



**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, October 5, 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. A moment of silence took place for Hurricane Ian victims.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney added two additional items: Consider** discussion for a 3-way stop at the intersection of Saugana Trail/Miami Trail in Saugana Lake and **Consider** IDNR Grant. **Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of the September 21, 2022 minutes. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Deputy Auditor Vaughn Galloway read the Claims with Payroll ending 9/23/2022 - \$1,268,408.83 and Operating Expense Claims - \$1,611,463.36. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

President Matias requested everyone to be brief as possible for Public Comment, focus on respect and civility.

Public Comment

Mark Parkman, 4052 S. 1100 W., Westville, thanked the Commission for support and help with Purdue Extension in regards to 4-H. He went on to discuss truck activity in the county. Owns a business in Westville, question on truck **over-width**, not weight, he purchases a year-long permit from the State of Indiana, travels anywhere except around Indianapolis, he cannot do this in our county but needs to purchase a permit every time he travels for a job and this adds to the cost. Talk has been heard about keeping truck traffic off of Lincolnway in La Porte. For example, if he has a job in Rolling Prairie and begins to leave his business in Westville, he will travel down Lincolnway with his excavator. Currently he pays a federal highway use tax of \$550 per truck, \$2,000 for plates to drive on the roads, plus the wide-load permit. Several county roads now have 'no trucks' signs posted and the alternate routes take more time to travel. When the Truck Ordinance is looked at, please remember the local business owners who use the roads. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, will be asking for the Truck Ordinance to be tabled, a workshop will be scheduled for further discussions. **President Matias**, trying to protect the county roads from damage yet not wanting to cause issues for the business owners that travel the roads.

Randy Veatch, 4177 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, stated the gate was open at 6:15. Thanked the Commission for stopping the resale operation next to his property and Versaw's, don't forget the one on Schultz Road. Expects to be treated like everyone else, no special handling. Department Heads are allowed to go on and on but not the general public.

Rick Kentaft, 324 Bach Street, La Porte, followed up on Mark Parkman's comments. Years ago, there were more trucks downtown La Porte due to all of the factories; American Home Foods, Allis-Chalmers, and all the foundries, agreed tabling the Truck Ordinance so those involved can discuss it. Commissioner Haney could give good insight due to him owning a trucking company according to his registered business under Thirteen Colonies Consulting Limited, a trucking company. **Commissioner Haney** replied he is a consultant for numerous businesses and organizations, not a truck driver. **Rick**, you received PPP funds as a trucking company in 2020. Rick requested to be a part of the Truck Ordinance discussion with his background.

ORIGINAL

Wayne Rightsell, 4210 E. Michigan Blvd, Michigan City, MidFirst Bank, a company operating within our borders, our county and the courthouses, were issued a violation of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferators Sanctions Regulations. Luis v. United States in 2016. Nation Star, Nationwide, Braden v. Nation Star in 2015. No one was protected. Sheriff sales and due process. Serious issues within the building with 4th Amendment deprivation violation, “to take compulsory pictures, mug shots or finger prints before conviction is a violation of the 4th amendment.” Stated several court cases. “To detain a person in custody for any reason except to see a magistrate, it’s 24-hours for a misdemeanor and 72 for a felony.” He served in the Army and cannot let this happen.

Rodney McCormick, 617 Union Street, Michigan City, member of the local NAACP, Branch 3061, Unit B. Heard mis rumors about the interim Human Resources Director. The issue is being used as a pawn in the Black Community. Tired of Shaw Friedman and the same old La Porte County Democrats. City inspectors are being over worked by illegal political signs put in wrong places. Two biggest offenders are Dan Granquist and Sheila Matias. David Ashley and Wes Scully are paid for their help during elections.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Larry Levendowski, Director of Facilities, update on Rolling Prairie: asphalt is down, electric should be hooked up soon, seeding should be down also. Few materials have been delayed. **Requested** permission to approach the Council for additional appropriation to pay Nipsco invoices, approximately \$145,000. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the request. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Barb Huston, 911 Director, stated that at 12:24 a.m. a caller to the 911 center reported seeing smoke from the old American Rubber factory on Brighton Street in La Porte. City of La Porte Police confirmed it was almost fully engulfed in flames. An ‘all-call’ went out to La Porte Fire Departments, no electric or gas was on in the building, water department was advised, Center Township Fire Department aerial came in, Hazmat phone trailer, EMA rehab trailer, Kankakee and Coolspring Township Fire Departments, Springfield Township Fire Department is on standby, Scipio Township Fire Department is on standby for City of La Porte, and Norfolk trains have been notified so they have been traveling slower than usual along the tracks passing the building on Brighton Street. RAVE alert was sent out due to the smoke in the air.

Monique Thomas, Interim HR Director, reported on the 6 months as Interim Director, there have been terminations and employee disciplinary actions while trying to maintain staffing needs in most of the departments. Requested the HR Assistant position to go from COMOT-V to a Full-Time Exempt status and the HR Admin Assistant position from part-time to full-time. The HR Assistant position does provide responsibilities and duties in absence of the Director. She will prepare the changes and present it to the Job Evaluation Committee and bring it forth should the Committee approve it. She will also suggest the current part-time HR Admin Assistant position to be full-time, the assistant has been a tremendous help while the full-time HR Assistant position is vacant due to Monique filling the Interim Director position.

Tony Rodriguez, ED, confirmed the successful submission of the Middle Mile Grant to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Thank you to the Assessor’s office, GIS, Auditor’s office, Highway Department, Planner, and the Building Department who all played a role in the process. Announced that on Friday, October 7th at 9:00 a.m. the Broadband Task Force will be hosting a ‘Connecting La Porte County’s Future’ workshop.

Nelson Pichardo, filling in for County Attorney Shaw Friedman, Monday, October 3rd, his office filed complaints for injunctions in Superior Court 2 where the Judge has since recused himself from the D&M case and Versaw’s case is set for October 11th at 10:30 a.m. Until the Clerk sets a Special Judge for the D&M case, nothing will be done until that time. Randy Veatch was given copies of the paperwork he requested in these cases.

Mike Polan, Building Commissioner, although both cases have no zoning violations from his office, both D&M and Versaw are currently operating under a Stop Work Order issued by another agency so the County has taken enforcement action. Thanked all first responders who are currently at the scene of a big fire at the old American Rubber plant, requested the public to keep their distance from 3 structures that have critical damage to them, stay at least 30 feet back from the situation. **President Matias**, asked Mike to give a few details on one of his employees that he notified the Commission on earlier in the week. **Mike Polan**, Employee Spotlight, his employee, Ashley Kazmucha, while staying for an evening meeting, helped an individual who required a ride, a warm sweatshirt, and a night at a hotel. She went above and beyond to assist this person.

Requests

In Celebration of 30 years in La Porte County, the Unity Foundation proclaimed the day as Mike Brennen Day. **President Matias** read the Proclamation in to the record. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ***Proclamation attached to minutes**

Considered permission to approach the Council for computer replacement and budget shortages, **Andrew McGuire**, EMS Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

ORIGINAL

Old Business

Considered second/final reading of Amendatory Commercial Truck Ordinance along with accompanying fee schedule and authorize collection of any past due Truck Ordinance fines - **John Boyd**, Sheriff; **Duane Werner**, Highway Superintendent and **Laura Nirenberg**, Esq. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to table and set a workshop of individuals to discuss further details. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ***Tabled**

New Business

Considered supporting Stepping Stone Shelter's request for \$150,000.00 appropriation from ARP funds. Interim Director **Deb Varnak** and Stepping Stone's Board President **Ron Heeg**, approached the Council for appropriation to assist with funding for the shelter. All funding is through grants which are usually 'reimbursed' but the money is needed up front. Donations are welcome as well. Due to Covid, their funds have been diminishing. The request was for \$150,000 over 2 years, Council approved the amount over a 3-year period. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0**

Considered MOU with HealthLinc, Jeff Wright and Sheriff's Department, **Ron Heeg. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered renewal of consulting agreement between Sheriff's Office, Pension Board/Merit Commission with M. A. Dilts regarding Sheriff's Dept pension program, **Ron Heeg. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered MOU between E-911 and Indiana Department of Correction for use of certain radio channels to assist emergency response at ISP or any other DOC facility in La Porte County, Barb Huston, Director. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered cooperative agreement with Berrien County Sheriff and La Porte County E-911 dispatch, Barb Huston, Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered requesting on-call engineering consultants at USI evaluate Council recommendation for competitive bids on annual Franklin Street Bridge maintenance/repairs vs. Use of Special Purpose statute dealing with historic, unique requirements of bridge utilizing sole source team. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Matias stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

Considered request from North Central Community Action Agencies, Inc. for support for appropriation of \$50,000 from ARP funds, **Cynthia Davis**, Executive Director and **Willie Milsap**, President. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered contract with Weaver Consultants Group for annual PASER road ratings to assist grant applications and prioritization of road repair schedule, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Lincoln Trail Extension Contract, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, 3 miles instead of 2 miles. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered grant agreement with IDNR, Next Level Trail Grant, for the Lincoln Trail Extension Project to PNW. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered lease with Northwest Health for use of former Coolspring Library location for Absentee Voting, Heather Stevens, Clerk. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Held discussion on a 3-way stop sign at the intersection of Saugana Trail and Miami Trail in Saugana/Hudson Lake. A traffic study will be done to determine the next step. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Comments

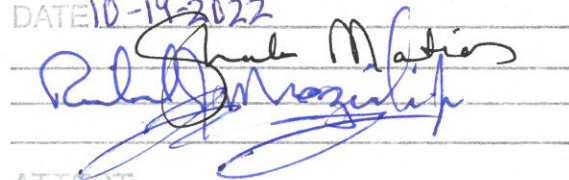
Commissioner Haney, it is now fall in La Porte County, attended the Scarecrow Fest, Pumpkin Fest and the grand opening of the new Sebert Woods Park. Worked with Senator Braun’s office on a couple of issues. Took part in final interviews for a Community Corrections Director. Attended multiple department head meetings. October 20th at Luhr Park is a mother/son event, Trunk or Treat at the Animal Shelter on October 28th, 5-7 p.m. Check the county website. Register to vote, deadline is October 11th, go to indianavoters.com. Quoted Bill Maher, “Freedom isn’t free. It shouldn’t be a bragging point that ‘Oh, I don’t get involved in politics,’ as if that makes someone cleaner. No, that makes you derelict of duty in a republic. Liars and panderers in government would have a much harder time of it if so many people didn’t insist on their right to remain ignorant and blindly agreeable.”

Commissioner Mrozinski, attended 100 years of Tonn and Blank along with Commissioner Matias. Also, the Museum had a wonderful presentation by Judge William Boklund on prohibition in our county. Rich continues to work on getting a VA Clinic in La Porte. Concrete has been poured and asphalt down at the new EMS Base/Highway Garage in Rolling Prairie, just waiting on electric to be hooked up. RDC has a few projects moving forward; 39 North, Love’s project, and I-94/Hwy 35/Hwy 20. Meadowview Drainage project has been moving forward to help those having flooding issues. Franklin Street Bridge is an important part of our county, especially to Michigan City. Fairgrounds improvements are in the works. He spoke about the Interim HR Director position; the job was posted and nine applicants were received. A workshop was held with the Council where 3 applicants were set up for interviews by both the Commission and Council. Out of those three, two were focused on but when the votes were taken one applicant had a tie vote and the other one only had one vote out of ten voting members. There is a lot of work done in the Human Resources office and hopefully the ten voting members will come to an agreement to fill the Director’s position and the Assistant Director’s position.

Commissioner Matias, La Porte County Works! featured JLM Johnston Landscape Maintenance, Incorporated. JLM is a small, family-owned landscape provider with over 20 years of service in Northwest Indiana. They’re located on State Road 2, Westville. With projects transitioning between seasons from landscape to snow removal, the company identified a unique way to utilize the snow plow mounts on their trucks. The Out-Front products they developed allowed them to increase the operational use of their trucks and UTVs in the landscape business. JLM Johnston Landscape Manufacturing is a prime example of the entrepreneurial spirit that is demonstrated by the business located in La Porte County. It was the idea of two local businessmen that became operationalized and a business product line. While running their landscape business, often times they needed a way to bring a larger assortment of small equipment to the work sites than they could fit in the bed of a truck. Because of their patent-pending Out-Front system, they began utilizing the front of their trucks. They found that not only could they carry more equipment, but they ultimately saved time and increased overall efficiency. The company is excited to share their unique patent-pending Out-Front carrier system and attachments for trucks, SUVs, UTVs, and ATVs. Their industrial-strength products are suited for landscaping providers, municipalities, utility companies, universities, and personal vehicles, assisting them in increasing their vehicles usage and their bottom line. JLM’s mission is to development products that help increase crew efficiency and vehicle utilization, with a commitment to honesty and integrity in their operations. Their products are made in America with American-made components. Information will be posted on our website. Commented on the current fire in La Porte at the old American Rubber factory. Our county is very large with a lot of fire departments including volunteer firemen. EMA and Red Cross have been on the scene tending to those putting out the fire. An example of how great our county is when it comes to working together. On a sadder note, she reported on a tragedy that took place yesterday in south county where a family was on their way to school and was involved in an accident that resulted in two fatalities. Keep the family in mind. She reminded everyone that we are moving into the General Election and if your voter information needs updating go to indianavoters.com. Reported on the meeting with the Broadband Task Force on Friday, October 7th, 9-11 a.m. at Purdue Northwest at the Dworkin Center, it is a community meeting with internet service providers who will have representatives there with maps and updated information to share everyone.

President Sheila Matias adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 10-19-2022



ATTEST: _____ Auditor

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**Mike Brennan Day Proclamation in Celebration of Unity Foundation
of La Porte County's 30th Anniversary**

WHEREAS, our community owes a debt of gratitude to Mike Brennan - for his entrepreneurial spirit, generosity and commitment to La Porte County and the region; and

WHEREAS, Mike Brennan was a Founder and driving force for the formation of Unity Foundation of La Porte County over 30 years ago; and

WHEREAS, in a congratulatory letter from John Mutz, then president of the Lilly Endowment Inc., he said, "We believe that the creation of the Unity Foundation may be one of the most important events in the county's history."; and

WHEREAS, since 1992, Unity Foundation has made La Porte County stronger by building permanent endowments, providing leadership, offering philanthropic vehicles for everyone and by being a catalyst for social and economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, La Porte County's community foundation, has grown from \$0 to \$44 million in assets, administers more than 325 charitable funds, and has granted more than \$22 million to benefit the people and places here; and

WHEREAS, we commend Mike Brennan for his unselfish, strategic, and inclusive leadership that has helped strengthen the communities of La Porte County now and forever; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sheila Matias, President of the La Porte County Commission, on behalf of the entire County Commission, do hereby proclaim Oct. 1, 2022 as

Mike Brennan Day!

IN WITNESS, WHEREOF I hereunto set my hand and cause the Seal of the La Porte County Commission to be herein affixed.

**Sheila Matias, President
La Porte County Board of Commissioners**

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