

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
June 27th, 2022 at 6:00PM

A regular meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on June 27th, 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, followed by a moment of silence for the victims of the Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas shootings.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Novak, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, and Mr. Mollenhauer were physically present for the meeting, while Mrs. Gramarossa was present electronically via Zoom. Mr. Garner was absent from the meeting.

APPROVAL OF JUNE 27th, 2022 AGENDA

Mr. Rosenbaum requested to add Resolution 2022-06 – A Resolution approving policy for waiver, negotiation, or settlement of certain delinquent property tax penalties under Ordinances and Resolutions, as well as item #8 under New Business: transfer of funds by the Commissioners from the liability accident insurance premium account to the claim account. Additionally, he requested the addition of a motion of support from La Porte County EMS regarding the purchase of two new ambulances and their equipment, to be addressed under EMS's Appropriations, Transfers, and Requests.

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

APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 11th, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

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

APPROVAL OF THE MAY 23rd, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

Auditor Tim Stabosz noted that one update needed to be added to the May 23rd minutes, stating that one line of dialogue needed to be changed from “Mr. Novak added that although the Michigan Township Trustee was partaking in the Rental Assistance Program, they currently had not spent any of the program’s funding” to “Mr. Novak added that the Michigan Township Trustee reported to the Council that, for the prior month, they did not use any of the county rental assistance funds.”

- i. Motion to approve with the correction made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Patty Nocek – 2555 N 450 E, Rolling Prairie

As a La Porte County Health Department employee, Mrs. Nocek asked the Council to consider raising the mileage reimbursement because of climbing fuel prices, noting that the IRS had recently raised its own mileage reimbursement from 58.5 cents per mile up to 62.5 cents per mile, and the County should consider raising its current 56 cents per mile to mirror the IRS’s 4% increase.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPEN FLOOR CLOSED.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Nicole Messacar, MS4 Director

Ms. Messacar informed the Council that she had submitted a notice of intent for MS4’s stormwater program, and as such, wanted to begin the program. She requested to spend out of MS4’s non-reverting fund to acquire permitting software, in addition to receiving consulting and training for the software, which in turn would require two contracts to be paid for: one for the consultant, and the other for the product itself, which carried a one-time lump sum cost of \$3,200 with no annual contract. She added that once the lump sum was paid, the only other cost for the product would be a \$89 fee per stormwater project, and although a funding method for the per-project fee had not yet been established, funds would likely be able to be used from pre-existing permitting fees per individual contractor.

Ms. Messacar’s second request was to spend non-reverting funds on office supplies, such as computer monitors, storage for documents, and other items, which would cost roughly \$5,000. She clarified that

she had spoken with IT Director Darlene Hale and received her approval, in addition to the approval of County Attorney Shaw Friedman who recommended that the Commissioners approve any required contracts for the supplies.

When Mr. Yagelski asked if Ms. Messacar had considered using the preestablished program known as Beacon, Ms. Messacar explained that she had met with a representative from Beacon, however, after a demonstration of the company's software, she discovered that it would not be compatible with MS4's needs. She added that she could use Beacon's communication system to relay to other County departments when a permit had been issued, however, the actual permitting software would need to be able to process stormwater permits, which Beacon and the Building Commission's software currently could not create. Additionally, she explained, the product she was currently researching also offered the ability to generate reports that would be required for annual reporting to the federal government.

i. Motion to approve from MS4's non-reverting fund, not to exceed \$10,000, made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Heather Stevens, Clerk

Mrs. Stevens approached the Council to seek permission to pay her full-time scanners through the Clerk's Perpetuation Fund, and specifically, just the scanners whose sole duties including scanning the Clerk's documents, not to include any additional part-timers who carried alternative duties within her department. Council Attorney Guy DiMartino inquired with Mrs. Stevens if she had any means to separate the hours of the part-timers who did not exclusively scan, to which Mrs. Stevens explained that said part-timers did not carry any scanning duties whatsoever, and although she did have permission to create a full-time position that would cover the tasks of the part-timers, she preferred to keep the staff members as part-time, although she would not be able to use the Perpetuation Fund to pay said part-timers. She added that, except for the scanners, all other part-time Clerk employees were receiving their payment through the part-time account. Mr. DiMartino proposed receiving reimbursement from the Perpetuation Fund for the non-scanning part-timers, however Mrs. Stevens explained that the State Board of Accounts was very strict about the application of the Clerk's Perpetuation Fund, and would not approving its spending on employees who did not perform scanning duties. Mr. Novak advised Mrs. Stevens to pay the non-scanning part-timers out of her full-time account until the month's end, and to investigate what amount of pay could be taken out of her Perpetuation Fund that could be directed to any of the part timers' applicable duties. He noted that no motion would need to be taken for this action, as all funding was currently available within the Clerk's 100 fund.

Judge Greta Stirling Friedman, Superior Court 4

Judge Friedman asked the Council for a motion of support to help cover the costs of one of Superior 4's probation officers, who served in the problem-solving court and as a case manager. She explained that the position had been funded through grants and partial coverage from the County in the past and added that she had already secured a grant from the Healthcare Foundation, however would need the County's assistance once more in covering the costs for the position from April of 2022 until the end of the current year. Her motion of support was a request to approach the Council with the request in July, however Mr. Novak noted that no motion would need to be taken on the item and Judge Friedman would simply need to approach the Council during the July Council meeting as originally intended.

Lynn Swanson, Coroner

Ms. Swanson approached the Council to report on the total number of deaths investigated by the coroner for the year to date. She explained that of the 155 investigated deaths, 20 were overdoses, 9 were suicides, 7 were motor vehicle accidents, 1 death was a drowning, 1 death was an asphyxiation, and the remainder were 110 natural deaths. She estimated that over 300 Coroner-investigated deaths would likely occur before the year's end.

Ms. Swanson explained to the Council that on March 14th of 2022, House Bill 1174 had been signed, which officially designated coroners and deputy coroners as first responders, and specified death in the line of duty as it relates to coroners and deputy coroners, and adds them to the list of public safety officers whose families receive a special death benefit if the officer dies in the line of duty, which will take effect on July 1st of 2023. Mr. Yagelski asked if the County's \$50,000 employee death benefit would be applicable to the coroner and deputies as well, which Mr. DiMartino responded that he was unsure but would investigate the matter.

Ms. Swanson continued her report, adding that four of her employees would need to go to the Indiana State Coroners Conference to ensure that their continued education hours were kept up with, and she intended to hire two more coroners to send down to the Medical Legal Death Investigator Course in September. At this time, Mr. Cunningham proposed reviewing the Coroner's request for additional appropriations to meet the Prosecutor's overdose death autopsy needs from the Old Business portion of the meeting.

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

Prosecutor John Lake spoke electronically via Zoom to clarify that autopsies performed by the coroner on overdose deaths were only done for investigations where prosecution could be followed through on those who dealt drugs to the overdose death victim; however in many of the high-profile, multi-jurisdiction cases, the outcomes of autopsies would be needed at the beginning of the case. Additionally, new challenges such as the disguising of fentanyl as oxycontin or Xanax posed new risks in the community that could increase overdose deaths as they made their way into the County coming from larger cities. He explained that the vigorous tactics from the prosecutors to prosecute drug dealers with autopsy findings was necessary to collectively dissuade activity from dealers and cartels. Mr. Lake explained that simply using toxicology reports was not a reliable tactic, and toxicology reports did not provide exclusions of causes of death, natural or otherwise. Mr. Lake noted that St. Joseph County's autopsies cost \$2,200 per body by using Western Michigan University as a source for the procedure; however in the end, it was the coroner's decision to select which source would perform the autopsy.

Mr. Yagelski asked why Mr. Lake claimed that autopsies were only performed on some overdose deaths when Ms. Swanson said that she had been advised to perform autopsies on all overdose deaths. Mr. Lake stated that the autopsies performed were only in cases where the prosecutor had leads to a case, while Ms. Swanson clarified that she had since conversed with Mr. Lake and was able to coordinate direction for the autopsies, however she still needed the previously requested \$70,000 of funding to fulfill the requests of Mr. Lake.

i. Motion to approve out of APR (8950/8951) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Amanda Lahners, Health Department Administrator

Ms. Lahners approached the Council to inform them that because of the end of grant money and state withdrawal of funding, both of La Porte's external Covid clinics would be closing within the next week, with the vaccination clinic closing the next Wednesday, and with its rollback location being the Health Department's County offices. She added that Covid vaccinations would continue to be performed at the Health Department's offices, which would perform vaccinations every Wednesday after July 1st. Ms. Lahners added that the Health Department had originally been considering ending its Covid testing program, as with the ending of previous grants, the testing would cost patients roughly \$65-\$85, whereas patients could travel to local pharmacies and receive the tests for free. However, the County had received a state grant of \$50,000 that would extend the testing program from July 31st until December 31st, 2022. As such, the Health Department would continue its testing program, and added that this would benefit all of La Porte, and especially patients who needed to receive Covid testing weekly per the request of their employers. She noted that the testing would take place at the new Michigan City Health Department office, not at the 8th Street location, which the Health Department was currently fully moving out of. She clarified that the grant would cover all the costs of testing and contract staffing, and required no particular requirement for clinic hours.

Mr. Yagelski inquired which employers required their staff to test weekly, emphasizing his concerns that testing of this nature would consume the \$50,000 grant's funding. Ms. Lahners was unsure, however replied that she would investigate which local businesses require this practice.

Ms. Lahners informed the Council that she would be present at the next Council meeting to speak about the difficulty in hiring nurses and explained that La Porte County's starting pay was roughly \$10,000 less than that of surrounding counties for registered nurses. Mr. Yagelski asked if the County's accommodating work schedule would be appealing enough to attract healthcare workers from other settings such as hospitals, which historically were not as accommodating with desirable hours, despite the County's lower pay. Ms. Lahners noted that there would be some appeal for the County's offered hours, however the difference in salary overshadowed any of the scheduling benefits that the Health Department had to offer. As an example, Ms. Lahners said her current nursing supervisor had an annual salary of \$53,000, while Porter County's starting rate for registered nurses was \$52,500. Mr. Novak informed Ms. Lahners that the Council would investigate the matter.

On the topic of gas mileage reimbursement, Ms. Lahners explained that she had 6 full-time field officers who used their own personal vehicles for various inspections, with some inspectors racking up as many as 1,000 miles a month, and urged the raising of the County's gas mileage reimbursement to combat skyrocketing prices for fuel.

Mr. Mollenhauer asked Ms. Lahners to share the Health Department's plumbing concerns with the Council. She explained that leaking from the fifth-floor restrooms and the HVAC units have been causing damage on the Health Department floor, including damage to the ceiling tiles and running water falling onto the Health Department's office floor. Mr. Yagelski asked what Facilities Department Superintendent Larry Levendowski had done to address the issue, which Mr. Novak noted that many of the problems were cosmetic, and not as a result of maintenance failures. Mr. Mollenhauer added that

Mr. Levendowski was actively looking into the costs to repair the issue. Mr. Yagelski asserted that he wanted to hear Mr. Levendowski's approach to repair the leaking, which Ms. Lahners assured that this was already planned for the following month's Council meeting.

Eric Fenstermaker, EMS Assistant Administrator

Mr. Fenstermaker proudly informed the Council that for the first time in years, La Porte County's EMS team was at capacity, following a boom in new hires after EMS's starting pay was increased. In fact, he continued, three surplus candidates had also turned in applications. With the extra money that EMS currently had from being so short staffed in the past, Mr. Fenstermaker explained to the Council that he wanted to hire the three additional applicants to fill in for current employees who were on worker's compensation or for the employees who were scheduled to go on maternity leave in the near future, and when the Rolling Prairie EMS base was to be completed in August or September, direct the three employees to work at the new base.

Mr. Yagelski asked what the long-term plan would be to allow for budgeting the three surplus employees, and pressed for the Commissioners to look into budgeting options to allow for their hiring. Mr. Rosenbaum contested that with the passing of the increase of the Public Safety LIT, a long-term solution had already been provided, and once the Rolling Prairie EMS base opened, the three employees could be transferred to that particular base's budget. Mr. Yagelski pressed once more that he preferred to have any budgeting investigated by the Commissioners. Mr. Novak added that with the presence of extra applicants, the Council should consider bringing them on, while Mr. Mollenhauer explained that it would be helpful to combat EMS's overtime and to assist with the current employees who were out on worker's compensation, in addition to the employees who would be on maternity leave in the near future.

Auditor Stabosz informed the Council that the Public Safety LIT tax rate would officially change on October 1st of 2022, and as such, those funds would start accruing sooner than the beginning 2023. [Editor's Note: Later in the meeting, Mr. Stabosz clarified that the funds **would** begin accruing on January 1st of 2023, not October 1st of 2022.]

Mr. Cunningham added that paying new hires a beginning salary would be substantially cheaper than paying overtime for EMS's current employees.

- i. Motion to approve the hiring of the three additional applicants made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Auditor Stabosz reported that there was no correspondence.

LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Yagelski: Mr. Yagelski informed the Council that a new microphone system for the County meeting rooms was now up and running, and IT Director Darlene Hale would likely be utilizing the User Fees account to pay for the updated system.

Councilman Rosenbaum: Mr. Rosenbaum explained that he and Mrs. Gramarossa attended the Indiana County Council Association conference, and were able to glean a large amount of useful information.

Councilwoman Gramarossa: Mrs. Gramarossa confirmed her and Mr. Rosenbaum's attendance at the Indiana County Council Association conference. Additionally, she informed the room that she had spoken with her liaisons, whose operations were running smoothly.

Councilman Mollenhauer: Mr. Mollenhauer described how he met with EMA director Larry Butcher regarding the need to replace more emergency sirens, in addition to EMA's lack of storage facilities, in which a workshop was recommended to find a solution for both issues.

Councilman Novak: Mr. Novak waived his liaison report.

Councilman Cunningham: Mr. Cunningham did not report any interactions with his liaisons.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS

Resolution 2022-06 – A Resolution approving policy for waiver, negotiation, or settlement of certain delinquent property tax penalties

To ensure that the Council had enough time to review a last-minute addendum to the resolution, Mr. Yagelski recommended pushing the item to the end of the meeting.

- i. Motion to push Resolution 2022-06 to the end of the meeting made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

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

a. La Porte County Auditor – Accounts Payable Clerk position

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

b. La Porte County Adult Probation – Pretrial Services Officer position

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

c. La Porte County Soil and Water – Education Coordinator position

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

d. La Porte County Highway Dept. – Bridge Tender position

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

2. Consider increasing mileage rate from current 56 cents per mile

i. Motion to approve the increase of the County's mileage reimbursement rate from the current 56 cents per mile up to 62.5 cents per mile, beginning July 1st of 2022 and through the end of the year made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham and Mrs. Gramarossa.

ii. All members voted in favor.

3. La Porte County Historical Society Board of Directors – Requesting that the Museum Assistant Director position be changed from part-time to full-time

Commission President Richard Mrozinski approached the Council to inform them that, although many candidates for Museum Assistant Director had applied, many ultimately turned the position away as it was not full-time. He proposed turning the position into a full-time position to ensure that it could be filled, which would in-turn assist with the museum's operations.

Mr. Mollenhauer inquired as to what the pay for the full-time Museum Assistant Director would be, which Mr. Mrozinski recommended that 85% of the Director's salary should be offered. Mrs. Gramarossa contested that if this were approved, additional pay increases from part-time to full-time would need to be fairly evaluated to reflect this 85% ratio, and informed the Council that there were still many County positions that were considered highly underpaid. Mr. Yagelski added that the 85% ratio rule was reserved for deputies of department heads, and as such, did not apply to the Museum Assistant Director position. He also recommended waiting to decide on the position's pay until the budget hearings in July. Mr. Mrozinski explained that the Museum Assistant Director's pay ranged from \$13-\$15 per hour for the part-time position, whereas the Director's salary was roughly \$37,000-\$38,000 annually.

i. Motion to temporarily pay the Museum Assistant Director \$15 for 40 weekly hours until it can be reviewed during the July 2022 budget hearings made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.

Mr. Rosenbaum praised the idea of making the Museum Assistant Director full-time, as it would allow educational events to be held there in the winter, in addition to helping spread knowledge of the County's history.

ii. All members voted in favor.

4. La Porte County Parks Department – Requesting the Maintenance position be changed from part-time to full-time

Park Superintendent Jeremy Sobecki explained to the Council that he had been having difficulty in acquiring part-time employees, and requested that one of the part-time positions be turned into a full-time position so he could secure more applicants. He noted the maintenance position's importance, and added that with all of the recent additions to the County's parks, the full-time help would offer great assistance with the upkeep of the recent improvements. Mr. Novak asked Mr. Sobecki if he had funding for a full-time employee, which Mr. Sobecki confirmed that he did not currently have the funding, costs for which would land in the mid \$30,000 range.

Mr. Rosenbaum stated that although he would rather hire part-timers for such a position, Mr. Sobecki's struggle to secure part-timers was an exception, especially considering La Porte County's parks expansions. He added that he wouldn't want to increase the part-time pay for the position to increase applicants, as in doing so, other part-time positions might require pay increases across the board.

i. Motion to approve the replacement of one part-time Maintenance position in exchange for opening one full-time Maintenance position made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

5. La Porte County Job Evaluation Committee – Requesting Approval of:

a. The recommendation for the Registered Nurse to move from a PAT III classification to a PAT VI

b. The recommendation for the Executive Assistant to the Board of Commissioners to move from a COMOT V classification to a COMOT VI

Mr. Novak confirmed that the items were in regard to the upcoming July 2022 budget hearings, and directed the Auditor to add both items to the budget hearing's agenda. Regarding the proposed registered nurse pay increase, Mr. Cunningham noted his concerns with approving a three-level jump at one time, regardless of whether its consideration was during a Council meeting or budget hearing. Human Resources Director Monique Thomas spoke electronically via Zoom to inform Mr. Cunningham that the proposed pay raise in question was specifically for a registered nurse who had been working for the County for 19 years, hence the sharp rise in the newly proposed salary.

6. La Porte County Auditor – Requesting permission to pay sick days in the amount of \$3,318.75

Mr. Novak asked Auditor Stabosz if the line item was for Vicki Mrozinski, which Mr. Stabosz verified was true.

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

7. La Porte County Circuit Court – Requesting permission to pay sick days in the amount of \$4,500 and 21 vacation days in the amount of \$6,475.67

Mrs. Gramarossa confirmed that the employee that the line item was for was Desiree Nichols, who was retiring.

- a. Requesting permission to pay sick days in the amount of \$4,500
 - i. Motion to approve made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
 - ii. All members voted in favor.
- b. Requesting permission to pay 21 vacation days in the amount of \$6,475.67

Mr. Yagelski explained that under the La Porte County Employee Handbook, vacation days were not to be accumulated from year to year, and must be taken within the calendar year, and vacation was only to be paid upon termination, whether voluntary or involuntary. Mr. Novak questioned if voluntary termination was equal to an employee's resignation. Mr. DiMartino added that, by definition, a termination could be defined as being fired or as a resignation. Mr. Cunningham expressed concern for the precedent that could be set in buying out vacation time at a higher rate over sick days, and warned that it could result in employees utilizing sick days over vacation days in hopes of selling their vacation days at a higher rate once they were terminated or if they resigned. Mr. Novak noted that vacation could not accrue year after year, and as such, an employee could only receive a buyout for their current year's vacation time.

Mr. DiMartino questioned how the employee in question was to receive \$6,475.67 for only 21 days of vacation, and additionally questioned how the vacation days were accrued.

- i. Motion to table until the July Council meeting made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

8. Transfer of funds by the Commissioners from the liability accident insurance premium account to the claim account

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

9. Mr. and Mrs. Warnke – Gypsy/Spongy Moth that is currently inhabiting La Porte County

Diane Warnke introduced herself and informed the Council that she and a few others would be speaking about a recent spike in La Porte's infestation of *Lymantria dispar*, colloquially known as gypsy moths or spongy moths. She added that Phil Marshall from the forestry division of the DNR would be speaking electronically via Zoom regarding the moths, and the DNR's efforts to slow their spread.

Phil Nelson approached the Council to speak about his own troubles managing La Porte's gypsy moth caterpillars on his property, noting that the caterpillars drop vast amount of feces, or frass, which inhibit his and his family's outdoor enjoyment. Additionally, he explained that the caterpillars were rapidly defoliating the trees on his property, primarily white oaks. He urged the Council to address the infestation, which was already wide-spread, before it became exponentially worse and affected property values. Mr. Nelson explained that federal programs were in place to assist with the infestations across the country, and pressed the Council once more to address the problem before it expanded across the County.

Mrs. Warnke added that the caterpillars also brought along health concerns, as their hairs could cause rashes if they came in contact with human skin, which in some cases, required hospitalization.

Phil Marshall, forest specialist of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources appeared electronically via zoom to explain that he worked closely with the DNR's "Slow the Spread" program, the same program he hoped to integrate into La Porte County. He gave a brief history of the moths, noting that they were first recorded in La Porte in 1981 in isolated locations, and the DNR had been sporadically treating for the moths dating as far back as 1999, all the way up to the most recent treatment being in 2022. He explained the caterpillars could contract a specialized fungus and virus that could knock back their populations and slow their spread, however said diseases only thrived in the wetter seasons of spring. He added that gypsy moths often had population booms for about 2-3 years before they experienced a drop in numbers, and could potentially disappear for up to ten years before another population spike begins.

Mr. Marshall disclosed that although there was a vigorous suppression program in place for exceptionally large infestations of gypsy moths, the funding for this program was very limited, and as such, La Porte County would be more eligible to receive aid from the Slow the Spread program.

He added that in a bad infestation, roughly 75% defoliation could occur in the caterpillar's preferred food plants, which primarily included white oak, maple, and willows.

Mr. Novak advised setting a public workshop regarding the gypsy moth infestation. Mr. Yagelski asked Mrs. Warnke if she had approached Purdue regarding the gypsy moths, which she noted that Purdue worked closely with the Slow the Spread program already. She explained that when she tried to reach out to the local Purdue Extension, she had been unable to reach the representative in charge of gypsy moth inquiries. Mr. Marshall clarified that, with the Purdue Extension's change in staff over the past few years, he was unsure as to who was in charge of gypsy moth inquiries at their location, however he would research whose jurisdiction it was and try and integrate them into Purdue's Slow the Spread program.

Mr. Novak noted that getting all concerned parties, Purdue or otherwise, to the proposed workshop would be advisable. Mr. Cunningham added that he would like to see the Health Department at the meeting as well, and that the meeting would be open to anybody who would like to be present.

OLD BUSINESS

The Coroner's Old Business request had already been resolved in the Department Heads section of the meeting.

There was no additional old business.

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, AND REQUESTS

La Porte County E911

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

1. Consoles, carpet, 24/7 chairs	\$472,676.90
2. Monitors/Keyboards/CPU's	\$37,808.15
3. Work Stations and monitoring/Phones	\$84,271.42
4. Chairs	\$4,362.50
5. Air Purifiers	\$4,716.00
6. DisplayPort Adaptors	\$1858.24

Mr. Novak informed the Council that he had spoken with E911 Director Barb Huston, and explained that since new ARP funding had not yet come into the County's budget, the items Mrs. Huston brought to the table might need to be held off on. Mrs. Huston explained that if the first line item for consoles, carpet, and 24/f7 chairs were delayed, she would lose the bid that was in place to secure the items' costs, and as such would need to be rebid for at a later date at a likely higher cost.

