



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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**Sheila Matias
President**

**Dr. Vidya Kora
Vice President**

**Richard Mrozinski
Member**

**LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 20, 2020 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room 3 at 4:00 p.m.
via ALCO and Zoom**

President Sheila Matias called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Executive Assistant Diane Gonzales called the roll: Commissioner Kora - Present; Commissioner Matias - Present; Commissioner Mrozinski - Absent. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Kora motioned to add items “re-opening of county buildings” and “amend the current COVID-19 policy”. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. Commissioner Kora then motioned to accept the amended agenda. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approval of May 6, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Executive Assistant Diane Gonzales read the claims with Payroll ending 5/8/2020 - \$1,169,396.65 and Miscellaneous claims - \$857,626.58. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment

State Senator Mike Bohacek – Briefed Commissioners on the upcoming IURC rate case. Phone calls have been coming in throughout his district. Rate structures are being revisited in all utility companies throughout the state. Providing rate release for themselves and not the consumer to offset some of the diminished demands for services. There is a remonstrance process that the regular rate payer/citizen can use at in.gov/oucc/2370 and he urged all whether you are for or against it that we speak out and let the OUCC be aware of our testimonies.

Joe Haney – 2695 W. Joliet Road La Porte – Echoed Senator Bohacek’s comments on the rate increase and to keep in mind there are unintended consequences that have spread out from keeping the economy shut down during this pandemic. Hopefully we can continue to move forward quickly as possible while still respecting our most vulnerable.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Tony Rodriguez – OCED – Reported on the La Porte County Action Fund and the \$250,000 grant for small businesses in the county. Thanked both Senator Bohacek and Representative Pressel for their efforts to assist our county. Currently most work being done today is virtual. There have been 19 significant prospects looking at La Porte County to bring businesses to the area.

Tony Mancuso – Health Dept – Updated Commissioners on Governor Holcomb’s next phase 3 of the re-opening plan. Gatherings are up to 100 people instead of 25. Retail will be at 75% capacity.

ORIGINAL

Larry Butcher – EMA Director – Reminded all that it is imperative to keep track of all receipts for anything pertaining to COVID-19.

Update on any polling place cancellation/approval of new or consolidated polling places/review process of handling and processing Absentee ballot requests – County Election Board. No one was present to give an update. President Matias voiced her concern as a Commissioner that it had been reported to her on several issues pertaining to Absentee Voting. Commissioner Kora asked the current status of the polling locations. All but 2 had said yes to be used for a location on June 2, 2020 for the primary Election. Darlene Hale, IT Director, demonstrated how to access the application and/or polling locations on our county website.

Requests

Considered contract between the Fair Board and Sheriff's Department during the week of the fair. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Old Business

Discussion on construction and financing schedules for the Michigan City courthouse renovation with members of the construction and finance teams. Handouts were given to the Commissioners. Bids will be advertised by Tonn & Blank with a deadline of June 1st then opened at the meeting scheduled June 3rd at 10:00 a.m. **Tonn & Blank representative John Gilmore** via Zoom stated the bids will be reviewed after opening then a contract amount for the sum of the qualified bids will be provided on or around June 17th which should fit in with the bond issue schedule. September 8th is when construction should begin. The old annex building will be demolished and replaced with a new building. Should finish around September of 2022. Both Commissioners thanked all that have been involved with the renovation on the project, especially during the “pause” due to COVID-19. **Patti Zelmer with Ice Miller** via Zoom, reported on the bond finance. A timetable was given to the Commissioners which Patti referred to stating the changes in financing from where we were before when the project originally started was a lease financing structure in order to allow the bonds to be issued by a building corporation and not count against the county's constitutional debt limit. It has now shifted to a plain bond issue instead of a lease structure. Plain bond issue has advantages such as can be done quicker and usually overall lower costs. The county does not have anything outstanding to count against the debt limit. Structures were switched in order to move more quickly, the amount of funds would come from two different sources and to lower the overall cost. Repayment to the bond is exactly the same as it was when it was a lease. Certified shares of the county with a property tax backup. The June 30th deadline is still in place but the state has recognized there has been obstacles due to the virus. Compliance extended, order giving authority to go past June 30th deadline to September 8, 2020. Informational only for this meeting.

New Business

Considered Capital Asset Policy in connection with the county's plan to achieve GAAP compliance – Joie Winski, Auditor. Auditor Winski stated this is the last step for this GAAP compliance. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered possible intervention in IURC case – Cause No. 45377 – where state's investor owned utilities have requested the IURC to consider a “tracker” mechanism where utilities' pandemic-related expenses and lost revenues are taxed to ratepayers. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried by voice vote.

Considered contract Right-of-Way services for Bridge 186 – Jay Sullivan, Engineer. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered County Buildings Re-Opening Plan submitted by Judge Greta Friedman and Steve Eyrick. Commissioner Kora participated in the re-opening plan. Staff and public will be protected. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias said employees are anxious to get back to work in the offices.

ORIGINAL

Currently in Phase 1 – May 15 through June 1, 2020. Phase 2 will be June 1 to June 15 and Phase 3 from Monday, June 15th moving forward. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered amended COVID-19 policy. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Commissioner Comments

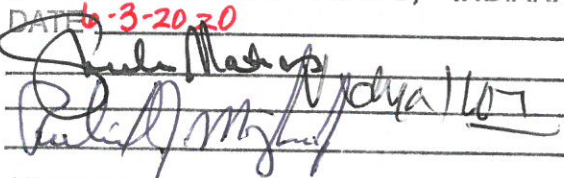
Commissioner Vidya Kora stated working at the clinic and hospital he has yet to see the virus spread employee to employee. 1. Symptoms 2. Social distancing 3. Wear masks and 4. Hand hygiene. Each one is a percentage but together most effective.

President Sheila Matias expressed gratitude for Dr. Kora for creating policy and sharing information from his experiences during this pandemic. Reported on numbers as of today for positive cases. Thanks to Tony Rodriguez and Bailey McGrath for the broadband taskforce efforts especially during this time when a lot of people are at home.

Adjournment

President Matias adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

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

DATE: 6-3-2020


ATTEST: _____ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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