that an additional officer is unnecessary. He also announced that he is a staunch supporter of veteran service organizations. Mr. White expressed concern that too many veterans will remain unserved because they will visit an office and there will not be a VSO available. Councilman Santana responded that making appointments would remedy that situation. He added that per February 2018 meeting minutes, Mr. George Watkins stated that there are over 10,000 veterans in the County, but the number is decreasing due to older veterans passing away. Therefore, Councilman Santana feels that one VSO is sufficient to handle the Michigan City and La Porte offices. Mr. White said the veteran population is growing and the figures need to be updated for the Council to make an informed decision. Mr. Golec said it is necessary to rely on the monetary figures and not the number of veterans. He added that being a member of veteran service organizations does not insure that that the members know what services are available to them. Mr. White thanked the Council for letting him speak. President Novak said he supports the upcoming appropriation but would like to revisit at this year's budget hearings.

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

LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Kirkham had nothing to report.

Councilman Sullivan shared that Treasurer Lynne Spevak informed him \$72.9 million will be distributed from the May 2018 tax collection in the settlement process. 67,831 tax bills were issued and delinquent penalties will be added after May 10th. The property owners may make monthly payments to become current. The tax sale will be October 18, 2018 for all property owners 1 year in delinquency (May 2017 and prior). Residential, commercial, and vacant properties will be listed for property tax and penalties owed. The certified list will be created June 28th.

Councilman Santana stated EMA cameras/sirens/alert systems are going on Michigan City pier. He attended the EMS Awards. Rich Gramarossa took the walk through the downstairs of the Complex and the progress is fantastic.

Councilman Garner had nothing to report.

Councilman Mollenhauer attended a Health Department Board meeting on April 24th, on April 25th, he attended the La Porte County Redevelopment Commission meeting, on April 26th, he attended the Child Abuse Prevention Walk at the United Methodist Church, on May 10th he attended the Officers' Merit Commission and Pension Board meeting, and on May 11th, he attended the Fallen Officer Memorial Service. On May 16th, he attended the La Porte County Employee Health Insurance Quarterly meeting and it was reported that the County is \$26,936.00 under the projected 2018 quarterly costs. Human Resource Director Barb Mossman communicated to Councilman Mollenhauer that at the August 15th quarterly meeting, there will be information about the health insurance premium renewal. The underwritten finalized number should be available in September. He explained the renewal process and that there will be no disruption in the employee's deductible. If there are any questions, feel free to contact her since she was unable to attend tonight's meeting. On May 17th, he attended a workshop regarding property tax questions, on May

23rd, he attended the La Porte county Emergency Medical Service Award Ceremony and on the same day, he toured the reconstruction in the basement of the Complex and it is really coming along well and faster than anticipated. On May 28th, he attended the Veterans' Memorial at Fox Park, and on May 28th, he attended a memorial service for a fallen officer in Long Beach. A stone monument was also dedicated to three officers who lost their lives in the line of duty. The Health Department is on tonight's agenda for replacement of two employees who are very much needed. He also spoke with Solid Waste District Director Clay Turner and said things are progressing well with the transition from the Westville facility to Zigler Road. He asked for patience from the public.

Councilman Yagelski attended a workshop of Michigan Township Assessor Scott Bell and La Porte County Assessor Mike Schultz. He'd still like to see a computer program that would identify assessments that have significantly increased. He attended a NICTD meeting where the positive train control was discussed. The challenge is the amount of money it will cost to maintain which is causing a rate increase. There are both positive and negative responses to the rate increase but to insure safety, it was universally accepted.

President Novak attended the Veterans' Treatment Court graduation on May 22nd. He congratulated Roseanne and Jason for turning their lives around and completing the program. He also attended the EMS Awards and he congratulated those who won awards. There was a fairgrounds committee meeting for the new non-for-profit that was formed, and there is another meeting tomorrow night. There was a meeting with the Building Department regarding the new software rollout. The possible move-in for Probation is in June which is well ahead of what was anticipated.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Consider Approval of Council President's Authorization to Hire Replacement Position for Superior Court #4 Clerk's Office – Traffic/Small Claims Clerk and the Prosecutor's Office – Child Support Case Worker

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

2. Consider a Motion of Support for EMS to add an Additional Ambulance to La Porte County

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Kirkham and seconded by Councilmen Mollenhauer and Sullivan.

