

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**March 28, 2022 at 6:00PM**

The meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 6:00pm (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex located at 809 State Street, La Porte, Indiana, 46350.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Novak.

**ROLL CALL**

President Novak, Vice President Rosenbaum, Councilman Yagelski, Councilman Cunningham, Councilwoman Gramarossa, and Councilman Garner were physically present for the meeting, while Councilman Mollenhauer appeared electronically via Zoom.

**APPROVAL OF MARCH 28, 2022 AGENDA**

Mr. Rosenbaum requested to add a few items to the agenda. Under New Business item number one, he requested to add the letter "b": Human Resources Director – Recommendation that Assistant Director Monique Thomas be assigned as acting director until replacement is found. Mr. Rosenbaum also requested to add under New Business the letter "c": MS4 Director; and additionally requested to add number four under the New Business category: Clerk permission to purchase 2 new computers for early voting (recommended by IT because the current computers are running on an outdated Windows 7 user system). He added one more item to new business as well (with the request to for it to be advertised at the April Special meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, as to establish funding for the project), item number five: Approve Declaration of Emergency Repair – The purpose is for emergency repair of the grandstand seating at the La Porte County Fairgrounds. Under Old Business, Mr. Rosenbaum requested to add a fourth item: Set date for Public Hearing regarding Resolution approving the Acquisition of Real Property Pursuant to IC 36-1-1.0.5-1 – Parcel next to EMS Base in Michigan City (west side of building on Coolspring), with the request to be set on the April 11<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting. For his final addition, Mr. Rosenbaum added number five under Old Business: Update plan for Westville Emergency Siren.

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

## **APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 24, 2022 AND FEBRUARY 28, 2022 MEETING MINUTES**

Mr. Stabosz advised the Council to vote on the two sets of minutes separately, as some corrections had been inserted into them between the Council's previous viewing of them and the start of the current Council Meeting.

### **Approval of the January 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Stabosz noted that one correction had been added to the minutes. Under page 2, the approval of the January 3, 2022 minutes, Mr. Stabosz corrected the original line to now say: *"Motion to approve January 3, 2022 minutes, correcting the items that were listed."*

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

### **Approval of the February 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Under Appropriations Transfers and Requests and beneath the Meadowview Estates appropriation, Mr. Stabosz added the line: *"Mr. Yagelski emphasized that the County will not be directly hooking up anyone from the subdivision into the system; Surveyor Hendricks affirmed that that is correct."*

i. Motion to approve as amended made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **Jackie Dermody, La Porte Family Advocates CEO**

Mrs. Dermody informed the room that April was Child Abuse Prevention Month, and Family Advocates was working closely with Dunebrook to raise child abuse awareness within the community, as well as Family Advocates' adoption of the "Paint the Town Blue" theme, and as such, beginning in April, blue wreaths would be dispersed in downtown La Porte, on the Courthouse lawn, and throughout Michigan City.

### **Lisa Pierzakowski, Center Township Trustee**

Mrs. Pierzakowski approached the Council to inform them on updates with the Eviction & Rental Assistance Program. She explained that only three cases had been fulfilled since March 1<sup>st</sup>, with two cases currently in the works, which left the current budget for the program at \$13,667.07.

### **Rip Ludlow, Retired Paramedic of La Porte EMS**

Mr. Ludlow wanted to thank the Council for their consideration in establishing a base and ambulance in the Rolling Prairie area, a 40-year hope of his which he was grateful to see come true. He highlighted the importance of the location of the base and design, and emphasized the need to hire a new team to run the base, and not to redirect staff from the La Porte EMS base so as not to thin-out pre-existing EMS staffing, and to ensure that call loads would not become overwhelming. Mr. Ludlow expressed relief and

gratitude that presence of the new EMS base and staffing it appropriately would ensure better healthcare in the Rolling Prairie area.

**General Public Comment: The Meadowview Estates Subterranean Flooding Project**

Multiple members of the public stepped forward to voice their concerns about the proposed resolution to the Meadowview Estates Subterranean Flooding situation, many of which expressed worries that runoff from the drainage pipe going into Kingsbury Creek would cause extra flooding downstream of where the flood water was being redirected. With this potential flooding in mind, a few speakers asked that the Council take heed to the possibility of the redirected water being contaminated in storm water and fertilizer runoff, which could pose a hazard to the environmental state of Kingsbury Creek, which is considered a natural spring. Many homeowners spoke of their struggles to receive permits to make alterations to the creek or its runoff on their land, reporting that since much of the creek's area is considered a protected wetland, the drainage board had no jurisdiction on establishing a drainage pipe from the Meadowview Estates area while Kingsbury Creek and its surrounding wetlands were designated as a protected area. Another resident clarified that there were inconsistencies on the application of the project, and indicated that the application neither had the correct location of the creek listed nor did it list the project's area as a designated wetland.

**Spencer England, 516 E St.**

Mr. England approached the Council regarding consideration of the LIT Tax, and urged the use of transparency in how the funds would be directed, and pressed for the creation of a paper-trail to document its use.

**Paul Przybylinski, Michigan City City Councilman**

Mr. Przybylinski approached the Council to voice his grievances regarding the proposed LIT Tax. He requested to know where and how the LIT narrative was being directed, noting the different methods of paying emergency service personnel in Michigan City. He explained Michigan City's police force and fire fighters were offered a 25-year longevity package, which increased their weekly pay and pension. Mr. Przybylinski expressed confusion as to why the proposed LIT Tax was being pushed through so urgently, and pressed for the retention of the current tax rate. Additionally, he advised the Council to look into developing a hiring policy to ensure that the La Porte County Sheriff's Department's new hires could be retained long-term. Mr. Cunningham inquired with Mr. Przybylinski as to what the outcome of the vote for the LIT Tax proposition was during the Michigan City Council meeting, to which Mr. Przybylinski informed him that the vote passed in favor of the LIT Tax 6-2.

**Tom Dermody, La Porte Mayor**

Mayor Dermody questioned why La Porte needed to retain a low tax rate, and indicated that having such low taxation was causing the community to just get by and not receive the best County services that could be offered. He cited two recent shootings in Michigan City as due cause for raising local taxes to ensure that public safety could be properly invested into to keep area communities safe. Mayor Dermody added that, with the \$32 million reduction in property tax collections, as a result of the property tax caps, the County was suffering a 25% loss of its budget, and asking for one-third of those funds back via the proposed LIT Tax would ensure that public safety services, equipment, and personnel could be properly provided for to serve the communities of La Porte County. Referring to Mr. England's previous comments, Mayor Dermody assured transparency in the documentation and reporting of the LIT's usage and spending.

**PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.**

**DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

**Barb Huston, La Porte E-911**

Mrs. Huston announced that April 11<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup> was National Dispatcher’s Week for the E-911 department. She dispersed handouts to the Council highlighting the changes to the dispatch center which took place between its establishment in January of 1992 and modern day, March 2022, and praised the strides made in 30 years of operation to get the dispatch center to where it was today. Additionally, Mrs. Huston offered call statistics from the years past, noting that in 2020, E-911 had 59,645 emergency calls, of which out of 166,610 total calls, 114,152 resulted in dispatches. In 2021, E-911 had 59,000 emergency calls, with a total of 168,936 total calls and 136,268 dispatches. In contrast, in 2010, the dispatch center had received a total of 147,048 calls altogether. Mrs. Huston added that the call center was now also receiving emergency text messages as well, with a total of 1,786 total text calls in 2021. Retired EMS staff member John Jones joined Mrs. Huston at the podium, and urged the Council to look into increasing EMS compensation, whether through LIT or other means, to ensure the retention of talent. Additionally, Mrs. Huston and Mr. Jones prompted the Council to consider the rebuilding of the Wanatah and Michigan City EMS bases due to their dismal states.

**Jeremy Sobecki, La Porte County Parks Superintendent**

Mr. Sobecki informed the Council that construction of the restroom at Bluhm County Park was almost complete and should be open in a few weeks. Playground construction at the same park, however, was stalled due to rainy weather, with the contractors to hopefully return as the site dried out following the inclement weather. Mr. Sobecki announced that he had received pricing for a bio-soil rain garden design for Bluhm County Park, a garden which would assist with the water runoff from the newly paved parking lot. While original estimates came in at \$60,000, Mr. Sobecki noted that he already obtained new, cost-friendly plants, and as such a new estimate for the design work would be \$3,000, with excavation prices remaining to be seen. He informed the Council that he planned on acquiring various volunteer groups to assist with the planting of the foliage, and explained that he was looking for a motion of support to acquire the \$3,000 for the project’s design work.

i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**Amanda Lahners, La Porte Health Department Administrator**

Ms. Lahners informed the Council that the Health Department was beginning a new program which would be in charge of reviewing fetal infant mortality within the County, and explained that La Porte had the 11<sup>th</sup> highest amount of fetal infant death rates in the state of Indiana. She added that the team would be based within La Porte’s Health Department, and a coordinator would be hired to front the team. Lastly, Ms. Lahners noted that the program would be 100% grant funded, and would cost no County dollars.

## **LIAISON REPORTS**

**Councilman Garner:** Mr. Garner spoke to Treasurer Joie Winski, who reported collecting large amounts of taxes thus far, and that her department was preparing stuffings-and-mailings in the near future. Mr. Garner added that the Sheriff had already sent updates regarding his department's goings-on to the Council via email.

**Councilwoman Gramarossa:** Mrs. Gramarossa reported that she had spoken to all her liaisons, and their various endeavors were going smoothly.

**Councilman Rosenbaum:** Mr. Rosenbaum stated that he attended the Redevelopment Commission meeting, and that events with the FMEC were going to be discussed further into the meeting.

**Councilman Yagelski:** Mr. Yagelski had no liaison reports to offer at the given time.

**Councilman Cunningham:** Mr. Cunningham waived his liaison reports in light of the meeting's length.

**Councilman Mollenhauer:** Mr. Mollenhauer explained that he had met with the EMA Assistant Director regarding the Westville emergency sirens, a topic which would be presented later in the meeting.

**Councilman Novak:** Mr. Novak waived his liaison reports, and offered to share any information regarding them outside of the evening's meeting.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

**Letter of Support for LIT Tax – La Porte County Association of Realtors, Inc.  
Letter from Steve Holifield, 6782 E 100 S, Mill Creek**

Auditor Tim Stabosz reported that there were two pieces of correspondence, one from the La Porte County Association of Realtors, Inc. in which they offered their support for the LIT tax, and one from resident Steve Holifield. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the letter from Mr. Holifield, which urged the Council to reconsider going through with the proposed LIT Tax. In his letter, Mr. Holifield claimed that raising taxes to pay emergency services was ill-advised in the face of record-breaking increases in the cost of living within the County, and pressed looking into staffing cuts excluding the Sheriff's, fire [sic], and EMS departments. He instead advised offering a petition for voters during the upcoming May 2022 election, a petition which would explain what the LIT Tax is for and how it would be spent, and to allow the tax payers to decide if they wanted to push it through.

## **ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution No. 2022-03A – Peepers & Sammann Company Inc. – Public Hearing**

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

No member of the public approached the Council to speak during the public hearing, which Mr. Novak subsequently closed.

**Resolution No. 2022-03A – Peepers & Sammann Company Inc. – Confirmatory**

- i. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Auditor Tim Stabosz read aloud the resolution.
- iv. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- v. All members voted in favor.

**Resolution No. 2022-03B – Alexander Chemical – Public Hearing**

Mr. Novak declared the opening of a public hearing for the Alexander Chemical’s resolution.

Resident Dawn Milnek approached the Council to inquire what the resolution entailed, which Mr. Novak clarified was for tax assistance for building and property expansion. Economic Development Directory Tony Rodriguez approached the podium to introduce Alexander Chemical’s President, Rob Davidson. Mr. Davidson clarified that Alexander Chemical specialized in water treatment and purification, and as such, were an essential business in La Porte County. He added that the requested expansion of facilities would include new maintenance and headquarters buildings to attract new talent and growth within the company. Additionally, a new security facility, improved parking lots, and landscaping would be included in the expansion as well. While Alexander Chemical employs 42 employees currently, the new accommodations would allow for the integration of 6 more employees, and would invest \$5.6 million in local real estate and \$850,000 in personal property through manufacturing, research, development & logistics, and IT. Mr. Davidson clarified that Alexander Chemical was looking for a 10-year abatement for the expansion. Mr. Yagelski inquired about Alexander Chemical’s use of railroad on their property, which Mr. Davidson responded that the use of rail was already ongoing at Alexander Chemical’s facilities, although he would like to see additional spurs brought in to increase competition from rail-provided suppliers. Mrs. Milnek asked if there was proper drainage on the property, which Mr. Davidson clarified that a retention pond was present on the grounds to ensure the drainage needs of the land.

President Novak closed the Public Hearing.

**Resolution No. 2022-03B – Alexander Chemical – Confirmatory**

- i. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the resolution.
- iv. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

v. All members voted in favor.

**Resolution No. 2022-03C – Harrison Electric – Declaratory**

i. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

iii. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the resolution.

iv. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

v. All members voted in favor.

iv. Council Attorney Guy DiMartino announced that the resolution would be set for Public Hearing at the next County Council meeting, as confirmed by President Novak.

**Resolution No. 2022-03D – Sullivan Palatek, Inc. – Declaratory**

i. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

iii. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the resolution.

iv. Motion to approve made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

v. All members voted in favor.

**Ordinance No. 2022-03A – Animal Shelter Adoption and Spay and Neuter Fees Account**

i. Motion to suspend the rules made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

iii. Motion to read by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

iv. All members voted in favor.

v. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the Ordinance.

vi. Motion to give the second reading of the Ordinance by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

vii. All members voted in favor.

viii. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the second reading of the Ordinance.

ix. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Gramarossa.

x. All members voted in favor.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

#### **a. La Porte County Highway – Two Equipment Operators**

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**b. Human Resources Director – Recommendation that Assistant Director Monique Thomas be assigned as acting Director until replacement is found**

i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Cunningham recommended making a motion to increase part-time hours in the HR Department to accommodate for Barb Mossman's retirement and subsequent shortage of staff in the department as a result of Interim Director Monique Thomas taking her place.

i. Motion to authorize the Council President to temporarily fill an empty position or increase hours for the Human Resources Department made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

#### **c. MS4 Director**

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

### **2. La Porte County Human Resources – Requesting permission for Waggoner, Irwin, and Scheele to conduct an external salary review. (Requesting favorable support)**

Human Resources Director Barb Mossman spoke electronically via Zoom to offer two quotes from Waggoner, Irwin, and Scheele, a consultant which provides external salary reviews. Mrs. Mossman explained that for the firm to review all county staff, the cost would be \$43,620. The second quote, which would review all employees except for elected officials, chief deputies, EMS, Sheriff's merit, jail, and POLE positions, would be a reduced quote of \$19,680.



i. Motion of support for the second quote of \$19,680 was made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Garner.

Mr. Stabosz encouraged the Council to reconsider the first quote of \$43,620, which would investigate all County employees, and added that this would allow for more accurate forecasting of how any LIT increase would need to be directed toward County employee salaries.

ii. All members voted in favor.

iii. Mr. Rosenbaum added that an efficiency study should also be taken into consideration for County employees.

### **3. La Porte County Maintenance – Presentation of the findings for outsourcing Housekeeping at the Michigan City Courthouse.**

Facilities Director Larry Levendowski approached the Council to report his findings on the cost for outsourcing housekeeping services at the new Michigan City Courthouse. Mr. Levendowski reported that although he had initially reached out to eight providers to receive quotes, only three companies reported back to him with quotes to service the Michigan City Courthouse: Club Clean whose quote was \$467,844 for the year, Spic & Span whose quote was \$218,000 for the year, and Properly Clean, who offered an hourly rate that would estimate to \$108,160 for the year. Mr. Levendowski noted that even though Properly Clean offered the lowest rate for cleaning services, they only offered 32.5 collective hours of service weekly between two employees, and the two full-time county employees assigned to the Michigan City Courthouse were already struggling to fulfill the custodial needs of the newer, larger building. Additionally, Mr. Levendowski presented what the cost would be to hire two new full-time employees, which would be \$114,790, a finding which he presented to the Commissioners and which received a unanimous vote of approval. Mr. Yagelski asserted that he would prefer to outsource the labor rather than bring in additional employees, and opined that the three cleaning services might offer more motivated staff, even with one service offering less hours. Mr. Yagelski proposed keeping the current staffing number as-is for the current housekeeping employees, to which Mr. Levendowski explained that when he first began directing the Facilities Department, he managed a staff of five full-time housekeepers and four part-time housekeepers, and he was currently down to only 4 full-time employees and no part-time employees, in addition to needing to take on the task of cleaning the new, larger Michigan City Courthouse, to which Mr. Yagelski debated that the new Courthouse had instead decreased in size, and was in need of less housekeeping service as a result. Mr. Yagelski added that the County workforce had not increased enough to require the need for additional housekeeping services, to which Mr. Levendowski rebuked that he had been having to assist with cleaning buildings as well to accommodate for the lack of housekeeping staff, and that if this short handedness in staff were to continue, the quality of the housekeepers' work would suffer. When Mr. Yagelski stated that he heard that the part-time housekeepers had been outperforming the full-time housekeepers, Mr. Novak and Mr. Levendowski re-informed him that there currently were no existing part-time housekeepers in the Facilities Department.

Mrs. Gramarossa noted that in June of 2021, Mr. Levendowski had approached the Council to request approval to bring on a full-time maintenance employee, as another full-time employee was designated to be retiring by the end of the year, and asked if the latter employee did in fact retire. Mr. Levendowski responded that the employee had not yet retired, to which Mrs. Gramarossa proposed redirecting a

maintenance employee to fill in for the needed housekeeping service instead. Mr. Levendowski responded that maintenance employees had already been assisting with housekeeping to make up for the department's reduced staff, and reiterated that even just one more full-time housekeeper would assist with the department's workload, and continued that attempts to bring in part-time employees had been unsuccessful. Mrs. Gramarossa inquired once more as to how the extra full-time maintenance employee could be redirected to housekeeping in an attempt to help with the workload, at which point Mr. Novak clarified that the employee in question had been a part-time employee prior to being full-time. Mrs. Gramarossa inquired how many part-time housekeepers were posted at the Fairgrounds, which Mr. Levendowski answered that there were two, and additionally noted that three of the currently existing housekeepers expressed that they were looking for different employment, and that the aforementioned employee who planned on retirement still had their plans to retire in the works. Mrs. Gramarossa asked if the retiring employee had given Mr. Levendowski a date as to when they would retire, which Mr. Levendowski noted that the employee had not yet given him a designated date as to when that would occur.

Mr. Yagelski asked if an outsourced contractor were not selected to clean the Michigan City Courthouse, where the cost for cleaning supplies would come from. Mr. Levendowski responded that the Facilities Department had always paid for the cleaning supplies of the Courthouse and would continue to do so. Mr. Yagelski queried as to what the estimated cost for supplies would be to clean the Courthouse for a year, which Mr. Levendowski offered a rough estimate of \$15,000.

i. Motion to send the item back to the Commissioners for a tru-cost analysis made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**4. Clerk asking for permission to purchase 2 new computers for early voting. (Recommended by IT because they are running on Windows 7.)**

Mr. Novak announced that Circuit Court Clerk Heather Stevens reached out to him to let the Council know that IT had already resolved the request for the 2 new computers, and that no vote would need to be taken.

**5. Approve Declaration of Emergency Repair – The purpose is for emergency repair of the grandstand seating at the La Porte County Fairgrounds.**

Mr. Levendowski explained that the FMEC insurance agent recommended an inspection of the fairground grandstands, to which ET Paddock Enterprises performed a full inspection of the grandstands. The main grandstands in particular, which seat 1,600 people and are about 150 feet in length, had electrical code violations due to various issues with a nearby electrical panel. Additionally, many of the boards were disintegrating, even with efforts to replace many of the worse-for-wear boards over time. Much of the area underneath the seating was rusted and in poor shape, as well as many of the ramps up to the grandstands being non-ADA compliant. Mr. Levendowski additionally noted that gaps in the bleachers were over four inches between boards when they should be under four inches, along with other various deterioration and heaving of the grandstand's general structure, and many of the railings being an incorrect height. Attorney Doug Biege informed the FMEC that the grandstands would need to be fully repaired before they could be utilized again. Mr. Levendowski explained that although he had reached out to multiple contractors to work on the grandstands, issues with acquiring

materials for the project would push the completion of the repair past fair time, however New-Tech would be able to repair the grandstands in time for the fair. Mr. Yagelski asked which fund the costs for the repair would be gleaned from, which Mr. Novak noted that Riverboat could be utilized, and Mr. Rosenbaum added that ARP funds could also be used as well.

i. Motion of support not-to-exceed \$600,000 made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

Mr. Yagelski emphasized the nature of the emergency request, and the urgency to complete the project before the County Fair began, while Mr. DiMartino urged the project's importance to keep fairgrounds patrons safe.

ii. Five members voted in favor (Mr. Novak, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mr. Rosenbaum) and two members voted not-in-favor (Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Garner).

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. La Porte County Prosecutor – Requesting permission to disperse funds to Adult Protective Services Investigators per a new state grant agreement. (Tabled from February 28, 2022)**

i. Motion to remove from table made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Prosecutor John Lake approached the Council regarding the state grant agreement that would offer pay for overtime and bonuses for the Adult Protective Services Department. He noted the difficulty in acquiring the grant, and explained that if the grant was not utilized by June 30, 2022, the State of Indiana would reclaim any grant money that had not been used. Mr. Lake added that if that were to happen, obtaining this grant and others from the State would become even more difficult as a result of the County's failure to use the previously acquired grants. Mr. Cunningham asked if Adult Protective Services employees had received County bonuses, which Mr. Lake confirmed they had. In light of the Adult Protective Services employees already receiving bonuses from the County, Mr. Cunningham proposed that Mr. Lake should find another way to spend the grant money. Mr. DiMartino explained that the grant's language was clear in that the funding should be used strictly for overtime and bonuses only, and instead recommended offsetting the County bonuses and grant funding accordingly, and workshopping the item and deferring it to the next month's Council meeting to ensure that the state funding would be utilized before it reached its deadline.

i. Motion to have the Prosecutor and Council Attorney workshop the item and present a solution at the next Council meeting made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Yagelski inquired with Mr. Lake if he was able to recover a previously bypassed state grant, which Mr. Lake explained that he was unable to do so, as the grant had required definitive plans and construction of the facility to where it would be applied, plans which Mr. Lake had not been given, and additionally, the Michigan City Courthouse had not yet been constructed to allow for the application of

the grant. Mr. Lake did note that a chamber on the third floor could be utilized if the grant were secured, however, the chamber would need to be used strictly for IVD purposes during business hours. He noted that he would look into whether or not the IVD grant could still be utilized if the area in question was used for non-IVD business after-hours.

**2. La Porte County Treasurer – Brown Mackie expenses: Front Entry of \$6,500, Utilities of \$19,273.04, and Water of \$550. (Tabled from February, 28, 2022)**

i. Motion to remove item from table made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. Yagelski summoned Mr. Lake to the podium, and noted that in light of the recent overspending for repairs at the Brown Mackie location, he would like to see the prosecutors cover some of the costs incurred with the building's exit-repairs. Mr. Lake explained that the Prosecutor paid for the specialty code locks located in the Prosecutor and IVD offices and workspaces, however Mr. Levendowski contested that the Prosecutor had only paid for a few services regarding the locks and that the Michigan City Courthouse project costs had actually covered the costs of the locks.

i. Motion to table to allow time to investigate the source of the spending made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**3. LIT Update – Set date for public hearing and first reading for April 11, 2022 or April 13, 2022 at 5:30pm.**

Mr. Novak declared that the Special LIT Meeting would take place on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 5:30pm. Mayor Dermody approached the Council to offer multiple letters in support of the LIT Tax proposition, and explained that a total of 11 Councils had voted in support, almost all unanimously, with the exception of the Michigan City Council, which still passed with a vote of 6 in-favor and 2 not-in-favor, and with one absentee.

**4. Set date for Public Hearing regarding Resolution approving the Acquisition of Real Property Pursuant to IC 36-1-1.0.5-1 – Parcel next to EMS Base in Michigan City (west side of building on Coolspring). Request this be set for Special Meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup>.**

Mr. Novak set the date of the public hearing on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, during the Special Meeting. Mr. DiMartino clarified that it would need to be a public hearing, resolution, and appropriation.

i. Motion to set made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**5. Update plan for Westville Emergency Siren**

Mr. Mollenhauer explained that he had been working with EMA and Westville town officials to find a resolution with the emergency siren located at the old police station in Westville. He explained that

town officials would be provided a pole for the siren and would pay for its electricity, and the Council would pay to move the pole and upgrade it. Marquiss Electric, in turn, would be paid to remove the old pole and remount the new siren for \$11,685.

- i. Motion of support for \$11,685 made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, AND REQUESTS**

**La Porte County Coroner**

Requesting permission to spend from Coroner Non-Reverting Fund 2053 for:

Autopsy \$5,500

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

**La Porte County Council/Paladin**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950/8951) for:

Assist developmentally disabled population \$500,000

State Senator Rodney Pol, State Senator Mike Bohacek, Paladin President and CEO Steve Hobby, and Paladin Vice President Kimberly Latchford, approached the Council to request appropriation for a new Paladin Home building, which would offer additional opportunities for the community's disabled population. Mr. Bohacek noted that funding for the proposed building was authorized under the same Indiana Code section that allows for giving funds to establishments like the Swanson Center, and added that Paladin would be eligible for this funding as well. Mr. Yagelski expressed disappointment with Paladin's administration, citing specifically that Paladin had unnecessarily phased-out multiple job-building programs that assisted the disabled population with finding employment within the community. Additionally, Mr. Yagelski stated that several members of the community had expressed concern and boredom with Paladin's activities, noting specifically that the previous Friday, the only activities planned were three movies, which caused many family members of the Paladin House's clients to lose interest in attending the center's events. Mr. Yagelski noted disdain in the lack of a diverse schedule for the Paladin House's clients, and urged the inclusion of projects for young adults that did not include tasks limited to the likes of watching films and coloring, and that more career-based programming would be more beneficial to its attendees. Mrs. Latchford explained that the aforementioned phased-out career-based program was primarily a transitional program used to ease Paladin's clients into local jobs, and was never intended to be a full-term, inclusive program. She added that when the program was removed, another was developed through Saint Andrew's Products to fulfill the same transitional purposes, with the added bonus of the client gaining employment. She added that the clients are given choices as to what program they enjoy while at Paladin House, and that it wasn't strictly scheduled programming. Mr. Yagelski noted that he would still prefer to see job-based programming being integrated into Paladin's regular programming.

Mr. Hobby added that, upon overseeing career-based programming in Lake County facilities, many of the center's clients were as bored performing job-based tasks as they would be coloring, which potentially resulted in the center's eventual closure. Mr. Hobby digressed and explained that he needed

to close the La Porte facility, and that with his current funding, it was difficult to pay his current staff a living wage. He noted that Covid grant money did offer a reprieve in raising the wages of his staff, however the grant money might not always be available to bolster wages and was an unsustainable, short-term solution. As such, consolidating the La Porte and Michigan City Paladin Houses would allow for reduced mortgages, reduced utilities, and would assist in securing more grant funding.

Sue Pizarek, a mentor at the Paladin Center, approached the Council to share information about many of the activities offered by the Paladin House. She explained that companies like Sullaire had not always been present to assist in offering career-based programming, and that coloring was not part of her own personal curriculum. Instead, she noted, many of her activities early in the day involved continuing education in mathematics and vocabulary, with activities that highlighted social skills being enjoyed in the afternoon, such as games and learning how to raise livestock, with an emphasis that Paladin was assisting its clients in raising and showing chickens at the upcoming County Fair. Mrs. Pizarek added that although Paladin’s clients would occasionally watch movies, they were films with a purpose or moral, and that Fridays were considered “free days,” and showing three movies was an exception for such days.

Mr. Novak asked what could be done to assure to the Council that building a new facility would be beneficial, which Mr. Hobby responded that the facility would benefit the staff in the long-term as a result of increased grant money, which in turn would benefit Paladin’s clients. He added that Paladin offered additional services in the community, such as non-emergency medical transportation, not only to Paladin’s clients but to the elderly and pre-natal and new mothers as well. Mrs. Gramarossa clarified with Mr. Hobby that Paladin was still assisting clients with attaining gainful employment, which Mr. Hobby confirmed was an important program which Paladin assisted with.

i. Motion to approve out of ARP (8950, or 8951 if 8950 was not applicable) made by Mr. Garner and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Council/CVB Toll Road marketing proposal**  
Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950/8951) for:

|      |          |
|------|----------|
| 2022 | \$50,000 |
| 2023 | \$50,000 |

La Porte County Visitors Bureau Executive Director Jack Arnett welcomed Dan Bearss of the Northern Indiana Tourism Development Commission (NITDC). Mr. Bearss proposed advertising many of the highlights of Northern Indiana along various points of the Indiana Toll Road which runs through La Porte County. He noted that the points of interest that he wanted to highlight in his advertising campaign included Northern Indiana’s Dunes, Dunes State Park, various lake-bordering beaches and beach events, Notre Dame University, Amish communities, and more, all of which would be advertised under the “Indiana’s Cool North” Campaign, which sought to mirror a similar image to that of the Pure Michigan tourism campaign. The campaign in turn, he explained, would assist in bringing tourism to the La Porte area. Mr. Bearss noted that of the estimated 40 million travelers driving through Indiana on the Toll Road, only about 25% actually stopped and spent money at the plazas, and the goal of the proposed billboard campaign would be to reach out to travelers and convince them to visit Indiana’s various tourist destinations and bring more income into Indiana’s local communities.

i. Motion to approve advertising for both 2022 and 2023 out of ARP (8950) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

Mr. Cunningham took a moment to praise the La Porte County Convention & Visitors Bureau for their actions in advertising the NIBC Basketball Tournament and Lakefest, both events that brought televised attention and tourism to La Porte County, a statement which Mayor Dermody bolstered as well.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Council**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from ARP (8950/8951) for:

Volunteer Fire Departments in La Porte County \$160,000

The allotted \$160,000 in funding is to be distributed to each of the County's volunteer fire departments, with \$10,000 going to each of the 16 fire departments.

i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Information Technology**

Requesting Additional Appropriations from ARP (8950/8951) for:

Case for archiving (not-to-exceed) \$6,000  
Multi-factor Authentication (not-to-exceed) \$50,000

Mr. Novak explained that the multi-factor authentication was now being re-advertised as not-to-exceed \$50,000, instead of the previously advertised \$180,000. The Auditor's Chief Deputy, Vaughn Galloway, added that the items were additionally advertised under Riverboat in addition to being advertised under ARP.

i. Motion to approve both items out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Sheriff**

Requesting permission to spend \$18,790.25 from Misdemeanant Fund 1175.00000.000.0155 for:

To replace aging core switches and routers for computer networks \$18,790.25

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

Requesting permission to spend \$7,650 from K9 Donation Fund 4106.00000.0000311 for:

Train and Certify K9 Handler \$7,650

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Sheriff**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from General (1000) or ARP (8950/8951) for:

Pay for unused sick days \$9,000

i. Motion to approve out of General (1000) made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Building Maintenance**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) for:

Rolling Prairie EMS/Highway garage project (not-to-exceed) \$2,306,691.62

i. Motion of support to allow for contract signage and permit readvertisement under LIT at the next Council Meeting made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.

Mr. Yagelski clarified that the cost of this project was just for the construction of the building and facilities, and did not include costs for staffing the building. Mr. Novak noted that appropriations for non-construction costs would be addressed at the April 11<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Parks Department**

Requesting Additional Appropriations from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) for:

2 Mowers (not-to-exceed) \$21,000

i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Water proofing lower level of Environmental Education Center (EEC) building at Red Mill County Park \$23,192

i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Treasurer**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) for:

Brown Mackie (January Expenses) \$1,886.46



Mr. Galloway explained that these expenses were Brown Mackie repair bills from January which had put the Treasurer's account in a negative balance, and the payment would be necessary to balance the account. Noting that the other items for the Brown Mackie repair bills had been tabled, Mr. Yagelski announced that he wanted to table this item as well.

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

**La Porte County Emergency Management**

Requesting Additional Appropriations from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) for:

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| Tower and Maintenance for Towers | \$16,000 |
| Repairs on 2 Sirens              | \$46,000 |

- i. Motion to approve both items out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Rob Sabie of La Porte County EMA spoke about his findings on upgrading the County's emergency sirens, noting that a few sirens were in need of repair: one non-functional siren near Prairie View Elementary School, and another located at the fire station in Michigan City. Mr. Sabie continued that many other sirens simply did not meet the specs required of them for reasons such as their poles being too long or short, wiring issues, or various other incompatibility issues. Mr. Yagelski urged Mr. Sabie to acquire grant funding to assist in paying the sirens' repairs, and pressed for greater communication to ensure that the devices are working properly and that repairs are done in due time. Mr. Yagelski continued that he would like to see Mr. Sabie fulfill the continued education required to begin writing grants to pay for such projects, and in the interim, asked that Mr. Sabie take the time to coordinate with a grant writer to ensure that funding could be provided for the poles' and sirens' repairs.

**La Porte County Auditor**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) for:

|                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Baker Tilly GAAP Reporting | (not-to-exceed) \$85,500 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|

- i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Assessor**

Requesting to approve an Overtime account to transfer \$2,950.49 from Part-time pay 2015-101030-000-0815 to Overtime 2015-10140-000-0815 for:

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Michigan Township Reassessment | \$2,950.49 |
|--------------------------------|------------|

- i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

### Council/Attorney Comments

In light of recent negative publicity and false rumors that the Auditor should be removed from office, Mr. Cunningham voiced his support in Mr. Stabosz's actions and methods in practicing as Auditor. Mr. Cunningham explained that many of the recent complaints directed at the Auditor were strictly political. He urged supporting the Auditor, and in situations where billings are questionable, allow him to withhold payment to their respective parties, for those specific items.

i. Motion of support for the Auditor in acting in his role made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

Mrs. Gramarossa explained that notions of the County Attorney personally suing the Auditor for his role as an elected official were rumored, and if there was any question in his performing his duties for the County incorrectly, it was the Council's obligation to support him. Mr. Novak agreed with Mrs. Gramarossa's statement, however disagreed with the Auditor's recent withholding of payments in their entirety, and felt that partial payment should be made to these bills while the questionable portions of the bills were being investigated. Mr. Stabosz noted that the bills in question, from January and February, required a full evaluation, hence their full withholding, which Mr. Novak urged him to address the bills in a timelier fashion, and supplemented that Mr. Stabosz claimed that he would lose leverage if the bills were to be partially paid. Mr. Stabosz countered that the investigation of a bill in its entirety can raise additional questions and issues which may need to be addressed before payment can conclude. Mr. Novak responded that he would prefer that the Auditor pay the portions of the bills that are clear and without dispute.

Mr. Stabosz explained that he had sent an email to the Council for affirmation of intent to support him financially, and added that the notion of personally suing the Auditor for his fulfilling his obligations to the County was a misrepresentation of his position, as he was not performing these duties as a private citizen.

Mr. Mollenhauer commented that he felt as though it was the voters' decision to support or deny the Auditor's actions, which Mr. Cunningham stated that he disagreed with, designating the Auditor's role as agent in protecting the Council and the County's dollars from unscrupulous billing. Mr. Rosenbaum, citing his background in business, added that when working in finance, it was one's duty to offer scrutiny to any financial charges that would be deemed unreasonable, and threatening a colleague from performing their duties for the County was an unreasonable threat, and as such Mr. Rosenbaum also offered his support for the Auditor. Mr. Yagelski asked if Mr. Stabosz was currently being sued, which Mr. Stabosz clarified that he had not yet been served any papers, barring a previously ongoing defamation case. Mr. Yagelski expressed confusion as to what the previous motion was for when there was no lawsuit being filed against the Auditor, to which Mr. Cunningham reiterated that the motion was to support the Auditor's current practices in scrutinizing questionable billing, to which Mr. Yagelski disagreed with the Auditor's practice of withholding the large proportion of bills in question. Mr. Stabosz explained that he wanted the Council to stand up for the integrity of the office of the Auditor, and to send a message to vendors that if they try to personally sue him, that he would have protection from the Council in that his actions were a result of his responsibilities to the County. Mr. Novak noted that he did not have any legal background and was unsure of what legal protection the Council could offer

him in the face of a lawsuit. Mr. Cunningham restated that Mr. Stabosz should continue to perform his job, however he should be mindful of withholding the majority of bills. Mr. Stabosz added that the reason for the delay with the January and February bills was a result of the difficulty he had in receiving the information to properly investigate said bills, which Mr. Cunningham recapped that the Auditor should make an effort to pay bills or portions of bills that were not in question.

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

Mr. Yagelski took a moment to read aloud a portion of the Northwest Indiana Times regarding the annexation of water and sewer in the Michigan City area, and noted that a few comments made by Michigan City Councilman Bryant Dabney were misinformed. He explained that the annexation was a result of an overcapacity for water and sanitation of the areas in question, which helped out Michigan City's bottom line. He added that the water was being offered to Beverly Shores, The Pines, Long Beach, and even New Buffalo, and questioned if those areas would be annexed as well. He praised La Porte County for attracting the four large businesses that were on the Council's agenda, and warned against one large enterprise being the sole proprietor in an annexed area, as it was not healthy for economic development.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 25th day of April 2022.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Earl Cunningham

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Terry Garner


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa

  
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Councilman Mike Mollenhauer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Randy Novak

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Mike Rosenbaum

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST:   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Timothy Stabosz, Auditor