

MINUTES
LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
April 11th, 2022 at 5:00PM

A Special Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on April 11th, 2022 at 5:00pm (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex located at 809 State Street, La Porte, Indiana, 46350.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5pm by the Council President, Randy Novak.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Novak, followed by a moment of silence for the recently deceased Oatess Archey, Indiana's first African American Sheriff.

ROLL CALL

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

APPROVAL OF THE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Mr. Novak noted that the approval of the agenda was not present on the meeting's agenda, and needed to be incorporated.

- i. Motion to insert the Approval of the Agenda made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. Motion to approve the agenda made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mrs. Gramarossa.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Steve Holifield - 6782 E 100 S, Mill Creek

Mr. Holifield explained that although he was not opposed to giving raises to La Porte's public safety employees, he did not agree with the Council's proposed method of funding the raises. He pointed out that many of La Porte's residents were already living in poverty, and increasing the LIT would further indebt these already impoverished citizens, who were currently also dealing with increases in inflation.

Mr. Holifield instead proposed that the County coordinate a round-table discussion with La Porte County's Mayors, Chiefs of Police and Fire, EMTs, Council members, members of the public, and Commissioners. He clarified his concern that the Council would continue to press for more resources and questioned what the Council's back-up plan would be if other nearby counties also increased their taxes and continued to poach La Porte's public safety employees.

Rodney McCormick – 617 Union St., Michigan City

Mr. McCormick announced that he was not in favor of the proposed plan to raise the LIT. He added that he believed that first responders were certainly entitled to raises, however the Council's proposed method of doing so was not optimal. He mentioned considering raises for other overlooked departments, such as the Street, Refuse, and Parks Departments, and pressed that if raises were being offered, they should be offered for all County employees. Mr. McCormick urged the Council to take their time in pushing through any changes to the LIT, and to not be hasty in making any decisions. In his final statements, Mr. McCormick added that he believed the County was losing large amounts of funding to the County Attorney, and pressed the Council to take their time in considering any changes to the LIT.

Matthew Drangmeister – La Porte FOP Lodge #54 President

Mr. Drangmeister noted the difficulty in acquiring police staff and the frustrations of retaining them when surrounding counties offered greater pay. He explained that if the understaffing persists, officers would need to delegate and approach emergency calls based on severity, which could lead to waiting calls escalating before officers could arrive and resolve them.

Ron Schafer - 1566 E. Glacier Bend, La Porte

Mr. Schafer questioned why the underpayment of La Porte's first responders was permitted to happen as long as it had been, and reiterated that surrounding counties were offering greater pay for them and poaching them as a result. He continued that raising the LIT would generate \$6.7 million for the County, however only a sum of \$2 million was required to bring La Porte's first responder salaries up to competition with surrounding counties, and inquired as to where the remaining amount of funds would be directed once the need for salary increases were fulfilled, and recommended that the Council develop a plan first before approving the proposal. He additionally recommended pursuing a salary study and efficiency study before approving the tax increase.

James Marseille - 6764 W 700 S, Union Mills

Mr. Marseille explained the breakdown of the distribution of the proposed LIT increase, and noted that the total, roughly \$13 million, would bring \$6.7 million to La Porte County, \$3.7 million to Michigan City, \$1.8 million to the City of La Porte, and the remaining funds would be distributed to smaller local towns. He added that he did not approve of the expedited nature of the proposed increase, and the large amount of funding that would be gleaned from it. Mr. Marseille recommended utilizing ARP funding to cushion spending while long-term solutions could be researched to find the funding needed for first responder pay increases. He added that the Council should look into a long-term forecast to appropriately plan the spending of the funding. He alleged that Porter County, with 174,000 residents, compared to La Porte's 112,000 residents, would comparably make La Porte's income tax roughly 190% higher by population in contrast to Porter County's current income tax rate. He recommended opting for a lower tax rate to ensure future growth of La Porte County. He asked the Council for greater transparency in their decision making processes.

Scott Wilson - 601 F St., La Porte

Mr. Wilson, a La Porte City Firefighter Captain, explained that the LIT increase had been proposed ten years prior by Mayor Chroback, and as such, the Council's current proposition was not in fact expedited or rushed as other public commenters had mentioned, and added that the state of Indiana hastened LIT increases by cutting property taxes. He continued, stating that the LIT proposal was not just about giving first responders raises, but was ensuring that they were properly funded for equipment as well.

Michael McCrone - 5523 E Saugony Tr., Rolling Prairie

Mr. McCrone voiced his concerns about veteran first responder employees leaving La Porte County's employment to pursue better pay elsewhere. He bolstered Mr. Wilson's statement on acquiring funding to offer better pay for La Porte County's first responders.

Joe Haney, La Porte County Commissioner

Mr. Haney pressed for the clarification and documentation of where the LIT funding would be utilized, and highlighted the passing of Ft. Wayne's tax increases, noting specifically that only one-third of the acquired funds from their tax increases were actually being spent appropriately on public safety, with the remaining two-thirds being spent at said county's disposal. Mr. Haney pressed for itemized documentation of the LIT's spending. He continued that Porter County, with a .5% LIT, had roughly three times the number of active ambulances on the road per person in contrast to La Porte's .95% LIT, and urged that La Porte did not have enough ambulances on the road as a result. Mr. Haney pressed that saturated call numbers were not the only issue at hand, and that first responders' arriving to the scene of an emergency in a timely fashion was imperative. In his concluding statement, Mr. Haney advised waiting for the outcome of the Commission's recently approved salary study to come through before approving any changes to the LIT, to allow for more accurate forecasting of the proposal's expenditures.

John Boyd, La Porte County Sheriff

Mr. Boyd explained the duties of the Sheriff, and noted that one of the Sheriff's jurisdictions, the County Jail, was aging and in need of being rebuilt. He explained that the most recent renovations had been made in 2002, and the cost of a new building - not a renovation - would cost roughly \$190,000 per inmate bed to construct. He recommended that a building with 400 beds be constructed, with costs for its construction estimated to be about \$76 million just for the building alone. He continued that the surrounding counties' benefits and pay were greater, and as a result, the Sheriff's Department was short-staffed by three employees. He explained that 18 candidates had initially applied for the open positions, with 14 arriving for testing, 1 applicant being cut following testing, and only 5 candidates being qualified for the position in the end, thus severely limiting the application pool to choose an employee from. Mr. Boyd added that as a result of lack of funding, families in the community had needed to assist in funding the Sheriff's Department, which resulted in the donation of a fitness center for the Sheriff's Department, as well as the donation of an ambulance to the County. He explained that in the previous year, he had to approach the Council for additional appropriations in the total of \$2.9 million as a result of the Sheriff's budget being cut.

Mr. Boyd explained that the International Chief of Police had initially recommended staffing 2.6 police officers for every 1000 residents and, as it stood, La Porte County only staffed 66 officers when they should be staffing over 80, and added that calls for service had increased 31% over the last ten years, with forecasts for increased calls in the future. Mr. Cunningham asked if there was a year in which Mr. Boyd had not needed to approach the Council for additional appropriations, which Mr. Boyd confirmed that there had not been a year where he did not need to approach the Council for such requests.

Bert Cook, Executive Director of LEAP

Mr. Cook opened his statement by noting that he represented 500 businesses in the greater La Porte area and urged the focus of public safety as a means to attract new businesses and residents to the County. The LIT increase, he explained, would create a long-term and reliable solution for public safety funding in place of non-sustainable, short-term solutions which would not be able to assist the County as well over a long period of time. He noted that 71 of the 92 counties in the state of Indiana had already adopted LIT increases, and that La Porte should as well.

Paul Brettin, La Porte City Police Chief

Mr. Brettin explained to the Council that the City of La Porte budgeted for 44 police officers, however only currently employed 37 as a result of staffing shortages. As a result of these shortages, he continued, emergency calls regarding traffic safety and drug concerns often could not be prioritized. He pressed for an increase in police staff, requesting up to 57 officers to ensure that the City's needs were met, and the proposed LIT increase would allot for the funding of this staff increase.

Spencer England - 516 E St., La Porte

Mr. England voiced his concern about the County of La Porte taking on the same qualities as other neighboring counties with higher LIT. He requested that the Council take its time with their decision regarding the proposed LIT increase, as the deadline for the decision would be due in October of 2022. He urged the Council to explore other options for funding, and alleged that the shortage of public safety staff was not based on funding issues alone.

Marty Corley, Michigan City Police Department

Mr. Corley explained that Michigan City budgeted for 83 officers, however currently only had 73 in its employ. He continued that when he was first hired on in 2000, Michigan City had staffed 93 officers. Mr. Corley voiced his approval of the LIT increase, so Michigan City police officers could be prepared for any emergencies to come, and noted that increased needs for technology in the police force also needed to be budgeted for.

Robert Metcalf, La Porte City Police Department

Mr. Metcalf stated that in 2011, the La Porte City Police Department had not issued raises in over 9 years, and despite receiving sporadic raises following the election of Mayor Blair Milo, the department was still struggling to catch up to the salaries of neighboring counties. He continued that 50% of the Police Department's experience had been lost when senior officers took up employment in better paying surrounding counties, and that 70% of the department had less than 5 year's worth of experience.

Andy Snyder, La Porte City Fire Chief

Mr. Snyder noted that the plight of public safety was not a wage issue alone, and that the cost of equipment and vehicles needed to be allotted for in the budget as well. He added that the LIT was a sustainable tax, and would offer more predictable and secure funding for the La Porte Fire Department, a security which sporadic grants could not offer.

Jerry Cooley - 1777 W 1000 N, La Porte

Mr. Cooley noted frustration that the LIT would only glean funding from employed La Porte citizens, and that funding would not be able to be retrieved from cash-paid employees or businesses that were working on an under-the-table basis. He cited his activity with the Springfield Township Volunteer Fire Department, and added that his team of 15 volunteer firefighters addressed 800 calls in the last year

alone, and that they too were experiencing staffing shortages. Mr. Cooley pressed the Council to look into other taxation methods that would glean funding from all citizens, not just those who were employed.

Mike Lappelt, La Porte City Police Department

Mr. Lappelt advised that the understaffing of the County's Sheriff and the cities' police departments were unsafe for citizens and first responders alike. He advised that the LIT increase would benefit all La Porte County residents.

Tom Dermody, Mayor of the City of La Porte

Mr. Dermody extolled what he referred to as the City of La Porte's first honestly balanced budget since 2015, and cited its success as a means to extinguish concerns that the City of La Porte was overspending taxpayer dollars. He emphasized the actions taken to cut \$700,000 from the City's General Fund budget, and took exception to the County Council's methods in executing their efficiency studies, noting that he had done his own studies "in house." In ten years, he continued, \$320 million could be acquired from the LIT if its increases were approved; however, \$320 million was roughly the same amount of funding that the County had lost from its budget at a result of the property tax caps. He explained that the amount of funding lost to property tax relief was equivalent to roughly 25% of La Porte City's budget, and 37% from Michigan City's budget, and urged that County and City functions couldn't simply stop to save money to allow for budget savings. Mr. Dermody explained that 71 of the 92 counties in the state of Indiana had already been utilizing LIT increases to fund their public safety needs, and added that funds would also be distributed to township public safety works as well, with townships reserving the right to approach the Council annually to request additional LIT funds if needed. He disputed that, although Porter County reserved a .50% LIT rate, they also received funding from Memorial Hospital, specifically from the interest gleaned from the \$188 million proceeds from the hospital's sale. This interest, at roughly \$3 million to \$5 million annually, was used to bolster funding for Porter County's public safety projects. Mr. Dermody explained to the Council that numbers for violent crimes and drug overdoses in La Porte County were on the rise, and urged the approval of the increase of LIT funding as a means to supply the County's first responders with funding to tackle said crime in a head-on fashion.

Randy Veatch - 4177 W Schultz Rd., La Porte

Mr. Veatch questioned the Council as to where previously acquired County funding had gone, and inquired if an investigation would be done to track the County's past spending. Mr. Cunningham reiterated Mayor Dermody's statements that property tax relief had stunted the amount of funding that the County was able to procure, and additionally the \$12 million that would be received from the LIT increase would only cover about 40% of the funding that was lost to property tax caps, and emphasized that the County operations could not function at the same level if funding were directly diverted from them. Mr. Veatch asked what the plan was for the spending of the funds that would be received from the LIT increases, which Mr. Rosenbaum explained that the funding would be spent on the following: law enforcement, preservation of peace and order, firefighting and fire prevention systems, emergency ambulances and medical services, the Probation Department of the courts, community corrections systems, medical and health costs for jailed inmates and other confined persons, pension payments, fire and police departments, the Police Chief and County Sheriff, law enforcement training. Mr. Veatch endorsed researching potentially wasteful County expenditures.

Duane Parry, Mayor of Michigan City

Mr. Parry explained that taxes were a necessity for quality-of-life improvements and law & order in the County. He added that Michigan City was losing over \$9 million in funding annually as a result of

property tax caps, which was over 10% of Michigan City's \$5.8 million budget. Mr. Parry continued that crime from surrounding, larger cities was stressing local law enforcement and was also increasing budgeted costs to combat them, and noted that during today's loop, three violent crimes had taken place in Michigan City, and that he believed that traditional American values were dying. Increasing the LIT, he advocated, would be an immediate resolution to preserve public safety.

Bob Geralt - 3001 S US 35, La Porte

Mr. Geralt noted that even though the tax increase would be a small price to pay on an individual level, he was fearful of the County potentially wasting funding, and advised wariness about neighboring counties raising their taxes as a result and continuing to poach La Porte County's first responders. He urged the Council to not make any rash decisions, and go into the proposition of the LIT increase with a definitive plan.

Tim Stabosz, La Porte County Auditor

Mr. Stabosz explained that while there was nothing wrong with a need for salary increases to lock in public safety employees, a prior salary study indicated a need for only \$1.75 million to \$2.5 million in funding as to bring all County employee salaries up to speed with neighboring counties, and questioned why a surplus of \$6.7 million would be needed as a result of the proposed .5% LIT increase. Mr. Stabosz added that the property tax caps in La Porte were a "sunk cost" and that, therefore, they have been reconciled to over time. He gave credit to Mr. Dermody for addressing the underpaying of public safety employees, however added that the Waggoner, Irwin & Sheele salary study from 2016 indicated that classifications other than public safety were even more direly in need for salary increases, citing that the Highway Department and COMOT 3 and 4 Clerks were particularly in need of pay raises. Mr. Stabosz urged the Council to measure the exact need and appropriateness of raising the LIT before considering approving it.

Mr. Stabosz continued that he felt the Council's methods of approaching the LIT proposition were incorrect, and that the influence of the La Porte City Mayor had been unduly swaying the proposition's consideration. He emphasized the need that the Council use independent obligation to evaluate the issue on its merit for all of La Porte County's taxpayers, and feared the precedent it would set if it were approved without full and unbiased analyzation. He voiced his concerns as to harvesting more tax funding than required to meet the needs of public safety. Mr. Stabosz then stated that secondary units of local government would be receiving less than 5% of the funds collected from the increased LIT, with the County to receive over half of the funding at approximately \$6.7 million. He recommended that the Council thusly utilize its own financial advisor to offer an independent evaluation of the proposition, along with efficiency and salary studies to see where savings could be obtained, and urged looking into different forms of LIT taxation. He advised the Council to take its time on its decision regarding the consideration of increasing the LIT, analyzing it more carefully and systematically.

Paul Przybylinski, Michigan City City Council Member

Mr. Przybylinski praised the methods of utilizing Riverboat funding used by Michigan City to pay their police and fire departments. He explained that the Michigan City Police Department had also experienced issues with police staff leaving the City's employment after several years to work in other counties and noted the creation of a task force which would meet with Michigan City residents to address their concerns. He urged the looking into Michigan City's crime rates by district, and redistributing the districts in relation to rates of crime as an attempt to try and address the issue. Citing his own experience with crime in Michigan City, he noted having to wait for two hours before law

enforcement responded to an event in which he was a victim of car theft. Mr. Przblynski urged the Council to secure a plan for distributing the LIT funds before deciding on whether or not to raise them.

Jeff Santana, former La Porte County Council Member

Mr. Santana pressed the Council to wait for the findings from the Commission's salary study before moving on the approval of the proposed LIT increase. He opined that quality first responders had a desire to serve their counties and did not just do their job for the money, and noted that he did not agree with using increased LIT to raise first responder salaries. Mr. Santana expressed concern that the funding for the proposed EMS and Highway building in Rolling Prairie was placed on the agenda and advertised under LIT when previous discussion indicated that the building's funding would be taken out of ARP. In his final statement, Mr. Santana urged the FMEC's swift completion of the repairs to the fairgrounds grandstands.

Brian Crook – 1406 1st St., La Porte

Mr. Crook stated that additional taxes, such as the Wheel Tax and maintenance taxes for the La Porte City water, were already in place to help collect funding for the County, and voiced his disdain for the proposed increase in the LIT in the face of increased costs of living in La Porte County.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.

SPECIAL MEETING BUSINESS

1. Notice to Taxpayers – Hearing on proposed Public Safety Local Income Tax, Ordinance #2022-04A

PUBLIC HEARING OPEN

Mark Guzek - 1102 W 450 N

Mr. Guzek proposed attracting larger industries in an effort to bring additional revenue to La Porte County, and to increase the area's tax base.

Steve Holifield - 6782 E 100 S, Mill Creek

Regarding the comments of Mr. Guzek, Mr. Holifield noted that the La Porte County Commission had recently denied the building of a 308 home subdivision, which would have increased the County's tax base. He advised the Council to extend eastward to explore options for industrial expansion, and to attract businesses into La Porte County.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

- i. Motion to read Ordinance #2022-04A by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. The Auditor read the ordinance by title only.

Council Attorney Guy DiMartino advised that the Auditor read aloud the changes to the tax that were being proposed.

iv. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the ordinance: "Be it ordained by the La Porte County Council that a need now exists to modify the local income tax rates, imposed in the following way: the different allocation rate categories, certified shares, the existing LIT rate is .50%, the proposed LIT rate is .50%". Public Safety, the existing LIT rate is 0%, the proposed LIT rate is .50%. Economic Development, current existing rate .45%, proposed LIT rate .45%. Existing Property Tax Relief Rate is 0%, proposed rate is 0%. Special Purpose Rate existing is 0% and proposed is 0%. Correction and Rehabilitations existing is 0% and proposed is 0%."

Mr. Yagelski noted that although he was not against the proposed LIT increase, he was not in full agreement with the Council's current approach to it, citing that ARP funds were still available to be used, in addition to other funds that were likely going to be offered to the County from various state entities. He noted that the County had functioned for nine years before needing to consider a LIT increase, including managing through a recession and pandemic, and additionally noted concerns that another recession was likely going to occur. Mr. Yagelski continued that US consumer prices had risen by 7.9%, and cited a study indicating 54% of Americans had trouble paying some bills, while 20% of Americans described having difficulty covering all of their expenses, and added that the cost of living was proportionately at its highest since 1982. Mr. Yagelski recapped that 12 years prior, the La Porte Mayor had approached the Council regarding a LIT increase; however the Mayor's unwillingness to entertain budget cuts precluded the Council's supporting such an increase. Accordingly, Mr. Yagelski praised Mr. Dermody for finding ways to cut costs to his budget before proposing the LIT increase. Nevertheless, he urged the use of current funding for County functions, and proposed revisiting the LIT increase in a few months to allot for more time to research the County's options.

Mr. Rosenbaum noted that even though he had been pushing for an efficiency study, the Commissioners were the only ones able to sign a contract for one, and urged the Commissioners to hear out the multiple public commenters who were requesting one be done. He added that the County spent \$3.7 million alone in the previous year for items that could have been taken out of LIT instead, some of which were unforeseeable and unable to be forecasted for. Additional allotments, such as the purchasing of first responder vehicles, often required variable funding from year to year to ensure they were safe and up-to-date, with only \$309,000 being spent out of the County's General Fund in the last year. He added that with the new ambulance base in Rolling Prairie, full staffing and vehicles would need to be provided for, which LIT would assist in funding. He added that unexpected costs, such as replacing of the integrated security system and elevator repairs, were unforeseeable but necessary expenses. Funds from Riverboat were being lost annually, which, in and of itself, was not a long-term source of County funding, and advised against following the County Commission financial advisor's recommendation to borrow temporarily from other County funds. Mr. Rosenbaum continued that an alleged \$8.8 million coming into the County was a temporary source of income, and should only be reserved for major improvements. He explained that all of the County's spending is of public record and documented online via recorded meetings and meeting minutes. Mr. Rosenbaum added that the fairgrounds, which had been neglected for years, were now under jurisdiction of the FMEC, with the intention to maintain and improve its ground to allow for the generation of additional revenue through the various events at the property, allowing for the funding of Pioneer Land, the annual County Fair, and to provide rentals for private events. He reiterated the importance of funding County projects with long-term sources of County income, not short-term ones. Citing Sheriff John Boyd's statement about the County needing a new jail facility, and the need for \$16 million in repairs for the La Porte County Courthouse, Mr.

Rosenbaum noted the Council's propensity to wait until items and facilities were broken down before deciding to invest funding for their repair, and how having a long-term and stable source of funding such as the LIT could help the County get ahead of these issues. He urged the Council to be proactive in making repairs needed throughout the County, although praised the Council for their swift action in the approval of safety-related repairs that benefited County employees and citizens alike. Mr. Rosenbaum informed the room that the Council had been having public discussions regarding the consideration of the Public Safety LIT for months, and had been transparent in doing so. He took a moment to praise the County's grant writers for acquiring funds that could be used for major improvements within the County, but added that the County often had to match these grants, and needed to plan ahead for when the grants' payments were needed in the future. He added that the Council was constantly reviewing grants and funding, and offered full lucidity in that all County spending was a matter of public record.

Mrs. Gramarossa affirmed that the need for a new jail had been made known in 2018, and federal regulation and code would make the structure very expensive to build. She urged the Council to consider planning for the jail's construction, as the \$6.7 million that the LIT increase would annually bring into the County would not allot for the jail's timely construction in under ten years. She addressed the cumulative nature of Mr. Boyd's yearly requests for additional appropriations from the Council, and pressed the need to address the issue. Mrs. Gramarossa urged that the funds for first responders be made present, and added that if the public requested to see an action plan, that the Council would create one; however the need for additional public safety funding was staunch. She explained that the Council had reached out to ten town boards in the area in regards to reviewing the proposed LIT increase, and asked the boards if they felt they needed an increased LIT, and how they would spend it if it were approved. The findings, she noted, concluded with nine of the ten boards unanimously approving of the Council's proposed ordinance. Mrs. Gramarossa pressed the importance of the Council's decision-making skills to ensure the County's needs were well met, as best applicable, for the citizens of La Porte County.

Mr. Cunningham informed the room that all of the funding gleaned from the LIT increases would go to County agencies that are 24/7 services. He added that inflation created further pressure on the jail budget, and explained that with roughly 900 meals a day, food costs for the Sheriff's Department would continue to rise along with inflation. Mr. Cunningham explained that, since taking a seat on the Council, there had never been a budget that carried the Council through the calendar year by itself. Riverboat spending, he explained, came out to \$3,426,000 average annually in addition to the LIT over the previous ten years. In 2021, however, Riverboat & LIT spending came out at \$2,715,000. Mr. Cunningham explained that although there were requests for an exact plan as to how the LIT would be utilized in the long-term, the current Council might be different, as four seats would be up for reelection in November, which in turn would stunt much of the foresight required to forecast the LIT's spending with perfect accuracy.

Mr. Mollenhauer cited his confidence in the Council's strict review of the proposed LIT increase, and voiced his approval of the ordinance. He explained that during his years as Sheriff, he witnessed firsthand the decline of applications for law enforcement, and stressed the importance of having well trained and dedicated first-responder staff. He added that while it was important that equipment be provided for and improved in addition to bolstering pay, from 2007 to 2014, he said the Sheriff's Department staff only received one pay raise, and new wage increases would ensure the capture of quality employees, and could potentially liberate General Fund monies to potentially be used for County employee raises across the board. Mr. Mollenhauer assured the public that no funds from the LIT increase would go to waste, and Mrs. Gramarossa added that the State Board of Accounts would be

monitoring the application of the LIT funds, which would ensure that the funding would only be used on public safety applications as intended.

Mr. Garner voiced his support for the EMS and Fire Departments, and indicated that approving the proposed LIT increase would be the way to ensure that this support was recognized and fulfilled.

Mr. Novak pressed for more law enforcement to be present within the County, and emphasized that La Porte County, geographically, was the second largest county in the state of Indiana. He emphasized Mr. Dermody's shock of La Porte's EMS Department being the sole provider of ambulance service in the County, and noted that Porter County had multiple agencies funding their EMS service, including an estimated \$5 million acquired annually from a trust fund built off of the sale of one their hospitals. He added that the proposed salary study was not directed to the Sheriff's Department or EMS, only every County department outside of them and as such was not valid to the evening's discussion. Mr. Novak additionally noted that with the tax not being applied until the following year, the Council would have ample time to plan for the funds' execution. He corrected Mrs. Gramarossa's earlier statement regarding reaching out to ten town boards, and clarified that eleven boards had been reached out to regarding the ordinance, and as such, the Council had officially had twelve public hearings regarding the discussion of the proposed LIT increase within the past two months, assuring the Council's transparency on the topic. Mr. Novak added that the building and staffing of the Rolling Prairie EMS base would create a continuous cost each year, which temporary funding like ARP could not be relied upon to fund.

Citing his experience as a tax professional, Mr. Rosenbaum added that states without an income tax, such as Texas, Tennessee, and Florida, heavily relied on real property and personal property taxes, which targeted businesses, individual persons, and families alike. Additionally, he noted, these states compensated for a lack of local income tax by imposing high sales taxes, which impacted low-income persons.

- i. Motion to approve and add to the agenda of the next County Council meeting made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. Mr. Novak prompted Auditor Stabosz to take the vote via roll call.
- iii. Six members voted in favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mrs. Gramarossa, Mr. Novak, Mr. Garner, Mr. Rosenbaum), and one member voted not-in-favor (Mr. Yagelski).

2. Notice to Taxpayers – Hearing on proposed Acquisition of Real Property, Resolution #2022-04A, for Michigan City EMS

PUBLIC COMMENT OPENED AND IMMEDIATELY CLOSED, AS THERE WERE NO PUBLIC SPEAKERS.

- i. Motion to read Resolution #2022-04A by title only made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in favor.
- iii. The Auditor read aloud the Resolution by title only.

iv. Motion to adopt Resolution #2022-04A made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

Mr. Rosenbaum commented that with the increase of EMS calls in Michigan City, the prospect of purchasing the real property next to the EMS base would be a wise use of LIT funding to accommodate the future expansion of EMS operations.

v. All members voted in favor.

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, AND REQUESTS

La Porte County Sheriff

Requesting permission to spend \$31,000 from Misdemeanant Fund 1175.00000.000.0155 for:
Purchase of a van (not to exceed) \$31,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Building Maintenance

Requesting Additional Appropriation from LIT (1112) for:
Rolling Prairie EMS/Highway garage project (not to exceed) \$2,306,691.62

Mrs. Gramarossa clarified that the appropriation was for the building's construction only, and did not include costs to staffing. Mr. Novak added that the funds were coming out of the Economic Development LIT.

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Building Maintenance

Requesting Additional Appropriation from LIT (1112), Riverboat (1191), ARP (8950/8951) or Emergency Reserve (1186) for:
Emergency Repair of Grandstand seating at the Fairgrounds (not to exceed) \$600,000

Mrs. Gramarossa commented that no structural or engineering inspection had been performed on the grandstands, only a visual inspection, and urged that the project should have gone out for bid before its approval. Mr. Novak contested that the grandstands were barred from use until their repair, as dictated by the FMEC Attorney and insurance carrier, which is what initially dictated the grandstands' emergency repair. Additionally, he noted, other contractors had been reached out to, however could not perform the repairs in the required amount of time as a result of material shortages. Mrs. Gramarossa added that sufficient time had not been given to the Council to make an educated decision on the item as it was presented in the past Council meeting, a statement with which Mr. Cunningham agreed.

i. Motion to approve out of APR (8950 or 8951 if applicable) made by Mr. Rosenbaum.

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

La Porte County Commissioners

Requesting Additional Appropriation from LIT (1112), Riverboat (1191), or ARP (8950/8951) for:
Purchase of Property at 217 W. Coolspring Ave. for EMS (not to exceed) \$143,500

i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

ii. All members voted in favor.

COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

In observance of 911 Appreciation Week, Mrs. Gramarossa took a moment to thank 911 dispatchers across the U.S.

ADJOURNMENT

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 27th day of June 2022.



Councilman Earl Cunningham

ABSENT

Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor