



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202
La Porte, IN 46350-3400
Phone: (219) 326-6808 ext. 2229**

**Sheila Matias,
President**

**Dr. Vidya Kora,
Vice President**

**Richard Mrozinski,
Member**

**LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, February 5, 2020 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room #3 at 10:00 a.m.**

President Sheila Matias called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. President Matias asked for a moment of silence to remember former County Commissioner Bill Hager.

Auditor Joie Winski called the roll: Commissioner Kora - Present; Commissioner Matias - Present; Commissioner Mrozinski - Absent. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept the agenda. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approval of January 15, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Auditor Joie Winski read the claims of Payroll ending 1/17/2020 - \$1,512,882.32 and 1/31/2020 - \$1,262,045.24 and Miscellaneous claims - \$1,759,036.20. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

President Sheila Matias read into the minutes the "Policy to encourage effective, efficient use of public comment/input to aid La Porte County Commission" which are attached to these minutes. President Matias asked Attorney Shaw Friedman if he would like to add anything to the comments on the policy. Attorney Friedman stated "**No person may present any charges or complaints against individual employees of the county, department heads, professional advisors or elected officials without first presenting such charges or complaints to the Board, through the Presiding Officer, in writing, signed and verified by the group or person making the charge or complaint.**" This allows the Commissioners and Attorney Friedman the opportunity to investigate said charges then report back. It is good practice and that is why the Commissioners adopted the policy.

Public Comment

None

Commissioner Vidya Kora requested Jeremy Sobecki's item on the agenda "13 c" be brought forward and heard at this time due to another engagement Jeremy will be attending.

Considered Grant Agreement for Bioswale at Creek Ridge County Park – Jeremy Sobecki, Parks. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept the signature on the matching grant. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. Jeremy stated the Parks Dept had their awards ceremony the previous evening during the Park Board meeting. Organization of the Year went to the La Porte Slicers Building Trade Class for participating in the building of a shelter at Luhr Park. Volunteer of the Year went to Todd and Trina Walsworth from the Bike Stop for their design help of the bike trails. Park Service award went to Maintenance Supervisor Bob Goethals.

ORIGINAL

Department Head Comments

Steve Alt – E-911 Director – Reminded Commissioners of the upgrade for the equipment. Steve drafted an MOU with Porter County for coverage during the upgrade time. Steve also requested permission to approach the Council for funds needed for the upgrade. One great feature for the upgrade is if there is a power outage through the cat5 cable power will still supply to the unit. Steve stated a 3-year contract is \$242,931.42 which surcharges will be used to fund that amount. On New Year's Eve the fire departments were receiving weak pages. The current vendor was called out to remedy the issue. With this upgrade the issues should not happen. This system is \$78,242.72 which includes a maintenance agreement of 24/7 coverage. Current policy is when an issue arises Steve contacts the vendor but with this one the service would fix the problem before 911 even knows about it. Tested in the Chicago area. Requesting permission to approach the Council for new chairs for employees in the 911 Center. Cost is \$17,221.68 for 8 chairs that have a 10-year warranty. Certain items can be purchased with "surcharge fees" but not the chairs. Commissioner Kora asked about surcharge fees. Steve explained that his department is funded by surcharge fees through phone bills. The state disburses the fees to the local 911 departments. Commissioner Matias asked if the amount of \$242,931.42 is a "one-time fee" which Steve replied yes. The 911 equipment must be upgraded. Currently a version 4 but they need to be version 7 as per state. During the upgrade the system will be down approximately 8 hours and that is why the MOU with Porter County is being requested. Commissioner Kora asked about the 3-year warranty. The system will stay beyond that 3 years but the warranty is only for the 3 years. Commissioner Matias asked Auditor Winski if the user fee account has money which Joie replied yes, they have money. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve all 3 requests. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. Attorney Shaw Friedman stated the MOU with Porter County will be presented at the next Commissioners' meeting on the 19th.

Larry Levendowski – Director of Facilities – Reported last year concentrated on life safety and mechanical issues within the buildings. This year's goals will focus on Energy Savings within the buildings. Upcoming project will be blown insulation on the 3rd floor in the courthouse. Also LED lighting will be installed throughout both the La Porte Courthouse and Hiler Building. This will include sensors in the bathrooms that will automatically turn on/off when entered or exited. Work will be done in phases. Juvenile Service Center and Community Corrections will be done as well. EMS Projects are under way. The new facility in La Porte is on schedule. Within the next 1-2 months the Michigan City EMS building at Coolspring Avenue and Wabash Street will begin renovation. Drawings have been done for the new Rolling Prairie site, the Sauk Trail rest area that the county recently acquired on Highway 20 in Wills Township. Larry suggested a workshop be held to determine the best way to move forward on this project. Both Commissioners thanked Larry for his report and agreed a workshop would be best.

Barb Mossman – Human Resources and Bob Young – Highway Department Supervisor – Addressed comments made at the previous Commissioners' meeting pertaining to a county highway employee. Barb stated when equipment operators are hired there are certain requirements in the job description. One requirement is having a current valid CDL – Commercial Driver's License – either Class A or B. Along with the CDL the new hire must have a physical completed through the federal motor carrier safety administration by a doctor that is on the registry. The physical must be maintained while driving with the CDL. If the doctor feels a medical condition needs to be taken into consideration with the physical then that issue can be monitored for up to a year. The completed approved physical is valid for up to 24 months. Donna McCleary stated at the previous meeting her concerns for a county highway employee who should not be driving county vehicles. Due to Human Resources confidentiality for employees' files Barb stated a review was done on the employee's file and it did not yield any deficiencies resulting in the employee not being able to drive county vehicles. County Highway office keeps a list of CDL physicals which are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure employees are up to date on their certifications. If an employee is out on a leave of absence then returns to work a doctor's release is required for any restrictions or if they are cleared for full duty. If there are restrictions then it is up to the department to determine if they can work within those restrictions. Bob Young added the employee in question never had an "unfit for duty" in his file. The employee is also notified by the state when their CDL physical is nearing the deadline to renew. Commissioners thanked Barb and Bob for their update on comments made at the meeting on January 15th.

ORIGINAL

Bob Cutler – County Coroner – Shared information with the Commissioners on the signed mutual aid MOU with other counties to assist each other in the event of a disaster or mass fatalities situation. Counties participating with us are St. Joseph, Kosciusko, Fulton, Marshall and possibly Elkhart. All resources will be pulled together at no charge to each other to assist. All Commissioners from these counties have all signed the MOU. Bob stated we were the first county to implement this idea in the state and now the Indiana Association of Coroners will adopt and use it. La Porte and St. Joe counties were the pioneers of this mutual aid agreement. Commissioners thanked Bob Cutler for his leadership.

Tony Rodriguez – Office of Community and Economic Development – Reported a second try at the Rural Broadband grant from the Governor’s office will be applied for by Acme Communications and Comcast here in La Porte County. A letter of intent was issued by both private sector companies.

Presentation for FirstNet agreement by IT Director Darlene Hale and EMA Director Larry Butcher. Robert from AT&T was present as well. Darlene stated the state has a contract with AT&T to set up the portal for FirstNet. County currently uses Verizon cell phones. President Matias asked for clarification or an overview of the issue for the public’s benefit as to what the challenge is or why EMA would like to go to FirstNet through AT&T. Darlene said it is for “first responders” only. EMS, EMA and possibly Sheriff’s department. The ability to use the cell phone as a radio is the benefit by connecting through the 800 MHz. Commissioner Kora asked what AT&T does that Verizon doesn’t and Darlene replied the connection to the 800 MHz. Darlene tested the phones in various places in the county and the connection was good. Larry gave an example of the boat races that take place in Michigan City on the lake. At times cell services can get “bogged down” with users but with FirstNet that would not happen. Eric Fenstermaker, EMS Assistant Director, stated all of their data is 100% cellular or WiFi used. All ambulances, support vehicles, currently have modems that function off of Verizon network. Two weeks ago there was a major outage with Verizon. All tablets used for reporting patient care and cardiac monitors that transmit to the hospitals are all cellular so when Verizon coverage went down all data was lost. No EKGs were sent to the hospitals and care reports could not be generated. This issue prompted the First Responders to take a look at other options so this would not happen in the future. The current Verizon phone was compared, side by side, to the AT&T FirstNet demo for coverage and there was no comparison. AT&T’s FirstNet was much better in coverage areas. More coverage with less interruptions is what AT&T can offer. Eric stated while transmitting information to the hospitals time is of the essence and it is crucial if cellular coverage is lost. Commissioner Matias asked if a bundled rate is better when more departments go together. Robert, representative from AT&T, replied the rates have been negotiated with the state. Today’s request is for a participation agreement which gives the county the ability to purchase off the state contract. Commercial wireless network currently whereas FirstNet is not, it is a dedicated 1st responder network. It has additional benefits to it, more secured robust network which has additional frequencies to it. Governor Holcomb opted in to FirstNet in November 2017. It is a program nationwide and throughout the state. Commissioner Matias asked if Indiana State Police use this service. Marion County? Sheriff and EMA. Health Department, Prosecutor’s Office and the Coroner. St. Joe County? 90% of St. Joe’s 1st responders uses it. Porter County EMA uses it. Commissioner Kora asked about cost compared to Verizon. Price is about the same. Attorney Shaw Friedman said due to the preferred state recommendation for the service he agrees. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept the agreement with FirstNet for 1st responders. Commissioners Matias seconded it. Motion carried.

Requests

Considered permission for ALCO to approach Council to move equipment in the complex room – Mike Dempsey, Director of Operations for Access LaPorte County. Mike stated there are 3 entities that keep equipment in the small closet area where all equipment is currently kept – the court system, IT and ALCO. Difficult at times when ALCO employee logs in. Commissioner Kora asked for an estimate of cost – should not exceed \$1,000 replied Mike. Darlene Hale, IT Director, requested permission to add additional speakers for better sound quality in the room. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve request. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

ORIGINAL

Considered permission for closure of one lane during annual 5K/10K Resurrection Run/Walk NewDay Foundation April 11th – Cathy Dye, NewDay Foundation. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered LPCCVB Community Events Promotion Fund for \$500 each: LPCO Fair Pioneer Land, PKD Foundation, Westville Tri Kappa, Fish Lake Land Trust and Rumely Allis Chalmers La Porte Heritage Center. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered permission to advertise for rehabilitation of Bridges #77 and #78 – Jay Sullivan, County Engineer. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered appointments to Community Corrections Board – Greg Jones; La Porte County Board of Health – Dr. Georgetta Manning-Cox; La Porte County Public Library Board – Corey Campbell; La Porte County Convention & Visitors Bureau – Mike Seitz and Laura Krentz and Shared Ethics Advisory Board – Barb Mossman. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Old Business

Considered report from Attorney Laura Nirenberg regarding suggested date for stakeholders’/public workshop on commercial vehicles ordinance/receive draft permit flow chart connected with ordinance. Laura reminded Commissioners First Reading for this Ordinance took place at the January 15th meeting. A workshop for stakeholders and the public will be Friday, February 21st 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. Commissioner Kora asked if elected officials need to be present. Laura said no, the Sheriff and Highway Department will attend. Commissioner Matias suggested an evening meeting should be offered as well for those citizens that work during the day. Attorney Friedman stated Laura wanted to work with department heads that will be involved with this ordinance as well as stakeholders such as representatives of trucking companies that may have questions. Copies of the flow chart will be available in the Commissioners office for anyone wanting to know the process for the permits. Commissioner Matias stated she would like to see written letters included and reading comments into the record is important for the public. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve the date of the workshop for February 21st 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. in which stakeholders and the public may attend, submit comments whether in person, by letter or text and have the La Porte County Size and Weight Restriction Flow Chart available in the Commissioners office. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Report from liability agent of record on Franklin Street Bridge property damage/report of payment from Erie Insurance – John Jones, Michiana Insurance. John reported specifically on a couple of claims. In Michigan City on August 2, 2019 on the Franklin Street Bridge, an SUV was stuck between the gears on the lift bridge. A settlement has been reached with the driver’s insurance carrier, Erie, for \$100,000. The driver still contends that he was not at fault. A waiver for release of the \$100,000 requires a signature. Commissioner Kora asked how much money the county spent to repair the bridge from this accident. John replied he thought it was close to a million dollars due to other repairs were being done to the bridge. This accident was itemized over \$100,000 for repairs. Second claim John reported on was a trucking company with the same insurance, Great West Insurance Company, struck two county vehicles in two separate accidents, one a highway truck and the other a squad car. The waiver showed County Highway Dept as the signee but Attorney Friedman stated it needs to show County Commissioners for the signature. Commissioner Kora motioned for the agreement waiver to be signed. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

New Business

Considered Resolution honoring the League of Women Voters 100th year. Susan Webster, on behalf of the League of Women Voters, thanked the Commissioners. Commissioner Matias read the resolution. Commissioner Kora thanked the League for their civic engagement. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept the resolution. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. *****Resolution 2020-1**

ORIGINAL

Considered Parenting Inside/Out program at Community Corrections facility – Rob Neary, Community Corrections Director. Requested approval for the 12 week program designed to assists participates with interactions with their children. The program cost is \$3,500 which would come out of the commissary fund. Rob handed out booklets to the Commissioners. Commissioner Matias asked if there is a trainer within the department for this program. Assistant Director Sojourner Atwater stated two case managers will take training through the Pathfinder Network then once certified they will be able to facilitate the program. Rob introduced Toni Mandeville who was present as well. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept the program. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Vidya Kora reflected on serving as a Commissioner. Often asked why he runs for public office in spite of having a busy medical practice, Dr. Kora stated he emigrated from India making La Porte County his home where he has served the community in various capacities to make the community a better place to live, work and raise his family. There are times when a “special moment” makes it all worthwhile to serve and Dr. Kora spoke about a recent one. Last week a million dollar grant came in from the IDEC to help connect La Porte County, the six million dollar rail spur at the KIP, with the CSX main line. Gratification was felt at that time. Dr. Kora thanked his fellow Commissioners, County Council, Redevelopment Commission, Matt Reardon, Tony Rodriguez, State Legislatures - Representative Jim Pressel and Senator Mike Bohacek and Attorney Shaw Friedman. Commissioner Kora also stated he attended a recent meeting with Indiana Secretary of Commerce Jim Schellinger in Chicago where he pressed the importance of this issue. Both Jim and Butch Morgan from South Bend aided as well as other IEDC officials and private sector partners to bring this all together. Economic Development is a team sport.

Commissioner Sheila Matias said the word “team sport” cannot be understated. Economic Development can be hard at times, the work is done confidentially with “for profit” companies. Sheila stated this has been years in the making, everyone put their own issues aside and worked together to accomplish this mission. KIP has been a subject in social media. Bringing rail into the park is positive for the county. Commissioner Matias reported on a few items. The county’s new website has had a bit of a delay but nothing major. Launch date will be announced at the next Commissioner’s meeting. Broadband Task Force has an upcoming public meeting on Friday, February 7th at Purdue Northwest campus with Pat McMahon as the guest speaker. Sheila thanked everyone for “well wishes” sent to her during recovery.

Adjournment

President Matias adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 2-19-2020

Sheila Matias

Vidya Kora

ATTEST: _____
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL



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**POLICY TO ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT USE OF PUBLIC
COMMENT/INPUT TO AID LAPORTE COUNTY COMMISSION**

In accordance with the Indiana Open Door Law (I.C. 5-14-1.5 et seq.) all regular and special meetings of the Board of County Commissioners will be open to the public. Notice and agendas will be provided by the required forty eight (48) hours before the meeting to the press, posted outside our meeting room as well as posted on the county's website.

Because this Board strongly believes in hearing the views of citizens residing in La Porte County and organizations located here, we seek to adopt a policy to encourage effective and efficient use of public comment and input to aid us in our decision-making on various topics.

The following guidelines will assist the Commission in hearing public comment while conducting effective meetings:

1. "Public Comment" will be listed on the agenda not only at the beginning of every meeting but will also be received before the Board votes on a given resolution or ordinance that appears on the agenda.
2. Each person must give his/her name and address when addressing the Board.
3. As a routine matter, Public Comment will be confined to three (3) minutes per person, however the Presiding Officer may at his/her discretion permit a longer time period for a given comment if he/she believes it is in the 'public interest' for the normal time period to be extended.
4. All statements shall be directed to the Presiding Officer; no person may address or question Board members individually.
5. The Presiding Officer may prohibit comments which are deemed frivolous, repetitive, or harassing. The Presiding Officer may interrupt, warn or terminate a person's statement when the statement is too lengthy, personally directed, abusive, obscene or irrelevant and may request any individual to leave the meeting when that person behaves in a manner that is disruptive to the orderly conduct of the meeting.
6. No person may present orally or discuss at any meeting of the Board any charges or complaints against individual employees of the county, department heads, professional advisors or elected officials without first presenting such charges or complaints to the Board, through the Presiding Officer, in writing, signed and verified by the group or person making the charge or complaint.
7. Remarks by any persons addressing the Board which reflect adversely upon the character and motives of any other person or group are out of order. Also, attacks in the form of inferences, insinuations and innuendoes against the character or motives of any person are out of order.

As a board, we believe strongly that we as elected officials, our department heads, professional advisors and employees are all servants of the voting public and that we benefit by a wide range of views and input as we deliberate and consider important issues confronting our county. The guidelines above are designed to enhance orderly and efficient receipt of public comment, while at the same time ensuring a level of civility and decorum appropriate for a properly conducted business meeting of the Board.

ORIGINAL

RESOLUTION 2020-1

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA, HONORING THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS ON THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR FOUNDING**

WHEREAS, the Women's Suffrage Movement was organized in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention in New York State and over the next 72 years, many women dedicated their very lives to the cause; and

WHEREAS, on June 4th, 1919, the assembled Congress of the United States of America passed the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting states and the federal government from denying the right to vote to citizens of the United States on the basis of sex, and submitted it to the states for ratification; and

WHEREAS, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified by the last of the necessary thirty-six states on August 18th, 1920 and was officially adopted on August 26th in the year 1920; and

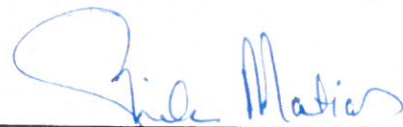
WHEREAS, the League of Women Voters was organized on February 14th, 1920 to educate and engage these newly enfranchised women; and

WHEREAS, in the past 100 years, through the actions of and with the support of the League of Women Voters, women have made significant contributions to government and the real-life issues affected by government; and

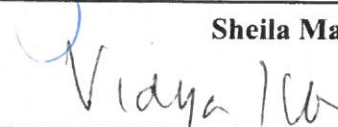
WHEREAS, the League of Women Voters has promoted participation by informed citizens at all levels of government and has helped shape public policy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the Board of Commissioners of La Porte County, Indiana, honors the League of Women Voters on the 100th anniversary of their founding.

2-5-2020

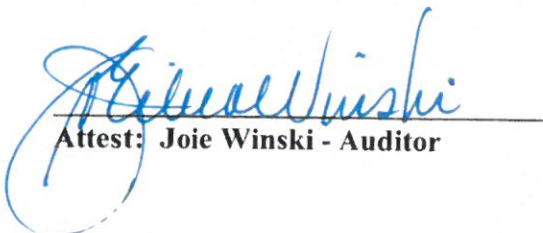


Sheila Matias - President



Dr. Vidya Kora - Vice President

Richard Mrozinski - Member



Attest: Joie Winski - Auditor

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