Mr. Mollenhauer asked why new consoles hadn't been asked for before E911 had moved them recently, to which E911 Assistant Director Matt Deckard explained that the poor condition of the consoles wasn't realized until their move had taken place. Mr. Novak advised Mrs. Huston to reach out to the vendor who had given her the bid for the consoles, carpet and 24/7 chairs to see if they would honor it at a later time, to which Mrs. Huston said she would try.

i. Motion to table all items made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Drug Free Partnership

Requesting permission to draw upon the Community Drug Free Fund for the amount Accumulated between April 1, 2021-March 31, 2022 for organizations serving La Porte County

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Sheriff

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

1. Gasoline	\$210,000
2. Extraditions (Return of Fugitives)	\$12,000
3. Jail Overtime	\$60,000
5. Inmate Food	\$369,000

Due to the high costs of the Sheriff's requests, Mr. Yagelski proposed that all items, except for line-item no. 4 for vehicles, be paid in intervals of thirds, with one third being paid the current month, another third being paid the month after, and the remaining third being paid the following month. Mr. Rosenbaum calculated that this would result in three payments of \$217,000.

i. Motion to approve three payments, all in one-third increments totaling at \$217,000 each, to be paid out over the course of three months for line items 1, 2, 3, and 5 out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

4. Vehicles	not-to-exceed \$540,000
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i. Motion to support out of ARP (8950/8951) or Public Safety LIT if the purchase was made after January 1st, 2023 made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Animal Shelter

Requesting permission to transfer monies from Donation Fund 4100.00000.000.0531 and put into Part Time Fund 1000.101.30.000.0156 \$25,000

i. Motion to approve \$5,000 out of the Donation Fund to pay for the shelter's current part-time needs, and table the remaining \$20,000 to see if its funding could be pulled from another source made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Engineer

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Cumulative Bridge (1135) for:
Engineering designs for Bridge #37 located at 250 S. \$195,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Office of Community and Economic Development

Requesting Additional Appropriation from LIT (1112) for:

Second Half of Annual Budget \$110,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Treasurer

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

Overtime \$10,000

In addition to her request for the overtime appropriation, Treasurer Joie Winski requested the creation of an overtime account for the Treasurer Department.

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

ii. Mr. Novak, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mrs. Mollenhauer, and Mrs. Gramarossa voted in favor. Mr. Cunningham voted not-in-favor

iii. Motion to create an overtime account for the Treasurer Department made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.

iv. All members voted in favor.

La Porte Superior Court No. 4

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

1. Office supplies \$2,000

2. Psychological Services \$7,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Parks Department

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

1. Luhr Trail and parking lot repairs and sealing \$19,942

2. Filling of propane tanks \$5,000

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County EMS

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

1. Fuel	\$50,000
2. Corporate/Non-Reimbursable Medical Supplies	\$85,000
3. Other Ops/Oxygen and Other Supplies	\$18,000

i. Motion to approve three payments, all in one-third increments totaling at \$51,000 each, to be paid out over the course of three months for all line items out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County EMS

Requesting a motion of support for:

Permission to purchase 2 ambulances at \$286,937.54 each	\$573,875.08
Loose equipment for 2 ambulances at \$18,528 each	\$37,056.00

(These won't be built until end of 2024/start of 2025. Money will need to later be appropriated during that year.)

i. Motion of support (not to exceed) for the ambulances and to discard the request for support for loose equipment made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Permission to purchase 1 support vehicle	\$43,740
Emergency lighting/loose equipment	\$13,413

(This vehicle will not be built until 2023. Money will need to be later appropriated during that year.)

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

La Porte County Community Corrections

Requesting a motion of support for service agreement for the Tek84 Intercept Whole Body-Scanner

\$8,500

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

ii. All members voted in favor.

Resolution 2022-06 – A Resolution approving policy for waiver, negotiation, or settlement of certain delinquent property tax penalties

Mr. DiMartino requested to make one addition to the addendum that was included with Resolution 2022-06. Regarding the last line on the addendum’s page, which read “Properties having previous penalties due to non-payment of taxes are not eligible,” Mr. DiMartino requested the addition of the line “to have the prior penalties removed, except as designated by law” to reduce the ambiguity of the phrasing.

i. Motion to read by title only with the addition of the added line made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

Mr. DiMartino added that the resolution, while being utilized to fix a tax error that occurred in April of 2022, was not a permanent fixture in the County’s resolutions. Mr. Stabosz added that a County policy needed to be created by the Council that would easily allow for the removal of tax penalties, in which, unrelated to the April 2022 tax error, a taxpayer could initiate a penalty removal through the Auditor or Treasurer’s office, only with the simultaneous approval of both the Auditor and Treasurer, to actually remove the penalty, as a failsafe.

i. Motion to adopt Resolution 2022-06 made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in favor.

iii. Motion to approve the La Porte County Policy Regarding Waiver, Negotiation, or Settlement of Certain Delinquent Property Tax Penalties made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

iv. All members voted in favor.

COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Mrs. Gramarossa read aloud an email from County Attorney Shaw Friedman accusing her of lobbying to prevent interim HR Director Monique Thomas from being hired as full-time Human Resources Director. Mrs. Gramarossa took great exception to Mr. Friedman’s comments, and explained that his accusations in the email were entirely untrue and were an inappropriate, strategic attack against her following the Commission’s inaction to declare Juneteenth a County government holiday. She wanted to clarify where these false accusations may have come from, and explained that a fellow VFW volunteer that she knew was looking for a job with the County. When Mrs. Gramarossa advised the volunteer to apply for the open Recorder position with the County, the Recorder recommended that she apply for Human Resources Head, given that she had roughly 20 years’ experience in the field of human resources. Mrs. Gramarossa noted that she never had any intention of lobbying against Monique Thomas or her placement as Human Resources Director, and added with Shaw Friedman being a vendor with the County, his attacks were entirely out of line.

Mr. Cunningham added that Commission President Richard Mrozinski had made previous claims of being lied to and about by Mr. Friedman, and agreed with Mrs. Gramarossa's statement that such attacks were inappropriate. He added that in the past, Mr. Friedman had in-turn lobbied the Black Ministers' Association and the NAACP to put pressure on the Council in the past so he could get what he wanted.

Mr. Novak cited his own frustrations with the Commission's approach to Juneteenth, and stated that Commissioner Joe Haney had actively reached out to the black community to incite frustrations about the inaction to pass Juneteenth; however Mr. Haney himself had not done anything on the Commission to take action on passing Juneteenth as a County government holiday. He added that the Commission had tried to push blame on the Council when, in fact, the Commission had been well aware the federal government pushed Juneteenth through as a holiday the year prior, and they had already had multiple talks about making it a County holiday.

Mr. Yagelski noted that there were currently two non-recognized holidays that the Commission listed as County holidays; Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, the Commission even going as far as to place these non-existent holidays on the calendar, which was prohibited. He explained that there was nothing he could do about the Commission's observance of holidays, and if they desired to observe Juneteenth as a holiday, they certainly had the power to do so. Mr. Novak added that he would prefer not to see election day as a holiday any longer, noting that many of the County's departments, such as the Sheriff's Department and the Clerks, still had to work on this holiday, which in turn was a cost to the County as they received holiday pay and an additional holiday from working as well.

ADJOURNMENT

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

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



Councilman Earl Cunningham



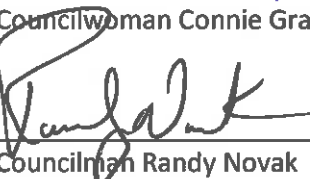
Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor