

## **MINUTES**

### **SPECIAL MEETING #2 OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**December 21, 2021 at 5:00PM**

The meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on December 21, 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 5:01pm by the Council President, Randy Novak.

#### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Novak.

#### **ROLL CALL**

Six Council Members were physically present for the meeting (Mr. Novak, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Rosenbaum) and one Council Member was present electronically via Zoom (Mr. Garner).

#### **APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 21, 2021 AGENDA**

- i. Motion to accept the agenda by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

#### **DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

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

#### **LIAISON REPORTS**

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

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

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

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

### **La Porte County EMS Captain, Jeff Koon**

Mr. Koon discussed the subject of bonuses. He made the following remarks: We can debate who is essential and who is not, however, we are governmental employees. So, we are all essential. In regards to pay we are separate not equal. We have endured changes in our way of life, risked our lives and our families as well. All departments of the county were affected. At the county level, work changed in so many ways. Departments that were barely needed or talked about were now front and center, like the Health department and IT. Departments were stressed, yet services still needed to be given. Now, almost 2 years later, we are seeing the effects of years of neglect when it comes to wages. Many departments are struggling more today, than in the beginning. As you reconsider the bonuses, please think about the employees that came to work these last 2 years and the new employees that came as well.

### **LaPorte County Juvenile Center Supervisor, Lynn Roe:**

In regards to the concern that employees will leave after receiving a lump sum of \$4,000, Mrs. Roe stated that the Juvenile Center has had a huge turn over, with a large number of them being veterans and seasoned employees. She assured the council the employees wouldn't leave with a bonus; the bonus is a show of thank you for working through COVID-19...the show of appreciation to receive the bonus at Christmas or even before the start of the new year to help pay off bills and help give our family a great Christmas. She expressed that you get used to the extra \$75 on a pay check and after the 2 years it goes go down to wherever we were before. She stated that in her opinion, a bonus is not going to make anyone quit. Employees would be so happy, even after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year, to receive the lump sum. She mentioned about other counties and cities receiving lump sums. She said she would appreciate a reconsideration for all employees that have worked through COVID-19 and are still working through it.

### **Tony Cox, Long Beach Indiana:**

Even though Mr. Cox doesn't work for the LaPorte County Government, he said he does know individuals that work at the Juvenile Center. He agrees with Mrs. Roe that not one of them is going to take the \$2,000 and "run away to buy their own island."

### **LaPorte County Commissioner, Joe Haney:**

Commissioner Haney apologized for the dressing down that Commissioners Mrozinski, Matias and Attorney Friedman have been visiting upon the council for the past week or three. He stated he values the working relationship that he has with each of the council members. He noted that when it came time for them to do a recommendation to send the council for bonus pay or retention pay, one of his concerns was to give the council the leeway and latitude to do what they need to do and some possible direction. However, he was out voted. Mr. Haney wanted to address some confusion about front line

workers. As far as he is concerned, he said over the past year, if you're a full-time worker and you came to work, regardless of department, you were on the front line. He wrapped up with suggesting a possible middle ground with a lump sum on the last check of the year, then taking the remainder of the amount and dividing out over the next couple pay periods, maximum of 26 pay periods of the next year, with a thank you up front.

**La Porte County Assistant Director of Juvenile Services, Michael Callahan:**

Mr. Callahan noted he wants to echo what Jeff Koon has said, along with his people and Tony Cox have stated as well. He said he appreciated the council for being here tonight for the reconsideration. He also stated that the employees come in every day, some come in sick and they send them home. However, they are that dedicated; they want to be here and they are not going to leave. He is not going to leave.

**Anthony Lewis, Michigan City:**

Sgt. Lewis suggested that the community seriously consider a lump sum retention pay to county employees. This opportunity is rare to be able to demonstrate that you recognize, appreciate, and own as a personal virtue with compassion, mercy and grace.

**PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Employee bonus ARP 8950 / 8951**

- a. Rescind approval of employee bonuses from last special meeting December 13, 2021
  - i. Motion made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.
- b. Motion for present full-time employees to receive in lump sum of \$2,000 payable December 30, 2021 immediately and the 2<sup>nd</sup> \$2,000 last pay period of December 2022. Prorate the Bridge Tenders.
  - i. Motion made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
  - ii. Auditor Tim Stabosz stated for the record, we have a cost of \$2.95 Million.
  - iii. 3 members voted in favor (President Novak, Mr. Yagelski, and Mr. Mollenhauer) and 4 members voted not-in-favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Garner).
- c. Motion for all full-time employees and including prorated Bridge Tenders to receive immediately \$1,000 the next pay period, \$1,000 June 2022, \$1,000 December 2022 and \$1,000 June 2023. The money, under federal rules, for those that are considered essential be pulled from the regular ARP fund and those that are not considered essential be pulled from the ARP Lost Revenue.
  - i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
  - ii. Mr. Novak asked Mr. Rosenbaum, who made the motion, if he would consider \$2000 up front, and a \$1000 in June, and \$1000 in December of next year. Mr. Rosenbaum stated his motion would stand.

- iii. 4 members voted in favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Garner) and 3 members voted not-in-favor (President Novak, Mr. Yagelski, and Mr. Mollenhauer).
- iv. After considerable discussion, Mr. Rosenbaum again read aloud the previously approved motion for all full-time employees and including prorated Bridge Tenders to receive immediately \$1,000 the next pay period, \$1,000 June 2022, \$1,000 December 2022 and \$1,000 June 2023. The money under federal rules for those that are considered essential be pulled from the regular ARP fund and those that are not considered essential be pulled from the ARP Lost Revenue.
- v. Motion to amend by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham to if employed on December 21, 2021, full time employees are to receive a \$1,000 bonus for the year 2021. The bonus is to be prorated by the number of months employed in the year of 2021, and similarly for each subsequent 6-month bonus period.
- vi. 4 members voted in favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Garner) and 3 members voted not-in-favor (President Novak, Mr. Yagelski, and Mr. Mollenhauer).
- vii. Upon the completion of the vote, there was significant disorder and commotion in the chamber, including a large number of audience departures; accordingly, President Novak briefly recessed and then reconvened the meeting.

### **ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS**

Amendment to Ordinance No. 2021-02.

The former paragraph K is amended to the following: if employed on December 21, 2021, full time employees are to receive a \$1,000 bonus for the year 2021. The bonus is to be prorated by the number of months employed in the year of 2021. Former paragraph K is renamed to paragraph L and reads as follows: the following job classification and compensation maintenance system is hereby adopted.

- i. Motion to amend by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. 4 members voted in favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Garner) and 3 members voted not-in-favor (President Novak, Mr. Yagelski, and Mr. Mollenhauer).
- iii. Motion to close the 2021 budget by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer and Mr. Rosenbaum.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

### **COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS**

Mr. Novak stated he wished they could have been able to do the \$2,000 up front. He stated he respects his fellow council members.

Mrs. Gramarossa stated she is amazed by how people reacted to the new amendment of receiving the \$4,000 bonuses.

Mr. Rosenbaum expressed that no one was entitled to anything in particular. He also stated that it was the council that made everyone equal. He said he doesn't expect appreciation; however, he does expect respect.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

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



Councilman Earl Cunningham



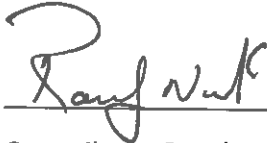
Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



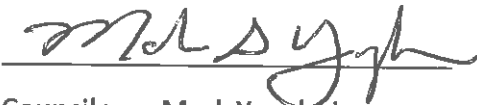
Councilman Mike Mollenhauer




Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor