



**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, February 15, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

President Joe Haney called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the **Pledge of Allegiance** led by **Dakota Euler**.

Roll Call

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the roll: **President Joe Haney** – Present; **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** – Present; **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** was **not present**; **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** attempted to claim a fifth medical exemption in a row and it was not recognized. **Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.**

Consider Agenda

President Joe Haney asked was there any additions, solutions or corrections to the agenda and there were none at this time.

Consider Approval of Minutes

President Haney suggested Considered approval of the February 1, 2023 minutes. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **President Joe Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Consideration of Claims

Auditor Tim Stabosz read Claims. Payroll ending 02/03/2023 in the amount of \$1,498,866.65 and Operating Expense Claims in the amount of \$6,230,811.87. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **President Joe Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Public Comment

Don Ensign, Veterans Memorial Parkway Commission stated purpose of their groups is to build memorials. They are in the process of completing of series of projects pertaining to the Veterans Memorial Parkway in surrounding areas and within this county. They want to create a tribute honoring those who have served and sacrificed for our country. He informed the Commissioners they he had a couple of packets for them to review and wanted to know if they would consider making a contribution to their Memorial for Veterans. **President Joe Haney** informed **Don** that this would be taken under advisement.

Rick Kentaft, La Porte County states he has concerns about the AME Consultant Contract that was signed by the county. He spoke on the salary of Paul Vinson in reference to the salaries of the three previous people working with the previous contract. He wants to know if the person hired would be doing on site inspections and working within Laporte county or from another him in South Carolina which supposedly he purchased for him and his family. Rick wants to ensure the taxpayers are getting the most for their dollars. In conclusion, he briefly expressed what the rules of HIPPA stated and asked **Attorney Jones** whether or not he agreed with them concerning **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski**.

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski asked **Attorney Jones** was he going to allow **President Joe Haney** to completely change the nature of the ordinance. Not only in reference to what it states but overrule what has been written and approved and ignore what a doctor stated about his medical condition. **Attorney Jones** stated he was posed this question at the first meeting of the year about being in attendance for Commissioners' meetings in person or via virtual attendance policy from a rule perspective. He expressed to **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** that **President Joe Haney**, being the chairperson has the power to make the decision of whether or not he is present at this meeting based on majority vote. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** asked the attorney so you can just ignore what previous ordinances had been voted on and approved by commissioners from the state of Indiana. **Attorney Jones** stated the chair of the meeting has the right and the obligation to determine how the exemption applies. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** replied so he has the right to change the rules. **Attorney Jones** stated he has the right to enforce the ordinances as written, he does not have the right to change the ordinances, a majority of the commission changed the ordinances. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** continued to make comments. He asked the attorney, so from now on Haney is the king of the county and are you going to go along with this, it that what you're telling me? **President Joe Haney** informed commissioner **Rich Mrozinski** that that is not correct at all and continued to told him that he was not going to recognize his alleged exemption at this time and stated that the meeting was going to move along.

George Callas, Tornado Drive, La Porte, stated back in July he had asked the Commissioners to have an open meeting where there is questions and answers. He knows tonight is not going to happen. George said he doesn't know why but the Rolling Prairie and the Franklin Street Bridge are a thorn to him. He asked could there be an update on the monies and what's going on in reference to these projects. **President Joe Haney** replied the bridge will be open on time and as soon as the facilities are completely constructed they will be up and running.

Derald Borton, Michigan City, stated he doesn't understand why you guys are denying **Rich** from doing his job. He claimed it's denying the taxpayers who elected him to do his job.

Department Head Comments

Tim Stabosz, Auditor introduced **Vaughn Galloway's** replacement, **Rhonda Graves** and wished him the best.

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department, thanked his employees **Niki Schmutte** and **Laura Moyer** for their years of service. They are retiring from the Parks Department's Nature Center. **Jeremy** stated he had been interviewing for their positions and had some good potential candidates. Also, he said that there will be a retirement in honor of **Nikki** and **Laura** on March 1, at the Nature Center from 1-4 p.m. and the public was invited.

Attorney Jones, introduced **Mark Roule** who joined his law firm as an attorney for any business that the county may need.

Requests

None at this time.

Old Business

Consider Commissioners' appointment to Property Tax Board of Appeals. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated she thought the board should hold off on this because there were some questions about this, as to whether or not individual lived in or out of state. **President Joe Haney** stated he had gotten information back in regards to Mr. Purze and apologizes for not informing the board and the attorney earlier. He stated as a free holder and certified level three assessor he is qualified to do this. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** motioned to approve **Ken Purze** to Property Tax Board of Appeals. **President Joe Haney** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

New Business

Consider housing request from Juvenile Services Center. **Attorney Jones** spoke on Judge Alevizos' behalf. The United States Marshalls had contacted **Judge Alevizos** regarding a possibility for the secured side of the Juvenile Services Center. This area has been certified and approved by the Indiana Department of Corrections. The federal government is in need of finding liquid partners. The Marshalls' office and federal judge had reached out to **Judge Alevizos** in regards housing additional inmates which could be a lucrative opportunity for the county. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** motioned to consider housing request for the Juvenile Services Center. **President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider GAAP compilation Statement of work 2022 and 2023. **Tim Stabosz** stated the Auditor's office has been dealing with Baker Tilly for a few years now in regards to completing the states' requirements in regards to financial reporting purposes. The auditor's office would like to continue with them and have been provided their contract. He asked for the Board of Commissioners consideration and support. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney asked attorney Jones had this been reviewed and he stated yes. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider SEH Proposal for 2023 and LAPAU FY 2023 SLA for submission. Tim Stabosz stated this consulting firm has been working with the county and they have been crucial with budget related matters. He asked for the consideration and approval of the Board of Commissioners to continue working with them. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider Drinking Water Tests at Valparaiso Lab, 40 @ \$40 each, totaling \$1600 due to the Health Department Lab being closed. **Jeremy Sobecki** stated that due to the flood he's not able to do any testing. Jeremy informed the BOC that they could get water testing conducted in the Valparaiso lab and there would not be any cost to the county. He has a plan in place to get testing done and is asking for permission to go before the Council to get approval not exceeding \$1600 for drinking water tests. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider renewal for Microvote Contract for Four (4) Year Full-Service Agreement: 2023 Primary thru 2026 General Elections. **Heather Stevens** stated the contract is just for the programming of their machines. She feels the county would be better off to let the professionals to do what they do. **Attorney Jones** stated he had a minor correction. It was revised and meets his approval. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider Workers' Compensation Policy Proposal - Michiana Insurance. **John Jones** stated he was back to report responses from various carriers as we move toward second quarter of workers' compensation period. He said there were six carriers and three ultimately declined. Three submitted proposals, one was eliminated and two offered some value to consider. At this time, he was able to negotiate terms with our encumberment resulting in a \$27,810 reduction in premium. He recommends we finish the policy period with BITCO and bring refreshed proposals this fall for December's renewal. Also, he's calling for some increased risk management from both the encumberment and those proposing to do business with the county this fall and in the future. Planning in the near term to begin an educational pen and paper for department heads slogan this year to enhance our cooperation as a state program partner to reduce our loss experience here at the county level. John asked BOC for approval for consideration to continue to work BITCO through these next three quarters. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider request for permission to pay retiring employees Niki Schmutte for 60 days sick time and Laura Loyer 150 hours of vacation time. **Jeremy Sobecki** stated Nikki has sick and vacation time and Laura has vacation time. He has the money in his budget for payout and is requesting permission from the BOC. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider out of state travel for Sean Fagan, Prosecuting Attorney to Savannah, Georgia for the ERISCA 60th Annual Training Conference and Exposition on May 22-26, 2023. **Sean Fagan** stated this conference deals with matters/functions within his office. He will have five to six people going for annual training. Sean asks the BOC for permission to travel at this time. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated that she had a question and asked Sean if he had the monies in their funds for this or will he be approaching the Council. Sean stated they currently have appropriated monies to the side and believes they have enough monies for this travel. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider payout of 41.5 sick days in the amount of \$3,112.50 for employee, Gail Bos, Victim Advocate. **Sean Fagan** stated one of his employees, Gail Bos is retiring and has been working with his office for thirty-three years. She has demonstrated good service to the county. He is asking permission from the BOC to payout. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider ROW Agreement LPA Contract for Bridge #97, Bridge on CR 50 East over Kankakee River. **Jay Sullivan** stated he's asking permission from the BOC to consider signing the Addendum to the ROW Agreement LPA Contract for Bridge #97. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Consider Resolution opposing proposed NIPSCO rate increase for electric utility services and filing Resolution with the Indiana Office of Utility Counselor. **President Joe Haney** read out loud the Resolution. He stated upon conclusion, the La Porte County Board of Commissioners opposes the proposed increase rate due to the adverse effects it would have on families struggling to pay existing utility bills. Rather than being rewarded for failure, it's time for NIPSCO executives to take pay cuts and undertake financially responsible cost cutting measures instead of seeking a bailout from already over burden rate payers. A copy of this Resolution will be forwarded to the Indiana Utility Consumer Council. Attorney Jones stated that there was some small typographical errors relating to this, under number 4, first page. Items were addressed and corrected. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Adjournment

Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to adjourn at 6:51 p.m. President Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

ORIGINAL

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

Connie Gramarossa

ATTEST: *James M. Staley*
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA