



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202
La Porte, IN 46350-3400
Phone: (219) 326-6808 ext. 2229

**Richard Mrozinski
President**

**Joseph Haney
Vice President**

**Sheila Matias
Member**

**LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, November 17, 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 led by Matt Reardon.

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

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

Considered approval of November 3, 2021 minutes. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 11/5/2021 - \$1,145,566.45 and Operating Expense Claims - \$3,941,472.29. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

President Mrozinski acknowledged 2 students from South Central High School were in attendance. He also recognized the firemen that were at the meeting. Rich said he met with the Council's finance committee prior to the meeting and had a discussion on the American Rescue Plan funds. One of the proposals suggested was \$10,000 to each Volunteer Fire Department in our County and he felt there was support from the finance committee for this idea.

Public Comment

Lisa Pierzakowski, reported on one of the 36 duties listed by the State of Indiana for a Township Trustee is #10, to provide fire protection which is required for areas of the township not incorporated in to a city. Emergency Services are provided as well as fire protection and this is done by Volunteer Fire Departments with no pay to the individuals for their service, 24/7. Lisa stated yes, all County Employees are essential but they get paid. The Volunteer Fire Departments are usually the first ones to arrive on the scene of emergencies and assist EMS with lift-assists, extrication from vehicle accidents and with heart attacks, for instance. She asked the volunteers to stand and there were approximately 20 individuals at the meeting. **She** then reported on the La Porte County Eviction Rental Assistance Fund and distributed paperwork to the Commissioners. She stated the current balance is \$24,570.98 out of the \$50,000 the Commission/Council gave for the program. If the resident ends up being funded through the township assistance then they are immediately signed up for the IndianaHousingNow.org so that if they are struggling moving forward they will be able to get funding which is paid up to 15 months. Lisa reported it is working and she thanked the Commission for the funding.

Randy Veatch, 4177 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, voiced his thoughts on the minutes, saying they were supposed to be a reflection of comments said at a meeting and not a stenographic transcript of all of the words.

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Brody Shoffner, Noble Township Volunteer Fire Department, supports the bonus for the Volunteer Fire Departments which if approved, will be used for a new compressor, hoses, and they are saving for a new truck.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Steve Eyrick, Adult Probation, gave special recognition and thanks to La Porte High School Art Classes 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 under the direction of Mary Beth Lebo for artwork displayed in the tunnel between the Courthouse and Complex buildings in La Porte. Additional thanks was also given to Larry Levendowski and his building maintenance crew for their assistance on the project.

Jay Sullivan, Engineer, had 3 items to discuss with the Commissioners. The Cougar Road project is over budget by possibly \$55,000. He also asked if a check for \$250,000 could be produced from the Auditor's office on the Otis Road Bridge. He reported the bid specs and plans are ready to go for the Meadowview Estates/Nowak Drive project and he just needs direction to move forward with it. The funds were approved but not sure what account is to be used. **President Mrozinski** said Jay should wait until the Council meeting to see what their decision will be. **Commissioner Haney** said he spoke to Council President Randy Novak and it will be on the Council's agenda for which account to fund it from, LIT or ARP funds. Joe said he understood that it should be advertised because it was already approved.

Tim Stabosz, Auditor, reported he had a productive meeting with President Rich Mrozinski. He also spoke about an item on the agenda pertaining to a proposed contract on his behalf with the law firm Kopka Pincus. He is hoping for support from the Commission. Auditor Stabosz said he does agree with the Commission on the PCB litigation, not settling on the \$900,000 that was offered. He strongly urged the RFP process should be used for competition to minimize the percentage that is taken by a quality law firm. He voiced his concerns on the current proposal that has Friedman and Associates taking 15% of the 25% fee which he wonders might be a referral fee. Tim recommended paying Friedman and Associates \$150 to review the work of the 2 firms involved with the litigation versus a percentage of the possible amount of the settlement. He included in his recommendation that the RFP process be used to select a firm to use in the litigation.

Amanda Lahners, Health Department Director, said her comment was really under 'Requests' and if allowed she would address it now.

Considered permission to approach the Council to purchase a new vehicle which will be used as a mobile vaccination clinic. **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department Director, stated she would like the funds to be used out of either the Covid fund or ARP fund. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Commissioner Matias addressed the volunteers from the County's fire departments in the audience by saying the suggested \$10,000 bonus for each department will be added to the Commissioners' list. **President Mrozinski** stated there was support from the Finance Committee for the Volunteer Fire Departments.

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council for matching AFG Grant, not to exceed \$25,000. **Jeff Hamilton**, Hazmat, said the grant will be used for replacing self-contained breathing apparatuses that were bought in 1998 and parts are no longer available for them. This will cover a 5% match plus 4 bottles, adaptors and filters. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Old Business

Considered 2022 annual material bid recommendations from **Duane Werner**, Highway Superintendent, and are as follows:

Class 1 - Crushed Limestone

Two Bidders: US Aggregates Inc. and South Lake Stone. **Accepted both bids.**

Class 2 - Bituminous Patching/Rap Materials

Three Bidders: Rieth-Riley Construction Co., Inc.; Milestone Contractors North, Inc.; and Central Paving Inc. **Accepted all bids.**

Class 3 - Blast Furnace Crushed Slag

One Bid: Beemsterboer Aggregates. **Accepted Beemsterboer Aggregates bid.**

Class 4 - Gravel, Dirt, Top Soil

One Bid: Ozinga Materials & Logistics. **Accepted Ozinga's bid.**

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Class 5 - No-lead, Diesel and E-85

Two Bidders: Triple J-Mar Petroleum, Inc. and PetroChoice/Rackham Service. **Accepted both bids. Will call for daily prices when fuel is needed.**

Class 6 - Signs and Sign Posts

Two Bidders: Traffic Control Specialists and Osburn Associates. **Accepted both bids. **Prices vary from product to product and will use whoever is cheaper on the products purchased.**

Class 7 - Culvert Pipe and Guardrail

One Bid: Debco Metal Culverts. **Accepted Debco Metal Culverts bid.**

Commissioner Matias motioned to approve the recommendations. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.

Considered approving President Mrozinski's proposed ARP list as the formal request of the County Commission to forward to the County Council for potential appropriations. **Commissioner Matias** read into the record the letter submitted to the Council for their approval. **Commissioner Matias motioned to add item #16 to the list - \$10,000 Bonus to each Volunteer Fire Department in our County and there are 16 VFDs plus Hamlet that services Johnson Township and New Carlisle that services Hudson Township would be 18 VFDs. Commissioner Matias added this will be for 2 years - \$10,000 each year. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. Commissioner Matias motioned to add item #17. Rolling Prairie EMS Base/Highway Garage. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. Matt Reardon** spoke on projects in TIF areas, Economic Development growth and tax increments. *****Letter attached to minutes.**

Considered engagement agreement providing for representation in PCB litigation against Monsanto and related/successor firms. **James Bilsborrow**, Seeger Weiss, said he has provided a retention agreement to the Commission and he heard the concerns from the last meeting. He stated Friedman and Associates are their choice for local counsel. Having local representation will be offered to the other Northwest Indiana counties as well. **Jon Knoll**, Cohen & Malad, confirmed having local counsel to investigate is a benefit. **Commissioner Haney** asked if other counties have 'signed on' to the litigation. **James** replied no, not yet. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. President Mrozinski stepped down and seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

New Business

Considered renewal of workers' comp policy through Bitco per recommendation of Liability Agent of Record. John Jones, Michiana Insurance, stated there will be an overall premium increase of \$143,936 for next year. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered Resolution authorizing Board President to e-sign on behalf of full Commission on INDOT's CCMG and LPA contracts - Mitch Bishop, Planner. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. ***Resolution 2021-14**

Considered contract between County Election Board/Secretary of State/Indiana Election Division and KNOWiNK, LLC for electronic poll books - Heather Stevens, Clerk. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried.**

Considered Ordinance to establish La Porte County as a Broadband Ready Community - Tony Rodriguez. **Commissioner Matias motioned to approve on 1st reading. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. Commissioner Matias motioned to approve on 2nd reading. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried. ***Ordinance 2021-14**

Considered Resolution approving of the proposed issuance of Refunding Bonds contingent on annual savings to taxpayers of \$20-25k per year for the ten (10) year remainder of the bond term - Randy Rompola, Barnes & Thornburg and Andrew Mouser, Baker Tilly. **Commissioner Haney motioned to table. Commissioner Matias seconded. Motion carried. ***Tabled**

Considered proposed contract with law firm of Kopka Pincus per Auditor request. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. No second heard. Motion died. Commissioner Matias** stated she had multiple concerns with the proposed contract. It is an open-ended one-year agreement for municipal matters and not for the litigation subject. She said this

could be for any project that a city, township or district works on; Hourly rate is \$175 versus the government rate of \$150; additional \$100 for law clerks; Retainer - which we don't have; Payment language saying bills will be expedited within 10 days. **Auditor Tim Stabosz** said this has since been modified to 30 days. **Commissioner Matias** wondered who would audit the claims. She then said the contract has been signed by the Auditor which the Commissioners' office sign all contracts. **Auditor Stabosz** said it was a conditional signature based upon approval from the Commission. **Commissioner Matias** asked if the lawyer has taken any actions on Auditor Stabosz' behalf. **Auditor Stabosz** replied yes, he filed an appearance in court. If this contract is not agreed upon he would be responsible for the services. He agreed the contract needs to be modified. **Commissioner Matias** said we need to figure out a way to get along and not call lawyers when disagreements happen. It is a waste of tax payers' money. **Commissioner Haney** said the lawsuit against the Auditor should never have been filed in the first place. The Auditor is allowed to have legal representation. He did agree that the contract should be formed to fit the current litigation issue of paying the County Attorney's invoices. **President Mrozinski** said he would not sign this contract. **Commissioner Matias motioned to deny. President Mrozinski stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Haney reported on good visits he had with different departments. He attended the 2nd ARP Listening session. PNW held a great Broadband Task Force meeting. South County Coalition held a meeting he attended as well as FMEC. Magic of Lights will be taking place so please check that out and look for an event at Pioneerland at the fairgrounds. He thanked the Volunteer Fire Departments that were at the meeting. Joe said he had a productive meeting with General Insurance for employee healthcare insurance and the cost will go up 4 ½% per individual plan which is roughly \$77 per year. They will be working on a possible clinic which will have benefits to the employees. A monkey survey will be sent out in the next couple of days to employees who have the insurance asking for their thoughts on the clinic. He saw an interesting quote, 'You can tell a lot about a person's vices by the friends they keep, you can tell even more about their virtues by the enemies they have.' Joe wished all a Happy Thanksgiving and to be safe.

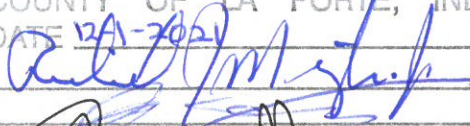
Commissioner Matias reported on La Porte County Works and introduced **Helena Agriculture** which was established in La Porte County in 2012. Located in Kingsbury Industrial Park at 1732 Hupp Road, La Porte, Indiana. Employs about 10 employees, although they employ 6,000 people in over 500 branch locations. Helena is one of the leading AG solution providers in the US, ranking near the top nationally in volume and sales for crop production products, fertilizer, custom application, seed and precision agriculture, turf management, industrial weed control, forestry, aquatics and more. Their focus is on helping customers be successful by employing a winning formula of dedicated and knowledgeable people, unique and useful products and the latest technical knowledge. At Helena, employees are like family supporting one another at work, at home and in the community. Their culture is intentional in creating a positive work environment that allows their employees to be high performers because they feel valued by their leaders and work team. The company believes that when their employees are treated well and feel cared for, their customers will thrive, and the business will grow. Helena is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive work environment where all their employees feel safe and each person has the opportunity to succeed. They embrace diversity in both employees and customers. Helena was ranked one of the Best Places to Work for the 4th year in a row. Employee benefits include life insurance, dental, vision, medical, paid parental leave, disability and infertility benefits. Helena offers growth opportunities by reimbursing tuition costs to obtain a CDL license and for a chemical application license through at Purdue University. Helena makes donations to support local nonprofits and organizations such as the Farm Bureau and scholarships for the Future Farmers of America (FFA). Helena currently has numerous job openings for truck drivers, applicators and warehouse supervisors.

Commissioner Matias gave a shout-out to Maria Fruth at the Healthcare Foundation for funding a grant with the Broadband Task Force. Yates Engineering did a last mile study for our County and broke it down by townships and shared solutions for each township. She stated Comcast has invested one million dollars hooking up 149 new properties, SurfAir and Acme Communications have invested money too. The Better Government Group and Purdue Extension held an event on 'how to run for public office.' She also said we have 2 regional superstar football teams in our county. Commissioner Matias reminded everyone our Covid numbers are high and strongly recommended taking precautions. She attended the Veterans' event at the Civic Auditorium where President Rich Mrozinski was honored with 4 medals for his service in Vietnam by Congresswoman Jackie Walorski. She thanked him and all veterans for their service. She thanked all that have reached out to her with both pros/cons while she has been doing her job as Commissioner. She wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Commissioner Mrozinski said it is very important to visit and recognize our current businesses in our county and potential businesses such as the Love's Travel Shop on US 421, 39 North Conservancy District, a possible site at Highway 35 and US 20 for a business and Kingsbury Industrial Park. He is happy to be a part of good things happening in our county. He said this is a full-time job at part-time pay but he enjoys what he is doing.

President Mrozinski adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 12-1-2021



ATTEST: _____ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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