



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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

**Sheila Matias
President**

**Richard Mrozinski
Vice President**

**Joseph Haney
Member**

**La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 6, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

President Sheila Matias called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the roll: Commissioner Joe Haney - Present; Commissioner Sheila Matias - Present; Commissioner Rich Mrozinski - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to add 4 items to the agenda: Under Requests **Consider** permission to approach the Council to use non-reverting funds to replace ceiling, lighting and HVAC on 4th floor in the complex, Amanda Lahners, Health Department Director; **Consider** permission to approach the Council requesting additional funds for fuel and a new full time maintenance technician position, Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department Director; Under Old Business **Consider** immediate termination of Community Corrections Director Rochelle Brown for failure to notify the Board of Commissioners/County Attorney of a death in custody and other 'good and just cause' consistent with the Community Corrections Board's April vote of No Confidence; and Under New Business **Consider** repeal or significant amendments to Ordinance 1995-06. **Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of June 15, 2022 minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 6/17/2022 - \$1,863,896.56 ending 7/1/2022 - \$1,276,899.48 and Operating Expense Claims - \$93,065,414.33 then added 1 claim for Friedman & Associates in the amount of \$6,825 for February work. Total of \$93,072,239.33. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Public Comment

Diane Warnke, 3893 N. 600 W. La Porte, thanked both Council and Commissioners for allowing the time to speak on the Gypsy Moth issue in her neighborhood and share the awareness they have been experiencing.

Mike Seitz, 212 Lakeside Drive, Fish Lake, during his time as President of the Chamber of Commerce in the City of La Porte in 2002 conducted a 2nd study of a possible 'bypass' around the downtown area of La Porte. Proper planning for growth for an 'economic corridor' could be a vital asset for the future of the development of La Porte County.

Matt Stock, via Zoom, 278 N. Fail Road, La Porte, stated the 'bypass' could potentially go right over his 20-year home so he has a different view point than others on the corridor. City of La Porte should be looking at other options first for the streets downtown. Boyd Boulevard was put in place specifically for this issue but never utilized. The bridge on Fail Road going north to Highway 2 could be reinforced/rebuilt at a much cheaper cost to allow trucks to leave the east side of town and go to Highway 20. He has watched traffic on Lincolnway where trucks try to go north on Highway 35. Look at other possible options.

Randy Veatch, 4177 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, made statements about several County Officials, employees and the sand issue behind his property. President Matias requested he stay on topic. When is the illegal activity going to stop being ignored?

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

None

ORIGINAL

Requests

Considered permission for travel to Reno, NV for NCJFCJ Conference. **Erika Stallworth**, JSC, submitted a request letter approved by Judge Alevizos and a notice of a scholarship awarded to cover the cost for her trip. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission for travel to Nashville, TN for NADP Conference. **Prosecutor's Office**, submitted a request, no additional funds are needed. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to close Voter Registration office during week of the Fair. **Gail Cains and Christen Zabel**, Co-Directors, submitted a letter for approval. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to use non-reverting funds to replace ceiling, lighting and HVAC on 4th floor in the complex. **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department Director, stated the ceiling is original from when the building was built, the floor was remodeled 13-14 years ago, walls were removed to open the floor for her department and by doing that shows 5 different ceiling tiles. Estimated cost is between \$180,000 to \$190,000. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the request to approach the Council. Commissioner Haney seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council requesting additional funds for fuel and a new full time maintenance technician position. **Jeremy SobECKi**, Parks Department Director, submitted information for his request. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the request to approach the Council. Commissioner Haney seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to establish an overtime budget for Community Corrections - **Rochelle Brown**, Director. **Commissioner Haney motioned to table this request. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Haney requested added item under Old Business be discussed now on the agenda.

Old Business

Considered immediate termination of Community Corrections Director Rochelle Brown for failure to notify the Board of Commissioners/County Attorney of a death in custody and other 'good and just cause' consistent with the Community Corrections Board's April vote of No Confidence. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the termination of the Director. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** **Attorney Friedman**, the Board of Commissioners nor his office had yet to be notified of the death 'in custody' even after 96 hours therefore it was agreed upon for termination. The Director had notified the Indiana Department of Corrections on the day of the death but not the Board of Commissioners. There was no objection from Community Corrections Board President John Lake on the decision. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to appoint Mericka Beaty as the 'Interim Director' until the position is filled. Commissioner Haney seconded the appointment. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered recommendations from La Porte County Bridge Naming Committee. **Sue Webster**, presented 3rd set of names for approval. **Potawatomie Indian Chief Saugana** will be honored on 500 E. crossing the Toll Road in Galena Township; **Allan Whitlow's** name will be displayed on the bridge over Springland Avenue near Krueger School in Michigan Township; **Sgt. Robert Earl Birkholz**, KIA July 12, 1970, will be honored on 1000 N. over the Galena River in Springfield Township; **William Ingram** will have a sign at 200 S. over Fish Creek in Lincoln Township; **Isadore 'Izzy' Levine**, Indiana Supreme Court Justice, will be honored but the bridge is yet to be determined and could possibly be on 400 N. east of Johnson Road; and **Captain Lucius T. Harding**, The Steamboat Skipper, will be remembered on Grangemouth Drive over the Stone Lake/Lilly Lake channel. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the 3rd set of names for Bridges in our County. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

New Business

Considered Museum Board's recommendation for Curator and Assistant Curator. **Bruce Johnson**, President of the La Porte County Historical Society Board of Directors and County Historian, introduced Savannah Jackson as the new Assistant Director and Danielle Adams, the new Director of the La Porte County Museum. Both are natives of our county. Savannah is a graduate of La Porte High School and St. Mary's College. Danielle is a graduate of Bruce's 4th grade class, South Central High School, De Paul University, and John Hopkins University in museum studies. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve both appointments. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Continued Old Business

Considered remaining in pending class action settlement in Monsanto PCB case per lead counsel's recommendation. **Attorney Friedman**, City of Lake Station, La Porte, Lake and Porter Counties were identified by Environmental Counsel from the east coast as the only four entities recommended to 'opt out' of the proposed class action settlement. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

ORIGINAL

Considered presentation by Zach Rice and Samantha Dewester of Beam, Longest & Neff, designated by the State of Indiana to administer the state's homeowners' assistance program for homeowners with back due property taxes, insurance payments or mortgage payments due to Covid-related issues. **Zach Rice**, consulting firm out of Indianapolis, currently administering the Indiana Homeowner Assistance Fund (IHAF) on behalf of the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. Three different programs available using ARPA funds. In the last 4 months this program has been built from the ground up. To date about 4,500 applications have been received, approximately 600 have been approved for about \$6,000,000 so far. La Porte County has about 80 applications with 14 approvals for roughly \$100,000. Go to www.877gethope.org for assistance. These are 'forgivable' loans, homeowners can get up to \$35,000 and if they live in the home for 5 years, they repay nothing but a lien will stay on the property during the 5-year timeframe. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered technical support contract for stormwater permitting by MS4 with raSmith and **Considered** contract with MyPermiTrack.com for permitting software. **Nicole Messacar**, MS4 Director, system for stormwater to help the public/contractors to do everything online. Great benefit all around and is in 'real time.' **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered resolution requesting La Porte city/county consultant, Lochmueller Group, to evaluate less intrusive and less costly ways to lessen truck traffic in downtown La Porte as opposed to the concept of an expensive and invasive bypass constructed on greenfield routes. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, what he remembered was the idea began when Elmo Gonzales was Mayor of La Porte and Severs Road was thought to be a route to take downtown truck traffic away from that area. **Opened** for Public Comment - **Tim Stabosz**, 1501 Michigan Avenue, La Porte, studied this issue as a La Porte City Councilman for two terms, believes politics are being played by the Commission, doesn't want to see this same issue next year pandering to the residents on Severs Road. He does think Boston Street to Severs Road is a good idea. For businesses trying to invest in downtown La Porte, sidewalk cafes similar to ones in Chicago for example, are having a difficult time and it has been a long-time desire to remove the heavy truck traffic in the area. **Matt Stock**, via Zoom, 278 N. Fail Road, La Porte, the A2A4 option would go right through the middle of his home if approved and would impact 10-70 other neighbors in his area. Other options need to be looked at again before final decisions are made. Businesses looking to locate into the downtown area should know what they are getting prior to opening. Trucks making deliveries are usually going to their destinations in that area and not taking a 'short cut' to get where they are going. **Timothy Cavinder**, 4848 N. Range Road, La Porte, President of 'Say No to La Porte Corridor Foundation' which is a non-profit group, thanked the Commission for listening to the concerns of the area residents that would be affected by the proposed options on alternative routes around the downtown area of the City of La Porte. **Commissioner Haney**, first half of his term he heard the City of La Porte say 'we're working with the County, working with the Commissioners' yet it wasn't until he made a public announcement about this issue that he was finally asked to meet with a representative of the City. No one from the City had really communicated with the Commissioners. In order to make this work with \$180,000,000, the proposal from the City was 80% from the State, 10% from the County and 10% from the City which would be \$18,000,000 for each County and City. Once completed the State could turn it over to the County to maintain. We have fallen behind in maintaining the current roads we have now. He believes we should withdraw ourselves from the project and let the City of La Porte handle it. He will support this resolution today; we cannot put this kind of burden on our children/grandchildren in the future for the financial implications towards the County. The County cannot afford to do this project. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ***Resolution 2022-6**

Considered Share Foundation's Broadband request for Sharing Meadows residential community for other-able adults - Tony Rodriguez. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Create task force to address limiting damaging gypsy moth infestation in northern La Porte County. **Bill Nelson**, via Zoom, 4144 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, partner at Braje, Nelson and Janes in Michigan City, Gypsy moths or Spongy moths have infested an area around Johnson Road/Schultz Road corridor which experts have identified as one of the largest infestations in La Porte County. For 42 years his family has owned the home he currently lives in and wasn't until last year that he started to experience the issue with the moths. His research shows La Porte County is kind of the southern border of the ever increasing and moving line in a south west direction from the north east where gypsy moths are continuing to move and take over more areas. Michigan has been infested but the state and counties have taken action to fight against the moths. The northern part of our county is now infested. Scott Keller, an attorney in South Bend but a resident in Hudson Lake, is in his third year with the moth issue. The moths create a mess and defoliate trees. With no action in the next year or two, trees will die off in significant numbers. Brian Mann, The Tree Mann, has offered to speak to any groups or task force on what he has been noticing with this moth. Thanked Kevin and Diane Warnke for bringing the issue to the County's attention. Council heard testimony nine days ago at their meeting. Thanked the Commission for their quick action by putting the topic on their agenda today. **Diane Warnke**, 3893 N. 600 W., La Porte, the caterpillars are now turning into moths. In a 24-hour period she collected 552 moths on her 2-acre property using 7 little traps. Mumaws and Jongkinds are experiencing first year with the gypsy moths. DNR representative, Phil Marshall, has been wonderful in helping with the issue. **Nicole Messacar**, 1401 Illinois Avenue, La Porte, there are a lot of resources out there for education and outreach, Purdue has put together a curriculum for elementary students; there is a cooperative invasive species management forum that formed in our area called P.L.A.N.T. - Porter La Porte Advancing Native Teams - and are constantly wanting to make people aware of **all** invasive

species and to think more broadly on the issues. Parks Department have kiosks with lots of information as well. **Walter Pearson**, 2776 N. Jongkind Park Road, La Porte, infestation is getting worse and spreading throughout the County. Caterpillars are now moving to the moth stage. Trees in his area have been defoliating. The feces are bad from these insects, covering the ground and items beneath the trees. Thanked the Commission for allowing them to share their troubles with the Gypsy Moths. **President Matias**, a task force will be organized. **Nicole Messacar**, suggested adding Michael Herrman to the group. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve creating a Task Force. Commissioner Haney suggested adding Jeremy Smith, a local Bee Keeper, to the list then seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider repeal or significant amendments to Ordinance 1995-06. **Commissioner Haney**, this Ordinance is still active but has been repealed by I.C. 35-47-11.1 and following subsections 35-47-11-2. The current Ordinance is in direct contradiction to the State law and **he moved to repeal or amend it.** Courthouse and/or Jail security would not be affected at all. **President Matias**, repeal or amend? **Commissioner Haney**, repealing it in its entirety will be the simplest, save the taxpayers money and bring us in to compliance with the Indiana Code. **Attorney Friedman**, the statute, as amended in 2022, does supersede some of the local regulation but a bit of time is needed to bring the Commission a 'finished product' of some kind to be consistent with state law. **Commissioner Haney motioned to table in order to give time to put something together with Attorney Friedman. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Haney, Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch visited the Convention Bureau to promote 'IN Indiana' campaign to generate tourism in our state. Attended a meeting with the 39 North Conservancy District, he reassured the residents that we have great volunteer fire departments. Exit Conference with the State Board of Accounts was completed for the 2019 year and was very informative. Attended a South County Coalition meeting. Parades, fireworks and events to celebrate our nation's independence. The County Fair will mark its 176th year July 9-16. There are a few free concerts on the 14th and 16th but will require admission to the fair. 4-H, exhibits and Pioneerland are good places to visit at the fair as well. Touched on good information that got out at the last Council meeting, there was one issue that he took exception to - towards the end of the meeting for Council members comments Council woman Gramarossa pointed out inappropriate actions and in an email that had went out from our County Attorney, Councilman Cunningham had followed up and said what she was referring to - Council woman Gramarossa, "It's clearly out of bounds, soliciting to get what he (County Attorney) wanted." Councilman Cunningham concluded by saying, "I'm appalled." He agreed with Council members Cunningham and Gramarossa, immediately following that Council President Randy Novak made some bizarre and curious comments, "The thing I find appalling is that a Commissioner, Mr. Haney, sends this email to Nathan Patrick and tips him off about this." Stated he never sent any preemptive emails out. He did forward one email after the Commission meeting on June 15th at the request of Nathan Patrick for a public document via his phone in the complex room. Is he to deny a member of the public a public document? Make him 'jump through hoops' and file an APRA request or an open-door law request for a public document for something that was clearly not privileged? He went on to quote Council President Randy Novak's comments, "I find that appalling for the Commissioner to take the effort to send the email out to the black community to tell them this is what they are doing." He closed with a quote, "It is those who have the facts, pound the facts; those that have the truth, pound the truth; those that have the law, pound the law; and those that have neither pound the table."

Commissioner Mrozinski, "Didn't know Randy Novak was here or that this was a Council meeting, I would suggest if you have issues with the Council or with Randy Novak, you bring it up at the Council meeting, he's not part of this group here."

Commissioner Haney, "I would suggest Randy Novak come here and bring it up with me if he needs to rather than spread lies and misinformation." **Commissioner Mrozinski**, "I don't think so and you're right, there's been a lot of issues in the last 18 months."

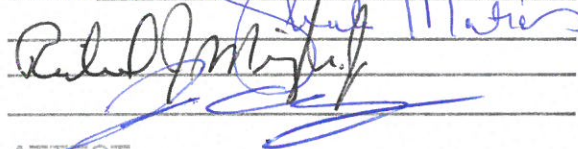
Commissioner Mrozinski, Montel Williams, host of Military Makeover, came to La Porte County to the home of a disabled veteran, Michael Stupar, on Wozniak Road. Took the Stupar family out of their home, put them in a hotel while they did a complete makeover on their home. Montel Williams' show reached out with requests they needed in order to make this event happen. Permits were obtained from Building Commissioner Mike Polan's office, inspectors were onsite regularly making sure it was done correctly; Landscaping needed to be done so he contacted Julie Small at Small's Nursery and they donated all flowers and plants for the project; Don Newland did all the landscaping on the property for the show; a deck needed to be replaced so he called Nick Pollock with the Carpenters Union and lumber was donated with the carpenters building it. During the 'reveal' when the family is brought back to their home, a motorcycle escort was requested so Rich contacted his friend Steve "Headdog" Moore, with the Wall Gang group, who led the procession to the 'reveal' for the family. A color guard was needed and Tom McGrath, Michigan City JROTC, was able to accommodate the request. Off-site parking was provided by Jeremy Sobbecki, County Parks Superintendent, at Creek Ridge Park. Sheriff's Department helped with the road closures as well as the Highway Department. The staff of the Montel Williams Military Makeover show were a delight to work with and for all they did for the Stupar family. They could not 'thank' us enough for the cooperation from everyone in La Porte County. Patrick Industries, Elkhart, Indiana, have partnered with the Montel Williams Military Makeover and did a year's worth of remodeling in 12 days. Wonderful experience, very moving and glad to take part in it. Attended the graduation with Problem Solving Court, Judge Greta Friedman does an amazing job with the 3-year program. "To see these people who have turned their life completely around, they were in a dark place and this is no easy job to go through this Problem Solving Court, if you screw up, you're out. This takes 3 years, these people are put to the test and they answer, they graduated and

they have a whole new life ahead of them now.” He met with a group of individuals onsite at the I-94, Highways 20/35 area to discuss the proposed project and hopefully everything will work out. Possible remedies continue to be a topic for the Franklin Street drawbridge. Attorney Friedman and Commissioner Mrozinski met in Michigan City to close the sale of property next to the EMS Base on W. Coolspring Avenue. The new EMS Base/Highway Garage in Rolling Prairie on Highway 20 is moving right along. INDOT and the Highway Department are in the process of producing signs to be displayed on our Jake Brake Ordinance. To open the 176th year of our County Fair, he will be one of the veterans performing the national anthem while raising the flag. Free entertainment will be at the fair including La Porte County’s own The Rock Doctors.

Commissioner Matias, Great parades, thanked all organizations/volunteers involved from each city. Website was redesigned right when Covid arrived and since then we’ve had 3 million visitors to our site. La Porte County Works! is taking a break this month and will be back in August with a profile on a local business and jobs they have available. During Fair Week two individuals stopped to share with her that they were wearing Peepers glasses. To date there have been 9 individuals rescued by the lifeguards in Michigan City at the beach. Reminded everyone that our bodies of water can be dangerous. Huge thank you to those that respond to help those in need while in the water. If the red flags are up, stay out of the water. “Someone earlier mentioned my bout with Covid, no joke, Covid is some serious stuff and I encourage people to get vaccinated if they have not but I really want to thank the community, so many people - I was down for the count for 6 days, not out of my bed but I really was touched by how many people reached out and sent notes and dropped things off and it was just really very nice. I wanted to mention it and to thank everyone.”

President Sheila Matias adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 7-20-2022



ATTEST: _____ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL