



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**
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President

Joseph Haney
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Member

LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, April 7, 2021 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room 3 at 10:00 a.m.

President Rich Mrozinski called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by Executive Assistant Diane Gonzales.

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the roll: Commissioner Mrozinski – Present via Zoom; Commissioner Matias - Present; Commissioner Haney - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approval of March 17, 2021 minutes. Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 3/26/2021 - \$1,137,615.80 and Operating Expense Claims - \$1,337,742.47. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded but asked for clarification on payment of expedited claims. Auditor replied he will report on that under Department Head Reports. Motion carried.**

Public Comment

Mark Yagelski, Councilman via Zoom, “Just letting you guys know you’ve given the courtesy to allow Rich and myself to try to get money for the Franklin Street Bridge, with that the responsibility now is with the President’s 2.7 million, trillion dollars there’s money for bridges now. We have attempted to go to our legislatures and we’ve attempted to go to our legislators in Washington, D.C. The issue I have with it is somewhat, and I don’t want to be disrespectful when I say this, we don’t look well in La Porte County. With the Mayor situation in Michigan City and City Council, with the Commissioner, Auditor, Attorney situation, they - we’ve become a laughing stock down in Indianapolis now either you take my word for it or you can call down there, I have no problem, their legislators are going ‘what’s going on in La Porte County?’ ‘What the heck are we doing?’ So my comment is being made is that I’m trying to get, working with Rich, to try to get us some of our - I am hoping to get 30 million dollars but probably 2 million dollars to get an engineering study, I mean an engineering design to build. I - we’ve, we’ve got to try a different way of venting ourselves. The way we’re doing it now is we, like I said we’re an embarrassment to our friends down in Indy and to, in Washington D.C. If it gets to Washington D.C. it’s pretty bad so the legislators told me that unless that changes, you know on a scale of one to ten and there’s 10 projects that come out of the district here that we are in, he said it may not be favorable for us so I am pleading and asking that we find a different way to vent ourselves and not look as if we’re bickering back and forth. Thank you.”

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Barb Huston - 911 Director, “Next week is National Public Safety Dispatch Week from April 12th to the 16th. It’s when we recognize our dispatchers in La Porte County. You can take the time to read the letter at your leisure but I do want to call to you the highlighted part where last year in 2020 there were 166,692 calls that came in to the center and 114,152 calls were dispatched. If you look at the 2nd page, we have a call summary and this is how the calls came in for the year 2020. The call summary is the second page then on the 3rd page you’ll have - this is what calls came in to the center yesterday and if you’ll look there were 181 calls to the 911 Center that were dispatched and there were 331 that actually came in to the Center for a total of 512 calls that were through all 3 shifts were received yesterday. We did a summary, a call summary for year-to-date, last year and this year, and if you will look at the next two pages you will see that in 2020 we had, we received about 40,072 calls, year-to-date from January until today and in 2021 41,506 calls all together into the Center so I would like to extend to the Commissioners and other elected officials that next week if you have time or even after today if you have never been to the Center, we’d love to have you come and meet some of our dispatchers and if you would you know, just say hi and tell them that they’re doing a good job because they really are and I’d really appreciate and Matt Deckard, who is my assistant, my deputy, he would also welcome you know, coming to the center, if you’ve never been there it’s quite a place. They won’t be able to talk to you very long but just say hi and recognize them would be good.” **Commissioner**

ORIGINAL

Matias, “Barb, May I ask you to read the paragraph where you have the highlights on the front page because I don’t know that all the public really understands the huge responsibility the dispatchers, the geographic area that your service covers so could you just...?”
Barb, “Sure, it would be my pleasure.”

“La Porte County Regional Dispatch Center in the year 2020 received 166,692 calls and dispatched 114,152 calls for service. The departments serviced are La Porte County Sheriff, La Porte City Police, Michigan City Police, La Porte and Michigan City Fire, Westville Police, Kingsford Heights Police, Trail Creek Police, Kingsbury Police, all 16 Volunteer Fire Departments in the county, and La Porte County Emergency Medical Service. Assistance is also provided to Long Beach Police and Indiana State Police when needed. The La Porte County 9-1-1 Dispatchers also provide coordinating efforts to Med Flight, Lutheran Air, local utilities, HazMat, the Red Cross and the Emergency Management Teams responding to all emergencies and non-emergencies in La Porte County.”

Commissioner Matias, “Thank you.” **Barb**, “They’re a great team and they do good work so recognition next week if you would please. Come see us in the center. Any other questions?” **Commissioner Matias**, “Thank you, they do a...they’re a dedicated group of people.” **Barb**, “They are.” **Commissioner Haney**, “Thank you.” **President Mrozinski**, “Thanks for your report Barb. You’re doing a great job.” **Barb**, “Thank you.” **President Mrozinski**, “Any other Department Heads have a report?” **Commissioner Haney**, “We have...” **Lynn Swanson, Coroner**, “I’m here.” **President Mrozinski**, “There you are.”

Lynn Swanson - Coroner, “Okay, good morning Commissioners.” **Commissioner Matias**, “Good Morning.” **Lynn**, “I know normally you only see me when I’m here to ask for money so I thought I’d give you a little report on what I’ve been doing other than asking for money although I’ll be back in a few to do that as well. In January I attended the new department head training in Indianapolis, in February I sent two candidates to the MDI training school in Indianapolis, one is finished and is doing her externship now, next month she will be out on her own in the field and the second one is retesting a couple modules, she had a little trouble getting through them, it’s a tough test so we hope to have her on her own in June. This brings our total deputies in the field to 6, 2 of those being chief deputies. We are continuing working with the Child Fatality Review Team with quarterly meetings, attending drug-free partnership meetings, meeting with the drug taskforce quarterly and continuing our work with the Opioid Fatality Review Team. In doing that we have received a grant from HealthLinc, which I believe I brought the MOU to you last month and for our efforts with the Opioid Fatality Review Team and coordinating these meetings, supplying information, reporting the statistics we received from them a check of \$1250 a month for the next 12 months for a total of \$15,000 to be used at our discretion for whatever our office needs to continue to provide them with the information they need. We’ve also changed our method of reporting violent deaths to the Indiana Violent Death Registry online. In doing this we were awarded \$4300 in supplies such as body bags, PPE, bio-hazard bags, a portable refrigerator to hold our samples, a safe to store our personal belongings, scanner and tablets for the deputies. We are working to set up reporting to the Indiana State Department of Health on Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Registry for which we would be eligible again for another \$4400 for emergency or office supplies. So far this year we have responded to 86 deaths which averages out to be about 29 deaths a month. We are moving into our new office space and the new cots you approved have been ordered. So we’ve been a little busy. And I’ll come back later to talk about some money.” **Commissioner Matias**, “Thank you Lynn.” **President Mrozinski**, “Any other Department Heads?” **Commissioner Haney**, “We have Director Lahners with her hand up (via Zoom).”

Amanda Lahners, “I just want to give you a quick update on a few items going on in the department and of course again our favorite subject Covid which is not slipping quietly into the night. It’s unfortunately we’re seeing a trending of upwards of numbers of cases in La Porte County in the last week, over the last several weeks. This past seven day period we’ve had a total of 227 new cases of Covid in the county which unfortunately that number would actually push us up into the red category for new cases for the week. I’m not saying that we’re in the red category advisory level that will not be updated for another hour or so, we’ll be able to check on that with the state. I will not be surprised if it didn’t bump us back up in to the orange level for the county so I definitely want to take this time to remind everybody to please wear their mask, to please social distance. If you have the opportunity or the time to get a vaccine please do that, all three of those items are going to help us get through this sooner rather than later. We have taken an extra 2,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine this month so we have 4,000 doses for this week to administer. We have picked up some extra days at the fairgrounds, yesterday was an extra day, the 8th, the 13th and then we will be having a clinic on a Sunday on the 18th of this month. I’m hoping to be able to catch people who have not been able to get in on any other day or time. I’m offering that that Sunday. We do have a new supervisor in the Health Department, Tricia Wozniak, who has been with the Health Department for - I’m not going to say how long because should would probably shoot me but she’s been here for quite a while and is a source of information. She is the new Environmental Health and Food Supervisor. And then we have a new clinic, not a new clinic but we will be resuming STD clinics next week, those have been shut down for a year now. We will be getting those up going on the 15th. We’ll be doing them 2 Thursdays a month here out of the La Porte office. Thank you.” **Commissioner Matias**, “Thank you Amanda.” **President Mrozinski**, “Thank you Amanda, it’s a good report. You guys are doing a great job out there. Any other Department Heads?”

Tim Stabosz - Auditor, “First of all I want to apologize to Mr. Friedman over a factual matter. I had said a few Commission meetings back that we paid out \$495,000 to his firm in 2020. Without getting into the details our accounting system has a funny way of double counting certain items which I now fully understand. The amount that was paid out to Friedman and Associates in 2020 was actually \$408,000. I regret the error. As a separate matter I wanted to report to you that my office has been engaging in a review of

how we handle expedited claims. These are, simply put, bills we pay out in advance of you're approving them here. It is worth noting that state law has a very limited list of the type of bills that can be paid out before you approve them here for obvious reasons of internal control and that is generally limited to time sensitive payments such as utilities, credit cards and the like. In addition the County *must* adopt an ordinance specifying which bills it intends to pay in advance. Our County has had such an ordinance in place since 2001. I thought it was important to report to you upon investigation it was determined that select bills were being paid out by my office in advance of they're being approved by this body in direct contravention of state law and our own ordinance. Specifically payments were being made to Friedman and Associates as well as to a former county attorney in advance and so far these are the only entities that have been so receiving such favorable treatment that could be identified. Upon finding this out I instructed my staff to cease such advance payments immediately. I would like to point out that neither state law nor our local ordinance provide for early payment to professional service providers. Although after thoroughly investigating this matter is my understanding that both attorneys either directly or through their representatives sought to receive this special treatment. As Auditor I need to again point out that this brings forth a legitimate question around internal control. I believe from my investigation that one of the reasons these payments went out is because of undue influence that the county attorney placed upon the former Auditor's office. I believe my staff was put between a rock and a hard place and was inappropriately compelled to make such payments knowing how powerful certain county attorneys have been in this county. When I say that undue influence or duress is placed upon my county employees this is exactly the kind of thing I am talking about and yet troublingly I am being sued by the County Attorney for speaking this truth and doing my job. Along with this investigation in to expedited claims my office is conducting an investigation or review of how we handle all legal bills. I've asked my staff to send every legal bill across my desk before it is paid. I have already contacted a firm completely unconnected with the current Count Attorney around a request for an adjustment to their billing itemization practices so that we can audit their bills properly. Unfortunately the current County Attorney, an outside contractor, has refused to answer 2 of my questions lawfully put to him in writing specific to his billings so I will ask them publically now and hope to get an answer. 1.) Do you perform all the Commission work yourself because there are no initials of attorney performing work anywhere on these bills like there are on the liability claims and 2.) On your Commission bills you itemize everything you do in one day as a clump and just list total times spent for the day. Is an additional break down available for each thing you do so that your claims can be properly audited and if it is determined that one of the items is not a bonafied governmental purpose then it can be questioned." **President Mrozinski**, "Mr. Stabosz..." "**(Auditor Continues)** ... Additionally and finally, as a matter of informing you I spoke with a high level representative in closing, a high level representative of the State Board of Accounts, Lori Rogers, and she told me that it is irregular to not have some type of written retainer or agreement of contract between the County Attorney and the Commissioners, even in an 'at-will' arrangement as currently exists. The reason should be obvious, the purpose is to lay out expectations and understandings between the two parties of what the Attorney's exact role is supposed to be. I would encourage you to establish a contract between yourselves and any attorney you use just as you would for any other professional services advisor. Thank you." **Commissioner Haney**, "Thank you Mr. Stabosz, I do have a question while you're up here, when it comes to some of the itemization issues and I've looked at some of these as well, it kind of makes it difficult to see exactly what's being spent on certain things, I know Councilman Cunningham has a records request open for example for the, what it costs the tax payers for the resolution here for the teachers' vaccination, for encouraging teachers to be vaccinated as soon as possible, we passed it here as well as in the Council and that cost the county tax payers, it's hard to tell, it costs at least a minimum of \$1,273.50 and it could have cost the taxpayers as much as \$2,323.50, possibly north of that, it's hard to tell based upon how these break downs are so I think that's when the State for example requires and they list, I glanced at some of these statutes and when they list fully itemized it's so that, you know we, you know both the approving body, which would be us as the Commission, as well as tax payers and of course obviously your (Auditor) office will be able to audit this to know exactly how much is being spent on things and that's why I think it's so crucial this is and I thank you for your due diligence on this." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Thank you, sure and I would just say that you cannot audit a claim or you cannot exclude an expense unless you know what that individual item is, as the former County Attorney's had a billing procedure where he would show us as little as one tenth of an hour so that is really the way to be able to audit a claim properly so..." **Commissioner Matias**, "So I have a question Mr. Stabosz, are all of the attorneys, we have a lot of attorneys for Boards, Commissions, etc., are all of the attorneys submitting itemized claims down to the one tenth of an hour? **Auditor Stabosz**, "Well, the, some of the jobs that they do are for example, the um...the um, the attorneys that help the indigent, I can't think of what they're called..." **Commissioner Haney**, "Public defenders." "...that's a fixed amount of \$40,000, generally \$40,000 per year for them so that's a pretty cut and dry thing..." **Commissioner Matias**, "Right." "...they don't itemize because they're helping the indigent so." **Commissioner Matias**, "Yeah, I understand that but I'm talking about the attorneys who submit claims, the indigent, that's a, that's for the courts and that's a separate..." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Well, there's, there's other Boards, Boards and Commissions that have like retainer agreements where for example, Attorney DiMartino, charges a fixed amount per month and only if he goes over a certain number of hours will he, will he charge more so I think his recent bills he hasn't gone over so I haven't reviewed further back and to see how he itemizes so it's, it's currently under review. I think the more - this is currently under review, we're looking at all legal bills as they come in, it's, it's a process but one of the things that was noted that's most significant is that former County Attorney Biege itemizes everything, every single thing he does separately, email to this person, email to that person to down to a tenth of an hour. What Mr. Friedman does is, Friedman and Associates does, is well basically for the entire day there will be a laundry list of things that were done so it's itemized in that sense but then it'll be like 4 ½ hours were spent so you can't, you can't break it out in part but the auditing process is to be able to examine and say, 'wait a minute, too much time was spent on this one item' or to be able to you know, question things and be able to audit so." **Commissioner Matias**, "So Mr. Stabosz, we pass our, our State Board of Accounts inspection and audit every year and they accepted that, that's, that's one of the billing types that they accept because we get billed from major firms from outside the area and they

submit those type of bills as well and are we going to ask this of you know, Barnes and Thornburg, and you know Wagner and Evans and all of the..." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Well, I, again it's, it's under review. For best practices I think that quite frankly in my experience of the attorney here, the outside contract Attorney Mr. Friedman, one of my opinions as Auditor and one of my judgements is that his willingness to engage in certain behaviors at your meetings that involve undermining Commissioners raised the level of scrutiny necessarily around matters of honesty and integrity." **Commissioner Matias**, "Okay, so I don't want to go down that path, I want to say if we have a standard practice we should apply it to everyone and I guess that's where I'm going, I'm saying that if this is going to be expected of one contractor, all of our contractors, regardless of whether they're legal or service providers, we need to have that same level so that there's a uniformity, there's equity and you know, we have a standard so I guess I'm asking you is that the direction you're going in your investigation and will that be applied to all vendors, all contractors, etc. across the board." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Well..." **Commissioner Matias**, "Because that seems correct, if that's what you want to do, you're the Auditor, that's your prerogative, but it should be applied equally across all contractors." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Well we can discuss it further and I think that's a reasonable position to take, again one has to look at the nature of whether one has a retained agreement, fixed amount, and see, I mean really what it comes down to, part of what an Auditor does is good faith, is judgement, and an Auditor has to be permitted to some degree, like any Department Head, to do their job as they see fit without undue influence or duress which is something we've seen in this County in my judgement so I certainly respect my need to be accountable to the Commissioners and I respect your position on this and I think that that is almost certainly a legitimate standard to take, obviously consistency and fairness. I'm sure there are people here that are concerned that I would not be fair with Mr. Friedman and I respect that so I don't have a firm answer for you, some of it may, some of it has to do with the nature of a County Attorney who is doing a lot of little things, you know versus other types of attorney work that again as a fixed amount so but I do know that the former County Attorney itemized in a certain way and I'd like to see that practice continued specifically..." **Commissioner Matias**, "So may I just make a comment on that type of bill..." **Auditor Stabosz**, "It's your meeting, certainly." **Commissioner Matias**, "...because I have reviewed those bills because they all come through the Commissioners' office and I, when I read those bills that are itemized down to point one of the tenth of an hour, we are charging the taxpayers to review an agenda so a piece of paper comes into your email we're, we're, that particular legal bill from the former attorney, charged the taxpayers to glance at an agenda even agendas that he's not, that he wasn't even in charge of, I found that a little bit, you know, precocious, let me just put it in, you know, you're paying an attorney for their experience, for their expertise, for their research, for all, you know when we call for opinions morning, noon and night, 7 days a week those attorneys are on call, but to charge the taxpayer for... seriously, some of the charges were, I looked at numerous bills you know last year and I was kind of taken aback that we were paying for someone to open an email." **Auditor Stabosz**, "Yeah." **Commissioner Matias**, "Someone to, you know... I don't know, it just makes no sense." **Auditor Stabosz**, "The thing about itemization is one of the things you can look and say, okay, an agenda was reviewed and that was one tenth of an hour, if it was a half of an hour you'd say know what, that's even worse, right? You know..." **Commissioner Haney**, "I think Commissioner Matias brings up a good point here and this is one of the reason why I directed our Executive Assistant to put in front of me every single legal bill that comes before the Commissioners now, for those who aren't aware in the public what's happened through this year up until about a week and a half ago and what I believe was standard practice for the past couple of years is that these bills would come in, they would get stamped by all 3 Commissioners' names and the Commissioners would never see them, so for example for this year up until ..." **Commissioner Matias**, "That would not be accurate, that would not be accurate." **Commissioner Haney**, "So for this year, up until this year, did you sign on your own, any single legal bill this year?" **Commissioner Matias**, "I have reviewed the legal bills. I have reviewed the files month after month after month." **Commissioner Haney**, "Not the claims that we see, the stack of claims but the actual..." **Commissioner Matias**, "No, the legal bills, I've reviewed the legal bills, yes, I have." **Commissioner Haney**, "...you have? And how did you receive those? Were they emailed to you or did you come in and see them in person? I'm curious." **Commissioner Matias**, "Some were emailed, some I had - I saw in person." **Commissioner Haney**, "Some you saw in person, okay. So from my perspective as Vice President of the Commission for example this year, those bills that came in up until this issue was raised a week and a half ago even though I was reviewing the claims, the actual break downs for all of these attorneys I had never seen, my name was just being stamped on them. So this is yet another thing where this level of diligence on the part of the Auditor as well as transparency for the public when I was up here for the past you know, for the past 3 months saying I'd reviewed the claims, I've gone through these stacks of claims but when it comes down to the actual break downs I mean there are hundreds if not thousands of line items on these and while we may be going through these stack of claims that we have in front of us in that brown envelope, the actual break downs for those aren't there so unless you're actually requesting them and looking at them and even knowing to go and find them, names are just being stamped on them and I'd be very curious to see if any of those were actually emailed to you because they would be on the county server for those bills prior to the beginning of the year." **Commissioner Matias**, "So I didn't say by - I said that I reviewed them but that's, I guess not the point you know we have a staff person who works for the 3 of us and her duty is to raise, to make sure that we are aware of things so I want to commend Diane because..." **Commissioner Haney**, "She does a fantastic job." **Commissioner Matias**, "...when anything comes about where she has a concern, she sees something irregular, she sees a charge that is excessive she brings it to our attention and I think she should be commended for that." **Commissioner Haney**, "She does do a fantastic job." **President Mrozinski**, "I feel the need to chair this meeting. We are way outside the parameters here of a Department Head Report, we're discussing things..." **Auditor Stabosz**, "I don't agree with, I don't agree with that." **President Mrozinski**, "...that should be discussed in a workshop or in a separate meeting not to be cluttering up our Commissioner meeting with this sort of thing. I have to agree that there may be some procedural things we need to look at but on the other hand we do get our miscellaneous claims, all of our claims every month to look at, I don't know about everybody else, I look at every one of them and if I have a question I will call that Department Head and ask about what's going on with it and Commissioner Matias quoted there State Board of

Accounts looks at all of our stuff every year and if, and if and when they have problems then we address them but I have seen no problems on anything to do with the charges from any of our attorneys but you know, you two guys have seem to have wanted to turn the Commissioners' meeting in to a court room here which I - is unnecessary and this is exactly the kind of thing that Councilman Yagelski was talking about that is getting headlines in Indianapolis and Washington D.C., this kind of trial at a Commissioner meeting it's uncalled for, if you've given your report, your Auditor's report, if there's other items that you want to discuss in a meeting then we'll set up a meeting to do that and I thank you for your report and would like to ask is there any other Department Heads who have a legitimate report they would like to give to these Commissioners at this time." **Auditor Stabosz**, "I resent that, I resent that comment Commissioner."

Joie Winski - Treasurer, "Yes, I would please, President Mrozinski." **President Mrozinski**, "You have the floor ma'am." **Treasurer Winski**, "Before I give my report since my name was just mentioned, I would like to publicly say that I was not coerced, intimidated, or under any undue influence when I paid Mr. Friedman his bills, there were few, the expedited claims were few and far between and normally he waited just like everybody else did until the Commissioners reviewed the claims and approved the claims which by the way claims are signed at an open meeting, not in your office, they have to be signed after they're voted on and Mr. Friedman can correct me if I'm wrong but everything is dictated by open door policy which means at an open meeting. Having said all that I would just like to report that our tax bills are on time and they will be mailed tomorrow. If you do not get your tax bill please let us know and we'll print one for you but we're on time, this is the 7th year. Thank you." **President Mrozinski**, "Thank you ma'am, just exactly the kind of report we would expect from your office. Are there any other Department Heads?"

Barb Mossman - Human Resources, "I just would like to put out there again that the County has a variety of open positions that are available. Interested applicants can visit the County's website laporteco.in.gov/employment. We are looking for paramedics, a highway mechanic, Juvenile Services Center has positions available, Community Corrections also has positions available and even our Health Department. The job description is available out on the website that details the duties and the requirements of each position along with the online application and I encourage anyone that knows anyone that is looking for employment to please visit our website. Thank you." **President Mrozinski**, "Thank you Barb. Any other Department Heads?"

Barb Huston - E-911 Director, "Barb also failed to mention 911 has openings also. I just talked to her yesterday so she probably doesn't have that on her calendar. I'd also like to weigh in on what was just said by the County Auditor. It is my opinion that when you give a report it should be a generic report. The report should say 'this is inappropriate and this is the way I'd like to have it done' and no names should be mentioned. As our President said this is not a court room. The court room is where all of that should be taken up and the bickering, it's really, to me as a Department Head, a new Department Head and as a former Commissioner, it's inappropriate it. Thank you." **President Mrozinski**, "Thank you Barb. I agree with you. Any other Department Heads? Going once, going twice, seeing none we will move on to Requests."

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council for Overtime/Parttime budget shortages - Andrew McGuire, EMS Director. **Andrew**, "So we've had quite an unusual start to our year thus far and I'm sure it's not over. So to start off and this unusual start has depleted our overtime and part-time budget unfortunately. In the month of January we had 12 employees off with Covid, this resulted in \$15,265 of overtime coverage. On a positive note I'd like to report that we have not had a Covid related illness or issue since January so on a positive note, knock on wood. We also have had 2 employees who have been off and are still off on workman's comp issues due to on-duty injuries. We've also had 4 employees take FMLA with 1 still remaining off work. Our regular call-offs are non-Covid related illnesses or at regular or slightly elevated levels. The thing that has hit us the worse lately, over the last 2 months we've had 6 employees resign. So obviously this has created open positions as we attempt to hire new employees and then as those employees move through their orientation process, we're filling those spots with overtime. We have been able to hire 4 of those 6 positions, we still have 2 paramedic positions remaining that are left open and that we are filling with overtime. Nearly every day, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week." **Commissioner Matias**, "Do you have any reflection on your exit interviews what is causing - I mean 6 departures in a, in that short period is you know, a bit alarming." **Andrew**, "Absolutely, and I do ask that question. A couple of these employees were in our middle management positions and really they were the people that we were looking to lead us into the future and move up into upper management so it kind of hurt us pretty hard there too but when asked they were leaving for higher pay and less call load. They sighted that our call volume and the pressure that we put on our employees is too great and cannot be sustained for a long period of time, that employees are forced to look for employment elsewhere to further their career because they can't stay here with the amount of call load that they have and you know, continue to go on with their personal lives and not be just drained the next couple of days that they're off and when you can go somewhere else for lower call volume and higher pay, it's tough to retain employees that way. So, but with that said we have already exhausted our overtime and part-time budgets so therefore I'm asking permission to approach the Council for an additional \$90,000 in overtime and \$15,000 in part-time in order to get through the remainder of the year which hopefully will get us through the remainder of the year." **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the dollar amounts stated by Andrew. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to spend funds for furniture - Lynn Swanson, Coroner. **Coroner Swanson**, "Obviously we had no office furniture when we moved in to the new office so the cost of the office furniture is \$2,632.99 which I would ask to spend out of a non-reverting funds. These are funds we collect from insurance companies and various places for reports that we provide, toxicology reports, autopsy reports, and it's a non-reverting fund so I would like to purchase the office furniture out of that." **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. Coroner Swanson**, "I have one other request which I apologize for this not being on the agenda but I just received the quote day before yesterday I believe from Darlene for computers and monitors for the Coroner's office. I've been bringing my laptop from home, back and forth, which is not really a good idea for me, you know I'll drop it sooner or later. So Darlene has given us a quote for the computers and the monitors of \$5,268.97. We also need a printer which I would expect not to exceed \$500. My request would be to approach the Council for 50% of the total cost which would be \$2,884.50, the other 50% would be taken out of our non-reverting fund as well." **President Mrozinski**, "Make sure when you approach Council that you have all of those figures on their agenda." **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve the request to approach Council. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered permission to travel to Indianapolis for training - Barb Mossman, HR. **Barb**, "I am requesting permission for both the HR assistant and myself to travel to Indianapolis on August 2nd through the 4th for the HR Conference which is held in Indianapolis. The HR Indiana Conference offers world renowned keynote speakers, 3 days of educational sessions, networking opportunities and exposure to the latest HR products and services. The educational sessions also provide an opportunity to earn continuing education credits towards my SHRM certification to maintain that. I'm asking right now because there is an early bird registration that does end April 30th which would save the County some money by allowing us to register early. I do have the funds available for the registration cost which is \$580 per person. I do not have funds though to cover the hotel or the travel expenses which the hotel is an average of \$711 total per person. The HR Indiana Committee that puts on the conference is maintaining all Covid related matters so if our Covid situation does progress this may change to just a virtual only conference but right now it is in person." **President Mrozinski**, "Very good, you've heard the request, entertain a motion." **Commissioner Matias**, "So Mr. President, I would move but I - at our last meeting we allowed one person from a department to go to training and then we also talked about the virtual training so I want us to be consistent until we remove the travel band, Barb is it possible for you to go and then bring back the material to your staff?" **Barb**, "Yes, I believe that will be - I will be able to do that, I would also like to request if they also offer a virtual option this year for one of us to attend in person and one to do virtual." **President Mrozinski**, "Would the training you said that would be for your qualification for your position, would that affect Monique also? Does she have to either virtual or in person in order to retain credentials for her position?" **Barb**, "Monique has not yet at this time earned the certification through SHRM so that is something that I would hope within the next year or two that she does acquire so at this point in time it would just be the benefit of all the educational sessions for her." **President Mrozinski**, "Okay so what is your, what's your pleasure there Commissioners?" **Commissioner Haney**, "One more question for Ms. Mossman real quick, for Monique's - does any of this count for her, you said she's going to need or I know we were talking about credentialing but there's certain CEs I know she'll need to keep up, do you know if any of this counts for that or no?" **Barb**, "If I understood your question right Commissioner Haney, Monique does not currently have the certification credentials through SHRM or HRCI so there is no continuing education credits that are necessary for her, that's just the purpose of the continuing education and keeping abreast of current and always changing situations within the HR role." **Commissioner Haney**, "Okay, all right, I appreciate that, I wasn't sure if her other certifications were needing to be renewed, some are you know, obviously some certifications and licenses need to be renewed, some are permanent once they're granted and graduate so thank you." **Commissioner Matias**, "So Mr. President, it sounds like Barb is amenable to going in person and having Monique sign on for a virtual option should that be available and I think that that will probably be a really more efficient use of our time so we can keep that office functional so that would be my motion." **Commissioner Haney**, "I'll second that." **Motion carried.**

Considered permission to spend funds to purchase a broom machine for road work - Duane Werner, Highway Dept. **Duane Werner**, "What I'm requesting is also to approach Council for this purchase of this self-propelled broom is what it is, the one we currently have now is approximately 25 years old. It's at the stage of its life where we cannot find parts anymore. We've band-aided it up as much as we possibly can, it's also becoming an issue with our employees as far as safety. This is a machine that does a lot of road work for us that's very dirty, the current one we have has no air conditioning, it's not a sealed unit where they're actually inhaling a lot of this dust so I'm requesting for this broom, how we're, we use this for our road program currently for our road paving, we prep roads for drainage, we berm the edge of the road, cut that edge of the sod off to expose the whole road that way we can see what we're doing, working with and then that also extends the life of that road getting that water off. That being said, with our road paving we're also doing a road maintenance program this year. We're planning on doing an additional 30 year or 30 miles of chip sealing. With that being said this will also increase our road drainage program where we're going to start prepping these roads also even though they just get a lay of oil and stone, we're going to get these roads addressed too as far as drainage so what we do is we cut that edge of the road off, that sod, let's that water get to the ditch ways, this broom will be used to clean that excessive dirt off of there and also when we do our chip sealing, it brooms that excessive stone off the edge also so it's a very vital piece of equipment that we have and this one that I'm looking at is like, it will be 3 years old, it's a 2018 with 1200 hours on it but it's a very good machine and a big improvement compared to the one that we currently use so I just wanted your blessing on you know, purchasing that and also approaching the Council to approve to spend the money for that." **Commissioner Haney**, "And you're taking this out of your existing funds; right?" **Duane**, "Yes, our existing funds, correct." **Commissioner Haney**, "I appreciate that, after our extensive conversation the other day I would make the motion." **Commissioner Matias**, "I will second." **Motion carried.**

Old Business

Considered opening 2021 vehicle bids for Sheriff's Department. **Ron Heeg, Chief Deputy**, "If you recall last month we approached this Commission to advertise bids for yearly allotment of vehicles. Those bids were due in on Monday and Diane has them."

Attorney Shaw Friedman opened the bids, "Yes Mr. President and Chief Deputy Heeg, we have two bids, both timely received for these vehicles, the first from La Porte Chrysler, 1309 Pine Lake Avenue, the total bid package is at the sum of \$262,255 with bond information; second bid is timely received from Lochmandy Ford in Knox, Indiana. Total bid package is \$281,687, bond information provided as well. Mr. President, we'd ask that both bids be shown as received and given to the Department Head for recommendation." **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Reviewed existing Whistle Blower protections under county handbook policy and state/federal law. **President Mrozinski**, "I'm a little confused here, two gentlemen who've kind of rewritten their own policy which is counter to the policy we already have in this, in the county. I thought that they had a chance to review our existing policy and understand that it is, I don't find it deficit in any way, looking at their - the new one that they wanted to bring in it does not start with the chain of command at all, it wants to, if someone has a complaint rather than take it to the present chain of command which would be either the Department Head, HR, HR has been strangely left off of this proposed ordinance. That's what the people are trying to handle, it might either go to the Commissioners and to the Attorney. I don't understand what it is that you guys don't, that you think is deficient in our current policy that you want to bring in a stripped down version here that does not follow chain of command at all. What I don't understand why you'd think the Auditor, of all people, would be handling employee complaints when we have an HR department, that doesn't make any sense what's so ever except that I think probably the Auditor helped Mr. Haney to write this proposed..." **Auditor Stabosz**, "That is not true."
President Mrozinski, "...ordinance. I would like to ask if we have had discussion on this in the past our Attorney who has I know, I saw, sent an email to Mr. Haney considering this, concerning this, can you expound on this, what, where are we at on this?" **Attorney Friedman**, "Thank you Mr. President, three weeks ago at this meeting I offered in public to work with Commissioner Haney to add or beef up our existing employee protections against retaliation that are spelled out in detail at page 23 to page 24 of the employee handbook so that offer still stands. That very next day I sent you a letter pledging collaboration and cooperation which you still have not responded to three weeks later. Folks, it takes two to tango, we don't have to like each other but the taxpayers expect us to try and work together and I appreciate the opportunity Mr. President to allow me to make the letter of record as my office and I know both of you Commissioners seek to work with Commissioner Haney on this and other topics and I'd like to at least make this of record so that we have a record of the history on this particular topic. On Thursday, May 18th (stated May but meant March), the day after the last Commission meeting, I sent Mr. Haney a letter. I said, 'As I mentioned last night you can't exactly claim ambush when it was you who went on Facebook, announced to a reporter on March 10th that you were presenting a policy to protect Whistleblowers at the next Commissioners meeting. Perhaps you can understand why Commissioner Matias contacted me and asked me to research existing protections for Whistleblowers in both county code and federal and state law. Documents which she then had blown up poster size for use and display at last night's meeting.' As I reassured you at that last night's meeting, I am more than willing to work with you on any improvements or strengthening of language that was passed by the Commissioners last summer designed to protect our employees from retaliation and again, that offer still stands. My suggestion the next time you have an initiative in mind is rather than go on Facebook or announce it to a reporter, give your colleagues and my office the courtesy of knowing what you have in mind to see if we can work collaboratively on it. I guarantee you that no newly elected officials' conference or Commissioners seminar would suggest the best way to win support for an initiative is to go on Facebook or to go to the press with it before your fellow elected colleagues are given a heads up. Furthermore an issue like this is squarely in my wheel house since I have focused on plaintiffs' employment law for the 37 years I have been in practice. I have successfully litigated on behalf of the victims of retaliation in the workplace in both federal and state courts. I'm quite proud of the fact that my Forrest Perkins versus Memorial Hospital of South Bend case that was decided not long ago now stands for the proposition that an employee who testifies truthfully for a coworker in an unemployment benefits hearing cannot be retaliated against by an employer. I also wanted to suggest as respectfully as I can that it is time for a re-set in the relationship you have both with your fellow Commissioners and my office. We are all interested, all of us, in open honest delivery of county government services and I know you don't want to leave observers with the impression that you're questioning the honesty or integrity of other public servants or that they don't share your commitment to open honest government. La Porte County Government has a solid reputation for openness and integrity and I believe the series of clean audits from State Board of Accounts will bare that out along with the A+ rating we secured from Standard and Poor's which cited the County's solid fiscal management and transparency of their review. Frankly, if you do encounter any instance of waste, fraud or abuse which you believe you've found, your first call should be to the County Attorney's office just like newly elected Auditor Joie Winski called me in January 2013 shortly after she and her new Chief Deputy discovered the possible embezzlement of \$150,000 by the former Chief Deputy of that office who has since served a prison term. I can assure you that your fellow Commissioners feel equally passionate about uncovering any waste, fraud or abuse and seeing to it that county employees' rights are fully protected. Commissioner Matias comments last night at the meeting on the 17th about urging employees to follow proper chain of command in perfecting any complaints was essential. In fact, some complaints and I want to make this very clear are found not to be actionable in federal or state courts if the complaining employees do not give notice to a supervisor or HR about conditions that may be unwarranted or unlawful. That's why you don't want to have an employee simply lodge a complaint with you directly or the Auditor but rather you should direct them to follow chain of command including a complaint to a supervisor and then HR as indicated in the policy which I sent you. As a general matter, giving your colleagues and my office a heads up on issues or concerns you may have isn't secrecy, it isn't keeping things from the public. It's just good common sense on how to work cooperatively in any elected body and I want you feeling comfortable, I'm

saying it again publicly, calling me or emailing me on any given issue as your colleagues do and please know I will get back with you immediately. You and I had a great 90 minute lunch shortly after the election where we tried to establish a working relationship. That has come off the rails however and I'm suggesting I'm ready and willing to work cooperatively on various ventures and I know your elected colleagues feel the same. Let us try as best as we can for a re-set. For instance, I know with certainty that your colleagues feel just as strongly as you do about the need to build and properly staff a Rolling Prairie EMS base and to do what we can to reinforce our EMS service so that there is no need for the City of La Porte to explore its own ambulance service. Let me know what other issues I can be of help on as Senator Bohacek has suggested to you. And yes, if there are improvements we can make in the existing language contained in the employee handbook, let's explore that together and collaboratively with your elected colleagues of this Commission. I'm ready for a fresh start and hoping you are too.' And I've also got I think some language that perhaps you all could consider perhaps a sentence that could be added to the existing anti-retaliation language on page 23 to page 24 to address specifically the area that is covered on most Whistle Blower actions. Most Whistle Blower protection provides protection for those employees who report, who give valid reports up chain of command, regarding waste, fraud or abuse of public resources. And so I'm certainly able to provide the Commission, all three of you, with perhaps a line that could be added to our existing anti-retaliation language to address I think some of the concerns that you have that prompted some of the inquiry on a Whistle Blower policy so I wanted to make that offer again and again, I think I've got some language that could be helpful to the Commission to potentially add to our existing policy on page 23, 24 of the handbook which does provide protection for employees regarding EEO, harassment issues, but it's fair to add a sentence that I can suggest regarding legitimate reporting up chain of command of waste, fraud and abuse would not subject an employee to any kind of retaliatory conduct and it would be strictly prohibited under your existing policy." **Commissioner Haney**, "Sure, and I appreciate that." **Commissioner Matias**, "Mr. President?" **President Mrozinski**, "Could you submit that to the Commissioners in writing so we can consider that at our next meeting? I think it's a good idea." **Commissioner Matias**, "That was going to be my request is that I'd like to see that in writing and if you could just really focus on the policy and any other improvements around this topic that can be added. I think that's smart, we want to take care of our employees in any way that we can and you know, give them a sense of safety in their work place is absolutely critical in building our culture." **Commissioner Haney**, "Absolutely, so I appreciate your email and I was going to and I did give you a short response that you know, generally speaking I try to triage my emails. I get literally hundreds of emails a day and you know, dozens and dozens just from the County alone so triaging some of those is an important way to go. I know ultimately you wound up looping in my fellow Commissioners on that email chain at which point well, that's where that was, so I think there's some important things and I want to touch on some things Commissioner Mrozinski said as he opened as well. First it's important to look at you know, comparing apples to apples, oranges to oranges. When we look at some of these protections you know, for example we talked about such as OSHA and it's important to note especially for the public who doesn't really involved in as necessarily as much, generally most of the federal protections, the majority of them extend to federal employees, most of the state extend to state and when you look at across the board various things and I'll get into why in this proposed ordinance that I had why I put the Auditor's office in there and there's an extremely important reason for that, when you look across federal-state you know, you have the OIG, Office of Inspector General for example, they remove these things out, when you talk about Whistle Blower protection again, we're not talking about EEO, I'm not talking about EEO, I'm not talking about anti-harassment, we're talking about actual Whistle Blower protection, they remove these purposely from under the purview of HR because of various different things and this is coast to coast, we're talking about from Florida in Miami to California, Washington State, New England, these are wide spread there they take them out of one of two categories, either the office of the Auditor or a second option which we don't have available in this county, is an ethics board. So for example, in 2013, January of 2013, one of the first actions the Commission took at that time, the newly formed Commission, just as Attorney Friedman was appointed as County Attorney, was that they repealed the ethics ordinance for La Porte County and in doing so they also completely dissolved the ethics board for La Porte County which we've been without now we do have this quasi kind of NGO group out of Lake County but you know, should we necessarily be looking at Lake County for our ethics standards, we're here in La Porte County, this is something that we should come back with in, it brings up another good point of why we don't have that ethics ordinance or ethics board here in La Porte County, so when I look at that and I look at the best practices and standards from any large municipalities, cities and counties across the nation that are serious about Whistle Blower protection, they take these and they don't put them, they purposefully, be it state, federal, county, city, they purposefully do not put them under the purview of HR because these things are so serious they put them under either under the purview of an elected official such as the Auditor's office which we can demonstrate from across the nation or in most cases or in a lot of cases other than that they use an ethics board that is formed there locally either the city or county. Now since we don't have an ethics board maybe that's something we should look into as appointing, as having an actual ethics board again in this county that would be something that would be there so thus, in this county, of my two options of either the office of the Auditor or an ethics board, barring the fact that we don't have an ethics board, I defer it to the office of the Auditor as it is best standards and practice across the nation. And it's important to look at some of these things so for example according you know, we have, let me quote this I want to make sure I get this right here so 'for the government accountability office at GAO they published a report stating that employees that reported illegal activities did not receive enough protection from retaliation by their employers.' They go on to talk about a number of reasons for this and they summarized by saying that the GAO found that key issues were lacking resources for investigating employees' claims and the legal complexity of Whistle Blower regulations. In it they talk about some of the difficulties of a lot of issues that can be found at local levels, in municipalities and county levels, where other things such as OSHA pertains very specifically to occupational safety and health and standards, right? When you talk about EEO stuff and anti harassment there's that, when you're looking at a broader sense of Whistle Blower protection for harassment and intimidation, coercion, threats, based upon your normal day-to-day jobs, that is something that is severely lacking and the GAO backs that up with

this report right here which so again this did, I think maybe perhaps we have a failure of terms or some sort of failure to communicate here to make sure that what I had drawn up and I know you (directed to Attorney Friedman) haven't had a chance to respond to any of this stuff and that's fine and perhaps tabling this to the next meeting to give you some more time to work through this and to understand some of the reasoning behind it. This would not be replacing or repealing anything that we have here in the County, this is additional protections for county employees specifically related to Whistle Blower protection so there would be no changes for HR for example, for EEO or and these you know, anti-harassment claims that are already on pages 22 through 24 of our employee handbook, this is additional protections at the county level that do not currently exist at the county level and that's why I'm so passionate about this, I feel so strongly about." **Attorney Friedman**, "Okay and I'm suggesting that I think we can add language to, specifically and I'll propose this to you all, a sentence or two that can be added to the existing anti-retaliation language, and I'll say to you again respectfully, I have been involved in Whistle Blower protection in the state and federal courts. I've got experience in this area and I'm hoping that that helps as this body deliberates on other ways to do that but keep in mind part of what the, part of what was provided at the last meeting was not only page 23, 24 of the handbook but the IOSHA Whistle Blower protection, the Indiana False Claims Act protection, Federal False Claims Act protection, there are ways to properly investigate actionable claims of fraud, waste and abuse. I would also suggest to you there's a reason that HR is generally shown to have that responsibility. HR is the only body that is insulated from partisan politics. The HR Director in fact is the only appointed official in La Porte County who is subject to appointment by both the Commission and Council, is subject only to replacement by majority vote of both the Commission and Council whereas you don't want in this kind of a case whether, and take the Auditor out of it, any partisan elected official being charged with investigating claims and that's why it's generally given to HR in any of the areas but we'll certainly look if you've got model ordinances that you've got from other areas, I know your colleagues will be interested in it, my office will be interested in it so share that if you've got the research from other parts of the country that you'd like to share, I'm absolutely willing to work with you on it." **Commissioner Haney**, "Appreciate that, yeah, and some, and one of the reasons why it took me so long to come up with this was researching fairly exhaustively what's been done in best practices across the nation and I really don't find anywhere where there are, where there is any real, where there's any real Whistle Blower protection that isn't put under a different purview than the HR and again you'll find like for example here in Indiana you'll find small towns that have like a one paragraph Whistle Blower protection thing that do direct it underneath. When you're looking at any of these larger cities or municipalities who get serious about that it's either you know, office of the Auditor or under an ethics committee and I am absolutely unopposed to having an ethics committee and reviving the former expired ethics ordinance. I know, I know when, when that change was made for example and I went back and looked at the minutes, it helps to go back and see what people were thinking at that time and I know former Commissioner Decker at the time, he was newly elected, he said one of the things that wasn't addressed in there was nepotism under the old ethics policy which the old ethics policy does under section G here, there's a specific section right here on nepotism so for whatever reason Commissioner Decker at the time was confused about that and no one, no one including yourself (directed to Attorney Friedman) corrected him on that and that was one of the reasons why they repealed the entire ordinance which just doesn't make sense to me." **Attorney Friedman**, "Well, one of the things, you know why because I think there was a move toward the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission which does have coverage throughout Northwest Indiana, La Porte County has signed on as a member of the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission, has best practices, has training for county employees, department heads and elected officials so again we can walk through that, perhaps we can provide you with additional information what the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission does in terms of ethics training and further advising employees on the rights and remedies and by the way, if you encounter any employee that has a complaint regarding you know, fraud, waste or abuse, direct them to follow chain of command, direct them to currently to file with the Human Resource – with their supervisor and then potentially with the HR department. I got to tell you Mr. Haney, many of the cases deal with the fact that some employee claims are tossed out of court if they don't follow chain of command, that's why I have suggested and Commissioner Matias did at the last meeting why following chain of command is so important to preserving the validity of the complaint so we can talk through that as well, I've got some language to propose to you all that might be added to beef up our existing anti-retaliation provisions and take a look at that and see what you think." **Commissioner Haney**, "I would like to see those and I'd also like to see some of your thoughts on this so perhaps it's best if we just table this until the next meeting, that would be amenable too." **President Mrozinski**, "Is that your motion?" **Commissioner Haney motioned to table until next meeting 4-21-2021. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

New Business

Considered settlement between county snow plow and Pauline Lyda in the amount of \$3,816.21. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered Proclamation for World Creativity and Innovation Week - Cindy Hedge. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered Proclamation for Child Abuse Prevention Month. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered final plans/specs for Rolling Prairie EMS base/Highway garage - Larry Levendowski, Andrew McGuire, and Duane Werner. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

ORIGINAL

Considered ordinance to create an ARP coronavirus local Fiscal Recovery Fund to receipt monies awarded to La Porte County through the American Rescue Plan of 2021. Amount for our county is 21.3 million dollars with half to arrive in approximately one month. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve on first reading. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. Commissioner Matias motioned to suspend the rules and accept on the second reading. Commissioner Haney seconded the motion. Motion carried. ***Ordinance 2021-2**

President Mrozinski, via Zoom, stated he will witness the releasing of 60 satellites by Space-X which will help Broadband.

Correspondence

Commissioner Matias accepted a letter of correspondence from **Marissa Lynch, G2 Strategies**, stating an error was uncovered in statute after so many gaming bills/changes over the last 4 years. After further inquiries and meetings with Representative Jim Pressel, the Auditor and G2 team, La Porte County will be receiving approximately \$100k in the next few weeks. **Commissioner Matias motioned to accept the notice in to the record of the meeting. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. Auditor Tim Stabosz asked if this was the State Auditor and not his office here in La Porte County.**

Commissioner Matias stated the Memorial Bridge Naming Committee submitted names for the next few months. This item will be on the next agenda under Old Business.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Haney – Reported that the old La Porte Hospital will be used as the vaccine clinic instead of the fairgrounds due to the week of the Fair. He attended meetings with FMEC; Michigan City Courthouse Beam setting; Currently the State does not have any plans for EEE spraying this year but if they do determine it is necessary then our county can opt out and the 39 North Conservancy District had a meeting. Commissioner Haney commented on Councilman Yagelski’s remarks about our county being a quote unquote laughing stock. He has been in contact with Senators and Representatives in Indianapolis and he said there is concern for La Porte County however ‘Sunshine is the best disinfectant’ and sometimes it is the light transparency to get back on the right track. He quoted Chinua Achebe, ‘One of the truest tests of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised.’ Then quoted Elie Wiesel, ‘What hurts the victim the most is not the cruelty of the oppressor, but the silence of the bystander.’ Commissioner Haney said he will continue to do what’s right for the people of La Porte County and the employees, to stand tall and stand strong for them.

Commissioner Matias shared good news for the rural broadband. Later today there will be a press release stating the HealthCare Foundation of La Porte has awarded the La Porte County Broadband Task Force with a grant to expand the efforts of reaching our rural areas with broadband. She reminded all to continue wearing our masks, get vaccinated if possible and take precautions to help stop the spread of the Covid virus. Commissioner Matias also said the ‘tone’ that this Commission currently has is of great concern to her, she has spent a lot of years in public service as a teacher, in elected offices, and in appointed offices. Employees have reached out to her asking why the Commission is focused on so much negativity. She reminded them to follow the chain of command. Commissioner Matias stated in the 2 ½ years she has been in the office she has not been coerced or seen retaliation, conspiracy, terror and dishonesty. If you see something, say something. She heard from a Congressman’s office and they will make decisions based on what they think is right and hopefully we can show them our county is a great place to live and raise a family.

Commissioner Mrozinski referred to Councilman Yagelski’s comments on the Michigan City drawbridge on Franklin Street. Congressman Frank Mrvan’s office conducted a meeting with Mark Yagelski, Commissioner Matias, Matt Reardon and President Mrozinski to explore options on moving forward with the bridge and how to land money from the Community Projects fund. La Porte County is getting a ‘black eye’ during discussions among legislatures in Indianapolis. President Mrozinski said calls have come in inquiring about 1 Commissioner, 1 Auditor and 1 Councilman from our county that instead of being positive for the county they continue their political agenda of a personal vendetta spreading hate and discontent and it needs to stop. In the 12 years he has been involved in county politics he has seen disagreements and at times been a part of the disagreements but nothing to this level which is continuous harassment and it has to stop. Hopefully in two weeks at our next meeting it will be a more positive meeting and move forward for the county. It is a 7 days a week job.

President Mrozinski adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE: 4/21/2021

Richard J. Mrozinski

John Matias

ATTEST: _____
Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL