



LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Sheila Matias
President

Richard Mrozinski
Vice President

Joseph Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, September 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom

President Sheila Matias called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence was heard for La Porte County Patrolman Neil Thompson, the only member of the Sheriff's office to have died in the line of duty on September 21, 1980 when a suspect fleeing other officers in a stolen ambulance intentionally struck Thompson's squad car which was parked off on the side of the road. Patrolman Thompson was a United States Army Veteran of the Vietnam War. He served with the La Porte County Sheriff's Department for 3 years. In 2002, State Road 39, from US 6 to US 30 in La Porte County, was dedicated the Neil G. Thompson Memorial Highway in his honor.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Mrozinski added one additional item: Consider** authorizing the County Attorney's office to enforce the MS4 General Permit Holder's Stop Work Order with a court filing. **Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of the September 7, 2022 minutes. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 9/9/2022 - \$1,261,556.05 and Operating Expense Claims - \$7,020,128.84. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

President Matias reminded everyone of the policy for Public Comment.

La Porte County Firefighters Association Randy Novak and Andy Snyder, **Sheriff John Boyd**, EMS Director Andrew McGuire, Coolspring Township Volunteer Firefighters **Rick Bradford**, Warren Smith, Mick Pawlik, and Hunter Wroblewski honored 10-year-old Jonathan Mendez, a Michigan City student, with a Certificate of Recognition for Exemplary and Life Saving Service and a 'challenge coin' from Sheriff John Boyd. **EMS Director Andrew McGuire** presented Jonathan with a sweatshirt and the La Porte County Firefighters Association gave him a certificate for his bravery as well. On August 25, Jonathan was going door-to-door selling candy for his school on Clover Lane in Michigan City when he heard an individual inside a home calling for help. He called 911 and was able to get help for the 80-year-old gentleman who had been on the floor for three days. His parents, Luis and Matilde Mendez, were present during his recognition. **Matilde Mendez** thanked everyone for the honor and items given to her son.

Public Comment

Randy Veatch, 4177 W. Schultz Road, La Porte, commented on the business that has been operating for the last 8 years next to his property.

Scott Archambault, 1651 W. 450 N. La Porte, resident of our county for 21 years and his concern is the accelerating deterioration of the road in front of his house.

William Allison, 5791 E. SR 104, Walkerton, voiced his concerns against a utility substation, specifically a battery energy storage system facility, in Walkerton.

Faye Moore, 515 Grace Street, Michigan City, via Zoom, supports the use of the mobile voting van. When and where will it be placed so people in Michigan City will have access to it as well as the southern part of our county.

ORIGINAL

Nelson Pichardo, County Election Board Democrat Attorney, never imagined two years ago when his law firm applied for a grant that it would be viewed as anything less than positive or beneficial for the county. There has been no evidence of any misconduct by officials of either political party. For the record, the grant application had no restrictions or prohibited the use of a van for non-partisan Absentee Voting.

Rodney McCormick, 617 Union Street, Michigan City, via Zoom, mobile voting van is a sore issue with a lot of people. Was hoping it would have been in Michigan City for voters. Van is needed for everyone to have a chance to vote. There are some Michigan City neighborhoods that are in single digits for low voter turnout.

Kathy Chroback, 1509 Monroe Street, La Porte, stated her experience as Clerk for 4 years. Voter Registration is a separate office from the Clerk's office. The party chairmen, Democrat and Republican, appoint the Co-Directors in that office. Read a statement by the current Clerk that was in posted in Hometown News Now. Commissioners oversee the elections; the Clerk administers them. There are 92 counties in our state and only 5 have the Clerk and Voter Registration as separate departments. Suggested Voter Registration uses the van prior to elections then County Election Board during the elections for voting.

Elizabeth Bergeron, 1018 Providence Street, Michigan City, mobile voting van needs to be given back to the Clerk with no excuses.

Jody Slabaugh, 2402 N. State Road 39, La Porte, requested his name be removed from the May 18, 2022 minutes.

Spencer England, 516 E Street, La Porte, document the use of the mobile voting van and possibly add a tracking system.

Heather Oake, 3306 N. 50 E., La Porte, keys to the van should be given back. Bible says not to even have the appearance of evil.

Earl Cunningham, 6311 W. Shiva Drive, La Porte, commended Jonathan Mendez who was honored at the beginning of the meeting. Stated if Nelson Pichardo helped write the grant on the Commissioners' behalf for the mobile voting van, he would like to see those minutes.

Tim Stabosz, Auditor, located the grant application that was submitted for the mobile voting van. Attorney Shaw Friedman's signature is on it.

Donna Johnson, 1037 Indiana Ave, La Porte, heard about the Oath Keepers issue. An oath is taken to uphold the Constitution. Disheartening to hear slander about someone being an Oath Keeper, and not a member of an organization but someone who keeps their oath when they take office.

Attorney Shaw Friedman, his office was very much a part of applying for the grant. Proud that a \$68,000 grant was sought for then awarded during 2020 for non-partisan safe elections while voting in La Porte County.

Francine Kalita, 4372 N. 675 W., Michigan City, there is a cost for using the mobile voting van. Tax payer money. Disagreed with the van being used throughout the county for registering voters.

Allen Stevens, Republican County Chair, amend the agenda and vote tonight to move Voter Registration office under the control of the Clerk.

April Daly, 1707 N. 675 W., La Porte, doesn't understand the issue with the van. We should want to register people to vote.

Department Reports/Department Head Comments

Connie Gramarossa, Councilwoman and liaison to Voter Registration, congratulated Gail Cains on her retirement as of October 1st. Since Voter Registration falls under the Commissioners, they might want to address the issue with Gail's replacement who will be taking vacation November 1st-8th. Commented on a press release issued by President Matias to Clerk Stevens about the van. Stated the schedule for the van in the Primary Election that was kept by Voter Registration: Monday, April 25th 9am-1pm in Fish Lake; 2:30-4pm in La Porte at Cambridge Apartments; Tuesday, April 26th 10am-2pm United Methodist Church in Rolling Prairie; Wednesday, April 27th 10am-2pm (no location); Thursday, April 28th 10am-2pm Maple City Square Apartments; Friday, April 29th 10am-12pm Lakeland Estates; 1-3:30pm Blvd Gardens in Michigan City. Proof that the van was used.

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council to purchase a printer/copier for the nature center. **Jeremey Sobecki**, Parks Department. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to purchase office furniture for the new Rolling Prairie Highway Garage. **Duane Werner**, Highway Superintendent, not to exceed \$5,000. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Old Business

Considered First 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 approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Motion to restore keys to Mobile Van to County Clerk on assurances that van will be deployed immediately for non-partisan voter registration at events, festivals and high school parking lots for registration up to October 11th deadline and then used for Early Voting purposes - all as permitted under grant by Center for Tech & Civic Life. **Commissioner Joe Haney** motioned to approve keys be given to the County Election Board. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider authorizing the County Attorney's office to enforce the MS4 General Permit Holder's Stop Work Order with a court filing. **Mike Polan**, Building Commissioner, supports the action. There have been no zoning violations on the D&M site but that doesn't mean they can operate freely while a stop work order is in place from another agency. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

New Business

Considered contract for construction inspection on Marquette Trail Project, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0**

Considered contract with Peterson Consulting Services, Inc., **Tim Stabosz**, Auditor. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered \$3,351.58 claim to Kelley Hamilton for damage to vehicle from county lawn mower. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered \$25,000 settlement for LaRon Ross v. La Porte County Sheriff, Guy DiMartino. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered November 8, 2022 General Election Polling Locations, Heather Stevens, Clerk. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Haney, glad to see van returned to the County Election Board. Attended a meeting with Solid Waste. Recycling for 7-1 took place over the weekend. Festivals are coming up, Door Village Harvest Fest, Westville Pumpkin Fest, and Wanatah Scarecrow Fest. Salvation Army will have 'Stuff a Bus.' Attended AIC Conference in South Bend. Lots of topics covered from battery storage, solar panels, ARPA funds, an app for broadband with NACo called TestIT where they are compiling their own data, JRAC and creating services for mental health. Grand opening for Sebort Woods.

Commissioner Mrozinski, EMS/Highway new building in Rolling Prairie are moving right along. Waiting on electric to be hooked up. On the 8th he met with staff of Congressman Banks. The VA Clinic in Mishawaka was renamed after the late Congresswoman Jackie Walorski. On the 12th he met with Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch. Attended AIC conference and workshops were great. Nice chat with Jake German. Representative Jim Pressel recently named Head of Ways and Means Committee. The museum put on a great presentation for veterans including uniforms and a booklet with information on each, great job done by the staff.

Commissioner Matias, congratulations to the 2022 Historians of the Year for the La Porte County Historical Society Museum - Greg Fruth, Mark Williams, and the Peter C./Charlene J. Kesling Foundation for promoting and preserving the history of La Porte County. The museum is a treasure trove and great fun to visit. **La Porte County Works!** program highlighted Tonn & Blank in Michigan City, who celebrated their 100th year in La Porte County. They are the leading construction management and design-build firm in the Midwest and a key partner to generating millions in economic development for communities. They are also one of our county's biggest supporters of non-profit causes and organizations. Local non-profit support includes A. K. Smith Center, Boys & Girls Clubs, Franciscan Alliance Foundation, Unity Foundation of La Porte County, and dozens more in the Northwest Indiana area. In 2020 Tonn and Blank established the Tonn and Blank Off-site Construction Division located in the Northpoint Development Midwest Trade Center (MTC). As a subsidiary of Tonn and Blank Construction, the company is located at 6500 U.S. 421 in Westville Indiana. Off-site construction is faster, safer, more regulated and requires less coordination efforts resulting in more productivity and improved quality control. The new 85,000 square foot facility maximizes their self-reliance and complete advantage by improving each projects quality, safety scheduling and site logistics. All aspects of a project can be constructed in the facility including bathroom

Pods, exam rooms, offices, electrical and data distributions rooms and exterior wall systems. The company has approximately 35 employees at the Off-Site Construction Facility. Nationally, they employ over 250 people. All insurance, 401K and additional benefits are paid by the employer. The company hires through the local building trades. For more information call the Tonn and Blank Off-Site Construction Division at 800-871-1555 or visit tonnandblank.com

President Sheila Matias adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 10-5-2022

Sheila Matias
[Signature]

ATTEST: _____ Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL