



**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, April 1, 2020 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room #3 at 10:00 a.m.
via ALCO and Zoom**

President Sheila Matias called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Kora motioned to amend the agenda by adding 2 items under New Business "Consider resolution to put on hold the Michigan City Courthouse renovation" and "Consider resolution regarding the timely deposits of funds and the approval of claims" to the agenda. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approval of March 18, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Auditor Joie Winski via Zoom read the claims of Payroll ending 3/27/2020 - \$1,189,026.56 and Miscellaneous claims - \$1,100,704.86. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Prior to Public Comment Commissioner Kora stated the Coronavirus situation has had some health consequences all over the country including deaths. There have been significant economic consequences as well for our county. The economy has come to a sudden stop and thousands of workers are now unemployed. Blue Chip casino, which is used to supplement us, has been closed. Expenses will probably arise from this COVID-19 virus. We are in a totally different world right now. Commissioner Kora motioned to put the Michigan City Courthouse project on a temporary hold for now until the economy improves and hoped to move this resolution to the County Council to do the same. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski agreed by saying it is the responsible thing to do right now. As a tax payer and a Commissioner he seconded the motion. President Sheila Matias weighed in on the resolution. Right now it is critical and essential to wait on the renovation project during this pandemic. Vote was taken, 3 'ayes' therefore motion carried. Verbal Resolution passed. Approved motion will be forwarded to the Council as the unanimous recommendation of the Commission.

Public Comment

Mike Rosenbaum – County Council via Zoom – Spoke only for himself and not the Council but believes a workshop should have taken place prior to the resolution to put the Michigan City Courthouse renovation project on hold. Commissioner Kora said he agrees with the joint workshop and this resolution is not about the financing but is simply putting the project on hold during the COVID-19 crisis.

Randy Novak – County Council President via Zoom – Two weeks ago the Commissioners were 'gung ho' on moving this project forward now all of a sudden without consulting the Council this resolution has passed. It's better to work together for all of us. Commissioner Kora replied the urgency with the economy prompted this

ORIGINAL

action and nothing else. Hopefully this will only be short-term. Randy said communication would be appreciated. President Sheila Matias stated in stressful times it's better to pull together than divide. This resolution is the sentiment of the Commission expressing concerns for our financial responsibility right now to the tax payers. Coronavirus procedures prompted the discussion on finances during this time and Attorney Shaw Friedman emailed both Council and Commission at the same time with the information he researched.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Tony Mancuso and Jenny Smith – Health Department – Restaurants are still being inspected due to carry-outs that are available. Construction building has not stopped so septic inspections are still being done. IDEM has not suspended water samples so those are being tested in the lab. Complaints are still coming in. Tony said Jenny will give an update on what the nurses are going through during this time. President Matias asked Tony if there were any additional support his office may need. Tony replied it will be the nurses that will need the help as more cases come in. President Matias requested Tony put together a list of what his department will need. Commissioner Kora said there are 6 nurses in the county health department and if Tony could determine what other employees in the health department can do clerical work or work not done by a nurse will be great. Jenny said a few more cases have been reported so that puts the county at 13 cases. Every day reports come in from the hospitals, doctors offices, and NBS system which is the communicable disease reporting system. Every positive case that comes is thoroughly investigated which includes contact tracing which goes back 2-3 days of their symptoms onset. Every person they've been around is then investigated too. The average investigation is taking up to 6-7 hours per client. Instructions are given for quarantine and isolation. Hotline numbers to call if they do not have a doctor. All high and low risks contacts are followed up. Low risks are casual contacts that are a distance of 6 feet or further away whereas high risks are within that 6 foot distance for longer than 10 minutes or someone you shared saliva with by kissing, sharing utensils or cups. Each high risk case needs to be quarantined for 14 days. Commissioner Kora stated once testing is more available each contact should be tested to get a handle on the spread of the virus. Identify the positives and isolate them is the way to win this war. President Matias asked what the compliance attitude around quarantine is and are they grateful for the instructions. Jenny said yes, 100% of them are on board. They are scared and don't want to spread the virus.

Requests

None

Old Business

Considered bid recommendation for bridges #77 and #78 – Jay Sullivan, Engineer. Larson Danielson will be awarded the bid for the bridges. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Considered contract with USI for 2021-2023 Bridge Inspection – Jay Sullivan, Engineer. Attorney Shaw Friedman stated after reviewing this contract Auditor Joie Winski had a question about it being a 3-year contract versus the usual 1-year contract. Auditor Joie Winski said it should not be a 3-year right now and recommended a 1-year contract. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept a 1-year contract with USI for bridge inspections. Commissioner Mrozinski asked if it would ensure the price not increasing every year by locking it in for 3 years instead of the one year. Auditor Winski replied the cost for 3 years is not something we should do during this time. Commissioner Kora asked if all of the money needs to be paid up front. Auditor Winski said we need to look at the future, future of loss revenue, loss income, and loss tax dollars. The Governor extended the deadline to pay property tax up to July 11th with no penalties. Commissioner Kora withdrew his motion to accept a 1-year contract with USI. Jay Sullivan, Engineer, phoned in via Zoom and stated this is an 80/20 grant from INDOT. It is not a yearly contract but one contract for 4 years with 4 phases for the inspections and might be a federal requirement. Attorney Friedman asked if it is differed until the next meeting would it pose a problem in terms of the deadline. Jay replied he had received emails from INDOT requesting the signed contract by the Commissioners. Commissioner Kora motioned to table the contract. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried to table until the next meeting on April 15th. *****Tabled until 4-15-2020**

ORIGINAL

Considered Otis Road time extension contract with INDOT – Jay Sullivan, Engineer. No cost to the county. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

New Business

Considered Supplement Lincoln Trail contract extension of current deadline – Mitch Bishop via Zoom corrected the wording by saying it is not an extension but a contract amendment to include an archeological survey. This trail goes from 300 south along the old Monon trail west of Purdue Northwest. Requesting permission to approach the Council for 20% match. Attorney Friedman has reviewed the supplement and recommends approval. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Considered permission to approach the Council for construction of left turn signal addition to the 400 North and Johnson Road intersection – Jay Sullivan, Engineer. INDOT investigated and determined a left turn signal was not necessary for this project so the County would have to absorb the cost of \$9,287.79. If the Council did not want to go this route the Highway department might be able to pay for it through CEDIT. Commissioner Kora motioned to accept. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

Considered 1st reading of a proposed contractor payroll fraud ordinance – John Carr, Nick Pollock Indiana/Kentucky/Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters. Attorney Shaw Friedman stated this proposed ordinance would have the county be consistent with ordinances already adopted by both La Porte and Michigan City to deal with this persistent issue of contractor fraud. John Carr, Indiana/Kentucky/Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters and the La Porte Starke Pulaski County Building Trades Council and Nick Pollock, Indiana/Kentucky/Ohio Regional Council of Carpenters out of Local Union 1485 in La Porte. John stated this ordinance would put language in place to prevent contractors from paying their employees cash which leaves municipalities deprived of local taxes. It also creates an unfair advantage for law abiding contractors that pay into workers' compensation and payroll taxes. This is happening more in the construction business usually in wood framing and drywall projects and both commercial and residential projects. Northwest Indiana has taken the lead on passing ordinances in municipalities to address this issue. La Porte County would be the first county to pass an ordinance such as this one which would protect local tradesmen and local contractors. Nick Pollock echoed what John stated but wanted to emphasize on paragraph 2 of the proposed ordinance. Basically all about tax dollars coming back to the area is what is important, especially during a time like this with what is happening due to Coronavirus. Both John and Nick thanked the Commissioners for their consideration of the ordinance. President Matias called for public comment. None was heard so Commissioner Kora motioned to adopt on 1st reading. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried. Second reading will be on the April 15th meeting.

Considered resolution regarding the timely deposits of funds and the approval of claims. Attorney Friedman said this was recommended in response to one of the Governor's executive orders. Various governmental agencies around the state are adopting similar resolutions. This will allow, if for some reason the Board cannot meet to approve claims then the executive officer, the President, is authorized to sign them. This offers some flexibility. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.

*****Resolution 2020-10**

Attorney Shaw Friedman spoke on the new State Board of Accounts guidance which provides some needed flexibility which was requested in a resolution two weeks ago. If in some certain circumstances there may be certain funds surplus that could be used for COVID related expenses, and an ordinance has been passed by the Commission, it gives some flexibility to cover some of those expenses. Both the Board of Commissioners and the County Council approved this Resolution which was sent down to the Governor's office.

ORIGINAL

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski stated a few positive things have happened during this crisis. A wounded warrior who owns a distillery is now making hand sanitizer with his equipment instead of whiskey. Kim Sauers, local business man, donated N95 masks from his company. This confinement that has changed everyone’s demeanor, everyone is on edge, we need to remember everyone has something going on so please just respect each other, keep tempers under control and we will get through this time. Stay home if you possibly can. Rich thanked Dr. Kora for dealing with both right now, a doctor and a Commissioner, both being stressful.

Commissioner Vidya Kora thanked Rich for his words of wisdom. Reminded everyone that the surge for our state will happen in the next two weeks. Very, very important to take this seriously and stay home. If you do not need to be out please stay home. If you are out providing essential services please just do that and get back home. Not proven but prudent to use a mask, scarf or bandanna if possible. No treatment or vaccine at this time. Best thing to do right now is social distancing, stay at home until this peak goes down. This will flatten the curve, meaning instead of a big spike where the health care system may not be able to handle a large capacity of patients coming in all at one time, this will help alleviate that spike. Eat right and get the right amount of sleep. Prayer is a good thing, helps to reduce stress, improving a sense of optimism, sense of gratitude, all are good to improve our immunity. Meditation and mindfulness are important too. Request to employers, please allow your staff that has underlining health problems to stay home. We need to protect the most vulnerable. Continue to work with both hospitals. PPE is a priority for all of our 1st responders. Commissioner Kora thanked all of the employees during this difficult time. He thanked all of his colleagues- doctors, nurses, physical therapists, respiratory therapists, and all of the hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes for continuing to work through difficult and trying times. He is eternally grateful to all of them.

Attorney Shaw Friedman stated Access La Porte County will be televising Governor Eric Holcomb live address today at 1:30 p.m. on channel 97.

President Sheila Matias said since January to the launch of the new website on March 4th, there have been 8,000 unique visitors spending approximately 55 seconds on the site. From March 4th to April 1st there have been 25,000 unique visitors to our website spending about 2 minutes on the site. There is a COVID-19 page on the website with information constantly being added for the public. President Matias said she has been talking to people and there is stress among them. Feeling helpless and they want to be able to do something but for right now the importance of staying home and social distancing is the best thing to do if you can. Parents are at home being teachers to their children while schools are closed. Restaurants offer carry out only so people have become cooks and bottle washers where normally they are at their job or profession. All schools have done a great job trying to figure out how to handle education and feeding students during this time. Science experiments are being done in backyards. Parents are coming up with ideas to keep their children healthy and happy. President Matias was grateful for the county team that has pulled together, IT, Health Department, Law Enforcement, EMS, EMA, and 911 Dispatch. The best of humanity comes out during tough times. Be a good neighbor, be a good American. Stay home if possible, look out for our elders and anyone in need right now. Pull together as La Porte County cares.

Adjournment

President Matias adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE _____

Sheila Matias
Vidya Kora
Rich Mrozinski

ATTEST: _____
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL