

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL

July 26th, 2021 AT 6:00PM

The meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on July 26th, 2021 at 6:00pm (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex located at 809 State Street, La Porte, Indiana, 46350.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6pm by the Council President, Randy Novak.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Novak asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and requested a moment of silence for the recently deceased Mike Dempsey, the former Director of Operations for Access La Porte County Television.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was conducted by Auditor Timothy Stabosz. All seven Council members were physically present.

APPROVAL OF THE JULY 26, 2021 AGENDA

- i. Motion to approve made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 28, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Cunningham requested that the approval of the June 28, 2021 meeting minutes be tabled due to short staffing, and a resulting delay, in the production of said minutes.

- i. Motion to table the approval of the minutes was made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor to table the minutes until the August 23, 2021 Council Meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Many members of the public came to the council in support of hiring a proposed Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (EEO Officer). Residents Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Sinclair noted their hopes that having this position in the County would increase the recognition of minorities in the area. In addition to

suggesting that the EEO position would bring more minorities into the County workplace, Resident Mrs. Most also noted her own hopes that the position would offer whistleblower protection in the event of workplace discrimination. President of the NAACP of La Porte County Wesley Sculley promoted hiring a person of color for the position in a move to represent diversity in the County. Alternately, resident Rodney McCormick expressed concern over candidate selection potentially being determined by the County Attorney Shaw Friedman, and opined that the EEO Officer position would be obsolete if it meant needing to report to an attorney regardless. Mr. McCormick mentioned his wariness that Commissioner Haney's original whistleblower protection proposition had been heavily criticized, however has now suddenly rematerialized with heavy consideration. Resident Mr. Kelly Sr. voiced his disenchantment with bureaucratizing the position for fear of its function falling short. Local Pastor David Ashley mentioned this as a concern as well but spoke in favor of the EEO Officer position.

Valerie McCline, 5255 W 800 N

Ms. McCline approached the Council regarding the McCline/800 N drainage issue, explaining that the drainage problems on her property have been causing trees to fall, her ditch backing up with debris, and various additional issues as a result which have also inhibited her ability to bring her horses onto her property. She informed the Council that she has been struggling with both La Porte County and the State for years to get the issue resolved, often resulting in her needing to pay out of pocket for services to alleviate the problem, only for the issues to return due to the poor drainage in the area. President Novak noted that the issue has only been brought up to the Council in the previous month, to which Ms. McCline contested that she has been struggling with the Commissioners for 6 years before getting to this point. She urged the Council to move forward with the 800N project to alleviate these frustrations.

Joe Haney, La Porte County Commissioner

Commissioner Joe Haney requested the Council consider raises for county salaried positions across the board, as to bring La Porte County wages up to speed with those of neighboring counties, especially positions with a high turnover rate. He informed the Council that the McCline/800N drainage project request would be brought up later in the meeting. Mr. Haney also spoke of the EEO Officer position, mentioning his efforts to ensure that the position would be independent and without bias. He noted three topics he hoped the position would assist with: aiding the Human Resources Department, EEO recruitment, and the development of a whistleblower investigator. Mr. Haney reiterated that the EEO Officer and Whistleblower Investigator need to be two separate entities instead of one, as to provide a completely independent party to which employees would feel safe and confident communicating with, and requested that the Council have the Commissioners rework the one position into the two which he summarized.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Darlene Hale, La Porte County IT

Ms. Hale reported to the Council that two more of the IT Department's staff members had left the department. Ms. Hale asked for permission to replace the System Tech and the Network Engineer which she had lost. She also noted that she would be reaching out to the local colleges, Ivy Tech and Purdue, to reach out to potential interns to work with La Porte County IT. Ms. Hale explained that she also wanted to increase the salary for the previously discussed Network Admin position, to which Mr. Yagelski informed her that the current motion would be to approve the current pay offering for the newly advertised positions, and another vote would need to be taken to consider the requested salary increase for the aforementioned Network Admin position.

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Garner.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Ms. Hale clarified to the Council that she wanted to increase the salary for the previously advertised Network Admin position from a PAT 3 salary to a PAT 5 salary instead, which would be a \$4,600 annual increase for the position. President Novak confirmed with Ms. Hale that the increase in salary would be for the Network Admin position, which Ms. Hale confirmed. Mr. Rosenbaum informed the Council that the increase would bring the annual salary for the Network Admin position up to \$46,355.

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum
 - a. Attorney Guy DiMartino requested that Mr. Yagelski amend his motion to reflect the new annual salary for the position noted by Mr. Rosenbaum.
 - b. Mr. Yagelski amended his motion per Mr. DiMartino's request.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Yagelski inquired with Ms. Hale about a few updates regarding the IT Infrastructure request from the June 28, 2021 Council Meeting. Ms. Hale explained that the intention of the project was to house La Porte County owned hardware at a Union Station Data Center in South Bend, which would contain crucial back-up data from the County's local servers in the event of an emergency or cyberattack. The particular contract, Ms. Hale explained, would cover 5 years of housing at the alternate location and offer a 10GB connection with the server. President Novak asked Ms. Hale about the prospect of a cyberattack targeting La Porte's local servers, and if the back-up hardware would remain safe in such an event. Ms. Hale confirmed that the alternate hardware and back-up data would be protected, as it would be located at a separate location.

Mr. Cunningham queried as to what research had been done to select the supplier to house the hardware, which Ms. Hale noted that a lack of data centers in the area narrowed down the IT Department's options drastically. Mr. Yagelski informed Mr. Cunningham that a supplier from Portage had also been reached out to but was not selected, while Ms. Hale added that the 10GB connection to the server provided by the current choice of supplier was particularly appealing.

Mrs. Gramarossa inquired about what to expect once the initial 5 year contract came to an end. Ms. Hale explained that rental would very likely continue to be charged, and increased pricing for updated hardware was to be expected following the end of the contract. Ms. Hale noted at this time that the only other backup that the county had at this point was a local cloud, which couldn't accommodate

much of the current back-up due to the sheer size of the data from various county programs like Laserfiche. She continued that Laserfiche, often used for scanned documents associated with the courts and other legal areas, usually contained so much data that the current cloud system was often unable to perform daily back-ups. Mr. Rosenbaum inquired with Ms. Hale as to whether having this data back-up system was a security measure advocated by the State, which Ms. Hale confirmed it was.

Lynn Swanson, County Coroner

Ms. Lynn Swanson approached the Council to address some of the curiosities that had been brought up regarding the role which the Coroner plays in La Porte County. Ms. Swanson clarified that the Coroner plays an imperative role in pronouncing the death of a decedent, but does not transport bodies to a county morgue as there is no centralized county morgue located in La Porte County. Ms. Swanson clarified that oftentimes morgues or body-holds in a few of the local hospitals are utilized when necessary. Ms. Swanson also informed the Council that Deputy Coroners are not volunteers, and iterated the strict education, training, and schooling which is needed for the position as required by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators. Mrs. Swanson emphasized the medical significance of the duties of the Coroner, in addition to the role a Coroner plays when easing the grief of affected family members of a decedent. In her conclusion, Mrs. Swanson welcomed anyone curious about duties of the Coroner to reach out to her for any additional questions.

Barb Huston, E911 Director

Mrs. Huston informed the Council that Marquiss Electric Inc. would be coming into E911 by the end of the week for minor electric work and to begin moving consoles. She explained that she hoped to have all the consoles moved before the telephone upgrade, while also mentioning that Motorola had acquired a new project manager who would be helping with the upcoming telephone upgrade once the aforementioned console moving project had been completed. Mrs. Huston emphasized that the current 911 dispatchers would need to relocate during the telephone upgrade, and clarified that she intended to use spare consoles located in Porter County, Long Beach, and a La Porte to perform this task. She expressed her anticipation that the telephone upgrade would be finished within one day or less.

Regarding the previous Commission Meeting, Mrs. Huston reiterated her request to receive ARP funding to be directed to E911, as her team of dispatchers are considered Essential Workers. She requested to be reached out to by the Finance Committee to meet about this request.

IT Director Darlene Hale stepped up to inform the Council that her team was no longer utilizing T-1 lines in compliance with requirements of the upcoming E911 telephone upgrade.

Tim Stabosz, County Auditor

Mr. Stabosz approached the Council and noted that the approval of the of the Franklin St. Bridge request at the June 28, 2021 meeting was unusual in that the Council approved the project before the Commissioners approved a contract. He also expressed concerns regarding the release of a legal opinion advocating a no-bid contract, which had been put forth by the Commission Attorney Shaw Friedman. While Mr. Stabosz noted his respect for Marquiss Electric Inc., the company selected for the no-bid contract, he expressed concerns around conflict-of-interest, and the legality of the no-bid contract. Mr.

Stabosz announced his intention to reach out to the State Board of Accounts to seek and receive a "No-Action Letter" for the Franklin St. Bridge contract, which he emphasized would be setting a precedent for La Porte County given the size of the contract. He affirmed to the Council that his doing so would offer legal protection for the project.

Shaw Friedman, County Attorney

Mr. Friedman approached the Council to express his frustration in his correspondence with Commissioner Joe Haney in relation to the no-bid contract that was approved for the Franklin St. Bridge. Mr. Friedman noted that he urged the Commissioners to move forward with utilizing the special purchase statute to secure the project to Marquiss Electric Inc. to ensure swift and quality work on the Franklin St. Bridge. Upon Mr. Friedman volleying a number of unsubstantiated claims and personal attacks toward Commissioner Haney, Mr. Cunningham inquired about the relevancy of Mr. Friedman's statements and questioned their importance to the Council meeting. As Mr. Friedman continued his claims against Mr. Haney, President Novak gaveled him to halt and to keep the discussion civil. President Novak called a five-minute recess, and the Council meeting returned shortly thereafter.

After the recess, President Novak asked Mr. Friedman if he had any information to offer to the Council related solely to the Franklin St. Bridge contract. Mr. Friedman confirmed his confidence in establishing Marquiss Electric Inc. as the sole contractor for the project, and affirmed that the Commissioners took the proper steps to ensure the legality of utilizing the special purchase statute and issuing the no-bid contract.

Mrs. Gramarossa requested that Mr. Friedman send all of this information to the Council via email, while Mr. Rosenbaum asked Mr. Friedman to verbally certify that a separate contract file was assembled to reflect the Commission's actions, which Mr. Friedman confirmed. Mr. Cunningham conveyed his frustration as to why the Commissioners' intentions with the Franklin St. Bridge request were not mentioned during the June 28, 2021 Council meeting, to which Mr. Friedman replied that he happened to be absent during said meeting.

Mr. Cunningham communicated his dismay about the drastic and urgent resolve of the Franklin St. Bridge contract when mention of the project had begun circa six months prior, to which Mr. Yagelski noted the urgency to repair the bridge before the year's end. President Novak requested that should projects of this nature come to the Council again, that required provisions and documentation be attached and presented accordingly.

Attorney Guy DiMartino commented that as long as the Commissioners met the letter of the statute and had all of the proper documentation, the county would be clear for the project.

DEPARTMENT HEAD OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.

LIAISON REPORTS

Council Member Terry Garner:

Mr. Garner spoke with MS4 Coordinator Rick Brown about many of the projects MS4 performed for the community the prior year, as well as discussed the \$5,000 budget cut which MS4 had received in the same year. Mr. Garner informed the Council that Mr. Brown would come before the Council the following day to request the \$5,000 cut from the previous year be reinstated into MS4's budget.

Vice President Mark Yagelski:

Mr. Yagelski informed the Council that he had spoken with Museum Director Keri Teller Jakubowski regarding the state of the repairs at the La Porte County Historical Society Museum. Mr. Yagelski explained how Covid-19 quarantine and a resulting absence of staff allowed water damage from the roof to go unnoticed and worsen. Mr. Yagelski recapped the Council on the former \$30,000 offer from Dr. Kessler to assist with repairs of the roof and mentioned his hopes of endorsing the project when it came to the table. Separately, Mr. Yagelski told the Council that while he believed that approving a blanket increase of all salaried positions across the board might not be attainable, he did press the urgency of increasing salaries for imperative and high-turnover positions in the county such as EMS and IT. For his last liaison report, Mr. Yagelski explained how he had spoken with a local contractor in regards to the Franklin St. Bridge project. Mr. Yagelski requested that subtler methods of communication be used during public meetings and that speakers remain composed when referring to local businesses during future meetings.

Council Member Earl Cunningham:

Mr. Cunningham noted that he extensively met with Auditor Tim Stabosz regarding budget hearings, and met also with Community Corrections, which Mr. Cunningham explained he would be bringing the latter up later in the meeting due to some newly developing issues.

Council Member Michael Rosenbaum:

Mr. Rosenbaum described to the Council his involvement with the FMEC and his frequent attendance at the La Porte County Fair, where he met frequently with members of the La Porte County Fair Board. Mr. Rosenbaum praised the many contractors and Director of Facilities Larry Levendowski in preparing the grounds for the Fair. Mr. Rosenbaum noted his involvement with the RDC, and the interesting opportunities the RDC presented in bringing new businesses to La Porte County. He mentioned observing a local radio study orated by Economic Development Director Tony Rodriguez, which noted a shortage of 5,000 homes in the La Porte County area. Following this, Mr. Rosenbaum indicated his interest in fulfilling more housing projects to address this problem in the community. Mr. Rosenbaum continued that, while he was proud of the La Porte County Parks & Recreation Department's changes in the past year, there was uncertainty regarding the maintaining of their current budget, or in raising the budget for the department in the upcoming budget hearings.

Council Member Connie Gramarossa:

Mrs. Gramarossa explained how she had spoken with various departments which reported running smoothly. Mrs. Gramarossa noted her activity with the Drainage Board and acknowledged the appearance of Ms. McCline during the public comment section earlier in the meeting. Mrs. Gramarossa expressed her hope in working together to find a solution for 800 North drainage issue.

Council Member Mike Mollenhauer:

Mr. Mollenhauer expressed his respect for Marquiss Electric Inc. and recapped an experience where Marquiss Electric Inc. had honestly and loyally assisted him during his time as a Sheriff under taxing environmental circumstances. Mr. Mollenhauer also attended an RDC meeting, the Midwest Trade Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, the Renaming Ceremony of the La Porte County Animal Shelter (being renamed to the Jane Bernard Animal Shelter), and attempted to join his first NIRPC meeting, which he was unfortunately unable to attend due to internet connection issues with Zoom. Mr. Mollenhauer also attempted to attend an Emergency Management Agency meeting; however, the meeting was eventually postponed which allowed him to partake in a Solid Waste District meeting instead. He also met up with Director of Human Resources Barb Mossman and the Job Classification Committee multiple times throughout the month to review various staff classifications, and heavily praised the work offered by Mrs. Mossman as well as the committee regarding the guidance that was offered. Mr. Mollenhauer mentioned how he enjoyed the care given to the fairgrounds during his visit to the La Porte County Fair but expressed disappointment in the lack of 4-H project turnout, as well as a lack of churches offering vending services.

Council President Randy Novak:

President Randy Novak informed Mr. Mollenhauer that the lack of church presence at the Fair was likely a result of declining congregation size, but thankfully, Bethany Lutheran Church had taken up two of the buildings at the fair to accommodate the crowds. President Novak also noted that as a result, Bethany did sell out of food very swiftly. Mr. Novak praised Director of Facilities Larry Levandowski, the Highway Department, and all the contractors who had dedicated time, money, and supplies to the success of this year's County Fair. He also urged a sense of pride for those who worked on the fairgrounds, as the La Porte County Fair represents everything that the county stands for. Separately, President Novak informed the Council that he wanted to assemble a new committee to review salaries, preferably a committee which would be made up of the Personnel Committee and the Council, to which he would like to have a meeting established within two or three weeks.

Mr. Cunningham noted that he would be eager to motion the approval of raising county part-time wages up to \$15. Director of Human Resources Barbara Mossman approached the Council to request that the wage be brought up to \$16 to accommodate part-time positions which may need a certification or degree to fulfill, to which President Novak confirmed that \$15 would be just the starting wage and that more specialized or in-demand positions could certainly start off at a higher wage given the circumstances.

Motion to approve increasing part-time pay to \$15 per hour made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

Mr. Rosenbaum expressed concern as to whether bumping up part-time wages might cause issues with salaries close to this pay bracket that were not approved for wage increases, and the potential of needing to increase existing salaries to compete with the part-time pay increase. Mr. Cunningham mentioned that the lack of fringe benefits in part-time positions would help prevent any gap-closing issues and promote full-time positions with the county. Mr. Cunningham recapped his worry about surrounding counties and businesses offering higher pay than La Porte County was offering, and the potential loss of quality part-time staffing opportunities that may result from this. Auditor Tim Stabosz sought confirmation from Mr. Cunningham that the \$15 hourly part-time wage would be considered for all departments across the board. Noting his neutrality, Mr. Stabosz explained that increasing part-time pay may affect the raise amounts that could be offered to full-time employees, as departments would have to budget differently to accommodate the part-time wage increase.

Mr. Yagelski and Mr. Cunningham discussed whether increasing the starting wage would bring forward more quality applicants, to which Mr. Stabosz suggested that the range of the wage could be lower if the Council desired. Mr. Stabosz recommended that a range of \$11-\$15 per hour could be offered depending on the position offered and the applicant's experience, which Mr. Rosenbaum asserted as well. President Novak proposed to Mr. Cunningham that a range of \$13-\$15 per hour could be an option. Mr. Mollenhauer expressed support for Mr. Cunningham's \$15 per hour request, but prioritized interest in establishing a range of \$13-\$15 with raises offered following the completion of an employment probationary period. Mrs. Gramarossa agreed that looking into the long-term cost of the raises, including what the cost would be for eventually increasing wages for full-time positions, would be highly advised.

Mrs. Mossman confirmed with the Council that at any given time, there are likely 125-150 part-time positions filled with La Porte County, with 20-30 of said positions being seasonal.

President Novak commented that he stood behind Mr. Cunningham's statements and used Michigan City's lifeguard pay increase as an example that increased wages can help fill vacancies in employment, and hopefully with the County.

Mr. Stabosz took a moment to inform the Council that a pay increase to \$15 per hour for part-time staff could potentially cost the County roughly \$500,000 annually, as a ball-park figure.

Mr. Cunningham asked Mrs. Mossman when these changes in wages could be applied to payroll, which Mrs. Mossman informed would be the upcoming or following Monday, and noted that the pay period turns over on Saturday.

Mr. Yagelski informed the Council that he would prefer individual departments to have power in establishing a range of pay, and for said departments to take responsibility for vacant positions if they were still unable to fill them following the pay increase.

Mrs. Gramarossa asked Mr. Stabosz if his previous calculation offered to the Council would have been the cost of a full year with the part-time pay increase, which Mr. Stabosz confirmed.

Mrs. Mossman directed the Council to communicate with the Payroll department about any updates in wages, as Payroll would be the department directly applying these changes.

At this time, Mr. Cunningham withdrew his motion and amended his original motion to raise part-time pay to \$13-\$15 at the discretion of individual department heads, effective at the next payroll period, seconded by Mr. Yagelski. President Novak noted that high-turnover and imperative positions would be

treated as exceptions. Mr. Yagelski and President Novak noted that the first payroll of September would be the decided date to enact the \$13-15 part-time hourly pay increase.

- i. Motion to approve increase of part-time pay to a range of \$13-\$15 per hour, effective the first pay period in September, made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

END OF COUNCIL MEMBER LIAISON REPORTS.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS

There were no ordinances or resolutions.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Consider approval of Council President's authorization to hire replacement positions for:

La Porte County Purdue Extension Office – Program Assistant 4-H Position

La Porte County Animal Shelter – Animal Control Officer

La Porte County Juvenile Services – Assistant Director

La Porte County Clerk – Deputy Clerk

La Porte County Community Corrections – Field Officer and Case Worker

La Porte County Highway Department – Front Desk Receptionist

- i. Motion to authorize all the requests to hire collectively made by Mr. Rosenbaum, seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. Six members voted in favor (President Novak, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Mollenhauer), and one member voted not in favor (Mr. Garner).

Mr. Garner inquired if La Porte County paid the wage of the Program Assistant 4-H Position, to which Mrs. Mossman confirmed that it was to be paid for by the County. Mr. Garner questioned offering the Program Assistant to the Purdue Extension until Purdue could solve the grievances which were causing a loss of staff and volunteers. As a result, Mr. Yagelski withdrew his vote from the recent motion.

- i. Motion to amend the previous motion and remove the Program Assistant 4-H Position from the collective vote made by Mr. Rosenbaum, seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in support.

- iii. Motion to approve all the requests to hire barring the Program Assistant 4-H position made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- iv. All members voted in favor.
- v. Motion to deny approval of the Program Assistant 4-H position made by Mr. Yagelski.
- vi. Motion to instead table the approval of the Program Assistant 4-H position until the next Council meeting made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- vii. All member voted in favor to table the Program Assistant 4-H position until the next Council meeting.

2. La Porte County Assessor – The reclassification of Personal Property/Mobile Home Supervisor position to take effect first pay in August.

Chief Deputy of the Assessor's Office, Stacy Sweitzer, approached the Council to clarify that the intention of the reclassification was to consolidate two existing positions into one supervisory position with a staff member who was already established with the Assessor's office. Said staff member had been fulfilling both positions and recently became certified to perform as the Personal Property Supervisor, hence the request to merge these two positions into one.

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

3. La Porte County Planner – Motion of support for Community Crossings grant.

County Planner Mitch Bishop approached the Council to ask for a commitment letter to approve the Community Crossings Grant which he would like to use on the Highway Department's 500 West and 150 North projects. Mr. Rosenbaum discussed with Mr. Bishop what the grants would entail, noting that the two grants as listed were worth roughly \$2.2 million. For clarification, Mr. Rosenbaum confirmed that a total of \$1 million in reimbursement could be gleaned from the \$2.2 million in grants, however the County would have to cover the remaining 1.2 million on the projects. Mr. Bishop explained that the 500 West project would ultimately cost \$800,000 and was the first priority of the two projects, and the 150 North project would have an estimated cost of \$1.4 million total, with which the grant in place, would leave the County with around \$700,000 in costs for the projects.

- i. Motion to approve made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

4. Council Attorney, Guy DiMartino – Update on eviction relief program.

Attorney DiMartino presented his plan to administer the recently established eviction relief program and the \$100,000 funds which came with the program's approval. When Mr. DiMartino reached out to the Supreme Court for guidance, he was informed that the courts cannot work directly with the program without the Supreme Court's approval. He continued that he reached out to County stakeholders, and in particular, Trustee Lisa Pierzakowski to assist with the program. Regarding hiring facilitators, Mr. DiMartino noted that he wanted to stay away from needing to pay for administration and discovered through Judge Lang that the State of Indiana offers facilitation complimentary to tenants and landlords alike, and the facilitation could be performed within 10 days of a request.

Mr. DiMartino continued that the first step of the program would be to offer a landlord an informational form immediately following the landlord's filing of a notice to evict. The landlord would indicate whether or not they agreed to go into the program. Should the landlord agree, and subsequently the tenant agree as well, both parties would be handed off to the Trustees. Mrs. Pierzakowski would then take applications one day a week in La Porte and one day a week in Coolspring, and would then qualify applicants within 72 hours. Should the applicant qualify, the landlord and tenant will apply for State facilitation, which in turn would be performed within 10 days and could be engaged via phone call or video. If an agreement is made on the arrearage, the landlord and tenant will return to the Trustees with a mediated settlement. A voucher signed by the landlord and tenant would then be prepared by the Trustees. Ultimately, the Trustees would seek out reimbursement of the distributed funds. Mr. DiMartino noted that the maximum amount for a voucher would be \$7,500. Mrs. Pierzakowski would in turn offer monthly reports to demonstrate the success of the program.

Mr. Rosenbaum asked if tenants and landlords would need to approach the State before entering the program. Mr. DiMartino responded that they would not need to.

Mrs. Pierzakowski approached the Council to inform them that if the State does happen to offer aid to a landlord of an approved applicant before the County does, the landlord would need to reimburse funds back to the County, to which Mr. Rosenbaum expressed his approval.

Mr. DiMartino informed the Council that \$25,000 would be needed to get everything in order for Mrs. Pierzakowski to move the program forward, and once funds are spent, reimbursement will be sought through the Auditor's office. Mrs. Pierzakowski spoke of United Way's positive reception of the eviction relief program, while President Novak added that the program also caught positive attention at the recent Michigan City Council Meeting. Mr. Novak also indicated that the City of La Porte did not seem interested in contributing to the program. Mrs. Pierzakowski alternately mentioned that she was actively looking for workarounds to apply \$120,000 for Covid relief toward the eviction relief program.

President Novak asked Mr. DiMartino if any of this assistance would apply to persons with mortgage foreclosures, to which Mr. DiMartino explained that many foreclosures already have forms of mediation, but the decision to offer help through the eviction relief program will fall on the Council.

OLD BUSINESS

La Porte County E911

Requesting to spend \$125,407.52 from Surcharge Account to replace the old analog T1 lines.

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Commissioners

McCline/800 North (\$120,000) from Riverboat (1191)

- i. Motion to remove the request from the table made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Yagelski inquired as to whether the County Highway Department could simply clean Mrs. McCline's ditches on 800 North.

- i. Motion to approve the Highway Department cleaning of Mrs. McCline's 800 North ditches made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Rosenbaum.

Mr. DiMartino clarified that a motion to clean the ditches was being made, and if necessary, the previously mentioned appropriations regarding the project would be revisited if the cleaning did not resolve the drainage issue at hand.

Mrs. McCline approached the Council to inform them that long-standing issue with the ditches in question was the presence of trees and foliage that grew in them after years of neglect, furthering drainage problems. President Novak informed Mrs. McCline that the County would clean the ditches first and proceed accordingly afterward.

- ii. All members voted in favor.

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, REQUESTS

La Porte County Information Technology \$658,659.50

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950) for:

Infrastructure Broadband Disaster Recovery South Bend Union Station

Auditor Tim Stabosz noted that while Broadband could be covered by ARP funds, he was unsure if Disaster Recovery would be applicable to receive funding from the ARP.

- i. Motion to approve contingent upon written approval by Mr. Karl Cender, or an alternate advisor, to ensure ARP eligibility OR readvertisement for the next Council Meeting made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

At this time, Mr. Rosenbaum recommended that the Council hire their own advisor separate from the Commissioners' own Mr. Cender, as he noted that he did not prefer Mr. Cender's credentials regarding legal matters of this sort. He instead recommended hiring an advisor such as Baker Tilly to prepare the written approval or disapproval of ARP funding for the project. Mr. Cunningham expressed interest in Mr. DiMartino preparing a written approval, to which Mr. DiMartino declined but informed the Council that he could reach out to Mr. Cender to prepare an approval. Mr. Rosenbaum adamantly noted once more that he did not have an interest in offering the approval to Mr. Cender, as it would be putting additional work on Mr. Cender for which he hadn't been hired to do.

- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Motion made by Mr. Cunningham to have the Council Attorney reach out to Baker Tilly in the event of Karl Cender's declination to answer the IT Broadband Disaster Recovery ARP eligibility question, seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Sheriff

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950) for:

Merit Overtime (\$2,500)

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Maintenance

Requesting Additional Appropriations from LIT (1112) for:

Museum Roof Repairs (Not to exceed \$150,000)

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Maintenance – 2 Trucks and a Compact SUV (\$115,000)

- i. Motion to approve \$115,000 from LIT (1112) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Rosenbaum clarified to the room that the vehicles approved in this motion would not be available until the beginning of the following year.

La Porte County Human Resources

Requesting Additional Appropriation from General (1000) for:

Salary for EEO Compliance/Recruitment and Investigative Officer (\$50,000)

Human Resources Director Barbara Mossman approached the Council to inform that the proposed EEO Officer position would be classified under the Human Resources Department. Mrs. Mossman clarified that the proposed EEO Officer would report to Human Resources as necessary but would be able to approach cases independently.

Mr. Cunningham expressed disapproval that a non-County affiliated, independent attorney was not considered for the EEO position, bringing up the many requests for an independent party to represent the position during the public comment section earlier in the meeting. Mrs. Mossman explained that part of the reason for this classification was to assist with understaffing in the Human Resources department, to which Mr. Cunningham explained that he would rather hire a part-timer to assist with Human Resources.

- i. Motion to deny made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. 6 members voted in favor (Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Cunningham, President Novak, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Garner) and 1 member voted not-in-favor (Mr. Mollenhauer).
- iii. Motion to approve the hiring of a part-time employee for the Human Resources Department made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham. (Part-timer would not have EEO or Whistleblower responsibilities.)

- iv. 5 members voted in favor (Mr. Garner, Mr. Cunningham, Mrs. Gramarossa, President Novak, Mr. Yagelski) and 2 member voted not-in-favor (Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Mollenhauer).

La Porte County Superior Court No. 4

Requesting Additional Appropriation from General (1000) or Riverboat (1191) for:

Psychological Services (\$5,000)

Mr. Rosenbaum collaborated with Mr. Mollenhauer on whether funds should be taken from Riverboat (1191) or General (1000), while President Novak inquired with Auditor Tim Stabosz as to where he recommended the funds be taken from. Mr. Stabosz said he had no recommendation.

- i. Motion to approve the funds being made available from Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Commissioners

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950) or LIT (1112) for:

Kingsbury Creek Culvert/Drainage Improvements (\$700,000)

- i. Motion to take funding out of ARP (8950) contingent on approval of such via Baker Tilly and to take funds from LIT (1112) if ARP funding was not approved made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

Mr. Rosenbaum took a moment to express wariness in spending ARP funds too swiftly or recklessly and mentioned that he would like to see some planning to ensure ARP funds could be held onto.

- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Coroner

Requesting to Spend from the Non-Reverting Fund (2053) for:

Training of Deputies at Phil Chalmers and Indian Loss Team Training Professional Services

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Auditor

Requesting to Spend from Dual Homestead Act (7110) for:

Checks (\$1,049)

1099 Material (\$1,141)

Auto Purchase Order Forms (\$2,091)

2 Adding Machines (\$299)

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Garner and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Mr. Rosenbaum took a moment to reiterate his stance on loosely spending ARP funds and urged spending it more frugally going forward. He expressed hope in continuing to find funding to support the County's employees, and noted his desire for cooperation and assistance from the Commissioners to assist in doing so to ensure the entirety of these duties did not fall solely on the Council.

Mr. Yagelski explained that he wanted to see a program that would integrate younger staffing into the County's employment and pointed out that he would like to see alternate sources be made available for applicants to be able to apply for positions with the County. Mr. Rosenbaum commented that the Trustees have assisted applicants in acquiring County employment in the past, which Mr. Garner confirmed as well.

Mr. Cunningham took a moment to remind the Council that the Belterra Conference on September 21st and 22nd would need to be registered for in order to attend. He also expressed relief that the Council meeting ended better than it began, and strictly urged the importance of transparency in both Council meetings and Commission meetings.

President Novak requested developing an ARP workshop prior to the August 23, 2021 Council Meeting, and asked the Council to start preparing information about the ARP for the workshop. He noted that the Finance Committee and the Personnel Committee would meet in the next few weeks. In his last statement, he stressed the importance of remaining civil and respectful during the County meetings.

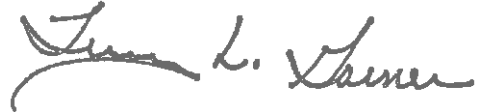
ADJOURNMENT

- i. Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 23th day of August, 2021.




Councilman Earl Cunningham



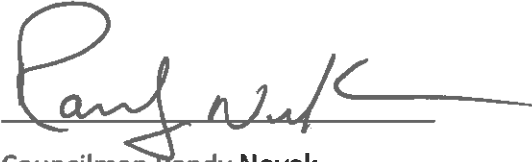
Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



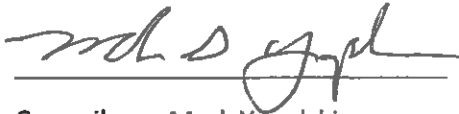
Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski



ATTEST: _____

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor