

## MINUTES

### LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING #1

December 13th, 2021 at 5:00PM

A Special Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on December 13th, 2021 at 5:00pm (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 5pm by the Council President, Randy Novak.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Novak, with a moment of silence for the passing of Barbara Friedman (mother of Commission Attorney Shaw Friedman) and Terry Fenstermaker (the father of EMS Administrator Eric Fenstermaker).

#### ROLL CALL

President Novak, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Cunningham, and Mr. Mollenhauer were all physically present, while Mr. Garner was present electronically via Zoom.

#### APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 13, 2021 AGENDA

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

#### PUBLIC COMMENT:

**La Porte County Resident Steve Holifield, 6782 E 100 S**

La Porte County Resident Steve Holifield approached the Council regarding the salaries and bonuses topic discussed during the November 2021 Council Meeting. He argued that, despite having bonuses on the table and increasing the County employees' salaries, little had been done to try and cut expenses from the County and, as such, taxpayers would not see any sort of return. Mr. Holifield added that with upwards of 150 part-time staffing positions being filled in the County, that cutting a few of these positions may help cut expenses and bring funds back to the taxpayers of La Porte County. President Novak noted that part-time employees ultimately cut more expenses for the County, as the

County would not need to invest in benefits or insurance with part-time staff that they would need to with full-time staff.

**PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.**

**DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

**Human Resources Director, Barb Mossman**

Mrs. Mossman approached the Council to request that Juvenile Services and Community Corrections be considered for the additional 1% salary increase offered to departments who were considered essential workers, as they continued to work continuously through the pandemic.

**Building Commissioner, Mike Polan**

Mr. Polan informed the Council and the room of multiple complaints in the community regarding the compliance of mobile homes, noting specifically that there had been grievances about mobile homes existing outside of mobile home parks, with roughly 300 mobile homes specifically not falling into compliance with current regulation. He added that though there may be variances from case to case, he promised to crack down on any particular cases that did not meet the Commissioners' standard, for both current mobile homeowners and those going forward.

**LIAISON REPORTS**

**Mr. Rosenbaum:** Mr. Rosenbaum had no liaison updates to report for the evening.

**Mr. Cunningham:** Mr. Cunningham reported that he had received a call from the Director of Community Corrections, Rochelle Brown, regarding a question about grant funds.

**Mrs. Gramarossa:** Mrs. Gramarossa reported that she had spoken with her liaisons, all of whom reported that operations were running smoothly.

**Mr. Mollenhauer:** Mr. Mollenhauer had no liaison updates to report for the evening.

**Mr. Yagelski:** Mr. Yagelski had no liaison updates to report for the evening.

**President Novak:** President Novak had no liaison updates to report for the evening.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**Letter from the La Crosse Public Library**

County Auditor Tim Stabosz read aloud the letter from the La Crosse Public Library, as written by La Crosse Library Director Carla Wilson. Mrs. Wilson indicated in her letter that the currently appointed La Crosse Library Treasurer, Tracie Vernich, was on the verge of having her elected term expire as of December 31st, 2021. Mrs. Wilson spoke highly of Mrs. Vernich, and added that she, as well as the

Library Board of Trustees, would like to have Mrs. Vernich reappointed to another 4-year term in her current seat.

- i. Motion to reappoint Tracie Vernich as the La Crosse Library Treasurer beginning January 1st, 2022 made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

## **ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS**

There were no ordinances or resolutions to report.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Request to hire for replacement positions for:**

Michigan Township Assessor – Deputy Clerk and Clerk Positions

- i. Motion to deny made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Garner.

Michigan Township Assessor Scott Bell approached the Council to inform them that he was looking to replace two staff members who had moved onto other opportunities. One position was noted primarily as a field representative, while the other was described to have held primary obligations with personal property, including mobile homes. Additionally, Mr. Bell explained that the addition of splits, combines, and transfers continued to create more work for his department, with which the two positions could assist in performing, and he urged that little work could be performed without the two additional staff members to aid the department.

Mrs. Gramarossa inquired about the move to deny Mr. Bell's request, to which Mr. Rosenbaum explained that Mr. Bell was first and foremost entitled to a single staff member, and that the Michigan Township Assessor's office had been deflecting duties onto the La Porte County Assessor's Office. Mike Schultz, the La Porte County Assessor, clarified that the County had jurisdiction over everything south of Coolspring Ave. and, as a result, held responsibility for most of the mobile home parks in Michigan City. Mr. Schultz continued that he had dedicated two La Porte County Assessor's Office staff to personal property alone, and as such the Assessor's Office had already been shouldering most of the duties and ratio studies that go hand-in-hand with the mobile home parks. He added how reports indicated that many buildings under the Michigan Township Assessor's Office, going as far back as 2018, had not been assessed by the Assessor's office accordingly. Mr. Schultz went on to explain that he felt that he would be able to take on the two staff members that Mr. Bell was requesting, however only if they would receive training from the La Porte County Assessor's Office to ensure proper coaching. Mr. Bell noted that while some small mistakes had been made, an associate from the La Porte County Assessor's Office had played a role in one of the overlooked assessments that were brought to the table, and that his team was not entirely at fault for the aforementioned failed assessment from 2018, and that he did not express full comfort in having the two requested staff members working for the La Porte County Assessor's Office.

- ii. Motion to withdraw his previous motion and to table the item until the following month made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Garner.
- iii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Rosenbaum spoke to Mr. Bell and informed him that he would coordinate with Mr. Schultz and himself to meet an agreement on the Assessors' staffing issue.

**2. Consider approval of Council President's authorization to hire replacement position for:**

La Porte County Health Department – Nurse Position

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

**3. La Porte County Maintenance – Drawings for Rolling Prairie EMS, Highway Department, and salt storage**

Mr. Levendowski approached the Council to inform them of his intention to release the Rolling Prairie EMS/Highway Department/Salt Storage drawings in preparations to begin bids for the construction of the project. He explained that bids would go out in February of 2022, with intentions to break ground on the project beginning in May of 2022. Mr. Yagelski inquired as to why EMS and the Highway Department simply would not be able to share a single building instead of needing to build two separate buildings, to which Mr. Levendowski explained that two historical landmarks on the property prevented the construction of one single large building, and two smaller buildings needed to be built as a result. Mr. Levendowski added that with a potential \$2.1 million to \$2.4 million in costs, constructing two additional buildings could offer some wiggle room as to what kind of cuts could be made to the budget, should they be necessary.

**4. Public Safety LIT**

- i. Motion to provide an informational segment regarding Public Safety LIT during the upcoming January 2022 County Council Meeting made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Garner.

Mr. Rosenbaum added that this would be a great way to allow for funding of EMS and the Sheriff's Department, as well as a County Fire Department, if one were established and present.

- ii. All members voted in favor.

**5. Commissioner/Auditor Negotiation and Mediation**

- i. Motion made by Mr. Cunningham to add to the agenda and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Motion made by Mr. Cunningham to have the Council formally authorize President Novak and Vice President Yagelski to negotiate a resolution with the Commissioners

regarding the pending lawsuit between the County Auditor and said Commissioners. Additionally, he requested to authorize County Council Attorney Guy DiMartino to serve as a neutral intermediary to assist in reaching a settlement between the two parties; seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

- iv. All members voted in favor.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Motorola Invoice for \$89,962.00 to be paid by E911 user fees (held over from November)**

President Novak abbreviated the conflict with E911's Motorola Invoice, noting that at one point, user fees would often run a surplus and help pay the invoice; however, increased fees from Motorola have resulted in a deficit. E911 Director Barb Huston confirmed this, and also clarified that user fees generally did not cover the 911 Center's costs, and that the Motorola invoice was forecasted to have rising costs each year despite being contracted.

- i. Motion made by Mr. Yagelski to split 50% of the costs of the invoice with E911, with the remaining 50% coming out of E911's user fees, seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
  - a. Attorney Guy DiMartino recommended pursuing a motion to support, so the item could be readvertised from the appropriate account.
    - i. Motion to support made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
    - ii. All members voted in favor.

### **2. Michigan Township Assessor Certification pay reimbursement agreement**

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

Mr. Rosenbaum abbreviated that, since Michigan Township Assessor Scott Bell's certifications had not been up to date from September of 2019 to September of 2021, bonuses received as a result of his assumed certifications had still been collected by Mr. Bell despite being out of date. He commended Mr. Bell for coordinating with the Auditor to ensure that the bonus funds he received during his time with invalid certifications would be repaid back to the County. Mrs. Gramarossa took exception to Mr. Bell's nefariousness in falsifying the legitimacy of his certifications in the July 2021 budget hearings, noting that he claimed his certifications were up to date at that time. Auditor Tim Stabosz confirmed that, during the budget hearings in July of 2021, Mr. Bell did imply that his licensure was up to date when technically it was not.

### **3. Salaries and Bonuses**

Motion to give all full-time employees a \$2,000 bonus over a two-year period in 2022 and a \$2,000 additional bonus in 2023 made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

Mr. Rosenbaum commented that he would prefer to see the bonus funds distributed evenly through the 26 paychecks which employees would receive throughout the year, as to prevent staff members from simply receiving their bonuses and opting to leave La Porte County employment

shortly thereafter. He also noted that a \$2,000 bonus might not be sufficient for some of the County's employees and added that he did not see bonuses for part-timers as being appropriate. Mrs. Gramarossa commented that when Covid bonuses had been distributed the previous year, certain essential-worker contract labor associates did not receive any sort of bonus despite their close involvement with dangerous work during the pandemic. Mr. Mollenhauer interjected to inform the room that the bonuses currently on the table were not inherently Covid incentives, however were instead intended to bring County full-time staff back up to speed with pay, as the previous decade had multiple years where bonuses and raises were not available to be offered to incentivize the retention or rewarding of staff.

Mr. Rosenbaum clarified that, in addition to the Coroner's Office, the Health Department had multiple essential worker staff members who were considered contract labor as well. At this time, Mr. Stabosz noted that bonuses going into 2023 might be altered by new County Council members being elected into County office. Mr. Mollenhauer proposed instead that \$2,000 be offered before the year's end in 2021, with the additional \$2,000 to be given in 2022, as to avoid any potential alterations from future County Council members.

Mr. Mollenhauer made a motion to amend his previous motion and to allot for a \$2,000 bonus offered before the end-of-year 2021, with an additional \$2,000 bonus to be offered at the end-of-year 2022. Seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

Mr. Rosenbaum inquired if the hire-date of full-time employees should be considered in distributing the bonuses as well, noting that a staff member who had only been employed with the County for a short period of time should not be taken into consideration for a bonus, and that the distribution of the proposed 2022 bonus would need to follow suit. Mr. Yagelski recommended offering an altered bonus for staff members who had been with the County less than a year, such as a 50% bonus for an employee who had been with the County full-time for 6 months, and ensuring the full bonus would be directed at staff members who had been working full-time with the County for a year or more.

Mr. Cunningham pointed out that, with the roughly 650 full-time staff members employed by the County, offering these raises would cost around \$2.6 million in ARP funding – in the ballpark of 25% of all non-lost-revenue ARP funding available to the County, which in this case, was targeted toward what constituted as less than 1% of the total population of La Porte County, and proposed that the Council should be more conservative with the funding.

Mr. Stabosz took a moment to inform the Council that, while the Payroll Department certainly could process the proposed bonuses before 2022, the pressure on the Department to do so with so little time left before the year's end would require extra funding to ensure that overtime could be paid to the Payroll Department to expedite the proposed 2021 bonuses.

Mrs. Gramarossa brought up the contract labor forces with the County, such as the Health Department and the Coroner's Office, who worked full-time however were hired on as 1099 staff, and therefore not on County payroll. While President Novak noted that the contract nurses should get a bonus, Mr. Rosenbaum disagreed. When Mr. Novak asked how many contract nurses were employed with the County, Michigan City Health Department Nurse Joanne Dehlinger was summoned by President Novak to clarify just how many contract staff were assisting the County. Mrs. Dehlinger noted that while she was unsure of the exact number of contract nurses, there were multiple. She took a moment to explain that laborious conditions and long hours had led to two full-time nurses leaving County employment thus leaving the County with only three full-time nurses on

payroll. She took exception to the process that was used to decide which employees were considered "essential," thus receiving 6% salary raises, and which were not, as such receiving only 5% salary raises; she argued that all government workers should be considered essential. Mr. Yagelski noted that the 5%-6% differential for "essential" workers was highly influenced by departments that were having trouble in retaining staff, such as EMS or the Sheriff's Department, to which Mrs. Dehlinger noted that the County would encounter additional trouble hiring nurses if their compensation was not increased.

Mr. Stabosz took a moment to explain the conflicts of issuing an entire lump-sum bonus of \$4,000 in lieu of dividing the bonus between two years. He explained that though staff members would assuredly appreciate the prospect of a lump-sum bonus, the County could run the risk of employees resigning shortly after receiving the proposed bonuses, and stretching out the bonuses over the course of two years could help ensure that County employees would remain incentivized to stay employed with the County. Mr. Stabosz also agreed that the amount of the bonuses were pushing the boundaries that the ARP funding had to offer, noting that if the proposed total of \$4,000 bonus funds distributed over two years were approved, upwards of 25% of ARP funding would need to be utilized. Mr. Rosenbaum added once more that he would prefer to see the bonuses distributed equally across the year's span of 26 paychecks, while Mr. Cunningham reiterated that he would prefer to see the funding be directed toward public works such as the local volunteer fire departments and the Parks Department, as to allow some of the money to be brought back into the community. Mr. Mollenhauer noted once more that County employees had not received adequate raises or bonuses throughout much of the previous decade, and he felt that the proposed bonus would be a deserved compensation for the stagnant increases in pay throughout the previous years.

Motion made by Mr. Mollenhauer to amend his previous motion, and instead offer a \$2,000 bonus in 2022 with a 12-month proration, with another \$2,000 prorated bonus to be offered in 2023, with contracted Coroners and Health Department Nurses to be included.

Mr. Rosenbaum recommended evaluating the individual workloads of the aforementioned contract workers to pinpoint what percentage of a bonus they would be eligible to receive, i.e., looking into which Coroners took more calls proportionately, and identifying if contracted nurses were paid hourly, and how many hours the nurses worked accordingly. Mr. Yagelski proposed including contract workers as a separate item, with reevaluation for contract labor to be looked into the following month to ensure that no contract worker is left out of the consideration and to allow for time to approach the topic with a strategy in mind.

Mr. Mollenhauer said he would stand on his previous motion to offer full-time employees a 12-month prorated \$2,000 bonus for the year of 2022 and a 12-month prorated \$2,000 bonus for the year of 2023, with the exception that contract labor would be temporarily excluded until the following County Council Meeting in January of 2022, seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

Four members voted in favor (Mr. Mollenhauer, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Yagelski, and President Novak), and three members voted not-in-favor (Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Garner, and Mr. Cunningham).

#### 4. Distribution of ARP Funds to La Porte County Volunteer Fire Departments and the La Porte County Parks Department

Motion made by Mr. Cunningham to give each volunteer fire department in La Porte County \$10,000 a year in ARP funds for the following 5-year period, seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

President Novak clarified that these funds would be strictly for volunteer fire departments, not career fire departments. He also noted that there were currently 16 volunteer fire departments in La Porte County which would receive compensation from this proposal. Mr. Stabosz added that the requested funds for \$10,000 for each of the sixteen volunteer fire stations for the next 5 years would sum up to \$800,000 in distributed ARP funds. Mr. Stabosz asked Mr. Cunningham if these funds would shift into reserve funds for the correlating fire stations, which Mr. Cunningham confirmed would be the case. Mr. Cunningham added that if the newly elected County Council in 2023 wished to make changes, they could certainly do so of their own volition; however, the volunteer fire departments would be guaranteed their first \$10,000 for 2022 at the beginning of the year in January.

Mr. Rosenbaum clarified that in 2022, the \$10,000 in funds offered to the volunteer fire departments would be a release of funds for that year, and for the remaining four years the funds would be allocated, but only released in those respective years, and he felt it would be more secure to advertise the line item for the January 2022 Council Meeting the following month, which Attorney Guy DiMartino added, would allot the Auditor time to direct the accounting aspects of the allocations.

The members concurred, by acclamation, that Mr. Cunningham's original motion was to be understood as a motion of support, seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa. All members voted in favor.

#### 5. Continuation of the 2022 Salary Budget Process

Motion made by Mr. Yagelski to reopen the 2022 Budget Process on Salaries, seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer. All members voted in favor.

President Novak explained that he wanted to see salary increases for select County personnel:

a. **Planning Commissioner:** A salary increase of \$5,293 (preferably from Building Fees, but to be taken from General 1000 if found otherwise nonviable) to bring the total annual salary up to \$58,000.

i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Garner.

ii. All members voted in favor.

b. **Building and Maintenance Director:** A salary increase of \$704 (from General 1000) and an FMEC stipend of \$10,000 (with an M.O.U to ensure that the stipend would be reimbursed back to the County) to bring the total annual salary up to \$70,000. The reason given for the FMEC \$10,000 increase is that the current Director has been investing large amounts of focus into the repair of the La Porte County Fairgrounds.

i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.



- c. **Park Director:** A salary increase of \$3,445 (from General 1000) to bring the total annual salary up to \$66,000.
  - i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.
- d. **Highway Department Director:** A salary increase of \$4,001 (from General 1000) to bring the total annual salary up to \$66,500.
  - i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to increase the proposed salary to \$4,501 to bring the total annual salary up to \$67,000, seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.
- e. **La Porte County Planner/Grant Writer:** A salary increase of \$3,000 (from General 1000) and \$10,000 (from RDC) to bring the total annual salary up to \$75,014. As the current Planner has been performing contract work for the RDC, President Novak proposed the \$10,000 salary increase from RDC so the current Planner could coordinate with the payroll department in 2022 to establish a system where the RDC could simply be debited for each check which the Planner is issued.
  - i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to decrease the proposed salary to \$2,986 (from General 1000) to bring the total annual salary down to \$75,000, seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.
- f. **IT Director:** A salary increase of \$5,000 from the FMEC due to increased care being taken to the technology and Wi-Fi at the La Porte County Fairgrounds, to bring the total annual salary up to \$74,575. Mr. Yagelski noted that the IT Director's Assistant Director would be receiving an increase in pay as a result as well, as the Assistant Director traditionally receives 85% of what is reflected in the IT Director's salary.
  - i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.
- g. **Juvenile Services Assistant Director:** A salary increase of \$2,500 (from General 1000) to bring the total annual salary up to \$57,654.
  - i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.

President Novak took an additional moment to report on the potential desire to address shift differentials. He indicated that some departments currently receive them, such as the Sheriff's Dept and E-911, and some do not, such as the Juvenile Center and Community Corrections. The council deferred taking any action at the meeting on this subject.

- i. Motion to add shift differentials to the January 2022 County Council meeting agenda made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

- ii. All members voted in favor.

Motion made by Mr. Yagelski to close the 2022 Salary Budget Process, seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum, with all members voting in favor.

### **APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, AND REQUESTS**

#### **La Porte County Drug & Alcohol Services**

Requesting permission to transfer funds from the La Porte County Drug & Alcohol Grant Money Shortfall: \$37.61

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

#### **Honorable Judge Thomas Alevizos Circuit Court**

Request to spend from Juvenile Probation Users Fees 251-20200-000-0321 for:

Desks for the Juvenile Probation Department for Michigan City Court House \$2,856

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. Five members voted in favor (President Novak, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Mollenhauer) and two members voted not-in-favor (Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Garner).

#### **La Porte County Animal Shelter**

Requesting to transfer monies from Animal Shelter Donation Claims 4100.20200.000.0531 to General Part Time Pay 1000.10130.000.0156 to:

Cover Payroll \$11,000

- i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to not sweep the Spay and Neuter Account, seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to transfer the \$11,000 and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

#### **La Porte County Plan Commission**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or General (1000) or ARP (8950/8951) or LIT (1112) for:

Cost of payroll for the end of the year \$975

- i. Motion to approve out of General (1000) made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Health Department**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or General (1000) or ARP (8950/8951) or LIT (1112) for:

Purchase of a van

Not to Exceed \$60,000

- i. Motion to approve out of ARP (8950, or out of 8951 if not applicable) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Coroner**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or General (1000) or ARP (8950/8951) or LIT (1112) for:

Cost of payroll for the end of the year

\$217

- i. Motion to approve out of General (1000) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Juvenile Services**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or General (1000) or ARP (8950/8951) or LIT (1112) for:

Security Cameras

Not to Exceed \$80,000

- i. Motion to approve out of ARP (8950, or out of 8951 if not applicable) made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS**

Having attended a meeting at PNC/PNW regarding the Redevelopment Commission's U.S. 421 and 300 N water and sewer project, Mr. Yagelski expressed concerns that more of the homeowners and commuters of the area had not been informed that such a project would be taking place. He described that, even though property owners whose properties would be worked on were informed of the water and sewage project, those who were not directly receiving work on their properties had not been informed of the project. As a result, he noted, there would likely be increased congestion in the area and

most of the surrounding homeowners could be very well unaware of the project happening in their area. He explained that he would like to see representatives of the project at Michigan City meetings to be available to inform the public about the project and to answer any questions which the public might have.

The Auditor's Chief Deputy, Vaughn Galloway, inquired with Mr. Cunningham about his liaison correspondence with Community Corrections, and mentioned reaching out to Mericka Beaty regarding the 4909 account and the arrears within said account. Mr. Galloway said that money could be moved around between accounts, but asked if the funding could be taken from work release fees instead. Director Rochelle Brown spoke via Zoom that she intended to request funds from the Project Income Account out of the part-time budget/100 Series account and shift the funds into the 300 Series account.

- i. Motion made by Mr. Cunningham to have Mr. Galloway meet with Mrs. Brown to arrange the transfer of funds between the various accounts to satisfy negative balances, seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Rosenbaum requested that more time be taken in 2022 to look into County employees' salaries to ensure that higher positions are not being paid lower wages comparatively to lower ranking staff within their correlating departments. He added that he felt as though not enough was being done to retain staffing levels within the County, and is hoping to work on the subject more in the near future.

President Novak commended Christopher Throgmorton for his role with the County Prosecutor in removing a potential sex offender from La Porte's streets. With Mr. Cunningham's praise as well, Mr. Throgmorton approached the Council. Mr. Throgmorton himself praised the community for their assistance, spreading of awareness, and communication regarding the perpetrator, however voiced his condolences for the community regarding the lack of assistance from local law enforcement. Mr. Throgmorton informed the Council that between 2016 and 2019, La Porte County had received half of a million dollars in Edward Byrne federal grand funding with direct intent for use to create a crimes against children taskforce, a taskforce which was shut down following the election of Prosecutor John Lake. He argued that we don't know what happened to the money, which belongs to the community of La Porte, and urged the task force's reestablishment. While he noted that he was grateful for the Council's praise, he said he would continue to look into the matter and search for an explanation.

Mr. Mollenhauer took a moment to thank the Maintenance Department for their work with the holiday lights on the Courthouse Grounds, and Mr. Rosenbaum took a moment to apologize to a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class whose choir concert he was unable to attend due to his obligation to the special meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

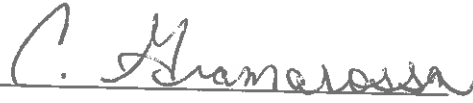
**Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 24th day of January 2022.**

  
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Councilman Earl Cunningham

  
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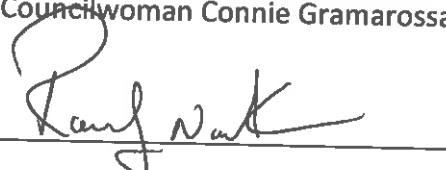
Councilman Terry Garner

  
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Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa

  
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Councilman Mike Mollenhauer

  
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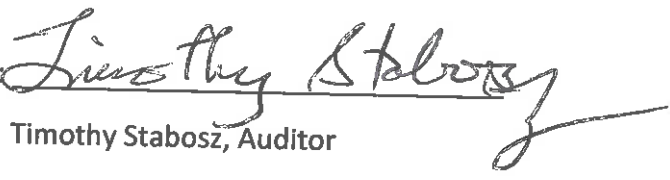
Councilman Randy Novak

  
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Councilman Mike Rosenbaum

  
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Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST:   
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Timothy Stabosz, Auditor