

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
October 24th, 2022 at 6:00PM

A regular meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on October 24th, 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 6:00pm by the Council President, Randy Novak.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Novak, followed by a moment of silence for the recently deceased Deputy Tobin Babcock.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Novak, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Mollenhauer, Mr. Garner, and Mrs. Gramarossa were all physically present for the meeting.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 24th, 2022 AGENDA

Mr. Rosenbaum requested to add additional items to the agenda:

1. Under New Business: item no. 7 "Homeward Bound – ARP Request", and item no. 8 "Coroner – Permission to spend from Non-Reverting Fund."
2. Under Old Business: "Franklin St. Bridge."
3. Under Appropriations, Transfers, and Requests: La Porte County Prosecutor – The listed appropriation should be \$18,810.67, **NOT** \$187,810.67.
4. Under Old Business: Mr. Rosenbaum clarified that Thate GLE would be providing the survey service for all three of the listed cemeteries at a total cost of \$5,100.00.
 - i. Motion to approve made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
 - ii. All members voted in-favor.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 26th, 2022 MEETING MINUTES

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

THERE WERE NO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT WISHED TO SPEAK.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS

Nicole Messacar – MS4 Director

Ms. Messacar approached the Council to ask for permission to apply for the Drive Green Indiana grant, which would pay for 80% of a new department vehicle with a 20% match from the County. She added that there was no cost to apply for the grant, and that payments would only be needed for the 20% match or if the County opted to join a premium membership with Drive Green Indiana. Mr. Mollenhauer noted that the County already paid for mileage for travelling employees, to which Ms. Messacar noted that roughly \$6,000 had been reimbursed to MS4 employees for mileage in the previous year, and that her personal vehicle, having been used for MS4 travel, was at 250,000 miles and would likely be unable to be used for County purposes in the near future. Mr. Yagelski asked if Drive Green Indiana's vehicles ran strictly on E85 fuel, which Ms. Messacar explained that Drive Green Indiana offered a wide variety of vehicles, with the intent that any vehicle they provide was designated to have improved fuel economy over the grant recipients' current fleet of vehicles. Mr. Cunningham stated that he believed that the County already had too many company vehicles as-is.

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

Jeremy Sobecki – Parks Superintendent

Mr. Sobecki explained that he had also been considering applying for the Drive Green Indiana grant, which would allow him to replace a van that he would have needed to acquire ARP funds to pay for otherwise. He added that this would not add to his fleet of vehicles, as it would be replacing a vehicle that was slated to be removed from the fleet due to its age and condition.

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

Mr. Cunningham recommended making a blanket motion that would allow for any department to apply for the grant, as simply applying didn't cost anything, and department heads would need to approach the Council to approve the 20% anyway.

- i. Motion to amend the original motion to allow for any departments to apply for the Drive Green Indiana grant made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

Mike Schultz – Assessor

Regarding an unpaid bill of \$7,197.96 for computers, Mr. Schultz approached the Council for approval to spend from his Sales Disclosure Fund to ensure that the bill could be paid.

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

Monique Thomas – Human Resources Director

Mrs. Thomas noted that she did not see her requests to move her part-time employee to full-time and reclassification of her Human Resources Assistant to non-exempt on the agenda. Council Attorney Guy DiMartino explained that if the request was to be addressed during the current meeting, a motion to amend the agenda would need to be made. Mr. Novak noted that the items would be held over until the following month, which Mrs. Thomas confirmed would be fine.

Tony Rodriguez – Economic Development Director

Mr. Rodriguez introduced Bailey McGrath, associate of the office of Economic Development, to show a PowerPoint presentation on the October 27th Broadband Workshop. During the presentation of the slideshow, Ms. McGrath explained that the members of the taskforce were listed on the broadband project's website, and added that the goal of the taskforce was to put broadband in all of La Porte County's residents' homes, with an emphasis on utilizing grants to pay for the project's funding. Mr. Rodriguez gave the councilmembers a BEADS checklist, which utilized a 10-item checklist to measure broadband expansion success. He explained that currently, La Porte County checked 8 out of the ten boxes, making La Porte significantly ahead of the curve on broadband expansion.

LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Cunningham – Mr. Cunningham waived his liaison report.

Councilman Yagelski – Mr. Yagelski waived his liaison report.

Councilman Rosenbaum – Mr. Rosenbaum reported that he attended the Redevelopment Commission meeting in the previous month, and that another would be held the upcoming Wednesday. He added that he had heard from all his other liaisons.

Councilman Garner – Mr. Garner waived his liaison report.

Councilwoman Gramarossa – Mrs. Gramarossa explained that she was proud of her work on the Redevelopment Commission and was grateful to be able to continue serving on it. She rebuked Mr. Mollenhauer for statements he had recently made in the media, regarding her absence from several RDC meetings, absences which she emphasized had been a result of her parents passing away. She added that even in the event of not all members of the board being present, the board possessed the capacity to continue to follow through with its duties to the County.

Councilman Mollenhauer – Mr. Mollenhauer attended the 2022 Mental Health Summit in Indianapolis, a summit that he explained could yield two important bills that could positively affect the state of mental health services in the state of Indiana and the county of La Porte.

Councilman Novak – Mr. Novak added that he had intended to attend the Mental Health Summit with Mr. Mollenhauer, however a last-minute emergency meeting in Michigan City caused him to cancel his plans to do so. He gave thanks to the businesses and individuals assisting with La Porte’s current mental healthcare needs and challenges.

CORRESPONDENCE

The auditor reported that there was no correspondence.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Solid Waste District Budget Adoption

Mr. Cunningham asked Solid Waste Director Clay Turner what his staff pay increase would be, as the Council had passed a 10% increase for all County employees across the board. Mr. Turner explained that if a 10% pay increase for Solid Waste employees was approved, he would need to go back to his board and the DLGF for advertisement, as he typically advertised a 5% pay increase every year. He added that he strongly approved of the across-the-board 10% increase.

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

ii. All members voted in-favor.

2. La Porte County Budget Adoption

Mr. Novak noted that the adoptions approval would authorize everything that the Council had approved of so far, including the 200 and 300 accounts.

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

3. Hanna Township Budget Adoption

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

**4. Consider approval of Council President's authorization to hire replacement positions for:
La Porte County Clerk – Deputy Clerk position**

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

**5. La Porte County Juvenile Services – Requesting approval of:
The recommendation for the Registered Nurse to move from a PAT III classification to a PAT VI**

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

6. Prosecuting Attorney – Discussion of his VOCA Grant being cut by 25%

Prosecuting Attorney John Lake explained that the VOCA Grant paid for three of his victim's advocates, who collectively manage 5,000 cases. With the grant being cut, he noted that he would lose \$37,000 worth of funding that paid for one of these advocates. He proposed that the Council consider utilizing Public Safety LIT funds in 2023 to allow for the payment of said victim's advocate. Mr. Novak advised that the item be pulled and readvertised for the January 2023 meeting; there were no objections to pulling the item.

7. Homeward Bound – ARP Request

Homeward Bound President Sandra Keller approached the Council to request \$340,000 from ARP for site development for a co-op based rental housing project in Michigan City, which would be utilized by impoverished citizens that fell in the 30%-50% median income bracket. The funding would allow for construction of three buildings that housed four units each, and would in turn accommodate 24 residents on one acre of land. Site infrastructure work would begin in early 2023, with construction forecasted to end later in 2023 so it may begin bringing in residents. Ms. Keller noted that even though Homeward Bound was only requesting \$340,000 from the Council, the entirety of the project's cost was \$2.7 million.

Mr. Yagelski asked what security measures Homeward Bound would take to ensure that the investment remained safe long-term, which Ms. Keller explained that residents would be

responsible for managing the day-to-day needs as a community, with support through Homeward Bound. She added that some fencing already bordered the property, and that security cameras could be a consideration. Additionally, Ms. Keller noted that Homeward Bound would want feedback from the residents as to what security measures they would like to see on the property. Mr. Yagelski recommended that Homeward Bound reach out to the Chief of Police to get an idea of what kind of security measures should be provided for on the property. Ms. Keller added that the terms of the lease available for the housing would allow for the removal of a resident should there be a threat of property damage.

Ms. Keller explained that money-in-hand and institutional funding was also being utilized to help build the site, with some funds coming from Federal Home Loan Bank of Indiana and Indiana Housing & Community Development assisting significantly with the project. Funds from these institutions were secured sparingly, as the process to acquire the funds required longer wait times, which in turn would set back construction time. Ms. Keller also noted that Homeward Bound was actively applying for grants to assist with the project's funding.

- i. Motion to support to approve the item if Michigan City would agree to pay \$172,500 or 50% of the project's funding made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

Mr. Garner asked what the size of each unit would be, which Ms. Keller answered 500 square feet per co-op unit. Mr. Yagelski noted that each unit's construction came out to roughly \$230,000, which Ms. Keller explained that the heightened cost was due to density and size requirements of the buildings that met Homeward Bound's vision for community living. Mr. Yagelski proposed taking the funding and revitalizing unsellable, larger homes around Michigan City instead, which Ms. Keller noted that staggering the properties would diminish the sense of community that Homeward Bound strived to achieve. Mr. Cunningham analyzed the square footage cost for the 500 square foot units with budget, and noted that the cost to build each unit came out to roughly \$458 per square foot, which he could not support due to the high price. Mr. Novak clarified that the funding would also be paying for infrastructure, road installation, and wetland management, not just the building of the residential units.

Homeward Bound Co-Founder John Vander Wagen III spoke about Homeward Bound's mission to help the community by offering them an opportunity to harness their social skills, which would in turn help with employment, social skills, and those in needs of mental health services. He added that the cost of materials had skyrocketed post-pandemic; when the project was in its beginning states in 2019, the cost for one square foot of living space came out to \$100, whereas in 2022, this cost almost tripled to nearly \$300 per square foot of living space.

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

8. Coroner – Permission to spend from Non-Reverting Fund

As part of her request to spend from the Non-Reverting Fund, Coroner Lynn Swanson noted that she wanted to include the purchase of new uniforms, however she did not have an exact total as to what the uniforms would cost.

- i. Motion to table until a total cost of all the requested items was procured made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. Six members voted in-favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Novak, Mr. Mollenhauer and Mr. Garner) and one member voted not-in-favor (Mrs. Gramarossa).

Mr. DiMartino noted that the purpose of a Non-Reverting Fund was that a department head could simply come before the Council to note their intention to spend without requiring an appropriation; however, he understood why it was tabled as an exact total for the cost of the Coroner's intended purchases had not been provided. Mr. Novak asked Ms. Swanson to email the Council with the cost totals of the items she intended to purchase with the Non-Reverting Fund.

9. Franklin Street Bridge discussion

Mr. Cunningham explained that due to the unique circumstances that allowed for the required work on the Franklin Street Bridge to be completed at substantial savings, that utilizing the traditional Public Purchasing Statute would impair the functioning of La Porte County. He added that he would like to attach to his motion a piece of correspondence from Marquiss Electric Inc. from September 9th, 2022, setting forth the proposed work to the bridge from the following contractors: Marquiss Electric Inc., Wiss, Janney Elstner Associates Inc. (a.k.a WJE Associates), and Harrison Electric. Mr. Cunningham requested that said piece of correspondence be included in the October 24th, 2022 meeting minutes, and to be consistent with the language the Commissioners passed the previous Wednesday, his motion would be to provide protection for the Auditor of any possible violations of the Public Purchasing Statutes on the historical Franklin Street Bridge.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Pioneer Cemetery

Requesting Additional Appropriations from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

Survey Cost

a. Sharp Cemetery	\$4,100
b. Miriam Benedict Memorial Cemetery	\$3,900
c. Webster Cemetery	\$3,900

Retracement Costs for each Parcel I.D.

a. 46-05-22-200-015.000-046	\$2,100
b. 46-14-06-100-004.000-056	\$1,500

c. 46-09-34-300-016.000-027 \$2,500
(Tabled from September 26th, 2022 Council Meeting)

Quote from Thate GLE Engineers and Surveyors \$5,100
i. Motion to take off the table made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ii. All members voted in-favor.

Mr. Novak explained that a last-minute contractor, Thate GLE, had provided a quote of \$5,100 that would provide survey services for all three of the listed cemeteries, and that selecting their quote was to the preference of the Pioneer Cemetery Commission.

i. Motion to approve Thate GLE as the selected contractor at a quote of \$5,100 out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Garner.

ii. All members voted in-favor.

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, AND REQUESTS

Honorable Judge Greta Stirling Friedman, Superior Court No. 4

Requesting permission to transfer \$24.60 from 1000-20048-000-0152 (Bailiff Supplies) to 1000-30009-000-0152 (Dues) to cover Indiana State Bar Association Dues for Magistrate John A. Link

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

ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Animal Shelter

Requesting permission to transfer \$2500 from 4100-20200-000-05321 (Donation) to 1000-20025-000-0156 (Gas and Oil).

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

ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Auditor

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

Brown Mackie bills \$27,025.54

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

ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Maintenance

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

Utilities for the remainder of the year \$145,000

- i. Motion to approve out of ARP (8950/8951) made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Planner

Requesting Additional Appropriation from WIN Tax (4220) for:

Matching Grant for IDNR-Next Level Grant \$304,000

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

Stepping Stone Shelter

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

To assist with operational cost for reimbursable grants \$150,000

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

North Central Community Action Agencies

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

Building an addition to the Wise Center \$50,000

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

Chief Deputy Auditor Vaughn Galloway inquired if the \$50,000 line item was a single payment, or was to be paid for in two increments, which Mr. Novak noted that a previously approved payment of \$150,000 for the organization had been designated to be split between two years (\$75,000 in 2022 and an additional \$75,000 to be distributed in 2023), however the listed line item of \$50,000 was a single-increment payment that was not being divided.

La Porte County Parks Department

Requesting Additional Appropriations from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

- 1. Electric Bills \$5,000
- 2. Color Printer for the Nature Center not-to-exceed \$3,900

- i. Motion to approve both items out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County E-911

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

Motorola Bill \$91,734

- i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mrs. Gramarossa and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Community Corrections

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

Compensation Payout not-to-exceed \$19,000

- i. Motion to approve out of Riverboat (1191) made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County EMS

Requesting Additional Appropriations from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

- 1. Replacement of computers not-to-exceed \$25,000
- 2. Fuel budget shortage \$25,000
- 3. Uniform Shortage \$5,000

EMS Administrator Eric Fenstermaker explained that, following a previous request for additional appropriations, EMS had overestimated how much funding they needed and currently had a roughly \$28,000 surplus of unused appropriations that could be directed to line-item no. 2, the surplus funds which currently sat in his Corporate Compliances Fund (36301), under the sub-account Fuel & Oil (20025). Mr. Galloway advised addressing the second line item and deferring the transfer of the surplus funds until the next Council meeting, as he was unsure if they were distributed from ARP (8950/8951), which he would need to confirm before any action could be taken.

- i. Motion to approve line items no. 1 and no. 3 out of LIT (1112) or ARP (8950/8951) if LIT (1112) could not be approved made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Human Resources

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

Office Supplies \$2,000

- i. Motion to approve out of General (1000) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. All members voted in-favor.

La Porte County Sheriff

Requesting Additional Appropriation from Riverboat (1191) or ARP (8950/8951) or General (1000) or LIT (1112) for:

9 Ford Explorers, 2 Ford F-150 pickups, and necessary equipment and striping not-to-exceed \$540,000

Mr. Yagelski asked how many vehicles would be traded in in exchange for purchasing new vehicles, which Sheriff John Boyd explained that no vehicles would be traded, however two would be held back as spares and the remaining ten were designated to be sold outright.

- i. Motion to approve out of LIT (1112) made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

Mr. Yagelski asked that if the purchase was made in 2023, if the Public Safety LIT could be utilized to pay for the vehicles instead. Mr. Boyd explained that this would be okay, however the cost for the equipment would need to be paid for immediately and could not wait until 2023.

- ii. Motion to amend the previous motion to allow for \$75,000 from LIT (1112) to pay for the vehicles' equipment, with the remainder of the costs to come out of Public Safety LIT in 2023 made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.

Mrs. Gramarossa inquired how the vehicles would be sold, which Mr. Boyd confirmed that in previous sales, the Commissioners contracted an auctioneer service to auction off the vehicles, who in turn provided a commission check for the total sale. He added that the two items sold at auction previously, a 30 year-old flat-bottomed boat and a 16-year old van, had brought in \$8,460 from the auction. He added that if the auction were done efficiently, especially if the vehicles set to be sold were not lumped-in with other items, that the auction method would yield more income for the County than would trading in the vehicles.

- iii. All members voted in-favor.

COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Auditor Tim Stabosz announced to the Council that the official account number for Public Safety LIT would be 1113. [Editor's Note: This was subsequently changed to 1170.]

Mr. Cunningham took a moment to thank Council Attorney Guy DiMartino for assisting with solving conflicts with the Franklin Street Bridge request.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Examined & Approved by The La Porte County Council this 28th day of November, 2022.



Councilman Earl Cunningham



Councilman Terry Garner



Councilwoman Connie Gramarossa



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



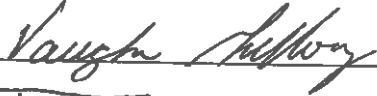
Councilman Randy Novak

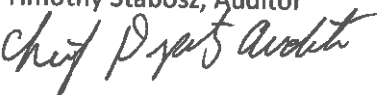


Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz, Auditor


Chief Deputy Auditor