



**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, June 16, 2021 La Porte County Complex Meeting Room 3 at 6:00 p.m.

President Rich Mrozinski called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Ben Dermody.

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

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

Considered approval of June 2, 2021 minutes. **Commissioner Matias** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 6/4/2021 - \$1,133,280.02 and Operating Expense Claims - \$1,026,769.64. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Matias** seconded. **Motion carried.**

Public Comment

Edward Seal, 406 Burlington Beach Road, Valparaiso, spoke on behalf of La Porte County Home Team in regards to an email on ARP funds for rental assistance. Ed stated there is a dire need for rental assistance however the courts may not be 'suited' to administer the funds. The Home Team is partnered with the Township Trustees, United Way and other organizations to help with rental assistance and would be better to administer the funds. Ed explained families are falling behind in rent and utilities due to Covid-19. United Way is currently working with 3 Township Trustees to assist families in need, the State has set up an Indiana Emergency Rental Assistance fund which is being processed through IHEDA and can pay up to 12 months of rent but the approvals have been slow.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Tony Rodriguez, Office of Community and Economic Development, reported Bailey McGrath will be moving on to another job. Tony spoke about the Broadband Task Force and gave credit to Mitch Bishop and Bailey McGrath for grant writing.

Joe Golec, Veterans Service Officer, reported FEMA has a program that reimburses up to \$9,000 for funeral costs for those individuals that have passed away due to Covid-19.

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council to lease a vehicle for Adult Protective Services new hire – Kristine Harlow. **Commissioner Matias** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to spend out of non-reverting fund – Rick Brown. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Matias** seconded. **Motion carried.**

Considered request to rename the Animal Shelter the **Jane Bernard Animal Adoption Center**. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Matias** seconded. **Motion carried.**

ORIGINAL

Old Business

Considered opting out of proposed Attorney General's settlement of opioid litigation to permit separate cities/counties' settlement negotiations in litigation to proceed - Doug Biege, Attorney. **Doug** reported he has been representing La Porte County in an opioid class action lawsuit that was filed in Ohio. Cohen and Malad are the attorneys for this lawsuit. Doug said this is complex litigation. Litigation is pending in Ohio and some bankruptcies in Delaware that are associated with this case. Over 70 municipalities and local governments in Indiana filed a class action suit against Johnson & Johnson and many of the manufacturers/distributors of the opioids based upon the practices that they engaged in and seeking damages to help make reparations to the citizens and some of the treatments, etc. There are billions of dollars at play. The Indiana Attorney General filed a suit against **some** of the manufacturers/distributors. The Ohio litigation is still negotiating which has been going on for a long time and a settlement is not forthcoming any time soon. Doug stated he cannot say what those numbers might even be. The Indiana Legislator this spring passed a statute saying all of the Indiana counties are included in the Indiana Attorney General's lawsuit and under that legislation whatever the settlement that might be awarded would be divided differently. It would be divided with 70% of the settlement funds going to the FSSA, 50% of that 70% goes directly to the state of Indiana. Out of the remaining 30%, 15% will go directly to the State and then 15% to local governments. Doesn't know how much the county will get either way but under the Attorney General's lawsuit, the state gets the bigger cut before it gets to La Porte County. Keep in mind the FSSA will be divided by districts for distribution of the funds but again, the state is getting 50% of it. Doug said its likely La Porte County will receive more money if it remains in the class action lawsuit. The way the Indiana Statute is drafted, we're automatically included unless we 'opt out' and a resolution was provided to the Commissioners. There is a distinct timeline to 'opt out.' Attorney Shaw Friedman stated there is no cost to the county. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered appointment of financial advisor for an initial engagement regarding calculation of lost revenues as a result of the pandemic/recession in connection with ARP funds. **Commissioner Matias motioned to remain with Karl Cender who is our financial advisor and has been for several years. Karl stated hourly basis fees will be charged. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered withdrawing request for June council meeting for \$20k part-time contract officer for H.R. and resubmitting to County Council for a full-time EEO compliance officer/recruiter/investigator in H.R. with job description and proposed salary for July Council meeting. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. President Mrozinski stepped down and seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - nay.**

New Business

Considered Ordinance on 1st reading to vacate undeveloped roadway on E. Belmont Drive in New Carlisle - Andrew Voeltz, Attorney. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered Ordinance on 1st reading to vacate undeveloped roadway on E. Saugana Trail and E. Miami Trail in Rolling Prairie - Andrew Voeltz, Attorney. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered service agreement with UMR - Barb Mossman, HR. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered agreement for Dependent Eligibility Audit - Barb Mossman, HR. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered formally notifying City of Michigan City of cessation of Willard Avenue Carpentry program for the courts/notice to end lease at location. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered appointment to MS4 board to serve as Chair of multi-jurisdictional MS4 co-op. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered request by Election Board to purchase mobile van (accessible for wheelchair users) for mobile voter registration and early voting with grant funds secured from Center for Tech & Civic Life - Clerk Heather Stevens, Chuck Watterson and Nelson Pichardo. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered requesting from Council \$750,000.00 from ARP funds to establish La Porte County Emergency Rental Assistance program to prevent evictions due to moratorium expiring June 30; fund to be administered by Judges Thorne and Friedman with input/consultation with Township Trustees, Clerk, Sheriff and non-profit organizations. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. President Mrozinski stepped down and seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - nay.**

Considered requesting funding from LIT/CEDIT, Major Moves or Major Bridge from Council for repairs to Franklin Street Bridge not to exceed \$1.5M. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Comments


Commissioner Haney stated summer is in full swing so get out and enjoy the county parks. They are currently hiring as well as other offices. Our county website has all of the open positions posted. The Parks also offer many programs for all ages. Natures Tiny Tots, Discovery Days and Pioneer Days just to name a few of them. Joe visited several offices including Health department, EMS and E-911 who hosted a breakfast at midnight for first responders and law enforcement that work that shift. He visited the Sheriff's garage. Vaccine Clinic requires no appointments now, walk-ins welcome. All 3 vaccines are offered. There will be a Holstein show at the fairgrounds. It is 'kitten season' at the Animal Shelter.

Commissioner Matias said Good Night to all, enjoy the summer evening.

Commissioner Mrozinski reported on his 9 years serving as liaison for the VFW in Washington, D.C. Congressman Myan had a Zoom meeting on June 10th. He is on the Veteran's Affairs Committee and was asked to Chair a Committee of Technology and Modernization which is a sub-committee from the Veteran's Affairs Committee. The electronic health records system for veterans is being overhauled. Suicide Prevention is one of their topics. There is a 'bow wave' or a delay in treating veterans after the pandemic. There are claims backed-up. Also scams happening to take advantage of veterans. Rich attended a LEAP meeting where Re-Districting was discussed. Michigan City Courthouse project is on schedule and on budget. The EMS base in Rolling Prairie is moving forward and Rich stated he has worked on this for the past 15 years. President Mrozinski asked Commissioner Haney for a quote to which **Commissioner Haney** responded with a short quote from a Barnes & Thornburg lawyer, 'Don't be in a hurry, don't be in a rush' on the ARP funds where the guidelines are constantly changing. **President Mrozinski** quoted Thomas Jefferson, 'When governments fear the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny.'

President Mrozinski adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 3-7-2021



ATTEST: _____ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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