



# LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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

Sheila Matias  
President

Richard Mrozinski  
Vice President

Joseph Haney  
Member

## La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Agenda Wednesday, January 19, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. - Remote meeting only via Zoom

President Sheila Matias called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

President Matias called the roll: Commissioner Joe Haney - Present in Complex Room 3 via Zoom; Commissioner Rich Mrozinski - Present via Zoom; Commissioner Sheila Matias - Present via Zoom. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Commissioner Haney called for Point of Order per County Resolution 2021-7 which requires 50% of the members to be physically present and since there was not 50% in person in the Complex Room 3 then there was no quorum. Commissioner Mrozinski referred to I.C. 5-14-1.5-3.7 allowing the Commission to meet via Zoom. He then motioned to ratify the President's directive for having meetings virtual until Covid numbers go down in the County. Commissioner Haney stated Point of Order, no quorum for 'in person' meeting. President Matias asked County Attorney Friedman to weigh in. Commissioner Mrozinski replied, "Consistent with the Governor's emergency order that allows public bodies to meet virtually and with the greatest risk of infections coming from larger groups, meeting with extended periods of time inside, I'm moving that we retroactively ratify on the record our Commission President's directive that all county meetings be held virtually until positivity breaks decline which means until we're not in the red." Attorney Friedman addressed the motion saying he spoke to Commissioner Haney on Saturday assuring him the meeting was legal and appropriate, Resolution 2021-7 was adopted to conduct virtual meetings once the public health emergency declared by the Governor ends. Both cities of Michigan City and La Porte have gone virtual for all of their meetings during this public health emergency. Under section 3.7 of Indiana Code 5-14-1.5, makes clear that the members of governing bodies are not required to be present as long as the public is allowed to attend during the meeting. A local resolution does not trump a state law, Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to retroactively authorize the Commission President's directive because the majority of the body needs to go on record, either for or against, the pending motion. Commissioner Haney agreed with everything said except establishing a quorum in the resolution, it only allows it, not force or require but allows it. Attorney Friedman said the resolution was adopted based on times when the public health emergency is over to provide for governing bodies to hold meetings. Commissioner Haney said state statute specifically allows local bodies to have a more restricted policy, which we've done, and he said the Public Access Counselor told him the 'local resolution would control unless the Board of Commissioners vote to meet in accordance with 3.7,' he then asked Attorney Friedman if he disagrees with the Public Access Counselor. Attorney Friedman replied he does agree with the statement and that is the motion on the floor, to meet in accordance with the 3.7. Commissioner Haney again stated no action can be taken without a quorum. Attorney Friedman replied we are in full compliance, the agenda notice was sent out stating the meeting would be held by virtual only, governing bodies all over the state are using the same resolution, and both cities of Michigan City and La Porte are conducting meetings this way, the motion is on the floor pending action. President Matias stepped down and seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney stated he would not be voting at all because he does not believe there is a quorum.

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to add a presentation by Dr. Deausy, the County's Chief Public Health Officer. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained. Commissioner Mrozinski then motioned to accept the amended agenda. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.

Commissioner Mrozinski asked if the Pledge of Allegiance could be said. President Matias asked Lisa Pierzakowski to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Considered approval of January 5, 2022 minutes. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.

Executive Assistant Diane Gonzales read the Claims with Payroll ending 1/14/2022 - \$1,268,156.47 and Operating Expense Claims - \$2,558,473.09. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.

ORIGINAL



**Dr. Sandra Deausy**, Public Health Office for our County, shared parts of her quarterly meeting report saying the pandemic is still here and people continue to die, 1,700 deaths per week putting the United States at almost 900,000 deaths. Omicron variant has been devastating for a lot of people even though the Delta variant had been for others too. Hospitalization numbers are still climbing. South Africa and United Kingdom were hit hard by the virus and their numbers are now coming down. Unfortunately for Indiana that is not true right now. Numbers are going up, hospitals are full and more children are affected. Indiana's vaccination rate is only above 56% and less than that for children. She reminded everyone to wear a mask, social distance and get vaccinated. Majority of the patients in intensive care, with very few exceptions, are among the unvaccinated. Today fully vaccinated means 2 doses of the vaccine plus a booster. Although numbers are high right now they may not be truly accurate with home testing kits being available and positive cases going unreported. Try to encourage those that are unvaccinated to get the vaccine, share true facts with them. **President Matias** thanked Dr. Deausy and stated the lines for vaccines at the clinics are long so hopefully people are hearing the message. **Dr. Deausy** said more children are getting vaccinated too. **Commissioner Mrozinski** thanked Dr. Deausy for her report. **Commissioner Haney** thanked her and said all of the staff have been outstanding with all they are doing with the Corona-19 virus.

**President Matias** reminded everyone of the rules set forth in the policy for Public Comment; limited to 3 minutes, civility, and the presiding officer can warn or terminate the comments or statements if too lengthy, are abusive, personally directed to one individual and not the whole Commission, and are obscene or irrelevant.

### Public Comment

**Dr. Vidya Kora**, via Zoom, said having worked as a Commissioner for 8 years, he has seen first-hand the extraordinary work that the county employees have done and he fully supports the proposed raises however he is not in favor of increasing the local income tax. Fortunately because of the money received from the American Rescue Plan, approximately \$21 million dollars to our County, he requested both Commissioners and Council consider using some of the ARP funds for the raises. Due to the pandemic and the supply chain disruptions there are significant signs of inflation, he anticipates money coming from the infrastructure bill, once appropriated and investments done, the supply should ease as well as the inflation. Right now is not really the time to raise taxes on the hard working people of La Porte County. He congratulated President Matias and the Broadband Task Force team for the honor of being recognized as one of the first 'Broadband Ready' counties in Indiana. He expressed his gratitude to the Broadband Task Force for their effort. Dr. Kora also recognized Joie Winski for all she has done to complete the Michigan City Courthouse Project done, under budget and on schedule. He included Commissioner Mrozinski, Council President Novak, and Councilman Yagelski for their help on the committee. He recognized Economic Development for bringing Corsicana Mattress Company to the County which provided 350 new jobs to our community. Good things are happening in La Porte County and we should all be proud of it. Dr. Kora made a brief comment on Covid saying he has seen a significant surge in the numbers in both his office practice and the hospital. The most severe illnesses are those that are unvaccinated. He requested everyone to get vaccinated and boosted because it does add a layer of protection. He believes we are at the peak of the Omicron surge and hopes the numbers will start decreasing, if so then the meetings will be able to be in person again. He thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak.

**Mark Yagelski**, Councilman, via Zoom, stated he understands the trials and tribulations that have gone on with the Covid situation however the buildings are not closed for business. Two forms of government, Commission and Council. There is a tax increase that is prevalent and the citizens of the county need to speak up about whether they are for or against it and he cannot remember a time when a Council Meeting has been 'held hostage' and not being able to meet in public versus virtual or via Zoom only. If the courthouses are open for business then the meetings should be in person. There is no mask mandate but if the Commissioners required masks to be worn for the in-person Council meeting then it will be done. Mark stated it is the Council's obligation to the citizens of our county to conduct an in-person meeting in order to hear information on the proposed tax increase without any interference from the Commission. The meeting is scheduled on Monday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

**Randall Veatch**, 4177 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, Complex Room 3, after watching and witnessing the last meeting, he individualized his statements for this meeting. He stated it is apparent the sitting board is not working together, hidden comments about each other were witnessed during the meeting and then during Commissioners' comments they criticized each other doing the same thing. He pointed out to Commissioner Haney that he said he (Joe) would get this ship 'righted' and fix the things that are wrong with the county. Randall then spoke to Commissioner Mrozinski on the 9 people he (Rich) said helped build this county to what it is today yet criticized someone who requests something being done as potentially harmless then to Commissioner Matias he said she followed Rich's statement by saying she knew of 10 people who gave their life's energy and careers contributing to this community. He questioned the Board asking what legacy do they want to leave behind, a sand mining operation in every neighborhood? Departments doing substandard work? He has asked the Board for an open investigation into the 2018 sign removal. He asked Commissioner Mrozinski if he was the person who ordered the signs to be removed. He asked Commissioner Matias if she will ask for the MS4 paperwork to be rescinded that was issued. Will she keep her campaign promise on the sand mining operation? He spoke to Attorney Friedman about a suggestion to the Commission in March 2021 on stopping an industrial business in a residentially zoned area, why is it still there on 400 West? To Commissioner Haney he asked when can he expect any conversation on getting the industrial business out of his back yard?

**Lisa Pierzakowski**, Center Township Trustee, via Zoom, stated the report sent to the Commissioners is the same report she sent to the Auditor's office each month. She said out of the \$100,000 that was set aside for the County Eviction Program, \$33,770.39 has been spent so far on 6 Townships: Coolspring, Center, Hudson, Noble, Union and Scipio. Currently 3 applications from Kankakee

ORIGINAL



Township are being reviewed. Not only are they processing applications for the County eviction funding but an IHEDA application through the state is being filled out as well which can pay up to 15 months of rent for the residents. Energy assistance applications and food stamps are another example of assistance provided by the Center Township Trustee's office. **President Matias** thanked Lisa for her report then inquired about Michigan Township which was brought up at the last meeting. **Guy DiMartino**, Council Attorney, said he, along with Council President Randy Novak, visited Michigan Township Trustee's office. The township still has funds from the county but they are in need of more and will be approaching the Council for that request on Monday. He said when they met with Ms. Childs at the trustee's office she stated they are not overwhelmed, it is going well at the office and she, Ms. Childs, is not sure where the information stated at our last meeting came from or why the statement were made. The complaint was not from her office. Their office did run out of their own funds but had a bit of county funds left that they were using. They will be at the next Council meeting requesting additional money. No one has been turned away, no one was denied if they qualified for the assistance.

**Mark Devine**, via Zoom, invited the Commissioners to a meeting on Saturday, February 19, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the La Porte Public Library's new building at 807 Indiana Avenue in La Porte. Mark said the topic is 'Say no to La Porte Corridor.' Commissioner Mrozinski said to be sure Mayor Dermody is invited. Mark stated the Mayor of La Porte was on 'sound-off' and said this project is spear-headed by the Commissioners and he would appreciate it if the Commissioners would attend.

**Jon Smith**, 0566 W. Nowak Drive, La Porte, via Zoom, Meadowview Estates resident, said he appreciates and is excited that the bid opening is today for the project to settle the flooding issue in his neighborhood. After looking at the plans though he noticed it falls short 220 feet from his house which he calls 'ground zero' because they are located at the lowest point of the flooding issue. They built their home in 2006, it was approved by the County Building Commissioner's office but they were never told they should not have a basement below 4 feet. The builder never told them. He requested the plans be extended another 300 feet to cover his home. It has been very stressful when the water table gets high, Jon said he has 3 sump pumps, Novo system, 2 battery backups and when the water level gets really high they run every 15 seconds. **President Matias** said the goal was to help all of those affected by the flooding issue. They will speak to Mitch Bishop and Jay Sullivan to see if the plans can be looked at to include everyone. Jon did say the pumps have not ran since July 2021.

**Marcella Kunstek**, 2654 S. 400 E. La Porte, via Zoom, thanked the Commissioners for taking the initiative to conduct meetings virtually and keeping the county safe during the pandemic. Virtual meetings are now common place and do not hinder the ability to get the job done.

**Allen Stevens**, Chairman of the La Porte County Republican Party, stated he was in the Commissioners' meeting room in the Complex building and Commissioner Haney was the only Commissioner in attendance. He panned the room with his phone and Commissioner Haney was the only member seated along the panel where Commissioners and Council members sit during their meetings. He showed approximately 16 individuals were in attendance as well. He spoke from the podium on the recent holiday, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, then quoted him, "One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws." He said he was live, in person to defy the unjust, unreasonable and illegal order. "This order is nothing more a thinly veiled effort to squelch dissension and public comment. My 1<sup>st</sup> amendment rights will not be abridged." Allen then quoted President Matias' from her press release, 'the greatest risk of transmission is said to come from larger groups gathered indoors for extended periods of time - hence the move to virtual meetings.' "Last Thursday Commission President Matias attended a Democrat fund raiser at Blue Chip Casino with another two hundred or so people. The very next day she issued the order to cease all in-person county meetings due to Covid concerns. This seems like a case of 'do what I say and not what I do.' The 15 or 20 people attending a socially distance public meeting are the least of our concerns." Schools, County offices, Public Transportation's running, stores are open, people are going to work daily and even party fund raisers at crowded casinos are occurring.

**Earl Cunningham**, 6311 W. Shiva Drive, La Porte, Indiana, Complex Room 3, commented on Attorney Jonas' reference to terms 'henchmen' and 'bagmen' used describing the Commissioners at one of the last meetings. According to the Webster's dictionary the definition for henchmen is 'a faithful follower or political supporter, especially one prepared to engage in dishonest practices by way of service' and a bagman is 'intermediary in an illicit or unethical transaction.' "I couldn't decide whether Mr. Mrozinski is a henchman or bagman and so I sent the Commissioners' attorney a text message or email asking him which would he prefer me to call him and I didn't get a response so I'm going to call him a henchman bagman." He said Commissioner Mrozinski stated at the end of the meeting that he appreciated all of County Attorney Friedman's support and guidance. He referred to Commissioner Mrozinski's statement about former Commissioners and Councilmembers, which 3 names caught his attention, Barb Huston, Ken Layton and Ron Clindaniel. He stated Barb Huston and Ken Layton were the last two Commissioners who did not hire Shaw Friedman. Barb Huston as a Democrat showed more courage and wisdom than Mr. Mrozinski has ever shown. Ron Clindaniel, Rich's mentor, would be ashamed.

**Rodney McCormick**, 617 Union Street, Michigan City, Complex Room 3, stated he made several attempts to login via Zoom but was never allowed to join the meeting so he was using another phone. In less than 100 days, he lost two sisters to Covid, one fully vaccinated with the booster and the other was not. He does not like the politics that are being played using Covid. Commissioners, especially Ms. Matias, seem to think their safety is more important than the rest of the employees. He suggested closing all the buildings and let the employees work from home. "Everybody knows the real reason why you're doing this, you don't want public comment to be made and its - shame on you. The last meeting that we had, I heard a lot of comments about Michigan Township and I



heard a lot of negative stuff today about Michigan Township. I heard from County Commissioners, I mean County Councilmembers telling us that Michigan Township only received \$10,000. We going to get to the bottom of that if we ever have a live meeting and just for the record Ms. Matias, you always brag about you are a two-term Mayor, can you tell everyone, did you finish your second term and the reason why you didn't finish your second term? Shame on you Madame Queen, we will vote you out of office. Thank you."

**April Daly**, via Zoom, asked if the focus could be on what's really important here, business is still getting done yet we are going back and forth about virtual meetings versus non-virtual meetings. We are in the middle of a pandemic and having meetings held virtually is no different than what other municipalities, towns, etc. are doing. Comments are still being heard. Questions are still being asked. We should be discussing ARP funds that should have been released into the community, that's what they were meant for was to get the economy moving. April said she believes only \$175,000 has been spent of the \$10 million dollars the County has received. "And then to top it all off Mr. Haney's video, which is an embarrassment, I don't - it appeared to me like he was upset because he was being asked to a smaller, being asked to move to a smaller room, Mr. Haney, and then you started slandering other Commissioners. I hope you have, certainly evidence proving that Mr. Mrozinski did something illegal. How you communicate with your fellow Commissioners is deplorable. Everybody's on the same team here and all of this supposed things that are going wrong, that people are doing, that they're stealing, with Shaw Friedman and with everything else, you have not and neither has Mr. Stabosz, brought forward one scintilla of evidence proving anything that you say and instead you continue to bring it back up every single meeting and at the same time you're not saying what you're doing for the community. So Mr. Haney, when you had made the comment that Sheila had not been, excuse me, Commissioner Mrozinski, excuse me, I'm nervous I'm sorry, Commissioner Matias was not in her office for 42 weeks, we're in the middle of a pandemic, she was still working during that time, during 2021 she worked on the Broadband Task Force, she redesigned the county website, she initiated the La Porte County work retention program. However, I don't see anything that you've done Mr. Haney, and you also made mention you were removed from some of the committees that you like to be on, so what do you want to do?" She asked him what he feels he can bring to the city of La Porte. All she sees is name throwing and scorched earth politics. The lack of political civility and moral decency in our politics is hurting us from a community stand point. It does not help and it puts our democracy in a freefall decline. She stated she will attend every meeting and when Mr. Haney and Mr. Stabosz lie about anything, she will hold them accountable and ask them to explain it. She thanked Commissioners Mrozinski and Matias for trying to do the right, it is truly sad that their hands are being tied.

**Mike Rosenbaum**, Councilman, Complex Room 3, thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak, followed up on Councilman Yagelski's request to allow the Council meeting to take place in-person where a discussion will take place on spending 3 ½ million dollars of ARP funds. He said not that action has not been taken but things had to happen first for what the projects are going to be spent on. He said there is no rush, they have time. He then shared with his phone showing that equipment in the meeting room had been removed for updates or something but he requested it all be returned in a timely manner in order for meetings to take place in the complex room. He suggested the wall could be taken down, social distancing will take place or whatever needs to be done to have the Council meeting in person on Monday. An important discussion will also take place on funds for public safety, EMS, Fire, Sheriff and Police Departments at the meeting.

**Chris Throgmorton**, La Porte, Indiana, thanked the Councilmen who spoke up about open and transparent government. Pineapple goes on pizza. It's an opinion and has nothing to do with tonight's meeting. Public meetings are for the public to attend the and address the elected Commissioners on what they are doing, both individually and as a board. To participate in their much sought after democracy. "You claim to represent us but you seem pretty intent on us sitting back and being quiet about whatever it is you're doing. The difference between in-person and virtual public comments, for one is I can't be muted if I'm standing there at the podium and I address you as the specific Commissioner that I voted for, you can just mute me if you don't like what I'm saying, you can just mute me, you don't have to be concerned with my 1st amendment right to say it even though you're very misconstrued about how far Robert's Rules is going to get you but there's also the inability for the audience to read the room when you're not in it, ok and I thank Commissioner Haney for showing up in-person, ya know, to actually participate in our democracy tonight because it's very important, you guys don't have a quorum, just so we're clear. I, as an aggrieved party, a member of the public, will be challenging everything that's happening here tonight in violation of Indiana's Open Door Laws so there's a new cause number for you to let Mr. Friedman rack up a bunch of billable hours for - good job. Anyway, you have a lovely night, pineapple goes on pizza is an opinion, you know, us speaking out about you're guys' little childish behavior here and spending millions and millions of dollars, that's what public comments are for, not our opinions. This isn't a personal attack, it's not hate speech, it's the people fed up and finally participating because we've had enough, anyway, have a nice night. Whack your little hammer if you'd like."

**Connie Gramarossa**, Councilwoman, Complex Room 3, she is having a hard time understanding why we can be open from 8 until 4, and we can have select elected personnel like the Clerk, Treasurer, Auditor, Recorder, and Assessor in the buildings talking to people yet you are stopping other elected officials from holding an in-person meeting in the meeting room. What is the purpose of doing that? Employees and elected officials coming to work 8am-4pm are safe but after 4pm the risk is higher for getting Covid when being in the meeting room? What is trying to be silenced here? She suggested rethinking this then thanked the Commissioner for listening.

**Joe Haney**, stated he keeps getting muted but neither Commissioner Mrozinski nor Attorney Friedman are being muted. He has tried to unmute himself but said someone on the other side needs to unmute him. He read a sentence from the Indiana Public Access Counselor for Best Practices, "Intentionally or blatantly negligent technological failures whether expressly or circumstantially inferred



may be ripe for complaint to the Public Access Counselor and by extension a civil action in the local circuit or superior court.” Commissioner Haney said he has every right to be at this meeting in the complex room, he has every right to speak or make interjection or point of order if he needs to and he continuously gets muted. He asked that whoever is doing it to please stop. **Attorney Friedman** referenced from the Public Access Counselor, “Executive Order 20-09 Modifies or suspends certain provisions of the State Public Access Law and specifically allows government bodies, and they’re doing it all across the state, to meet electronically and it’s not been found to be an impingement on public access participation, you saw tonight anyone that wanted to speak could speak but I just wanted to make that clear that we all can site Public Access Counselor rulings, this is frequently asked questions about Covid-19 and the Public Access Law and I’ll be happy to provide it to anyone who will request it.” **Commissioner Haney** asked Attorney Friedman if he understood that is was kind of separate then what he raised earlier. **Attorney Friedman** responded yes, he understands and asked if Commissioner Haney has been allowed to speak at the meeting. **Commissioner Haney** said earlier he was going to comment but could not unmute his mic and he did not mute it so right now no formal complaint will be launched, he was just making it known he was having an issue with the muting of his microphone. **President Matias** stated there were technical issues. **Attorney Friedman** said maybe it should be distinguished that the memo President Matias sent out on Friday to members of the staff and the public for meetings versus everyday work coincides with the judges’ orders that went out stating the same thing, day to day work is still being done, daily court calls are still being done due to smaller groups instead of jury trials where larger groups of people are together as the Covid numbers climb. **Commissioner Mrozinski** added if you were to go to any of the county buildings you will see plexiglass installed and PPE available to protect the employees. **President Matias** said this is only a short-term issue, this may be the only meeting held this way and hopefully in two weeks the numbers will go down. **Commissioner Mrozinski** said if you look at the number of people attending the meeting virtually you will see there are a lot.

#### Department Reports/Department Head Comments

None

#### Requests

**Considered** permission to approach the Council to hire a 4<sup>th</sup> Bridge Tender. **Duane Werner**, Highway Department Superintendent, via Zoom, stated currently there are 3 Bridge Tenders that work from the middle of March through Dec 1<sup>st</sup>, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day and 32 hours of overtime per pay period. Instead of increasing the hourly rate for the 3 individuals which would go over budget therefore by adding a fourth tender makes the most sense right now. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** permission to approach the Council to spend restricted MVH funds. **Mitch Bishop** said this is for Cougar Road and is for an overage. Additional money was needed for center line treatment when it was paved between US 20 and SR 2. Originally this was a right-turn lane but additional work was done and Cougar Road was approved by both Commissioners and Council. The amount requested is \$54,697.13. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** Proclamation for January 2022 as National Mentoring Month - Family Advocates. Both Jackie Dermody, Director and **Brenda Stellema**, Court Youth Advocate Program Director, joined via Zoom. **Brenda** stated this Proclamation is much appreciated in raising the awareness of youth mentoring in our county. It recognizes all of the programs and volunteers that step-up to help our young people. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

#### Old Business

**Considered** appointment to Community Corrections Advisory Board. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to appoint Mike Mollenhauer to the Board, replacing Randy Novak who was originally appointed. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** referring proposal on farming county-owned acreage near Fairgrounds to FMEC. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to move the proposed contract with John Glasgow, current farmer of the property adjacent to the prior county home, to the FMEC for their approval. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** bid opening Community Crossing Grant Project - Mitch Bishop, Planner. **Attorney Shaw Friedman** opened the 2 bids that were both timely received and dated. Milestone Contractors \$3,161,982.93 and Reith-Riley \$2,405,319.87. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to accept both bids then the bids were given to Mitch Bishop to bring back to the Commissioners with his recommendation at the February 2<sup>nd</sup> Commissioners’ meeting. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** bid opening Meadowview Drainage Project - Jay Sullivan, Engineer. **Attorney Shaw Friedman** opened all 6 bids that were timely received and dated. H&G Underground - \$2,145,960.27; Woodruff & Sons - \$1,043,497.88; Reith-Riley - \$2,115,548.87; Indiana Earth - \$2,417,290.80; Gough - \$2,075,000.00 and HRP Construction - \$2,298,170.00. This project is also known as Kingsbury Creek Culvert/Drainage improvements related to Meadowview Estates subdivision.

ORIGINAL



**Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to accept all bids that were submitted, give them to Engineer Jay Sullivan then he can give his recommendation to the Commissioners at their next meeting February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Commissioners stressed to consider Jon Smith's request to extend the plans 300 feet to cover his house in the neighborhood. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

#### New Business

**Considered** Acceptance of Construction Inspection Contract for Sign Replacement Grant. **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, said the county received over \$300,000 in 2019 for sign replacement in our Townships. This contract is with HW Lochner for \$33,171.70 for 8 remaining Townships with about 5,000 signs. 90% of this amount is reimbursed with the grant and replacement should start in May. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** contract for Office of Community & Economic Director Tony Rodriguez for 2022. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained.**

**Considered** proposed Ordinance to amend E-911 Advisory Board to change certain board composition. **Attorney Friedman** stated there was a request from the Board to remove the 2 Mayor positions due to them sending members of their police and/or fire department to the meetings instead already. Two Town representatives have been added as well. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve on first reading. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained. \*\*\*First reading only**

**Considered** proposed Resolution in support of reviewing all possible alternatives rather than increasing the local income tax (LIT) to provide employee raises. **President Matias** read the Resolution in to the record. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney** stated this will be a hot issue and he hopes whether it is a city or the county that they will double down, he referred to the Solid Waste Board last year when they were able to trim about \$90,000 to \$100,000 from their annual budget. He would like to see our employees paid adequately as well as cutting back on anything or reducing from somewhere before having to raise local income tax. Lean on the state legislators for the surplus they collect, money taken from the people should be given back to the people. Money is best spent by the people, its best invested back to the community by the people. The people can use every penny that is put back in their pocket right now from the state. **President Matias** agreed that getting tax dollars back from the state is a good strategy as well as working with our Council. Yes, our employees need raises and they need salaries that provide families with livable wages. Not a quick fix but something sustainable over time. **President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained. \*\*\*Resolution 2022-1**

#### Commissioner Comments

**Commissioner Haney** stated the crow issue is very serious at the La Porte Courthouse and surrounding sidewalks. We need to get a handle on it. The windows show evidence of it on every side of the courthouse. Dead birds are starting to show as well, yesterday there were 2 of them. Joe went on to talk about the heating issue at the La Porte Courthouse. LADS and the Clerk's office hopefully will resolve their room issue. He spoke on the list of names that Commissioners Matias and Mrozinski mentioned at the last meeting, he said some names he finds highly respectful and others were not the best, a few passed an outstanding Ethics Ordinance in 2013 for the county and he would like to not only see that ordinance brought back but for us to adopt something similar as well. Martin Luther King, Jr. quotes, 'The time is always right to do what is right.' 'A right delayed is a right denied.' If it's a right it shouldn't be denied. 'He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.' Joe quoted Martin Luther King, "I'm not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good." "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Two more quotes, "Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability but comes through continuous struggle. And so we must straighten our backs and work for our freedom. A man cannot ride you unless your back is bent." His last quote, "Cowardice asks the question, is it safe? Expediency asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? Conscience asks the question, is it right?" He closed with asking if your conscience is telling you and instructing you and having you do what is right.

**Commissioner Mrozinski** thanked Larry Levendowski for not power washing the sidewalk between the La Porte Courthouse and Complex to get rid of the bird droppings which was suggested by Commissioner Haney when it was 30 degrees out. Randy Novak and Rich has been meeting with Purdue Extension to resolve matters out there and he also attended a Drainage Board meeting. He went on to say he met with Councilman Yagelski, Matt Reardon and a representative from Congressman Mrvan's office on the Franklin Street Bridge. He will be meeting with a representative from Senator Todd Young's office as well on a few things for the county. He thanked Commissioner Matias for her work on the Broadband efforts in our county.

**Commissioner Matias** gave a shout-out to young farmers Jacob and Jill Smoker who received a national award 'Young Farmers and Ranchers Achievement Award' from the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention in Atlanta. She also stated free Covid tests kits are available, google free Covid kits and links will pop up showing how to get one. The USPS is delivering them as part of a federal effort to deliver 4 free kits to each household. Commissioner Matias spoke next on the LPCO Works!


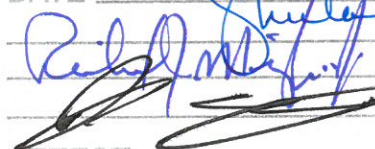
ORIGINAL



**E-PAK Machinery Inc.**, an industry leader as a manufacturer of in-line liquid packaging machinery, was founded in 2001 and is located at 1535 S. SR 39 in La Porte, Indiana. The company is led by the original founding executive team and has maintained its privately-held ownership throughout its history. This has allowed E-PAK Machinery to control key strategic and business decisions, ensuring a consistent focus on meeting and exceeding specific needs of its customers. E-PAK Machinery has reached an exciting milestone as the company celebrates 20 years of manufacturing innovative and versatile liquid packaging solutions for a variety of industries. The company produces a wide variety of manual, semi-automatic and fully automatic machines for filling, capping, plugging, labeling, date coding and bottle handling solutions. E-PAK provides filling machines for food products & sauces, bottled water, still beverages, janitorial & cleaning supplies, industrial & agricultural chemicals, petroleum & automotive products, acid & corrosive products, cosmetic & personal care products, and pharmaceutical products to name a few. Currently E-PAK is undergoing an expansion to add an additional 26,000 sq. feet to their 47,000 square foot facility. Fifty four employees currently working will be retained and E-PAK will add an additional 10 jobs ranging from entry level to skilled level position. The company offers competitive wage, health benefits, paid vacation, 401K with match, and first shift positions. If you are interested in a career at E-PAK, you may obtain an application for employment at <https://www.epakmachinery.com/careers/> or go to our county website under LPCO Works! to find all of the companies listed.

**Commissioner Mrozinski** suggested getting together this week prior to the Council's meeting on Monday to determine their meeting arrangements in the Complex rooms.

**President Matias adjourned at 8:01 p.m.**

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA  
DATE 2-2-2022  
  
  
ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_ Auditor  
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL

## **La Porte County Board of Commissioners Proclaim January 2022 as National Mentoring Month**

WHEREAS, January 2022 will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Mentoring Month, an annual campaign to focus attention on the need for mentors, as well as how each of us can work together to increase the number of mentors to help ensure positive outcomes for our young people.

WHEREAS, La Porte County, Indiana, honors volunteer mentors who support young people by showing up for them every day and demonstrating their commitment to helping them thrive; and

WHEREAS, mentoring programs like Slicer Champions School-based Mentoring Program, Youth Service Bureau's School Buddies Program, The Boy's & Girl's Club's AWE Program, Family Advocates' CYA Program, MCAS Safe Harbor's H40 Mentoring Program and Building Blackhawks Mentoring Program make our communities and our state stronger by driving impactful relationships that increase social capital for young people and provide invaluable support networks; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, mentoring programs have stepped up to fill gaps for young people and families, connecting them with resources and ensuring that mentoring relationships continue virtually to ensure that physical distancing does not mean social disconnection; and

WHEREAS, mentoring plays a pivotal role in career exploration and supports workplace skills by helping young people set career goals, equipping mentors with the skills needed to support the professional growth of young people, and drives positive outcomes for young people and businesses; and

WHEREAS, quality mentoring promotes healthy relationships and communication, positive self-esteem, emotional well-being, and growth of a young person and their relationships with other adults; and

WHEREAS, students who meet regularly with their mentors are more than 52 percent less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and youth who face an opportunity gap but have a mentor are 55 percent more likely to be enrolled in college than those who did not have a mentor; and

WHEREAS, youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46 percent less likely than their peers to start using drugs and 27 percent less likely to start drinking; and

WHEREAS, almost half of today's young adults report having a mentor in their youth and those rates appear to have been rising steadily over the past several decades, and

WHEREAS, National Mentoring Month is the time of year to celebrate, elevate, and encourage mentoring across our state and recruit caring adult mentors in La Porte County, Indiana;

**ORIGINAL**



NOW, THEREFORE, WE, La Porte County Board of Commissioners, do hereby proclaim January 2022, as National Mentoring Month in the County of La Porte, Indiana.

Signed this 19<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2022



---

**Sheila Matias, President**



---

**Richard Mrozinski, Vice President**

**Abstained**

---

**Joseph Haney, Member**

ORIGINAL