

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**JANUARY 25, 2021 AT 6:30 P.M.**

The Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on January 25, 2021, 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, turn off their cell phones. After the pledge, he asked that the attendees continue standing to observe a moment of silence for Donald Baugher, former County Council attorney, and Jaclyn Ann Santana Gonser, sister of former County Councilman Jeff Santana. He also asked to include those who have died or are recovering from COVID-19 and cancer.

**ROLL CALL**

Auditor Timothy Stabosz took the Roll Call. Council Members present were Garner, Rosenbaum, Mollenhauer, Cunningham, Yagelski, and Novak. A quorum was noted.

**APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 25, 2021 AGENDA**

Councilman Rosenbaum asked to add Appointment of Board Members to the agenda, but Auditor Stabosz explained it was already there as #4 under New Business. Councilman Yagelski asked that Resolution 2021-02 be added to Ordinances and Resolutions. President Novak asked that the La Porte County Planner appropriation be removed from Appropriations, Transfers, Requests. A motion to amend as requested was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Motion carried 6-0.

Councilwoman Gramarossa joined the meeting via Zoom.

**APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 23, 2020 MEETING MINUTES**

A motion to approve with the amendment of FEMC to FMEC on page 5 under Councilman Garner's liaison report was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Motion carried 6-1, with Councilman Cunningham abstaining because he was not in attendance at the November 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 9, 2020 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Mollenhauer. Motion carried 5-2, with Councilmembers Cunningham and Gramarossa abstaining because they were not in attendance at the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 4, 2021 REORGANIZATIONAL MEETING MINUTES**

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

**APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 13, 2021 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Not seeing or hearing any people who wanted to speak, President Novak closed public comment.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

*Commissioner Rich Mrozinski*

Commissioner Mrozinski acknowledged the efforts of the Office of Community and Economic Development which include the Love's Travel Plaza, the sewer extension, the potential rail projects in KIP, Corsicana Mattress Company, TIF areas under consideration for future development, the improvement of the expansion and retention program, the two small business stimulus packages, and a potential project on State Road 39 North where a drone was used to show investors the different available areas. He said the investment in this office has been well worth it, and he is very proud of what the office has accomplished.

Hearing or seeing no additional Department Heads who wanted to speak, President Novak closed Department Head reports.

**APPROVAL OF LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS**

President Novak said he sent out a list of liaison assignments at the end of the previous week. A motion to approve was made by Councilman Mollenhauer and seconded by Councilman Cunningham. President Novak stated that if any Councilmembers want to trade assignments to please let him know and it can be approved at a later meeting. Motion carried 7-0.

**APPOINTMENTS TO OPEN BOARDS**

**Michigan City Library Board**

President Novak said that Judy Lange is no longer interested in being on the Michigan City Library Board so there is a vacancy. Councilman Cunningham said Stasi Benning withdrew her application, but he feels that she would be an outstanding appointment to a future board. He then nominated Dale Cooper, who was the only remaining candidate; her application included several letters of recommendation. The nomination was seconded by Councilman Mollenhauer. The appointment of Dale Cooper was approved 7-0.

Auditor Stabosz clarified that the Board appointments are being done now instead of under New Business. President Novak agreed as did all of the Councilmembers.

After talking to the Council Attorney, Councilman Cunningham made a motion to execute an official policy of the Council to always reconsider the person currently serving on a board as the first nomination for all future board assignments. The motion was seconded by Councilmen Yagelski. Motion carried 7-0.

#### **Alcohol Beverage Board**

A nomination for Ron Schafer was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Attorney Guy DiMartino reminded the Council that due to the previously approved policy, current board member John Stimley was automatically nominated.

A nomination for Duane Miller was made by Councilman Cunningham and seconded by Councilman Rosenbaum.

President Novak closed nominations.

Councilman Yagelski wanted to ensure that everyone was aware that the John Stimley being nominated is the father and not the son.

Councilwoman Gramarossa asked if the voting would be done alphabetically by Councilmember's last name. Auditor Stabosz replied that a random number generator has been used to create lists of Councilmembers and only the Chief Deputy Auditor and he have copies. He added that several Councilmembers requested that the voting be done differently so the order would always be random. There was a brief discussion on the order of voting at the January reorganization meeting and then a motion to use a random number generator for the order of the vote on all future votes was made by Councilman Cunningham and seconded by Councilman Garner. Motion carried 7-0.

Councilman Garner said he believes that the previous Auditor completed voting this way during her 8 years in office.

On the nomination of John Stimley, the vote was as follows:

Councilman Garner – nay; Councilman Yagelski – aye; Councilman Mollenhauer – aye; Councilman Cunningham – nay; Councilman Rosenbaum – nay; Councilman Novak – aye; Councilwoman Gramarossa – nay; 3 ayes and 4 nays

On the nomination of Ron Schafer, the vote was as follows:

Councilman Yagelski – nay; Councilman Mollenhauer – nay; Councilman Cunningham – nay; Councilman Rosenbaum – nay; Councilwoman Gramarossa – aye; Councilman Novak – aye; Councilman Garner – aye; 3 ayes and 4 nays

On the nomination of Duane Miller, the vote was as follows:

Councilman Novak – aye; Councilwoman Gramarossa – nay; Councilman Rosenbaum – aye; Councilman Yagelski – nay; Councilman Cunningham – aye; Councilman Mollenhauer – nay; Councilman Garner – nay; 3 ayes and 4 nays

On the nomination of John Stimley, the second vote was as follows:

Councilman Cunningham – nay; Councilman Yagelski – aye; Councilman Mollenhauer – aye; Councilwoman Gramarossa – nay; Councilman Rosenbaum – nay; Councilman Novak – aye; Councilman Garner – nay; 3 ayes and 4 nays

On the nomination of Ron Schafer, the second vote was as follows:

Councilman Cunningham – nay; Councilman Mollenhauer – nay; Councilman Garner – aye; Councilman Novak – aye; Councilman Yagelski – nay; Councilwoman Gramarossa – aye; Councilman Rosenbaum – nay; 3 ayes and 4 nays

On the nomination of Duane Miller, the second vote was as follows:

Councilman Rosenbaum – aye; Councilman Novak – nay; Councilwoman Gramarossa – nay; Councilman Cunningham – aye; Councilman Yagelski – nay; Councilman Garner – nay; Councilman Mollenhauer – nay; 2 ayes and 5 nays

The nomination with the least amount of aye votes was Duane Miller and was removed from further voting.

On the nomination of John Stimley, the third vote was as follows:

Councilman Cunningham – nay; Councilwoman Gramarossa – nay; Councilman Rosenbaum – nay; Councilman Garner – nay; Councilman Yagelski – aye; Councilman Mollenhauer – aye; Councilman Novak – aye; 3 ayes and 4 nays

On the nomination of Ron Schafer, the third vote was as follows:

Councilman Rosenbaum – aye; Councilman Novak – nay; Councilman Cunningham – aye; Councilman Mollenhauer – nay; Councilman Yagelski – nay; Councilman Garner – aye; Councilwoman Gramarossa – aye; 4 ayes and 3 nays

The appointment of Ron Schafer was approved 4-3.

### **Animal Control Board**

President Novak explained that this is a Council Appointment but Dennis Carroll was helping out with it. He said that since he is the liaison, he is the appointment to that board. He continued that the Council approved Mr. Carroll to the position last year but now he will be taking over the board member position.

### **La Porte County Board of Construction Review**

This is a Commissioner position so it was removed.

### **911 Advisory Board**

President Novak said that this is his liaison so he will also serve on the board.

### **Park and Recreation Board**

Ronald Knickrehm was automatically nominated as he is currently serving on the board; there were no other nominations. A motion to close nominations was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Motion carried 7-0. The appointment of Ronald Knickrehm was approved 7-0.

### **La Porte County Planning Commission Board**

President Novak requested that Councilman Cunningham, the current liaison, be approved to serve on the board. A motion to approve was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. The appointment of Councilman Cunningham was approved 7-0.

### **PTABOA Board**

A motion to reappoint current members Bob Bailey and Jamal Agemy was made by Councilman Mollenhauer and seconded by Councilmen Cunningham and Garner. Motion carried 7-0.

### **Regional Sewer and Water District Board**

Current board member Clay Howard was automatically nominated. A nomination for Duane Miller was made by Councilman Cunningham and seconded by Councilman Garner. A motion to close nominations was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Cunningham. Motion carried 7-0. The appointments of Clay Howard and Duane Miller were approved 7-0.

### **Solid Waste Board**

Councilman Mollenhauer is the liaison so he will serve on the Solid Waste Board.

### **LIAISON REPORTS**

Councilman Rosenbaum said he had nothing to report at this time.

Councilman Yagelski said that an article was written about the Franklin Street Bridge that was misinformative and he expressed his disappointment that none of the Councilmembers were contacted for input into the news item. He explained that per state guidelines, the bridge cannot be torn down as it is an antique bridge. It could be moved to another location where it wouldn't have to be opened and closed, another bridge could be constructed beside it, or the façade could be incorporated into the construction of a new bridge.

Councilman Cunningham had nothing to report at this time.

Councilman Mollenhauer said since the last Council meeting in November 2020, he has 20 items on which to report, however, he chose to report on only two meetings. On January 13<sup>th</sup>, he attended the Solid Waste District board meeting where it was announced that there will be a public hearing to discuss a possible increase in Solid Waste fees. The public hearing will be held on February 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m., immediately followed by a board meeting. He added that there have been many discussions, including the possibility of a workshop, to analyze the decision on whether or not to raise the fees. It has been determined that the

landfill has run out of money, but Solid Waste does not want to decrease services, so the options need to be investigated.

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, he attended the Board of Health quarterly meeting. He shared that Health Department Administrator Tony Mancuso is retiring at the end of February. Amanda Lahners has been chosen as his replacement.

Councilwoman Gramarossa attended the Sewer and Water District meeting on January 21<sup>st</sup>. She said they are moving ahead with the second phase of the sewer system which should be completed by August 2021. People will be able to hook up to the sewer between August 2021 and January 2022; after that time, hookup will be mandatory. She added it was a self-funded entity.

Councilman Garner commented that Larry Levendowski has graciously taken Councilmembers around the building [500 Monroe Street] and after reviewing it, he believes it is a possibility [for COVID-19 PPE, and other storage].

President Novak had nothing to report at this time.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

None

## **ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**

### **Resolution No. 2021-01 – A Resolution of the La Porte County Council declaring a portion of La Porte County Indiana an economic revitalization area pursuant to IND. Code 6-1.1-12.1-1**

Tony Rodriguez, Director of the Office of Community & Economic Development, gave a brief overview of the resolution and asked that the public hearing and comprehensive presentation be scheduled for the next Council meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. He said this is a long-time La Porte County manufacturing company. He explained the company is E-Pak Machinery, Inc. that manufactures automated electronic liquid filling equipment with 64 full-time employees and an approximate yearly payroll of \$2.4 million. The property is located on State Road 39 and with the small parcel being added, there will be approximately 30,000 square feet of additional manufacturing space. He continued and said what is driving this project is to retain the existing manufacturing company in La Porte County and attempt to outcompete the neighboring state of Michigan. As a result of a meeting with the company ownership, where a comprehensive proposal was executed, Mr. Rodriguez now looks forward to giving a detailed presentation to the Council. He feels that the County is in a tremendous position to be kicking off 2021 with a significant potential expansion of a company that has such an impact on La Porte County. He added that he believes in the priority of taking care of business in the County first, and he went on to acknowledge the assistance from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation and all the entities that assist in training those for highly skilled advanced manufacturing jobs. He then explained the aerial photograph of the area to those viewing at home.

Tony Swedersky, Operations Manager at E-Pak Machinery, stated his business has been very fortunate to have growth, and even during COVID-19, there has been an upturn in the business. The demand for space is significant but an expansion was already being planned. President Novak said he attended the Zoom meeting with the owners where they were given a visual tour of the facility.

Councilman Cunningham asked if E-Pak had previously received an abatement in La Porte County and Mr. Rodriguez replied no.

Councilman Yagelski asked if there has been an increase in inquiries from businesses moving from Illinois due to the high-tax situation and tightened restrictions there. Mr. Rodriguez replied there has been a significant spike. He said it puts the County in a unique and very fortunate position but it is also driven by COVID-19 and the supply-chain challenges. He asked that support of this resolution by the Council be given and the public hearing be set for the next Council meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

A motion to read Resolution No. 2021-01 by title only was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Rosenbaum. Motion carried 7-0. Auditor Stabosz read by title only. A motion of support was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Rosenbaum. Motion carried 7-0.

**Resolution No. 2021-02 – A Resolution of the La Porte County Council - Adoption of Policies and Procedures to protect decorum and foster effective administration at public meetings**

A motion to read Resolution No. 2021-02 in its entirety was made by Councilman Yagelski. President Novak asked if there were any objections from the Council and there were none. Councilman Yagelski read the resolution.

Councilman Cunningham asked if someone can block or mute the visitors on the Zoom call and if so, does that person have sole authority. President Novak replied that the IT Director is the administrator at tonight's meeting and has the ability and will block and/or mute as directed by the Council. Councilman Cunningham then asked if anyone had been blocked or muted at tonight's meeting and President Novak decisively said no. Councilman Cunningham continued and asked the Council if they would be surprised if, indeed, someone said they were blocked and muted. President Novak said the Council has not blocked or muted anyone at the meeting but it would not surprise him. Councilman Cunningham inquired if the President or the Councilmembers would decide if an attendee of a meeting would need to be removed. President Novak replied it would be a Council decision.

Councilman Yagelski said he believes everyone should review the resolution and collectively come up with a workable solution. He stated there are new challenges now due to Zoom so they must be addressed.

A motion to hold over the item was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Rosenbaum. Councilwoman Gramarossa asked if this item was put on the agenda and President Novak said it was added during the approval of the agenda. She then asked if the IT Director is always the Zoom administrator but President Novak explained that anyone could be designated as the administrator. Councilwoman Gramarossa asked to get a copy of the resolution and after confirming her email, President Novak said one was already sent but he will be sure to get her another copy.

Councilman Yagelski informed the Council that previously, the host of the Council meetings has been IT Director Darlene Hale and the co-host was the previous Auditor Joie Winski. Therefore, he said that going forward, Auditor Stabosz should be the co-host.

Motion carried 7-0.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Consider approval of Council President's authorization to hire replacement position for Shared Employee Position in the County Assessor's Office; replacement position for Tax Deputy/Office Supervisor for Auditor's Office; and replacement for collection position, Residential Coordinator position, Field Officer position, and Program Supervisor position for Community Corrections.**

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Mollenhauer.

Councilman Cunningham asked if this was coming before the Council due to the hiring freeze and President Novak replied yes. Councilman Cunningham said in light of what happened at the end of 2020, with the addition and removal of employees by lame-duck politicians, he suggested an amendment be added to prohibit these actions from occurring again in the future. President Novak said he understood what Councilman Cunningham was saying but that particular department head who is no longer here had permission months in advance but waited until the end of the year to take action. Councilman Cunningham said that is his point and the amendment should preclude hiring or firing from November 1<sup>st</sup> forward unless approved by an appointed committee.

Councilman Yagelski said the Council has certain authority because they hold the budgetary control. However, he is unsure whether or not the Council has authority over elected or non-elected officials and would defer to the Council Attorney on that question. Councilman Cunningham then asked the Attorney to research how this modification could be executed.

Councilman Rosenbaum asked that a mechanism be included that would outline the specific amount of time in which a department head/elected official must act after permission is given to hire or fire by the Council or committee.

Councilman Cunningham said he would be happy to serve on a committee with Attorney Guy DiMartino to develop a solution.

Motion carried 7-0.

- 2. Establish County mileage rate for 2021 (2020 rate – 53.5 cents per mile) (2021 State rate – 39 cents per mile; 2021 IRS rate – 56 cents per mile)**

A motion to approve the 2021 State rate of \$.39 per mile was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Garner. Motion failed 3-4, with Councilmembers Cunningham, Rosenbaum, Novak, and Gramarossa voting Nay.

A motion to approve \$.475 per mile (the average of the state and IRS rates) was made by Councilman Cunningham and seconded by Councilman Rosenbaum and Councilwoman Gramarossa. Motion carried 7-0.

- 3. Request approval of La Porte County Council 2021 regular meeting schedule**

Councilman Rosenbaum read the dates aloud. A motion to approve was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Motion carried 7-0.



**4. Request for County Council Appointment of Board Members**

This item was addressed earlier in the meeting but since that time, Attorney DiMartino received communication that there are no vacancies on the Regional Sewer and Water District Board. It was decided that matter would be looked into and revisited at a future meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None

**APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFER, REQUESTS**

La Porte County Sheriff

**Requesting permission to spend from Firearms Fund  
For Replacement Tasers**

**\$11,502.00**

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilmen Cunningham and Rosenbaum. Councilman Rosenbaum said this is a continuous request when replacements are needed.

Motion carried 7-0.

La Porte Circuit Court

**Requesting permission to transfer funds  
From 100-30074-000-0148 to 10211-000-0148**

**\$5,000.00**

It was explained that this is for facilitation done for children; the person comes in early and stays late and keeps track of his hours.

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilmembers Cunningham and Gramarossa. Motion carried 7-0.

La Porte County EMS Andrew McGuire

**Requesting approval to pay FTOs (field training officers) step up pay  
When acting as management**

EMS Administrator Andrew McGuire explained that he sent out an overview of this to the Council but went on to give a brief explanation. He stated that his office has two members of management on each shift who are requested not to simultaneously take time off. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, sometimes there is no management available on the shift. Previously, senior medics stepped in during these times but due to lack of additional compensation for doing so, they are no longer willing to take on the responsibility. The field training officers recognized the need and said they would intercede as long as Mr. McGuire would find some type of compensation for them. Correspondingly, Mr. McGuire investigated various programs and decided to try to compensate them in an amount that equated to the difference between the FTO and lieutenant salaries; the lieutenant being the lowest level of management. This difference is approximately \$2.00 per hour and multiplying that by how many times the FTOs acted as management during one year, the cost would be roughly \$700.00. He said he has it in his 100 account and would not need an additional appropriation.

Councilman Yagelski said he understands the principle of it but feels it will cause dissension in other departments, and County employees are often called to step up when necessary. He feels the County would be in disarray if it had to pay every employee who occasionally was asked to go beyond his or her regular duties. Mr. McGuire respectfully said in comparison to other County departments, EMS is unique in the hours worked challenges with which they are faced.

Councilwoman Gramarossa said she feels that this is an uncommon time with COVID-19 and with the department consistently being short-staffed, it seems reasonable to request additional compensation. Councilman Yagelski said he recognizes how she feels but said situations like this happen in other departments such as the Highway Department and Sheriff's Office. In the times when a department is challenged, the administration has to step up and answer the call.

President Novak clarified that this request for additional compensation reflects when an employee is asked to step into a supervisory role and take on additional responsibilities outside of their normal duties. Mr. McGuire added that there is not a pay scale for FTOs; they are doing it for compensatory time or to just help with the training program.

Councilman Mollenhauer said when he was Sheriff, some corporals were not initially compensated to cover for sergeants when they were absent; the corporals were expected to act in the role of sergeant without any additional pay. However, Councilman Mollenhauer went before the Council at that time and additional pay was approved for the corporals which they currently still receive. Due to this, Councilman Mollenhauer feels the FTOs should be compensated for taking on the additional responsibility.

Councilman Rosenbaum understands Councilman Yagelski's concerns and would like to investigate whether or not this occurs in other departments and if so, how it is handled. Although he agrees with the additional compensation, he feels this item should be tabled.

A motion to table this request was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Motion carried 6-1, with Councilman Cunningham voting Nay.

Councilman Mollenhauer attempted to make an additional comment but was reminded that the item had been tabled and the discussion was closed.

#### La Porte County Maintenance

##### **Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From Riverboat (1191) or General Fund (1000)**

**For remodeling existing storage building at 500 Monroe Street**

**\$230,000.00**

President Novak said this was the item that was discussed at the workshop before the January Council meeting. Councilman Yagelski said there was still a question as to whether or not Cares Act money was available for this expense. Attorney Shaw Friedman said Treasurer Winski sent out an email stating there was still approximately \$2.7 million left to spend. Of that amount, he believes the portion used for PPE storage renovation could be paid out of the Cares Act fund by appropriating it. Auditor Stabosz asked Treasurer Winski to clarify that the Cares Act money is a part of the general fund. Treasurer Winski agreed it is within the general fund. Attorney Friedman said a certain amount of money was earmarked for Cares Act but had to be run through the general fund. Therefore, a portion could come out of the Cares Act money and the remainder would come out of the general fund. Auditor Stabosz reiterated that either way,

all of the money is in the general fund. Treasurer Winski agreed and said that per the state, the Cares Act money had to be put into the general fund but designated to a specific account to keep a record of transactions. Attorney Friedman added that by keeping this detailed accounting of the Cares Act money, an audit trail will be available if and/or when the federal or state government audits local entities.

Councilman Rosenbaum stated that the \$3.6 million of Cares Act money received by the County was for expenses already paid. Accordingly, the money was put back into the general fund to replace the money that was already spent and there is no longer any Cares Act money. Treasurer Winski said there was a direction to put this money into the general fund with the stipulation that it be designated as Cares Act reimbursement and then appropriated by the Council for whatever is needed. She continued that because there have been so many adjustments in protocol from the government regarding the Cares Act money, she feels it is prudent to only use it on items that are COVID-19 related. Councilman Yagelski added it is unlikely the federal government would audit because they are unable to complete tasks which they are already assigned.

Councilman Yagelski said that the responsibility of the County's money rests on the Council and additional committees are no longer necessary. He said he has not seen any accounting of the Cares Act money since the beginning but feels that the Council needs to know how the money has been used. He said he has no problem using half of the money from the account designated as Cares Act money since it is technically in the general fund.

A motion to approve \$100,000 out of the Cares Act account and \$130,000 out of the general fund for a total of \$230,000 was made by Councilman Mollenhauer and seconded by Councilman Yagelski.

Councilman Garner asked if Attorney Friedman and Treasurer Winski want more than \$100,000 taken out of the Cares Act money, will they be able to adjust that or have to come before the Council for approval. Auditor Stabosz said the money is all coming out of the general fund but for accounting purposes, the \$100,000 is being allocated as Cares Act money. Treasurer Winski agreed.

President Novak confirmed with Treasurer Winski that if the Council discovers it could have used more Cares Act money that the amount could be adjusted at a later date and she agreed.

Councilwoman Gramarossa stated she has had her hand raised via Zoom and is never acknowledged. She also said she asked for an accounting of the Cares Act money from Treasurer Winski but never received anything. Also, she said that Mr. Levendowski stated that the cost of the renovation would be approximately \$140,000 but not to exceed \$230,000; now the entire \$230,000 is being requested. She asked how this amount was determined. Mr. Levendowski said the \$140,000 figure was the amount discussed for the building across the road. As for the \$230,000, he said some of his original figures were low and have been adjusted to reflect the increase. However, all of the quotes have not yet been submitted. Councilwoman Gramarossa asked if \$140,000 of the \$230,000 would be used on the adjacent garage but Mr. Levendowski explained that was for the building across Monroe Street that was at one time being considered for purchase. He said he has not received all of the bids but is comfortable that the cost will not exceed \$230,000 and will hopefully be less than that.

Treasurer Winski said on January 20<sup>th</sup>, she received an email from Councilwoman Gramarossa's Yahoo account and immediately responded to her request for the accounting of the Cares Act money. She asked that Councilmembers contact her if they did not receive her email because it had a lot of pertinent

information in it. She added there is roughly \$2.7 million still in the Cares Act account and Auditor Stabosz agreed.

Councilman Cunningham reviewed the costs of buying the building across Monroe and renovating it plus repairing the current building versus just renovating the current building located on Monroe. He determined that by not buying the building and only completing renovations on the current building there would be a savings of approximately \$150,000.

Motion carried 7-0.

**La Porte County Adult Probation**

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From Riverboat (1191) or General Fund (1000)**

**For Criminal Rule 26 – 2 Positions**

**\$101,000.00**

Chief Probation Officer Steve Eyrick stated that several team members were in attendance via Zoom. He said he wanted to answer questions that were previously presented to him. The first inquiry was if all of the 92 counties complied with the mandate; he said he didn't have first-hand knowledge but because it was a Supreme Court mandate, he assumed that they did. The Sheriff also confirmed that all counties complied and Prosecutor John Lake previously stated the department would face serious litigation if this rule was not followed. Secondly, Councilman Mollenhauer asked how other counties are faring with this change, but Mr. Eyrick said they are reluctant to share any data because it is too early to determine. Lastly, Councilman Cunningham asked how many people are being kept out of jail and how much money is being saved. Mr. Eyrick reminded everyone that the program is not designed to save money but to evaluate a person's risk. However, he did assemble some information and said that 272 defendants from January 1<sup>st</sup> to May 2<sup>nd</sup> qualified for Criminal Rule 26. Of those, 187 were released in under 3 days. In addition, arrests were reduced due to COVID-19. After determining the daily cost of keeping a prisoner in jail to be \$32.17, he estimated that the savings of keeping the 187 defendants out of jail for approximately 18.8 days would be \$190,000 for an entire year. Judge Greta Friedman said there are no absolutes but hopes that the information given by Mr. Eyrick gave Councilmen Mollenhauer and Cunningham answers to their questions.

Councilman Cunningham said the presentation gave some wonderful information and there are other effects upon which a price tag cannot be put. He added that he wanted to know the savings so the taxpayers could see that spending \$101,000 on two positions is considerably less than the \$190,000 that would have been spent keeping the defendants in jail.

Councilman Mollenhauer also thanked them and reminded them to continue to pursue any possible grants.

A motion to approve \$101,000 out of the general fund was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Garner.

Councilman Yagelski said he has no problem supporting this but disagrees that the County should have bought into the program. He said other counties don't interview everyone.

Motion carried 7-0.

**COVID Committee/Treasurer Joie Winski**

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From Riverboat (1191) or General Fund (1000)**

**For COVID Vaccine Clinic from CARES Reimbursement to COVID Fund** **\$600,000.00**

A motion to approve out of the general fund was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilman Rosenbaum. Councilman Rosenbaum stated that people don't realize that it costs approximately \$100,000 to fund the clinic so this amount is for 6 months. The Health Department is sending invoices to the state to receive reimbursement but nothing has been received as of yet. Therefore, it is being specifically appropriated so if there is reimbursement in the future, it will be easier to track.

Motion carried 7-0.

**La Porte County Planner**

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From Cumulative Bridge (1135)**

**For Matching Community Crossing Grant – Bridges 104 and 512** **\$996,974.99**

Removed from the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

**La Porte County Office of Community and Economic Development**

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From CEDIT (1112)**

**For Annual Budget** **\$220,000.00**

A motion to approve \$110,000, with the stipulation that the other \$110,000 be requested in 6 months, was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilman Mollenhauer. Councilman Cunningham said he appreciates Councilman Yagelski for phrasing the motion in this way so the Council can receive another report in 6 months. President Novak acknowledged the incredible work being accomplished by Economic Development.

Councilman Cunningham asked Tony Rodriguez to explain to the taxpayers the different Economic Development units. Mr. Rodriguez said there is a high level of partnership between La Porte County, the City of La Porte, and the Michigan City redevelopment entities. He said if his office is not able to serve clients, he communicates with the other offices to find suitable spaces for them to keep them in La Porte County. It is not unusual that they work cooperatively. He added he significantly appreciates the support of the Council.

Motion carried 7-0.

**La Porte County Engineer**

**Requesting An Additional Appropriation**

**From CEDIT (1112)**

**For Meadowview Estate Study** **\$17,000.00**

Councilman Yagelski said these types of requests have come before the Council but don't belong here. He feels that this responsibility should fall upon the owners and not the County.

A motion to deny was made by Councilman Yagelski and seconded by Councilmen Cunningham and Garner. Councilman Rosenbaum said paying someone \$17,000 to determine a problem that is already well known is insanity. This fund should be used to help resolve the problem.

Councilman Mollenhauer stated the study should be completed to gather information on how to solve the problem. County Engineer Jay Sullivan said the study is intended to determine the extent of the drain's pipe and how far it needs to be extended.

Councilman Rosenbaum said the laying of the pipe could be completed by the Highway Department and as the Engineer, he feels Mr. Sullivan should be able to determine some of these needs. Councilman Yagelski said the Highway department has done this type of work in the past and it is no longer done that way. He said it comes down to politics.

President Novak said there has never been an issue with installing the pipe, but the issue is with the study.

Motion carried 6-1, with Councilman Mollenhauer voting Nay.

Councilman Yagelski said a screen will be installed closer to the Council President to make it easier for him to see raised hands from the attendees on Zoom. President Novak said that members of the public who raise their hands after Public Comment will not be recognized because it is against the rules.

A brief recess was taken.

**Fair Management Events Corporation (FMEC)**

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From Riverboat (1191) or CEDIT (1112)**

**For Improvement at County owned Fair Grounds**

**\$125,000.00**

A motion to approve out of CEDIT was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilmen Garner and Mollenhauer.

President Yagelski stated this is only for the annual amount. Councilman Rosenbaum said the FMEC is working on a long-term master plan so the Council can be reassured of what is going on at the Fair Grounds.

Motion carried 7-0.

**La Porte County Maintenance**

**Requesting an Additional Appropriation**

**From CCD (1138)**

**For Emergency Repair to Jail Elevator**

**\$195,000.00**

A motion to approve was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilmen Yagelski and Mollenhauer. Mr. Levendowski said the equipment is out of date, so there will be an upgrade to all of the electronics. Sheriff Boyd added that employees have been trapped in the elevator.

Motion carried 7-0

**COUNTY COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS**

Councilman Yagelski said he witnessed a lot of discourse at both the Council and Commissioner meetings since the election. He explained that he has been privileged to work with both parties and believes that an attack on an individual is an attack on the entire body, Council or Commissioners. He then read a brief statement made by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell: "President Biden is our president. He will have his agenda; we will have a meaningful debate. We will all have disagreements but we will work together for the betterment of this union." Councilman Yagelski said he hopes the differences disappear and to be a good team everyone has to act accordingly. He added that the problem with social media is that it is always one-sided and he believes that the team should do better and work together more efficiently.

Councilwoman Gramarossa clarified that she did check her email accounts and she did send the request from her County account but the response was sent to her private account. She wanted that information documented before the end of the meeting.

Councilman Cunningham asked if the meetings could begin at 6:00 p.m. instead of 6:30. Councilman Yagelski asked that if there is a Workshop, it would still start at 5:00 p.m. with the Council meeting held immediately after the conclusion of the workshop. Councilman Cunningham agreed. The Council agreed with the change. Auditor Stabosz asked if there would be a vote but President Novak said it was just an agreement between Councilmembers.

President Novak asked if Auditor Stabosz had any comment and he questioned whether or not President Novak was soliciting a comment from him. President Novak said he was so Auditor Stabosz began by saying it is the responsibility of everyone, especially the Council to which he serves, to defend the financial integrity of the County, and where he views and perceives the financial integrity is endangered or threatened, he has a moral responsibility to the citizens and will do what is necessary to defend the financial integrity of La Porte County. He continued that it includes the way decisions are made when those decisions are thwarted...and then he was briskly cut off by President Novak who said the comments are done.

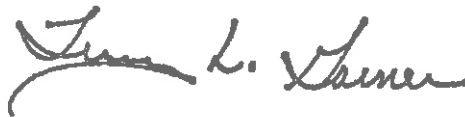
## ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilman Rosenbaum and seconded by Councilman Yagelski. Motion carried 7-0.

**EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL this 22nd day of February 2021.**



Councilman Earl Cunningham



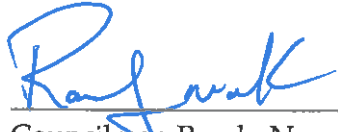
Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer




Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz, La Porte County Auditor