



**LA PORTE COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202
La Porte, IN 46350-3400
(219) 326-6C808 ext. 2229

**Joseph Haney
President**

**Connie Gramarossa
Vice President**

**Richard Mrozinski
Member**

**Laporte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

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

Roll Call

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the roll: **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** – Present; **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** Present Via Zoom, Claiming Medical Exemption, **President Joe Haney** – Present. **Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.**

Consider Agenda

Commissioner Connie Gramarossa stated that items “H, I, L, and N” needed to be removed from Considerations and made a **motion to remove items**. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded**. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider Approval of Minutes

President Haney suggested Considered approval of the March 16, 2023 minutes. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded**. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Consideration of Claims

Auditor Tim Stabosz read Claims. **Payroll** ending 03/17/2023 in the amount of \$1,453,927.38 and **Operating Expense Claims** in the amount of \$5,335,471.60. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** had a question on Operating Expenses and asked was Mr. Stevens present at the meeting or on zoom. He wanted to know about the purchase of a piece of equipment for \$48,000, he didn't see it listed on the Claims but did see a list where you could buy the same piece of identical equipment for \$28,000. Mr. Mrozinski wanted to know because he never seen a purchase request come across the Commissioners' desk to buy equipment or to Council for payment and why do we have the same piece of equipment with a \$20,000 difference. He stated it's a little bit troubling to him, wanted an explanation because it's taxpayers' dollars. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated that she did see the same piece of equipment and requested Charity to send her some documentation. It was brought to her attention if the purchase is under \$50,000 it doesn't need the Commission/Council approval, but does not know whether this is true or not. She has not received anything from Charity as of yet but informed Mr. Mrozinski that as soon as she gets information she will forward it to him. Mr. Jones or Mr. Stabosz did not have any concrete answers on procedure(s) in regards to the dollar amounts at this time as well. Mr. Mrozinski stated he'd like to know what's going on and it doesn't pass the smell test ladies and gentlemen. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve payroll and claims**. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded**. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Public Comment

Jennifer Childress, Family Advocate stated we work with a lot of youth in a variety of manners, and one is dealing with children who are abused or neglected. She said April is Child Abuse Prevention month. They wanted to know if they could get the Commissioners' approval to hang blue bows and give them some pens to wear.

Rick Kentaft, La Porte, stated he had two issues to discuss with the Commission on today. The first is, he sees that Integrias has advertised for the HR position for La Porte County. It looks like the requirements for the position were dropped. Our current Interim HR Director has a Master's Degree and they are looking for someone with a Bachelor's Degree. He said they lowered the standards and the county is paying out \$17,000 for them to do so and talking about raising the salary for the position. Mr. Kentaft said it looks like things aren't being done in the best interest of the county. The next thing he wanted was to present two ARPA requests for texts and emails and to hand over to the Commission today and wanted this to go into record. They are for Mr. Haney and Mr. Stabosz. Attorney Jones informed Mr. Kentaft to contact him if he has any concerns or questions.

Phyliss Marsh, La Porte commented on the barn out at the county home. She is one of the people who helped restore it. Ms. Marsh wanted to know who was responsible for the fence. The white fence goes with the barn. She has had several calls about the fence. Phyliss wanted to know if the fence would be taken care of and **President Joe Haney** informed her that it would be.

Rodney McCormick, Candidate 1st Ward Michigan City, expressed his thanks for the work on the Michigan City Courthouse. He stated the work being done on it and the cleaning is making it a lot brighter there has been a big improvement. Rodney wanted to thank everyone for their efforts and hard work. Also, he went on to state that it was a waste of tax dollars to replace HR position in the county. He wanted to know why we are going through all of this just to get rid of someone. The \$17,000 should be invested in training or putting it somewhere else. Rodney stated the commission has done a lot for him and he's encouraged with the things that has been done. The violence in Michigan City is out of control especially with minors and something needs to be done about this, we need help and you can't keep ignoring this.

Sherry Banic, La Porte, stated she had a couple things she would like to address and make known to the public and Commissioners. Ms. Sherry has been before the board several times in regards to Meadow View. There is a drain being put, there is storm water going into the drain and there are some flooding issues going on. She stated her issue is with the shifting of the flooding to one neighbor to the next. The drain was supposed to have clean water, not storm water and she wants to know who's going to fix this problem. She asked why didn't someone have to come before the Board to get funding to do the road. She said this is ridiculous that we are spending so much of our tax dollars on a private subdivision to accommodate possibly six houses. Ms. Sherry wants to know who's going to oversee the valve so that they don't have flooding.

Dean White, La Porte, stated he has been a longtime advocate for tourist guide, La Porte County Visitors' Bureau. He is trying to promote for many years now what is called a vista view, it's called Soldiers Memorial Park at the intersection of Pine Lake and Waverly. It's well overgrown with shrubs. Most of the property is owned by the county, and a small portion owned by the state and city. He stated it's an urgency at this time and would like for the Commission to look into this.

Department Head Comments

Amanda Lahners, Health Department stated the water lab in La Porte is closed due to the flood and will not be open for quite sometime. We were able to enter into an agreement with the lab in Mishawaka. So we will still be able to provide services to our county residents. We are accepting samples on Mondays

and Wednesday on 8th Street in Michigan City temporarily from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. for bacterial and chemical analysis.

Sean Fitzpatrick, Head of Facilities stated Marquiss Electric came out to assist with restoring the power new boilers out in stock and the prep in the Sheriff's Department. The pump was replaced in the lift station in the complex Building. The boilers in the Juvenile Center have been installed and are up and running. At the Community Corrections new boilers are in stock and the prep work is in progress. We have been working on the painting in the Michigan City Courthouse and we have more projects that are going to take place. In the Hiler Building, we have been working the elevator. The internal components and the operation of it is outdated. We are in the process of getting quotes to replace the components and an update will be given on the cost of this. This elevator in this building is the only way to be in ADA compliance having access to the second floor. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated once the quotes are in he will be approaching the Commission for permission to approach the Council for purchase. We did have one issue with two individuals being trapped in the Jail elevator but we have taken care of that and everything should be good. The clock service and bell now up and running. Had an issue at Community Corrections, an individual had escaped but we are working on having things tamper proof. Compressor for lg unit replaced in the La Porte Courthouse and one on order. We have six new part-time employees for our maintenance staff and looking to increase part time staff and start an evening crew to cover cleaning of work spaces. 684 work orders have been closed, 34 were for paper delivery for the month of March. **President Joe Haney** thank Mr. Fitzpatrick and his crew for their hard work and informed him that it is much appreciated. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he will be addressing the fencing issue and he was aware of this just waiting for better weather conditions.

Rob Sabie, EMA gave an update on last Friday's storm. There was a little bit of hail damage on the first round that went through. We spent two days looking at the damage reports that had been received. There are some trees down and the county highway department has been taking care of this. With alerting the county do provide a smart 911 app for weather alerts and closings. The sirens did go off and the app is just a backup. We were supposed to be on the agenda for a mitigation plan and it's in review. As soon as the information is received the Commission will be informed.

Requests

None at this time.

Old Business

None at this time.

New Business

Consider LCSD 2023 contract – **Sheriff Heeg**. He stated that they had their jail inspection done by the Indiana Department of Corrections and they gave the jail an excellent rating. He stated we have an agreement with the Sheriff's office legal deputy, the attorney has reviewed this and we are asking for approval of the Commission. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider support to proceed to the County Council and request monies from Opioid settlement to purchase two TruNarc drug test instruments – **Sheriff Heeg**. He stated that Laporte County was part of a class action law suit and will be receiving monies over a five year span. We would like to make a purchase of two TruNarc drug test instruments so that whenever drugs are confiscated eliminate the need for officers to have to touch the drug itself. The instrument will determine type of drug. Sheriff Heeg asked permission from the Commission to approach the Council for funding on this. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider on call agreement with Etica Corp for the not to exceed amount of \$60,000 and permission to approach the County Council for their approval – **Jerry Sullivan, Engineer**. He stated he was here to request permission from the Commission to approach the Council for an on call agreement with Etica for \$60,000. They will be used as a second set of eyes when projects come up, on call inspections, calculations, etc. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to table for further discussion. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider retiree pay for Vicki Ewart 60 sick days and 2 weeks vacation – **Heather Stevens, Clerk**. She stated Vicki is retiring after 32 years and she needs to pay her for sick days and vacation. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider annual service agreement for purchase of Tek84 Intercept Whole Body Scanner – Serial Number SN20040016 and Verizon wireless funding update – **Mericka Beaty, Community Corrections**. She stated their scanner annual agreement is due and it is \$495.00 more than last year. She is asking permission to approach the Council for the \$495.00. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider proposed amendment to the SRI contract with county – **Tim Stabosz, Auditor**. He stated himself and Treasurer Winski have reviewed contract and SRI have handled the county's tax sales. After several years SRI have up the fee from \$100.00 to \$125.00 and there were no other significant changes. Attorney Jones stated he has looked over contract and he had no comments or concerns. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider permission for La Porte Courthouse Lawn use for 11th annual prevent child abuse walk. Meagan read off briefly some history of the awareness of the Annual Child Abuse Walk and activities that take place on the day of this event. The blue walk is just one way to bring awareness or by wearing a blue ribbon of child Abuse Awareness. Meagan is asking permission from the Commission for the gathering on the courthouse lawn for the walk. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider request to close Small Road from Orchard Avenue to Forrester Road for the La Porte County 43rd Annual Sprint Triathlon. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated that he has participated in this event over the years and the sheriff department have been involved making sure things are safe. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motioned carried 3-0.**

Consider sick days and 1 month insurance extension for retiring employee – **Erika Stallworth, Juvenile Services**. She stated there would be a gap with her benefits during this transition and is requesting sick days paid and an extension with her insurance. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider RFQ for engagement of industrial appraisal firm – **Attorney Andrew Jones**. He stated there was a need for industrial appraisal firm and he will be willing to prepare a RFQ for insurance purposes. Having insurance in this regard is vitally important. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motioned carried 3-0.**

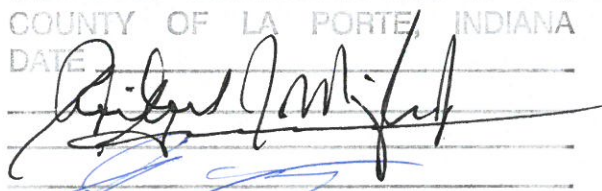
Consider settlement of \$7000 for property damage – **Attorney Andrew Jones**. He stated there was an accident with a county vehicle involving damage to another vehicle. Gallagher and Bassett is handling this. The claim processor has done a good job of settling claim for \$6500.00 and advised that we should accept this. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve not to exceed \$7000.00. President Joe Haney seconded. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa abstained. Motioned carried 2-1.**

Consider letter from office of the Indiana Attorney General and release of Prosecutors records. **President Joe Haney** stated that he had received letters from the attorney general's office. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated that she thought that this item had been tabled. **President Joe Haney** stated that he had received a demand letter and additional letters since the last meeting. He read information from some of the letters and recommendations from attorney general's office staff. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated Mr. Fagan has not taken her up on her offers to get open case files or come into the office to speak with her, or come to the Commissioners' meeting and has threatened me with obstruction of justice. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated he is in agreement with **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** because Mr. Fagan has had ample opportunity to show up in the Commissions' meeting and has failed to do so. **Attorney Andrew Jones** stated these emails belong to his office and not him personally. He recommends Mr. Fagan get his own prosecutor's server for his office going forward. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated again our attorney is representing stakeholder and the stakeholder himself does not have legal representation here today. **Attorney Jones** stated he does not represent Sean Fagan. **President Joe Haney** stated there has to be a vote today denying or accepting the demand. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated again that this issue has been tabled and it's being brought up again on another angle which **President Joe Haney** informed her that he has not had any contact with the attorney general's office, and he has to vote on this. Also, he stated either way a vote needs to be made today this is something we just can't push off, because we would be in violation of the law and obstruction of justice from the attorney general's office. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated again Commissioner Connie Gramarossa has made an offer to Mr. Fagan to come into the office to discuss specifically what he wants and we are in compliance with that move. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** also stated he information that he has recently learned about this case, he will not discuss it in an open meeting, but would discuss it in an executive session. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski stated he will abstain from any further involvement in it.** **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa stated that she will abstain as well.** **Attorney Jones stated then your vote carries then, if you would like to vote Mr. Haney.** **President Joe Haney replied in that case we would be in compliance with the attorney general's office in release of this information.** **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated that she wants it stated at this public meeting that this is forced upon me by the president of the Commission and the attorney. **Attorney Andrew Jones** said to be clear I have never denied you. Because the only one representing this, and hopes that someone comes forward and ask for these, all these billings, that podium is empty. Mr. Fagan has made no attempt to come here and ask for anything in public meeting. There's been private meetings in Tim Stabosz's office. Where ever this goes, this goes. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated she's going to have to consult with her personal attorney on this. She said she has asked for an attorney and was denied an attorney, and as far as she's concerned, she is done with this meeting. **President Joe Haney** informed her that we are still in session and you can make a motion on this, you can move to deny the request, I'm not stopping you on this. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated to Attorney Andrew Jones you just said he could make the motion by himself. **Attorney Andrew Jones** then stated there are a couple things we need to clarify. First, if you were seeking legal counsel I would never deny that request. My integrity is involved here. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated again let him make the decision. Now you want to go back on what you originally said and reword it. **Attorney Andrew Jones** stated he needs time to research and apologize for what he originally said. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated he had a question. He asked Attorney Jones why would you be meeting with the auditor to discuss this case? The auditor and the attorney stated that did not ever happen. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** then asked the attorney why would you charge us for this because I'm looking at the invoices where you charged us for this do discuss Mr. Fagan knowing you are his personal attorney, that whole thing doesn't smell good to me. He questions why the auditor would have an interest in this case unless there is an ulterior motive. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated Commissioner Connie Gramarossa was right this was tabled and unless you take it off it stays there and I would like to make a motion again to table it for further information. He said Commissioner Connie Gramarossa has offered to give Mr. Fagan what he wants if he comes forth and tells her specifically what he wants. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated she would like to leave the meeting now she feels like she's being emotionally and physically bullied and requested to leave the meeting.

Adjournment

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to adjourned at 11:30 a.m. President Joe Haney seconded.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE _____



ATTEST: _____
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA