

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**April 25, 2022 at 6:00PM**

A regular meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on April 25<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 Mollenhauer, Councilman Cunningham, Councilwoman Gramarossa, and Councilman Garner were physically present for the meeting, while Councilman Yagelski appeared electronically via Zoom.

**APPROVAL OF APRIL 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 AGENDA**

Mr. Rosenbaum requested to approve the agenda with the addition of one new item: Under New Business, letter "d": La Porte County Health Department, New Nurse.

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

**APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 MEETING MINUTES**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Michael Vincent – 6 Devonshire Ct., Michigan City**

Mr. Vincent urged the Council to preserve the state of the Franklin Street Bridge as a means to uphold its integrity with upcoming lakeshore events to happen in the summer, as it was the only logical means

of access to the lakeshore itself. He recommended that the Council limit the amount of times the bridge was raised on a daily basis. Mr. Novak informed Mr. Vincent that he would need to approach the Commissioners with his request, however he would pass on his request to them as well. Mr. Cunningham added that, with the bridge being part of a federal waterway, there could be difficulties in altering the frequency in which the bridge was raised.

**Joel Wilson – 8181 W. Applewood, La Porte**

Mr. Wilson requested that when the Council got to the New Business section, that they elaborate as to why a CMA was considering being hired instead of a nurse, who would have more credentials and be more of an asset to the County as a public health worker. He additionally voiced his concerns that raising taxes in La Porte County may stifle the number of persons moving into the County, which would prevent long-term growth as a result.

**Paul Przybylinski, Michigan City City Councilman**

Mr. Przybylinski asked the Council to consider who would be most affected by the increase in the LIT, and explained that 37% of Michigan City's population was considered to be living on the poverty level. He added that a LIT increase would harm the County's economic engine, and questioned if the proposed .5% increase could be made a smaller increment instead.

**Tim Stabosz, La Porte County Auditor**

Mr. Stabosz voiced his concerns over the Council's swift decision to approve the LIT increase. He explained that there were six categories of Indiana LIT, all of which had different purposes, including a Jail LIT that could raise up to .2%, a consideration that could help fund the building of a new jail building for La Porte County. He added that the financial advisor that was used in consideration for the LIT increase was an advisor of the City of La Porte, not specifically the County's advisor. As the CFO of the County, Mr. Stabosz advised the Council to procure their own unbiased financial advisor, and to evaluate the proposed .5% increase independently, as well as performing salary and efficiency studies to confirm that the .5% increase would be necessary. Mr. Stabosz also recommended potentially staggering the tax increase, with a .25% raise in the first year and a .25% increase in the following year, to reduce the impact that it would have on La Porte County's taxpayers.

**Tom Dermody, La Porte Mayor**

Mr. Dermody noted that Baker Tilly, the financial advisor used in the consideration of the .5% LIT increase, had been utilized for multiple LIT matters all throughout the County, and added that the .5% public safety LIT increase could still be used to acquire funds to build a new County jail. He pressed that the LIT funds would be a more secure source of funding for public safety instead of short-term funding such as ARP funds, which the County could not sustain itself on year after year. He urged the swift approval of the tax increase as a means to avoid any emergencies and to lock-in public safety employees, and prevent them from leaving to go work for neighboring counties.

**PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.**

## **DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS**

### **Lynn Swanson, La Porte County Coroner**

Ms. Swanson approached the Council to report that overdose deaths within La Porte County were on the rise, and indicated that in 2021, a total of 56 overdose deaths had been reported, while in 2022, 12 were already distinctly reported with another 7 outstanding toxicology reports waiting to be determined. She added that the Coroner had already responded to 85 deaths in La Porte County, with a total of:

- 2 asphyxiations
- 1 choking
- 3 vehicular accidents
- 12 overdoses
- 2 suicides
- 63 natural deaths
- 10 doctor-signs

Ms. Swanson also reported that the total number of calls responded to in 2021 was 417, and that 2022's call total was very likely to surpass 2021's total calls. She explained that most overdoses were coming from Michigan City. Ms. Swanson also added that four of her deputies would be going for recertifications, while an additional two candidates were considering education in September. Mr. Novak inquired about the consideration to reclassify overdoses that involved fentanyl as accidental, as many drug users did not know if the drugs they were taking were laced with fentanyl, resulting in accidental deaths. Ms. Swanson clarified that the reclassification was unlikely, as drug users were aware of the dangers of taking drugs, including the potential for them to be unknowingly laced with fentanyl, and upwards of 98% of the Coroner's drug overdose cases involved fentanyl anyway.

### **Joie Winski, La Porte County Treasurer**

Auditor Tim Stabosz joined Ms. Winski at the podium to address a recent property tax error. Ms. Winski noted that she had reached out to the DLGF and had secured a timeline for action, however no files had yet been received from the DLGF. She explained that the Communication Director of the DLGF, Jenny Banks, informed her that the tax error at hand was not commonly made, and that it was the first error of its kind in the past five years to have occurred in Indiana county government, with the reissuing of tax bills as a result. She pressed on the error's seriousness, and noted that its correction would hopefully be timely, and reemphasized that the situation should not be taken lightly. Mr. Stabosz added that the Auditor of State informed him that additional jurisdictions elsewhere also had property tax bills that would require corrections, which Ms. Winski pressed once more that she was informed that the matter should not be brushed off. She explained that she reached out to the treasurer of Wells County, another County who had experienced a tax error, however their error was entirely different in nature than that of La Porte County's. She explained that while Wells County had forgotten to add a conservancy district, La Porte County had the error of missing homestead exemptions and other various CNAV errors. She added that the treasurer did not have access to view abstracts and CNAVS due to the separation of powers. She additionally noted that the posting of the taxes was being stifled by large call volumes coming into the Treasurer's office, and urged that if anybody had any questions regarding the tax error at hand, that they please be addressed while she was at the podium, an offer which Mr. Stabosz proposed for himself as well.

Mr. Yagelski questioned why the errors could have been caused when the County had a series of checks and balances in place to prevent them happening. Ms. Winski explained that it was the duty of the

Assessor to send assessed values to the state of Indiana, which in turn would check and approve them, and allow the assessed values to be sent to the Auditor, who would then begin the Certified Net Assess Value process. Ms. Winski praised the software company LOW for their assistance with this process, who, in addition to the Auditor of the State, would send a checklist that was utilized to ensure all steps were properly taken, ensuring the application of the homestead and its supplement. Ms. Winski explained that on this occasion, this step was missed, primarily beginning with LOW's indication that it was not an item on the checklist that they issued. Ms. Winski claimed that she reached out to the Auditor to ensure that the application of the homestead exemption and its supplement were not missed, to ensure it was addressed given its absence on the checklist. She added that for unknown reasons, LOW representatives had not come onsite as they had in the previous year to review the abstracts, and additionally, the Treasurer and Auditor did not have the ability to cross-reference each other's LOW systems. She explained that when the abstract was returned, there were initially no reported errors with it; however, calls regarding tax errors began making their way into her office on April 10<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Winski explained that as a result of the mistake being missed, the homestead supplement had reverted to that of the previous year's number. She noted that when she served as Auditor in the past, she and her team would scrutinize the abstracts and CNAVs. Mr. Yagelski pressed for the matter to be looked into, and urged that the Commission attorney investigate the error as well as LOW's hand in the mistake. Ms. Winski explained that LOW only supplied software, and that it was the duty of the County to catch errors and ensure that the checklists were properly followed-through.

Mr. Novak advised Ms. Winski to return to future Council and Commissioner meetings to relay any updates and findings regarding the homestead error's correction, so the Council could take action on the potential penalty removals that could be offered as a result of the mistake, and noted that he hoped a Special Meeting could be arranged before the Council's next meeting in late May.

Mr. Cunningham asked if LOW was paid extra for being on-site the previous year, which Ms. Winski surmised that they had been. Alternately, Mr. Cunningham asked if the same fee would have been charged for this year, when LOW was not on-site, which Ms. Winski noted that she believed that the County had not been required to pay such a fee with LOW's physical absence.

IT Director Darlene Hale approached the podium to explain that if LOW does come on-site, fees for their hourly service are taken out of a technical support account. Ms. Winski added that an additional fee would need to be paid to LOW this year to assist with repairing the tax error, and when Mr. Mollenhauer inquired as to what the total amount of fees would be to repair the error, Ms. Winski gave him a rough estimate of \$100,000 at minimum.

Mr. Stabosz noted Ms. Winski's efforts to prevent her namesake from being published regarding the error, as to deflect blame from herself, and explained that when he took office, he enacted measures to ensure that he was familiar with the duties required to oversee the County's tax assessment as the Auditor, however he was disadvantaged by Ms. Winski's poaching of two of his experienced tax employees, which resulted in a loss of institutional tax memory in his department. Mr. Stabosz added that he initially did not believe the superfluous rumors that had been circulating regarding the staff diversions of the Auditor's office, rumors which suggested that attempts to sabotage the Auditor were in play; however, Ms. Winski's accusations that the homestead tax error fell entirely on him were making him consider that said rumor could have some truth to it. He added that he had previously been informed that it was the duty of the Treasurer to send out tax bills, and continued that the Department

of Local Government Finance of the state of Indiana certified CNAVs that had been incorrect. He reached out to the DLGF to clarify as to why they did not notice that the homestead supplements were identical in 2021 and 2022, to which the DLGF explained that they only flag 10% variances in numbers, and that a 0% variance would go unnoticed by them. Mr. Stabosz took responsibility for his portion of the error's overlooking, however took exception to trying to find one particular entity to blame when multiple parties had allowed for the error to slip through the cracks.

Ms. Winski explained that the statutory deadline for tax payments was on May 10<sup>th</sup>, with fall taxes due on November 10<sup>th</sup>, dates that would not be changed even with the presence of the tax error. She noted that a late payment penalty could be avoided if the Auditor, Treasurer, and Council made a resolution to waive penalties, so taxpayers would not suffer these penalties, and advised making a resolution to waive them for spring taxes only. Ms. Winski advised scheduling a Special Meeting to ensure a resolution. Mr. Stabosz added that some taxpayers may have bills that are unchanged as a result of real estate tax caps, and informed the Council that he would reach out to the DLGF to confirm if those taxpayers would need to be remailed to at all. The averaged homesteader, he added, would only see an average change of \$32 on their taxes, and only those taxpayers with high increases in assessed values would be likely to see sharp differences in their tax bill.

Mr. Novak advised Mr. Stabosz and Ms. Winski to coordinate a date for the Special Meeting to forefront a resolution to deal with the need for penalty removals.

**Barb Huston, E-911 Director**

Mrs. Huston thanked the public and all of the County's departments for their observation of E-911 Appreciation Week.

**Monique Thomas, Interim Human Resources Director**

Mrs. Thomas announced that April 28<sup>th</sup> would be the grand opening of the Northshore Clinic for County employees that were insured under the County's insurance plan, with its first official day of business beginning on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

**LIAISON REPORTS**

**Councilman Garner:** Mr. Garner had no liaison report.

**Councilwoman Gramarossa:** Mrs. Gramarossa stated that she had checked in with all of her departments, whose operations were running smoothly.

**Councilman Mollenhauer:** Mr. Mollenhauer met with EMS Administrator Andrew McGuire regarding a topic that would be discussed later in the evening. He also attended the Health Board Meeting, and spoke with the EMA's Interim Director Rob Sabie regarding the status and relocation of a siren pole in Westville, with the project's completion to hopefully be fulfilled by the end of the week. Additionally, Mr. Mollenhauer coordinated with Justin Kiel on the topic of the LaCrosse downtown streetscape project, and he also attended a job evaluation committee, and attended the Community Corrections board meeting.

**Councilman Rosenbaum:** Mr. Rosenbaum waived reporting on his liaisons, however noted that he had been in contact with them.

**Councilman Cunningham:** Mr. Cunningham thanked Monique Thomas for her efforts in setting up and coordinating the La Porte County job fair.

**Councilman Yagelski:** Mr. Yagelski had no liaisons to report for the evening.

**Councilman Novak:** Mr. Novak stated that he had spoken to all of his liaison responsibilities accordingly.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Auditor Stabosz reported that there was no correspondence.

### **ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS**

#### **Resolution No. 2022-04B – Harrison Electric – Public Hearing**

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

No members of the public approached to speak, and the Public Hearing was promptly closed.

#### **Resolution No. 2022-04B – Harrison Electric – Confirmatory**

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

Mr. Rosenbaum offered high praise to Harrison Electric for their positive impact on the La Porte Community. Mr. Cunningham added that Harrison Electric, which was both a large-sized but still a local business, played an important role in the repair and upkeep of the Franklin Street Bridge. Mr. Yagelski also voiced his appreciation for Harrison Electric, and explained that their outreach to local schools and impressive employee retention rate were a reflection of their quality and standards.

- v. All members voted in favor.

**Ordinance No. 2022-04A – Ordinance modifying local income tax rates – Second Reading**

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

Mr. Cunningham gave credit to Mr. Yagelski for his recommendation to send the LIT increase proposal out to other local taxing units for review, and added that the votes received from the local units came back 56 to 4 in favor of the increase, with 2 of the opposed 4 noting that they were not entirely opposed to the increase in its entirety. Mr. Cunningham added that the LIT's consideration had not been rushed, which Mr. Novak confirmed and explained that 13 public meetings had been held in total regarding the topic of the LIT increase.

- v. Six members voted in favor (Mr. Novak, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mr. Garner) and one member voted not-in-favor (Mr. Yagelski).

Mr. Novak stated that he intended to create an ordinance to be brought forward the following month that would allot for the previously approved \$10,000 to be directed to each of La Porte County's volunteer fire departments, with the exception that the ordinance would allow for annual appropriations, and that the funds for such would be culled from the newly increased Public Safety LIT. Mr. Yagelski voiced his disapproval of the ordinance, and explained that with multiple Council seats up for reelection, the ordinance could be altered in the future, and additionally that multiple attorneys had advised against making such an ordinance. Mr. Novak rebuked that if future Councils wished to challenge the proposed ordinance, they had every right to do so.

Mr. Garner thanked Mayor Tom Dermody and the County's public safety employees for their patience. Mrs. Gramarossa expressed surprise that some public safety employees had been paid as little as \$13 an hour, a rate which she explained was lower than what some fast-food chains were offering to their employees.

**NEW BUSINESS**

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

**a. La Porte County Community Corrections – Collection Officer and Field Officer**

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

**b. La Porte County Maintenance – Housekeeper**

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

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

c. La Porte County Juvenile Services – Youth Specialist Worker

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

d. La Porte County Health Department – Nurse position

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**2. La Porte County Health department – requesting a current Nursing position be changed to a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) position.**

La Porte County Health Department Administrator Amanda Lahners approached the Council regarding the hiring of Certified Medical Assistant. She explained the difficulties in retaining a fully staffed team of nurses, citing that higher pay outside of the County's employment was the primary reason for the difficulty in staffing, and additionally opined that the County would likely never be able to compete with the pay offered by alternative nursing employers. She did note, however, that the addition of a CMA on the La Porte County Health Department would divert many of the duties that saturated the nurses' workloads, as CMAs were licensed to perform many of the tasks that nurses do, including but not limited to administering vaccines and drawing blood. With a CMA being present, she added, the current nurses could focus on addressing their case management tasks.

Mr. Novak inquired as to how long Ms. Lahners had been trying to fill an empty nursing position in the Health Department, which Ms. Lahners answered that the empty position had been vacant for more than a year, with yet another nurse recently putting in their notice of leave as well. Council Attorney Guy DiMartino voiced his support in hiring a CMA for the Health Department, and Mr. Novak added that he would be interested in adding another nursing position to the Health Department, in addition to hiring a CMA.

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

ii. All members voted in favor.



**3. La Porte County Sheriff – Consider policy change to County Employee Health Insurance for retirees that would make Sheriff Merit Deputies eligible for County health insurance if eligible for full retirement pension benefits at age 50, with 20 years of service.**

Chief Deputy of the La Porte County Sheriff's Office Ron Heeg approached the Council to shed light on a discrepancy regarding the gap between the County's officers' authorized terms for retirement, and their ability to retain County insurance after they retire. Mr. Heeg clarified that the County's current insurance policy stated that retirees who were serving the County before February 1<sup>st</sup> of 2005 would be permitted to keep their County insurance so as long as they served the County for 20 years and were a minimum of 55 years of age, with the requirement that they would need to pay one-third of the insurance premium that was offered by the County. Mr. Heeg continued that potential retirees who were hired after February 1<sup>st</sup> of 2005 would be permitted to retain their County insurance after 25 years of service and who were at least 60 years old, with the requirement to pay half of the insurance premium offered by the County. He clarified that once retirees were eligible to enroll in Medicare or Medicaid, they would be removed from the County's insurance. The issue at hand, Mr. Heeg explained, was that the Sheriff's Department did not have the same pension plan as the County, and the independently managed pension in the Sheriff's Department indicated that officers could retire at 50 years of age, so long as they served the County for 20 years, thus forcing officers to work for another 5-10 years if they wished to lock-in their County insurance as retirees. Mr. Heeg proposed lowering the officers' retirement age down to 50 or 52 years, and reassured the Council that the cost would be manageable, as only five officers were in the right age and serving time to be applicable to the change. He added that allowing seasoned officers to retire sooner, and their subsequent replacement with younger, lower-paid officers, would save the County money in the long-run. He clarified that if an officer who was hired before February 1<sup>st</sup> of 2005 opted for a \$1,000 deductible, the total premium paid between the County and the employee would come out to \$11,624, with the County's portion of the payment being \$9,880 annually. If the officer were retired however, that same premium would only cost the County \$7,788 annually, with retired officers who were hired after February 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 costing the County \$5,812 in insurance premiums annually. Mr. Novak confirmed with Mr. Heeg that if a retiree had a spouse with insurance, the retiree would be required to use their spouse's insurance, and would not be eligible to utilize County insurance, a statement which Mr. Heeg confirmed, and added that the County insurance would only cover the officer and their spouse – family insurance was not an option under La Porte County's insurance following retirement. Mr. Yagelski recommended lowering the proposed age to 53 or 55 to ensure that vacant positions caused by retiring officers could be duly filled by new officers. Mr. Rosenbaum asked Mr. Heeg if he was proposing altering the County's February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 cutoff date, which Mr. Heeg clarified that he did not intend to ask to change the cutoff date, and was only asking for the creation of an addendum to simply alter the amount of years an officer would need to serve before they would be eligible to retire with County insurance.

Sheriff John Boyd explained the need for officers to retire early, and noted that as officers aged, they could become a liability, and they needed to be replaced with younger officers to reduce that liability risk. He added that the relatively low salaries paid out by the Sheriff's Department often meant that, even though an officer could retire, they would often need to find new employment afterward, and as such, would be more likely to end up using another employer's insurance in lieu of the County's insurance, which would result in savings for the County.

- i. Motion made by Mr. Rosenbaum to adjust the policy, with the following changes: if the officer was hired before February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, they could retire at 52 so as long as 20 years of service to the County had been fulfilled, with said retiree to pay one-third of their insurance premiums.

Officers hired after February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 would also need to serve for 20 years and be 52 years of age to retire, however they would still need to pay half of their County insurance premiums; seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

#### **4. La Porte County MS4 Director – Possession to meet storm water permit compliance**

Mr. Novak explained that with the recent retiring of the previous MS4 Director, Rick Brown, the Commission hired Regina Korthals to assist with the recent change in MS4 permits enacted by the state of Indiana. Mrs. Korthals explained that the permit status of Indiana had previously been Permit By Rule, and that the new permit that had been established on December 18<sup>th</sup> of 2021 would require all regulated entities to revisit and resubmit new Notices of Intent. MS4 would then need to reevaluate their programs, a task which La Porte's MS4 was not compliant with. Mrs. Korthals warned of the dangers of being non-complaint to the state's new permit, noting that state-revolving loan funds and federal highway dollars could be severely impacted if the County did not abide by the new regulations. She added that La Porte's initiative in addressing the permit's changes would pose as a positive leadership maneuver to surrounding MS4 bodies. Mr. Novak clarified that the motion was for MS4's restructuring of their budget, which would subsequently be used to increase the pay for the currently vacant MS4 Director position, with a newly proposed salary of \$61,000, and that no additional appropriation would be needed from the Council to allot for the salary increase. Mr. Yagelski voiced concern that funding acquired from local municipalities, which were gathered to be used for MS4, had been inappropriately spent by the previous MS4 Director, and urged looking into where and how the funds had been spent. Mr. Novak clarified that Mrs. Korthals had been hired to address matters similar to those that Mr. Yagelski was describing, and explained that \$130,000 for MS4 was still available for use, and was currently located in the Participant's Account Fund. He added that additional funds for the Director position would be taken from MS4's non-reverting fund, which had roughly \$32,000-\$38,000 available, and that MS4 was not asking for additional appropriation at this time. Mr. Yagelski reiterated that he desired to know exactly what the previous MS4 Director had spend unauthorized funds on.

Mr. Novak noted that an ordinance for the Participant's Fund did not dictate that it could be spent on increasing Director pay, and as such, only funds from the non-reverting fund might be able to be utilized until the ordinance could be investigated further. Mrs. Korthals added that only MS4 could take responsibility for their compliance with their new permit, and that as a co-permit, the only actions the County could take in advising MS4 would be to enter into agreements with them or create memorandums of understanding with them; no ordinance could be created that would merge any of their respective government bodies.

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

Mrs. Gramarossa asked what the current salary was for the MS4 Director, which Mr. Rosenbaum stated was \$49,315. When Mrs. Gramarossa asked how the new salary had been calculated, Mrs. Korthals explained that she performed a comprehensive raise study, which was coordinated with the help of the Indiana MS4 Partnership. She added that salaries were identified from Elkhart, Tippecanoe, Porter, Lake, and Vanderburgh Counties which identified the average MS4 Director salary to be roughly \$58,000-\$91,000. Mrs. Gramarossa asked what salaries were being offered by neighboring counties, which Mrs. Korthals noted that she could only immediately recall Elkhart's rate of \$91,000, as other counties' salaries were difficult to

pinpoint – a result of many of the counties’ various department heads absorbing the duties of MS4 in addition to their own tasks instead of having a sole MS4 Director. Mrs. Gramarossa proposed tabling the item to allow for time to properly identify the MS4 Director salaries in neighboring counties. Mrs. Korthals advised caution on the proposal, and explained that the MS4 Annual Meeting would be on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and it was strongly advised that La Porte’s MS4 representative be present for it.

Mr. Rosenbaum asked Mrs. Korthals if the proposed \$61,000 salary was relative to the workload that was expected of the La Porte MS4 Director, which Mrs. Korthals confirmed that it was, and additionally added that the increased salary would help attract qualified candidates to the position. Mr. Mollenhauer inquired as to what the required education for the position was, which Interim Human Resources Director Monique Thomas explained that the position required the following: a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Science, Water Quality or a similar field, previous experience preferred, knowledge of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management Guidelines being needed, and twelve continued education hours with Stormwater Education credits. Mrs. Korthals emphasized the need to secure a qualified applicant for the Director position to ensure that the County would continue to receive its various state funding through MS4’s management practices. Mr. Yagelski agreed with Mrs. Gramarossa’s proposition to investigate the surrounding counties’ MS4 salaries, and felt that \$61,000 would be too high of a salary for a potentially inexperienced candidate.

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

**5. Justin Kiel – Town of LaCrosse Downtown Streetscape project. Requesting favorable vote – not-to-exceed \$175,000.**

Mr. Kiel, President of the LaCrosse Town Council, explained to the Council that the town of LaCrosse would be utilizing ARP funds, INDOT funds and their grant funds, with the requested \$175,000 appropriation from the Council to begin a revitalization project in downtown LaCrosse. Mr. Cunningham asked if the Council could direct ARP funds to the project, which Mr. DiMartino said could be done once the second installment of ARP funds was received the following month. Mr. Cunningham clarified that the vote being taken would be a motion of support, and that the funds could be encumbered at a later date when the County had received its second installment.

i. Motion of support made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**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 March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022)

i. Motion to un-table made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Prosecutor John Lake approached the Council to explain that he needed authorization to spend from his infraction deferral account to be able to offset the funds that would be needed to pay the roughly \$900 employer portion of the grant, as to prevent shorting the bonus funds that his employees would be receiving. Mr. DiMartino clarified to the Council that the goal of the grant was to offset the bonuses that the County granted earlier in the year, and in doing so, they would need to take all of their bonus money before the June deadline, which would result in Mr. Lake being short of grant money to pay the employer portion of the contribution, and using the monies from the infraction deferral fund would make up for any of these shortfalls.

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

2. La Porte County Treasurer – Brown Mackie expenses: Front Entry \$6,500, Utilities of \$19,273.04, Water of \$550, and January 2022 expenses \$1,886.46. (Tabled from March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022)

Mr. Novak clarified that the item was still being looked into, and would not be addressed during the evening’s meeting.

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

#### **La Porte County Planning**

Requesting Additional Appropriations from Cumulative Bridge (1135) for:

Bridge 166 replacement	\$73,000
Bridge 94 replacement	\$75,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

#### **La Porte County Parks Department**

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

Design work for bioswale/rain garden at Bluhm County Park	\$3,000
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i. Motion to approve out of ARP (8950/8951) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

#### **La Porte County Maintenance**

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

Security wall in Surveyor’s office	\$18,985
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Director of Facilities Larry Levendowski explained that the appropriations would be used to create a glass barrier at the counter of the surveyor’s office, and additionally, a three-foot glass door was to be

installed, complete with FOB readers, which could only be completed by removing a portion of the counter at the entryway. The door, he explained, was necessary to keep members of the public from going behind the counter into the surveyors' workspace.

Mr. Yagelski asked why the Surveyor was asking for barriers and doors now when the County had provided them during the beginning of the pandemic. He asked why a glass door would be necessary when it was a costlier option, which Mr. Levendowski clarified that it would allow for the installation of a FOB reader, and would coordinate with the glass door that was already in place at the entrance of the office. Mrs. Gramarossa inquired if there was another door that led into the office, which Mr. Levendowski confirmed that an additional door was located toward the back of the office that employees could access as well. Mr. Mollenhauer asked if the cost for the project was comparable to other, similar projects that Mr. Levendowski had done in other departments, which Mr. Levendowski confirmed that it was almost entirely similar in cost.

Mr. Yagelski noted that the projects for other departments, which were similar in nature, were only approved as a result of the Covid pandemic, and that the Surveyor's request was too late to apply to those previous terms, and was not a necessity at this time. Mr. Cunningham asked if a swinging door could be installed instead, which Mr. Levendowski explained would be a difficult project to complete, given the presence of a large window-wall in that area that complicated a swinging door's construction. Mr. Cunningham asked if the Surveyor's office has a high rate of cash exchanges, to which Mr. Levendowski was unsure.

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

#### **La Porte County Adult Probation**

Requesting permission to spend from Probation Users Fees (2102) for:

- |                                       |                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Furniture for Superior Court No. 4 | \$9,627.73            |
| 2. Three new printers                 | (not to exceed) \$600 |

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

Mr. Yagelski voiced his disdain that Adult Probation had not yet fulfilled the promise that was made to the Council regarding the provision of furnishings for the Michigan City Courthouse. Mr. Novak informed Mr. Yagelski that Judge Friedman and Mr. Eyrick had in fact reached out to the Council to inform them that they would fulfill the promise, however they needed an invoice or list of purchasable items to do so, as they could not simply redirect funds from one account to another without an invoice.

Attorney DiMartino added that the funds being utilized in the appropriation were Adult Probation's own, budgeted funds, and that they could utilize the monies on the furniture as desired.

After Mr. Yagelski expressed his concern over the lack of the fulfillment of the promise once more, Mr. Novak reiterated that Mr. Eyrick and Judge Friedman requested an invoice so they could implement the request, and noted that the Council would procure an invoice to ensure that the promise was concluded.

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

**La Porte County Human Resources**

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

- 1. Replace damaged pedestal (with labor) \$323
  - i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
  - ii. All members voted in favor.
- 2. External market salary study \$19,680
- 3. Expense reimbursement for the study
  - a. Principal \$145
  - b. Sr. Consultant \$95
  - c. Consultant \$45

Mr. Cunningham voiced concern over the invoice from Waggoner, Irwin & Scheele’s proposed salary study, citing particular worries about the expense reimbursements, such as gas mileage compensation, lodging, postage & printing and per diem fees, all of which were variable fees that would rack up over a period of 4-5 months while the study was being performed, and whose ambiguity could potentially heavily increase the cost of the study much higher than what Waggoner, Irwin & Scheele was initially forecasting.

- i. Motion to table items 2 and 3 made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County EMS**

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

- 1. Camera system and FOBs at EMS bases and office (not-to-exceed) \$70,000
- 2. Digital Narcotic locking/tracking system (not-to-exceed) \$20,000

- i. Motion to approve both items out of Riverboat made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Commissioners**

Requesting Additional Appropriation from General (1000) for:

- Part-time pay \$7,904

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Auditor**

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

Compensation pay for two employees \$2,642.11

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County E-911**

Requesting Additional Appropriations from E-911 Surcharge (1222) for:

Total Response \$104,592

Caliber \$7,912

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**COVID Committee**

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

Health Department's COVID vaccine clinic and COVID testing \$60,000

i. Motion to approve out of General (1000) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.

ii. All members voted in favor.

**La Porte County Engineer**

Requesting permission to spend from MVH Restricted (1193) for:

1. On-call agreement for Community Crossing Project \$30,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

2. Requesting to spend from Major Bridge (1171) for:

On-call agreement for Franklin Street Bridge \$50,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

**COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS**

Mr. Yagelski noted that he reached out to Treasurer Winski regarding the furnishing of the Michigan City Courthouse, and that she stated that she would coordinate with Mr. Eyrick to ensure that Mr. Novak and Mr. Cunningham would be reached out to so as to secure an invoice and fulfill their promise. He urged once more for the investigation of the potential wasteful spending from MS4's previous Director.

Mr. Mollenhauer wanted to remind La Porte County residents that voting day would be coming up on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and that early voting could be done at the La Porte County Annex, Michigan City's 8<sup>th</sup> St. Early Voting Center, the old library located at 400 N. on Johnson Rd., Wanatah's town hall, and at the La Porte County mobile voting unit, a schedule for which was located on the La Porte County website.

Mr. Cunningham wanted to clarify that, regarding the Public Safety LIT, the 56 to 4 approval was distributed and approved almost equally across the board from Republican and Democratic officials, with a few Independent officials approving it as well. He thanked the Council for its support in passing the LIT, and stated that he believed the increase would raise quality of life in the County for decades to come.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

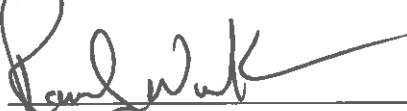
**Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 23rd day of May 2022.**

  
Councilman Earl Cunningham

  
Councilman Terry Garner

  
Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa

  
Councilman Mike Mollenhauer

  
Councilman Randy Novak

  
Councilman Mike Rosenbaum

  
Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST:   
Timothy Stabosz, Auditor