Councilman Yagelski believes the existing ambulances should currently be used because there are many challenges to the budget at this time. In addition, the budget hearings are only 45 days away and he would like to address it at that time. EMS Administrator Andrew McGuire sent out an email answering questions from the Workshop. He explained that on any given day, there is at least one, but sometimes two ambulances receiving maintenance, and sometimes the maintenance is long-term. There is the potential of running out of ambulances and be unable to service the community.

Councilman Kirkham said his concern is a life will be lost because of there is the unavailability of an ambulance. Councilman Yagelski said that the choices have to be smarter and trading in an ambulance for \$5,000.00 is not wise when it costs so much for a replacement. He stated that he is not opposed to a replacement ambulance, but the choices have to be smarter. Mr. McGuire clarified that the current trade-in amount of the ambulance is \$20,000.00. It was a separate line item in the bid but an ambulance could be held back and the price could be increased by \$20,000.00. Councilman Mollenhauer said there are a lot of upcoming costs that will impact the budget but obtaining an ambulance is critical to insure decent and safe ambulances are available. He is concerned about cutting corners and has observed that the ambulances

are consistently receiving maintenance. He is against keeping old equipment that continues to break down. Councilman Santana clarified there is an ambulance in Wanatah, two in La Porte and three in Michigan City plus an additional three in the fleet. Mr. McGuire stated that there is also a transfer crew that runs Monday through Friday. In addition, there are three back up ambulances. However, typically one is always in for maintenance. There are also stand-by ambulances required during the year for various events. Some maintenance issues require ambulances to be out of service for a significant amount of time. There has been an instance where there was the inability to make a transfer because the ambulances were either being used or out of service due to maintenance. Councilman Santana asked if ambulances are being dedicated to a particular place, is compensation being granted. Mr. McGuire said if there is a dedicated ambulance, off duty personnel and the ambulance are being paid for, but if only a drive-by is being requested there is no cost required. Councilman Yagelski the \$20,000.00 vehicle could be traded in next year or the year after, but feels it should be utilized for now for transfers and lighter duty. Auditor Winski said that the budget hearings are July 16th and 17th. After inquiry by Councilman Garner, President Novak stated that this is a motion of support for an ambulance and 6 personnel. Councilman Garner said it is not stated that way, and said the Council has fought the Sheriff for two deputies and safety for the southern part of La Porte County and the schools, and expressed disgust over this. President Novak took exception to that and said it is only a motion to support and could be voted against by a Council member if desired. He commented about keeping the old ambulance back as an option. EMS needs additional personnel and these people need to be assimilated into the budget. He continued that EMS has an excess amount of money being generated, so it is necessary to determine the offset. Even if the motion passes, it will only be for support and the ultimate outcome depends on the budget.

Mr. McGuire said he was able to add a spec to the contract for the new ambulance which keeps the cost at the same price if an additional ambulance is added next year, aside from the possible increased costs from tariffs. Because the budget numbers are not available, President Novak feels it is difficult to determine if the 6 additional personnel can be added. Councilman Yagelski asked the Council to table the motion until after the budget hearings. A motion to table was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Garner. Motion carried 4-3, with Councilmen Kirkham, Mollenhauer, and Sullivan voting Nay. President Novak clarified that a motion can be tabled at any time. It will be discussed again next month.

3. Proclamation in Support of National Drug Court Month – May 2018

President Novak read a letter of thanks from Judge Greta Friedman. Auditor Winski read the proclamation. A motion to approve Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Kirkham. Motion carried 7-0. President Novak said it is humbling to see how lives are turned around and how people are being helped. He thanked the entire team.

OLD BUSINESS

None

CORRESPONDENCE

None

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

None

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, REQUESTS

La Porte County Health Department
Requesting Permission to Replace
2 Existing Clerical Positions

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

La Porte County Assessor
Requesting Permission to Hire
For a Replacement COMOT V Position

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

La Porte County Parks' Department
Requesting Permission to Spend
From Parks' Department Non-Reverting Fund (2052)
For New Rental Hall Tables

\$6,949.65

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

La Porte County Commissioners
Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191), Win Tax (4220), or General (1000)
For Part Time Account

\$6,650.00

A motion to approve out of General (1000) was made by Councilman Kirkham and seconded by President Novak. Motion failed 5-2, with Councilmen Garner, Mollenhauer, Santana, Sullivan, and Yagelski voting Nay.

Councilman Yagelski made a motion to approve \$3,325.00 out of the General (1000) for the VSO to be in Michigan City one day a week to will be readdressed at budget hearings and was seconded by Councilman Garner. President Novak said he will vote against it because he feels it should be the full amount. Commissioner Mrozinski said there is nothing more important than safety for the Sheriff's Department, safety for EMS, and taking care of our veterans. He said the flag is waved every day for our veterans. He said the veterans need to know that there is someone in the County who is there for them. There was a small discussion of whether or not a part time VSO is necessary. Councilman Kirkham said he has friends who do not know what services are available to them. He also feels that the County spends a significant amount of money on various other things, but the Council would not be sitting here if it wasn't for our veterans. Commissioner Mrozinski said if it were up to him, he would have additional VSOs throughout the County. He added it is a big County with a lot of veterans and our backs cannot be turned against them.

Motion carried 5-2, with Councilmen Kirkham and Novak voting Nay.

La Porte County Sheriff's Department
Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191), Win Tax (4220), or General (1000)
For Jail Medical

\$165,000.00

Sheriff John Boyd said that each year, the line item for Jail Medical is \$120,000.00 but is now down to approximately \$2,600.00. This is not only due to the billing being behind, but also serious medical issues with inmates coming into the jail. He said his office is compliant with signing inmates up for HIP 2.0 and the state will cover 90% of their stay at the hospital. However, with one particular inmate there was a cost of \$42,000.00 even after the state paid its portion. There is another inmate who is required to have HIV medicine at a cost of approximately of over \$20,000.00. There have been a number of chronic illnesses at the jail. There are cases where a second opinion or additional services are required. Again, HIP 2.0 will cover 90% of overnight stays, but certain procedures are not covered and the Sheriff's Department must cover the cost.

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

La Porte County Coroner
Requesting an Additional Appropriation
From Riverboat (1191), Win Tax (4220), or General (1000)
For Additional Funds for Coroner Vehicle
(Previously Approved \$35,000.00 from Win Tax 4220)

\$5,709.00

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

La Porte County Maintenance
Requesting Permission to Transfer
From Janitor/Grounds Maintenance
For Purchase of Mower

\$11,300.00

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

COUNTY COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Councilman Yagelski said he doesn't want to argue with the VSOs but rather have a lively debate. He would like to meet with them and share his ideas of how to involve the outside service organizations. He thanked all veterans for their service and said shared his experience of the march for Post #451 in Michigan City on Memorial Day. He thanked the fire department for hanging between fire trucks at the cemetery and looks forward to meeting with the VSOs.

Councilman Santana said he will be the biggest supporter when there is justification for the need of an additional VSO. He believes there may have been a job promised and he feels things transpired over the last year or so with which he did not agree. If the numbers increase and there is a need, he will be in full support.

Auditor Winski reminded the Council that the meeting in June is the 18th. In addition, budget hearings are July 16th, 17th, and the 18th if needed. The state has moved everything back one month.

President Novak stated that prior to the June 18th meeting, he would like to get the salaries, but Auditor Winski interjected that there is also the luncheon at Purdue Extension on that day. President Novak said a special meeting needs to be scheduled to go over the salary studies. Auditor Winski said she would send out an email.

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

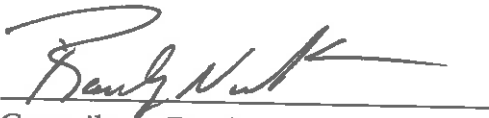
EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL this 18th of June, 2018.

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