



**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, October 21, 2020 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room 3 at 6:00 p.m.  
via ALCO and Zoom

**President Sheila Matias** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

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

**Considered approval of October 7, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.**

**Executive Assistant Diane Gonzales** read the claims with Payroll ending 10/9/2020 - \$1,176,235.87 and Miscellaneous claims in the amount of \$1,066,102.18. **Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.**

**Presentation by Representative Jim Pressel** of an award to La Porte County MS4 Coordinator Rick Brown and his assistant/director Ariana Woodson for being recognized as number one in the state of Indiana for education and outreach. Over 300,000 views on YouTube about stormwater. Each received a plaque from the state of Indiana.

**President Sheila Matias** reminded everyone of civility. Expectations of the Commissioners' rules are no personal attacks, three minutes to speak and Election Day is less than 30 days away therefore this is not a political campaign stop, it is a business meeting.

**Public Comment**

**Phil Janik, Jr.** – 8911 W. Division – La Porte – Known as the ‘Hoosier Bee Man’ specializing in producing 100% pure, raw local honey. Phil maintains 50-75 beehives between 3 bee yards within 10 miles of his home. Eastern Equine Encephalitis – Triple E – was found in an individual and a horse in September in La Porte County. Indiana State Department of Health conducted aerial spraying of mosquito adulticides September 22-23. The spraying of the pesticide impacted Hoosier Bee Man’s business by \$25,000. President Matias instructed the Office of Community and Economic Development to assist Mr. Janik with an application for assistance for small businesses.

**Andrew Voeltz** – Attorney with Howes and Howes – Informed Commissioners that his client, Arthur Lilly, who resides at 392 Kenwood Street in the city of La Porte, has gone before the Traffic Division in the City of La Porte to receive preliminary approval of the vacation of the plotted but undeveloped roadway known as Kenwood Street. Mr. Lilly owns 6 continuous parcels with Kenwood bisecting his parcels.

County Commissioners are adjacent landowners with two parcels completely submerged in water. Nick Otis, La Porte City Attorney, Nick Minich, City of La Porte Engineer and County Attorney Shaw Friedman have all been kept in the loop with Andrew on the intent to vacate. Two parcels owned by the Commissioners were plotted but undeveloped many, many years ago dating back to the 1960's, were purchased at a tax sale but then given back to the county after purchaser realized parcels were 'undevelopable' due to being under water. Andrew wanted the Commissioners to be aware this petition is in the works.

**Andrew** thanked Attorney Shaw Friedman for responding quickly to his access to public records requests for D&M Excavating and he looks forward to the request in a timely manner.

**Joe Haney** – 2695 W. Joliet Road La Porte – Congratulated MS4 Rick Brown and his award. Commented on the agenda item for PPE storage. Stated a committee should have been formed for the PPE.

**Department Reports/Department Head Comments**

**Barb Mossman** – Human Resources - Reported finalizing numbers for open enrollment. Possibly 7.78% rate increase for insurance premiums. Open enrollment will begin November 16-30 and will be all virtual. Commissioner Kora said he serves on the insurance committee and while reviewing the numbers with General Insurance it was noted there was an expected claim liability of 8.5 million dollars. The projected amount for 2021 is 9.4 million dollars. We are self-funded. We do get rebates returned to the county in approximately \$700,000. The only increase we may see is with the Stop Loss premium. The insurance carriers pays up to \$175,000 for each claim individual per year and anything above that amount to the Stop Loss. **Commissioner Kora motioned to approve Barb Mossman to approach the Council for funding renewal for the 2021 year for health insurance premiums. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried. \*\*\*Exact figures to be determined however maximum figure is 9.4 million. Negotiations are still in the works.**

**Tony Mancuso** – Health Department Director – As of 11:00 a.m. our county went into the orange color within the state of Indiana with our Covid cases skyrocketing. Our county might want to go back to 4.5 stage. Michigan Township Trustee's office in Michigan City on Michigan Blvd will begin testing November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Dr. Deausy said letters will be sent out to businesses in our county who do not comply with the face mask requirement. Health Department does possess the ability to pull a food permit if need be to ensure compliance. Letter was read into the minutes. **\*\*\*Attached with minutes**

**Larry Butcher** – EMA Director – Sufficient amount of PPE on hand. Covid Committee can be contacted at any time for supplies.

**Darlene Hale** – IT Director – Stated temperature screening kiosks are in and will be installed next week.

**Requests**

**Considered** update proposed solar project near KIP with Inovateus Solar – Keith Beall. Keith said Inovateus Solar is based out of South Bend and is an engineering and installation company. Currently working with Nipsco and have submitted a substantial solar project to Nipsco. This is a 100 million dollar solar energy replacement for Nipsco as the current generating plant is phased out.

**Considered** update on search for a suitable building or warehouse for PPE to be paid for by CARES Act Fund. Attorney Shaw Friedman stated for the record why his office recommended the Commissioners acquire the building at 507 Monroe Street using federal funds at a price that was \$25,000 over the last listed price. "I had no reason to doubt the owner who told me that he was getting offers above list price and he also knew this building would suit our purposes perfectly. My office, as you know, takes a back seat to no one in pushing for a fair return of our federal and state tax dollars to this community. As you all know I've written numerous memos to the Council and to the Commission over the last 3 months urging us not to leave one dollar on the

table when it came to the 3.6 million in federal CARES Act Funds for La Porte County. I'm also proud to have cofounded an organization with La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody, Northern Indiana Advocates, to push for a fair return of state tax dollars for our region. Now a couple of months ago our Facilities Director, Larry Levendowski, identified 3 buildings close to the courthouse that would be good for PPE storage, including 1) the Herald Argus Building; 2) the old Dye buildings on Washington Street and 3) the building at 507 Monroe Street. The Herald Argus Building sold for around \$235,000, still needs roof repairs. The City is no longer interested in selling the Dye buildings on Washington Street because they are hoping to eventually have a pedestrian bridge from La Stitch, that new development on Monroe Street, over the tracks to NewPorte Landing. In fact I toured the 507 Monroe Street building a couple of months ago with both Mr. Levendowski and Council President Novak. And keep in mind we either use those federal CARES Act tax dollars by the end of the year or they revert to state government. Yes, I recommended the Commissioners to pay a premium with federal CARES Act money to acquire a building that our Facilities Director has identified as ideal for clean, dry storage for PPE. It can also be used to move the entire maintenance department and set up central purchasing department which we have long talked about and which will save local tax dollars going forward." Commissioner Kora said our Facilities Director will give his presentation once he returns to work.

### **Old Business**

**Considered** favorable recommendation from Plan Commission to vacate Beach Drive – Andrew Voeltz, Attorney for Petitioners Don and Catherine Boody. Second and final reading for Ordinance 2020-6.

**Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Kora seconded. Motion carried.**

**\*\*\*Ordinance 2020-6**

**Considered** permission to change life insurance carriers. John Jones, Life Insurance Agent of Record, stated Grange Life would be ending their services with the County on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The replacement will be EMC National Life Company out of Des Moines, Iowa. **Commissioner Kora motioned to approve.**

**Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.**

### **New Business**

**Considered** favorable recommendation from Plan Commission to vacate portion of Canal Street in Hudson Township – Andrew Voeltz, Attorney for petitioners on 1<sup>st</sup> reading. **Commissioner Kora motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** update from Office of Community Economic Development regarding additional prospective development at NorthPoint complex (former Roundy's warehouse). Tony Rodriguez stated a potential employer looking to locate in La Porte County would bring 200 jobs to our county. Attorney Friedman reported that La Porte County is being recognized in Inside Indiana Business with Gerry Dick pertaining to freight rail planned for KIP.

**Considered** zero rent lease for use of former Coolspring Library location owned by La Porte Hospital for Absentee Voting at 400 North and Johnson Road. **Commissioner Kora motioned to approve.**

**Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried.**

### **Commissioner Comments**

**Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** wore Pink for National Breast Cancer awareness month during October and Ovarian Cancer awareness.

**Commissioner Vidya Kora** wished President Matias a Happy Birthday. Thanked Office of Community and Economic Development for their hard work.

ORIGINAL

**Commissioner Sheila Matias** said the focus on jobs for our community is an important one. Two new Absentee Voting locations so be sure to get out and vote early.

**President Sheila Matias adjourned at 7:30 p.m.**

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA  
DATE 11-10-2020 Sheila Matias

Paul J. Merzianik

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL

Dear Business Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Recently, a number of complaints have been lodged with the LaPorte County Health Department about lax adherence to the county and state mask mandate in certain businesses in our county.

The widely respected Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation predicts that if 95% of Americans just wore masks (the level in Singapore) then nearly 100,000 lives could be saved between October 1, 2020 and the end of the year. A review of **172 studies** in the respected British Medical Journal *The Lancet* found that face masks significantly reduce virus transmission.

This is a nominal request to make of you, your employees and your customers. While there are no monetary fines for non-compliance, the department can and will consider pulling the food permit for any establishment that sells or conveys food that is not adhering to CDC guidelines.

Also keep in mind as a business owner that you bear the very real risk of workers' compensation liability if one of your employees becomes sick because of relaxed mask wearing, or if one of your customers or patrons becomes ill and later brings suit against your establishment.

Please also be aware that there is no current immunity from liability which means the best way for you to protect against liability as a business owner is to **insist** that your employees, patrons and guests all strictly adhere to the following masking guidelines:

1. **Masks must be worn in public spaces where commerce is being conducted.**
2. **Masks must cover the nose and mouth.**
3. **Those serving the public must *always* wear masks – no exceptions.**

Thank you for your anticipated assistance in ensuring these simple steps are taken to help reduce transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sandra Deausy  
LaPorte County Health Officer