



**LA PORTE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
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**Richard Mrozinski**  
President

**Joseph Haney**  
Vice President

**Sheila Matias**  
Member

**LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, April 21, 2021 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room 3 at 6:00 p.m.**

**President Rich Mrozinski** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by IT Director Darlene Hale.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to add to the agenda Health Department's Dr. Deausy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Amended Health Order pertaining to county buildings. **Commissioner Matias** seconded. Motion carried. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to accept the agenda. **Commissioner Matias** seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approval of April 7, 2021 minutes. **Commissioner Matias** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried.

**Auditor Tim Stabosz** read the Claims with Payroll ending 4/9/2021 - \$1,131,328.82 and Operating Expense Claims - \$1,281,119.76. **Commissioner Matias** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded then stated the operating expense claims increased a bit due to Purdue Co-op; JBC Rail and Sheriff's Pension fund. Motion carried.

**Public Comment**

**Dr. Vidya Kora, via Zoom**, commented on item 11 a 'consider appointment of working group of elected/appointed county officials to prioritize potential projects for American Rescue Plan funding.' Dr. Kora thanked President Biden and his team for making the funding available to our cities, school districts and our county close to fifty million dollars. This is once in a lifetime opportunity. Dr. Kora brought to every one's attention communities across the country including our neighboring communities in southwest Michigan who are trying to incentivize young people to move into their communities by giving them some grant and financial incentives. These are young people who are moving out of the cities and work remotely. Incentives can be in the form of housing grants or forgiving student loans. Dr. Kora reported on Covid-19 that the numbers are going up in our county and he has seen a large number of patients. Approximately 28 patients in the Michigan City hospital and fortunately no one that has been vaccinated. Homebound people would like to get vaccinations too. Peggy Rose will be working on that soon. **Commissioner Haney** thanked Dr. Kora and stated the homebound vaccinations is under way with the help of the Health Department and EMS.

**Randy Veatch**, 4177 W. Schultz Road La Porte, Stated his concerns on D&M Excavating. Thanked the Commission for keeping Attorney Friedman. Referred to map and paperwork from prior Plan Commission meetings. Read off items listed on agendas from Board of Zoning Appeals and Plan Commission meetings.

**Pat Meaney**, 4078 W. Schultz Road La Porte, Voiced his concerns on D&M Excavating and previous Plan Commission meetings. Quoted Attorney Andrew Voeltz, counsel for Ryan Miller and Plan Commission Attorney Doug Biege from these meetings. Quoted then Commissioner Mike Bohacek as well.

**Allen Stevens**, GOP Chairman, handed out copies of Best Practices from other counties pertaining to Affirmative Action Program. Copies included Allen County, Indiana Affirmative Action Plan; Hendricks County, Indiana EEO Plan; Michigan City, Indiana Hiring Program; Vilas County, Wisconsin Affirmative Action Plan and Cleveland County, North Carolina. **Attorney Shaw Friedman** said item 10 b on the agenda will address this issue. **Commissioner Sheila Matias** stated Tonn and Blank presented a power point presentation at a Commissioners' meeting showing their numbers and jobs to answer questions about the Michigan City Courthouse Renovation Project and hiring. **Commissioner Joe Haney** spent time with members of the Social Status for African Males. **Barb Mossman, Human Resources**, replied county jobs are advertised through emails to area leaders, WorkOne, Indeed online and newspapers.

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**Andrew Voeltz**, via Zoom, Howes and Howes, LLP, La Porte, He was informed that a project with D&M Excavating was being discussed at our meeting without being on the agenda and he wanted it to be on the record that he felt it was a disgrace that comments were being made about himself and his client, Ryan Miller.

**Earl Cunningham**, 6311 W. Shiva Drive, La Porte, agreed with previous speakers. Earl said he submitted a Public Records Request to the Commissioners' office for the exact expense of legal fees for the educator's inoculation resolution.

#### Department Reports/Department Head Comments

**Barb Mossman, HR Director** - Reported there are currently open positions. Check the website.

**Heather Stevens, Clerk of the Circuit Court** - Thanked the Board of Commissioners for remodeling in her office.

**Amanda Lahners, Health Department Director** - Updated the Commissioners on COVID. County is currently in orange color. Continue to wear masks, social distance and wash your hands. Vaccinations at ourshotlpc.com, county has given 22,493 vaccinations with 29% of our county being vaccinated. One myth is if you've had Covid you won't get it again - not true. Health Order for mask mandate has been extended through the month of May.

**Tim Stabosz, Auditor** - Commended the Commissioners for being proactive in regard to agenda item 'appointment of a working group of elected/appointed county officials to prioritize potential projects for American Rescue Plan funding.

#### Requests

**Considered** road closure for La Porte County Family YMCA Tour de La Porte August 21. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** permission to approach the Council pertaining to Electronic Poll Books - Heather Stevens, Clerk of the Circuit Court. Secretary of State's office had money left in their budget and wanted to assist counties that currently did not have E-pollbooks. Clerk Stevens stated not sure yet how many poll books will be maintained through the contract.

**Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

#### Old Business

**Considered** Bridge naming by a committee made up of 5 individuals - Chairman Bob Young, Bruce Johnson, Don Lode, Richard Reel and Sue Webster. Members had lists of names which the group went through and it was determined the first 6 names for county bridges would be Townships. **Coolspring Township – Clifford D. Arnold Memorial Bridge** located on Johnson Road over I-94. Cliff Arnold was a US Navy veteran that served during WWII, he was very dedicated to La Porte County having served as Sheriff, Michigan City Mayor, State Representative and a Michigan City School Board member. **Kankakee Township – Phillip Fail Memorial Bridge** located on Fail Road over the I-80 Toll Road. A founding settler in Kankakee Township moving from Maryland to La Porte County in 1830. He and his wife raised 14 children. His son Stanton was the first white child born in Kankakee Township. Phillip passed away in 1876 and had lived in the same house since 1830. **Center Township – Charles 'O' Finley Memorial Bridge** located on Johnson Road over the I-80 Toll Road adjacent to property owned by Mr. Finley. Charlie O was known as baseball's super show man. He owned Kansas City Athletics that moved to Oakland, California under his ownership. The A's logo was sculpted in the grass along the toll road and painted on a barn on his property. He was a public figure known by millions of people and he called La Porte County his home. He later moved to a home on Highway 35 that he had purchased for his parents and it was known for live Christmas displays that brought joy to many. Charlie O passed away in 1996. **Michigan Township – Harriet Colfax Memorial Bridge** located on Franklin Street over Trail Creek and is a lift bridge. Harriet was a lighthouse keeper for 43 years from 1861 to 1904. She was responsible for 3 lights; one on top of the lighthouse and two smaller lights were at the east and west piers. She could walk to the east pier but for the west pier she had to row a boat out to it. Every sunset she would light the beacons then at midnight she would trim the wicks and clean the glass. At sunrise she would extinguish the flames. When the water froze in the winter she walked across the ice to get to the west pier carrying her supplies with her. She kept track of any boats coming or going. She knew all of the captains and the sailors. In 1904 the lighthouse service moved the big lens from the lighthouse to the new lighthouse at the end of the pier along with a foghorn. Harriet Colfax was the nation's oldest and longest serving lighthouse keeper. Two months prior to her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday she chose to retire. She passed away the following year in April of 1905 and she is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Michigan City. **Clinton Township – Abijah Bigelow Memorial Bridge** located on 1000 South also known as Bigelow Mill Road. Abijah is a Revolutionary War Veteran born in 1756 and was an original Minute Man. Enlisted and fought in the first Revolutionary War in Lexington, Massachusetts. Paul Revere made his midnight ride April 16, 1775 warning that the Red Coats were coming. Abijah was only 19 years old on the day he was among 60 Minute Men that gathered in the town center when 700 Red Coats arrived. Abijah and his wife had 12 children. A few of the children started moving west and Abijah and his wife traveled with them ending up in La Porte County in 1835. A grist mill was set up in the area known as Bigelow Mill 2 miles north of Wanatah. A large house built and lived in by Abijah, his wife, daughter and son-in-law was a station for the Underground Railroad. The mill continued to operate until 1885 but when the railroads came through Bigelow Mill was bypassed and Wanatah and Westville continued to grow but not



Bigelow Mill. There was a Bigelow Mill Road. **New Durham Township – Miriam Benedict Memorial Bridge** location pending at this time. Miriam Benedict moved to La Porte County in 1829 with her 6 children and 1 son-in-law from Ottawa, Illinois after the death of her husband in December 1828. In the state of Illinois at this time the children were removed from the home believing the mother could not provide for them so Miriam loaded the family up in the wagons and headed out of the state. She was the first white settler to purchase property in La Porte County and her grandchild was the first white child born in New Durham Township. The township was named after the town she was born in Durham, New York, in 1789. \*\*\*Side note given by Sue Webster – Diane and Nick Gonzales cleared the stones that were covered up by a fallen tree from the adjacent property next to Miriam Benedict Cemetery on Highway 6 in July of last year to determine if any of the stones were damaged. They cleared the branches and big tree limbs which were put in a pile for the highway department to pick up. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve all 6 names from the Committee. Commissioner Haney stated he will remain consistent and does not support naming a bridge after a politician or an owner of a baseball team. He does support the other names but not Clifford Arnold or Charles O. Finlay. President Mrozinski stepped down seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** whistleblower language to add to existing anti-retaliation language in county handbook. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. \*\*\*Resolution 2021-6**

**Considered** part-time or contractor relationship with Ethics/EEOC compliance officer for HR. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. President Mrozinski stepped down and seconded. Motion carried.**

#### New Business

**Considered** Appointment of a Working group of Elected/Appointed county officials to prioritize potential projects for American Rescue Plan funding. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** Resolution establishing North-South Corridor Funding Subcommittee. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** engagement with Baker Tilly regarding continuing reporting services connected with Michigan City Courthouse bonds - Tim Stabosz, Auditor. **Commissioner Haney motioned to accept. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** rent-free lease with La Porte Hospital to move Covid vaccination clinic starting May 27<sup>th</sup> and to provide rent-free use of La Porte Hospital RV for mobile vaccinations. **Commissioner Haney motioned to accept. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

**Considered** Dr. Deaussy's second amended health order extending county mask mandate and other health protections through April 30, 2021. No screeners required in the buildings anymore. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.** Amended health order will be posted on the county website.

#### Commissioner Comments

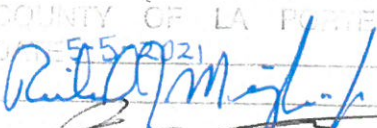
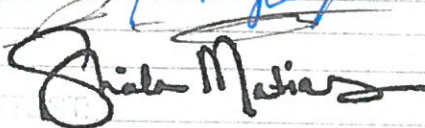
**Commissioner Haney** reported he attended the ground breaking event with EPAC; Meeting with Social Status of African American males; Visited E-911 Dispatchers on all 3 shifts for Dispatcher Week; Stated 2 of the best books to read are Paul Revere's Ride by David Hackett Fischer and Lexington and Concord: the Beginning of the War of the American Revolution by Arthur Bernon Tourtellot. He stated he is encouraged by the Whistle Blower Protection passed tonight.

**Commissioner Matias** thanked Jack Arnett, Maria Fruth, Sera Solutions and a local group of businesses joined forces pertaining to the vaccination being an issue for some folks and 'vaccination hesitation' was formed. Ourshotplco.com is focused on getting the word out on the importance of the vaccination. La Porte County Public Library offers curbside pickup with meeScan. Sign up for Rave for alerts. Go to the county website and please take the Broadband survey.

**Commissioner Mrozinski** attended a presentation with Lochmueller on the North-South Corridor. Rich believes the county still needs Code Enforcement. He attended a meeting with USI and Marquiss Electric to look at the Franklin Street Bridge and start planning for next year. President Mrozinski stated today is Administrative Assistance Day and the office is lucky to have Diane Gonzales as their secretary. He thanked her for her hard work and efforts as she does her job for the Board of Commissioners.

President Mrozinski adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

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EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA  
DATE: 5/5/2021  
  
  
Auditor  
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA