

La Porte County

A Year in Review



Presented by Shaw Friedman
Attorney for LaPorte County Commissioners
Richard Mrozinski, President
March 3, 2021

Legal Overview

- Firm members are on call 24/7 which allows county department heads and elected officials to get timely legal advice as issues/questions arise. This helps to ensure all policies and laws are adhered to in order to avert costly settlements and judgments with a focus on “risk prevention” and “litigation avoidance strategies.”
- No Open Records or Open Door complaints are currently pending with the Public Access Counselor or in the courts. We focus on ensuring that all contracts and ordinances are properly advertised; the firm adheres to the county’s value on openness and transparency.

2020 Successes

Working with the county leadership team and at their direction, legal guidance/expertise/strategy has contributed to the following successful efforts:

- Played a key role in advising all county departments and commissioners on federal and state mandates for county's Covid-19 response, funding and protocols including development of employment and building policies to protect staff, patrons and citizens.
- Worked closely with state government to gain the maximum allocation for LaPorte County of \$3.6 million in CARES Act funding for PPE, testing and vaccination programs.
- Successfully partnered with stakeholders to secure \$1 million grant from IEDC to permit full connectivity of rail at Kingsbury Industrial Park bringing us one step closer to connection with two Class I freight rail carriers – CN and CSX – which will aid in business development and job creation.
- Won decision from Indiana Supreme Court blocking class certification in the matter of *Dempsey v. Auditor*. Had class certification been permitted, county's exposure was in the millions of dollars for claims of interest on tax refunds.

2020 Successes Continued

Working with the county leadership team and at their direction, legal guidance/expertise/strategy has contributed to the following successful efforts:

- Obtained stop work order in summer 2020 on contested residential site off 400 North; this order was upheld in Indianapolis by administrative law judge which served to vindicate LaPorte County's insistence on prohibiting industrial activity in residentially-zoned area.
- Secured \$68,000 grant from the Center for Tech and Civic Life to purchase a mobile van for early voting and voter registration; worked to move early voting from courthouses to more user-friendly accessible voting locations without security checkpoints; successfully negotiated with LaPorte Hospital for use of former Coolspring Twp. Library location for early voting – a site used by thousands of LaPorte County voters in the 2020 elections.
- The Sheriff's Dept and Commissioners requested we draft an ordinance to regulate overweight trucks and put together enforcement mechanisms to protect county roads which was completed and approved.

2020 Successes Continued

Working with the county leadership team and at their direction, legal guidance/expertise/strategy has contributed to the following successful efforts:

- Secured INDOT approval to relinquish property near State Road 2 and U.S.20 that will provide site for much needed ambulance base for eastern side of county along with highway garage.
- Secured IDEM approval to close out leaky underground storage issues at now-cleaned-up former highway site in Rolling Prairie so site can be marketed and put back on tax rolls.
- Teamed with stakeholders and completed extensive planning and preparatory work for Michigan City courthouse renovation and helped secure A+ bond rating from Wall Street investment firm of Standard & Poor's; bond rating provides significant cost savings to our taxpayers on the interest for the bond issue for the courthouse project
- Coordinated closely with state legislative delegation on both sides of the aisle working to protect LaPorte County's interests in Indianapolis including \$500,000 funding for Lifeline grants for local small businesses struggling during the pandemic; coordinated with legislators and state government to protect county's share of gaming revenues

2021 Priorities

Based on requests/communications from county elected officials – we intend to work with the county team on the following 2021 priorities:

Public Health and Safety

- Seek funding and guide planning/construction implementation for fully staffed Rolling Prairie area EMS base and highway garage near corner of U.S. 20 and State Road 2.
- Assist Sheriff's Department with continuing compliance and implementation of all six pillars of President Obama's 2015 Task Force Report on 21st Century Policing
- Elected county officials have expressed concern that the county needs to renew attention/focus on region's toxic releases and its' impact on area's cancer rates/ health outcomes so we stand ready to assist with this effort which impacts every family and child in LaPorte County.

2021 Priorities

Based on requests/communications from county elected officials – we intend to work with the county team on the following 2021 priorities:

Economic Development/Job Creation

- Will assist to advance projects in county's three target TIF areas including support and strategy for 39 North Conservancy District's EDA grant application for proposed water tower
- Will assist to help you to obtain private sector commitments necessary to advance proposed installation of water/sewer lines under I-94 near U.S. 421
- Continue aiding the County Commission's progress on gaining full rail connectivity at Kingsbury Industrial Park including advancements on proposed connections to nearby CN and CSX main lines

2021 Priorities

Based on requests/communications from county elected officials – we intend to work with the county team on the following 2021 priorities:

Working for LaPorte County's Fair Share:

- Continue the County Commission's bipartisan problem-solving strategy by working closely with area legislative delegation and nine- county Northern Indiana Advocates (NIA)
- Continue advocacy for county's fair share of state funding for roads and infrastructure
- Respond to local elected officials' desire to advocate for more area residents – whether Republican, Democratic or Independent – being appointed to key state boards and commissions to increase our county's representation in Indy.

Full-service freight rail planned for LaPorte County's Kingsbury Industrial Park

Stan Maddux Oct 13, 2020 Updated Feb 8, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-22

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LAPORTE COUNTY, INDIANA AWARDING A BUILD OPERATE TRANSFER ("BOT") AGREEMENT WITH RESPECT TO RAIL FACILITIES IN THE KINGSBURY INDUSTRIAL PARK AND APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF THE BOT AGREEMENT

Region counties narrowly top statewide voter turnout rate in last month's elections

Dan Carden Jun 19, 2019 Updated Apr 16, 2020

TOP STORY

County council approves \$8 million for Michigan City courthouse project

By TED YOAKUM Staff Writer Mar 24, 2020

ORDINANCE NO. 2020- 2

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA
LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SPECIFIC SECTIONS OF LA PORTE COUNTY ORDINANCE, CHAPTER 70 (GENERAL PROVISIONS), CHAPTER 71 (TRAFFIC RULES), AND REPEALING CHAPTER 74 (TRAFFIC SCHEDULES), SCHEDULES I AND II

La Porte County lands \$1 million state grant to connect Kingsbury Industrial Park to CSX mainline

JANUARY 31, 2020 - BY LARRY AVILA

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LaPorte County commissioner urges calm after resident tests positive for COVID-19

Tyler Wornell, Stan Maddux Mar 14, 2020 Updated Mar 28, 2020

LaPorte County awarded \$250,000 grant to aid small business amid COVID-19

Dan Carden Apr 30, 2020 Updated Dec 24, 2020

This report was requested and prepared for the LaPorte County Commissioners to summarize key projects, grants, and other work done on behalf of the community and its citizens.

It is an honor to serve our county.

Friedman and Associates, P.C.

March 3, 2021

