



**LA PORTE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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**Joseph Haney  
President**

**Connie Gramarossa  
Vice President**

**Richard Mrozinski  
Member**

**Laporte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

**President Joe Haney** called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. followed by the **Pledge of Allegiance** led by **Jerry Sullivan**.

**Roll Call**

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

**Consider Agenda**

**Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated a deletion needed addressed under new business: i. Consider Board of Commissioners appointment to La Porte County Library Board from the agenda. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** motioned to remove item and approve correction to agenda as stated. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider Approval of Minutes**

**President Haney** suggested Considered approval of the February 15, 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 02/03/2023 in the amount of \$1,4266, 496.96 and Operating Expense Claims in the amount of \$880, 353.73230,811.87. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Public Comment**

**Steve Holifield**, 100 South, reported the Lincoln Township Board and trustee with the public attended a meeting last night and also had a zoom meeting with Kevin, Indiana Township Association. Steve thanked President Joe Haney for attending. He stated there are some issues, still have to work through them. Just wanted to keep BOC updated. Previously he had spoken with Commissioner Connie Gramarossa this weekend and spoke with Mr. Novak, on Monday at the Council meeting. He spoke with the State Board of Accounts and offered up a suggestion, these resolutions aren't going anywhere, maybe if we all work together up here it would help in the future. Asked for the BOC to get the word out, possibly on the agenda. Commented on Shaw Friedman.

**Tom Collway**, Michigan City had a public service announcement that he would like to make. He stated Michigan City is currently accepting applications for Lifeguards from the age of 16 years and up. A lifeguard certification and driver's license required.

**Mark Parkman**, Westville and **Ron Schaffer**, Laporte commented on bathrooms at the Pioneer Fairgrounds. Commented on the meeting last night for Pioneer Land and there was a discussion that came up about the bathrooms located at the north end of the fairgrounds. They have spoken to the county attorney and individuals individually, and the county engineer about getting them up and running. Possibly they could have them up and running before the Fair. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa stated she attended Lincoln Township meeting as well, spoken to several individuals, and there is an issue and believes it's a safety issue. She suggested sending this down to the Council so that some of the ARP's monies could be used to facilitate this. Due to the short period of time, this shouldn't be rushed through as an emergency and believe there is still some time to solicit bids. We do have some plans that are somewhat ready. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned for support for Mark and Ron to go down to the Council** and have them figure out financially how we can fund this project. And, as a Commission they could support this and get the contracts and bids out. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded.** Jay Sullivan, County Engineer commented on some plans that were in place and action being taken to get this project moving forth. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa suggested extra female bathrooms and the county engineer is aware of this. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Rick Kentaft, La Porte**, stated he was at a previous meeting, asked some questions, wanting to get some answers still. He asked President Joe Haney why he thought it was good idea to knock the County Economic Development that had been in place, how he thinks that would attract new businesses and create jobs. Rick stated he has not heard anything from President Joe Haney or this board. He went on to say that he and his family has had numerous of dealings with Shaw Friedman, which were successful. Me and my family will continue to work with him. Rick stated there is a lot of criticism and comments being made, an apology would be in order. He stated he was not a mouthpiece for Shaw Friedman. Also, he informed President Joe Haney that if had anything to say in regards to him that it would be appreciated if he would say it to him.

#### **Department Head Comments**

**Sean Fitzpatrick, Facilities Director** gave an update on current issues, plans, and completion of work orders; there were over 500 work orders that had been completed. The Michigan City Courthouse first floor is currently being painted. Signage has been put up in various county locations. Work is being done on the Hiler building and progress is being made. There are plans in place to address issues that had been discovered. Sean stated there are some major and potentially catastrophic issues that need to be addressed. There are some plumbing infrastructure issues at JSC and Community Corrections that require immediate attention. A holding tank and a boiler need to be replaced at JSC, the tank is leaking and can rupture at any moment and cause major damage on the mechanical room and adjacent areas and a similar situation exists in the complex boiler room.

At Community Corrections we're on our last boiler of 3 and it's the same age and the two that have gone down so we're looking to replace two and maintain the one that's currently supplying the entire facility. The quotes are attached and have been evaluated with the purchase of the equipment and installation and also with the work done by a company with conclusion that time wise having a company do the work will be best.

Sean stated that his intention was to request permission to approach the Council for funding before their meeting but he did not receive the last quotes in time and wanted advise from the Board of Commissioners on how to proceed with this matter. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to support to have the work done. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Bruce Johnson, La Porte County Historian** stated here was here to represent the Bridge Committee and would like submit six names, possibly names for the bridges.

Jimmy Bremer (1929-2005) – He was a lifelong resident of Wanatah, Indiana. In the U.S. army he served as a sergeant, a medic in the Korean War and awarded the Bronze Star Medal. He was a very giving man, nobody could buy anything he had, he gave it away. On Sunday's he played music in his garage, everyone was welcome to visit, eat, and drink. People knew not to bring any food or beverages because this would offend Bremer, he provided food and drinks free of charge. One Sunday even arranged for a nurse to attend and gave

every attendee a flu shot. He made bread and tended a garden. His generosity belied his bank account in 2005, but he was a wealthy man, he just didn't have money.

Elliott Donnelley (1903-1975) – Member of the LaPorte County Historical Steam Society later called the La Porte County Threshermen. Elliot was singled out as the strongest spoke in the Society's wheel of development. In 1968 Elliot served as chairman of the Board of the Society until 1975. He owned a number of narrow gauge and park-sized steam locomotives. The LaPorte County Bridge Naming Committee would like to name a County Bridge after Elliot naming it the Elliott Donnelley Memorial Bridge.

John H. Parks (1919-1944) – John was from Mill Creek, Indiana born in Cleveland, Ohio. Also, known in 1945 as "G.I. Joe" man of the year according to the front page of The Stars and Stripes newspaper. The headline was accompanied by a photograph of a weary serviceman, an American soldier in war. The photo the appeared in newspapers across the United States. He worked at the Mill Creek Ordnance Plant. In 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. In December 1944 amidst snowy fields and icy roads, parks' group encountered German tanks in a stand of spruce trees. Standing out of the turret directing his crew, Parks' tank drove toward the spruce woods while the other tanks provided cover. An enemy bullet killed Parks during his advance and enemy fire engulfed the tank in flames. Two crewmen escaped. Days later, parks appeared on the front page of the Stars and Stripes newspaper. His mother saw her son's photo. She had not heard from him in six months. Days later she received a telegram from the War Department that indicated her son was missing in action. It was nearly four months before the mother learned of her son's death. His body was never recovered. His name is engraved on the Tablets of the Missing at Luxembourg American Cemetery.

Ruth Clark Sabin (1802-1894) – Born in Massachusetts in 1802 and moved to La Porte County, Indiana in 1850. After her husband's death in Ruth had a home built, the Ruth C. Sabin Home, 3 floors, 35 rooms a long front porch, and gabled dormers on top built a where she and other elderly single women could live. The home was promoted "as one of the most useful institutions in La Porte County.

Russell Allen Phillips (1916-1998) – In 1940, graduated with a degree in Forestry and Conservation. In 1941, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Army Corps at Fort Benjamin Harrison and became an outstanding pilot. He and his crew were on a search and rescue mission Oahu, Hawaii to find a missing plane. Eight members of the crew died. Phillips, McNamara, and Zamperini survived in a life raft for more than 30 days. After floating in the Pacific for more than 2,000 miles, Phillips and Zamperini were picked up and then taken to separate Japanese prison camps where they were starved and abused for 30 months. They were finally liberated in September 1945 - Painter and Salesman for Bennethum's Paint & Glass - Educator in the La Porte Community School Corporation - An engraved brick in memory and honor of Russell Allen Phillips was placed on the Veteran's Walk at the entrance to Soldiers Memorial Park on Pine Lake Avenue - The incredible WWII story of Phillip's and Zamperini's survival was told in the 2010 best-selling book "Unbroken" by Laura Hillenbrand and made into a major motion picture directed by Angelina Jolie in 2014.

John Lloyd Wright (1892-1972) – In 1909, he and his brothers worked for Olmsted brothers, known for designing Central Park. John realized he has a talent for architect but needed training. He trained with his father but found it difficult due to his father's dominating personality. He left for Taliesin, his new estate in Wisconsin. He was put in charge of the office in Chicago and oversaw the construction of the Midway Gardens in Hyde Park. In 1917, he accompanied his father to oversee the construction of the new Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, Japan. He created a ¾ inch wooden logs that could interlock to create miniature buildings. He received a patent in 1920 for his wooden toys which he called "Lincoln Logs." He established his architectural practice and had an office at the Warren Building in Michigan City. In 1924, he built a home & studio for his family called "Studio Court" in Long Beach on Belle Plaine Trail near Stop 25. Over the years, Wright was commissioned to design one or two homes a year in Long Beach. They were built in the hill sides of the dunes or along the shores of Lake Michigan. His architecture reflected the natural beauty of the dunes with the colors of the sand, stone materials, and wood shingles, and built on many levels on the steep terrains in the surrounding duneland hills and forests. His homes and public buildings included the Miller House and "Villa

Z" in 1926, Long Beach Elementary School in 1927, the Krutckoff House and "Red Oaks" in 1928, the Long Beach Town Hall in 1931, the Dunes Arcade Hotel in 1933, the Burnham House in 1934, Coolspring School in 1937, the Jackson House, the House of Tile, and "Shangri-La" also known as the "House of Seven Levels" in 1938. In 1939, a fire in the garage and studio at his home destroyed most of his drawings. In 1946, he left Indiana and moved to Del Mar, California and had success designing more than 50 homes and buildings in San Diego area. In 1999, John Lloyd Wright's "Lincoln Logs" were entered into the National Toy Hall of Fame. Several of his homes in Long Beach have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski complimented Mr. Johnson on his presentation and motioned to accept recommendations. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated she wanted to address a situation with the Flood Committee. So as a department head herself, she was assigned to work on the flood project. From the Council Meeting's Agenda there was two things from Monday night she was looking at: Under New Business #2 Consider authorization of County Council Attorney, Guy DiMartino, to perform professional services for the Board of Commissioners in regards to flooding in the annex and insurance. And, any services performed for the Board of Commissioners would be paid for by the Board of Commissioners. Number #7 Appointment of Council Members to Property Damage Insurance Claim Committee. We have projects, our projects our up to our board to assign one of the commissioners to oversee the project just like the Michigan City Courthouse Project. **Attorney Jones** expounded on the Council hiring DiMartino for their services and stated they should be paying him not the Commission. The Commission has the power to contract and from a legal point of view of his understanding the Commission has not contracted with DiMartino in regards to the flood. The Council has their own professional services budget and if they decide to utilize DiMartino for his services that comes out of their budget. Unless the Commission appoints professional services from DiMartino or contracts with them they are not responsible for paying. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated the Council members are appointing a property damage insurance claim committee which is something that people complain about in reference to adding layers of government. She not opposed but suggest they work out the details if it pertains to the flood project. Property Damage Insurance Claims paid by the insurance company and not by the taxpayers. Vendors submit claims to the insurance company. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa asked if we are going to start adding layers of government, and the council stepping on the toes of the commission and the insurance companies what are we going to do. **Attorney Jones** replied from a legal perspective the Council only interest or legal involvement should be only if there is going to be a county expense. Like if the insurance falls short the county needs to have an appropriation to cover these expenses and the county council needs to be involved. Tim Stabosz explained that the appropriation funds goes through him if the money comes through the county. Commissioner Gramarossa said that she was not looking to eliminate anyone, wanted to ensure the bills are not tied up, paid in a timely fashion and wanted to know how they should proceed. Attorney Andrew Jones stated to Commissioner Connie Gramarossa, as the executive and appointee who is handling this project you are more than welcome to ask for the general commission approval to make the process where the vendors are paid directly from the insurance companies which seems to be the efficient wat to handle this process. Obviously, if there is a shortfall then you and the county meet to go through the typical appropriation process with the fiscal monies. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned we revert this back to the way it was originally intended and work with the insurance companies have them to pay the vendors directly. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski sated he agree and that he seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Attorney Andrew Jones** commended **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** for the work and efforts she's put into this project. She has contributed a lot of her time and energy taking care of things.

#### **Requests**

None at this time.

#### **Old Business**

None at this time.

## New Business

**Consider** La Porte County Courthouse Assessment Contract – Etica Group. Don Higgins stated he was not prepared at this time and is sitting in for someone and not prepared to review proposed plans at this time. Initially, **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** had motioned to approve and it was seconded before Don, representing the Etica Group spoke and stated he did not have any information at this time via zoom. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** motioned due to lack of knowledge, information, and dollar amount pertaining to contract, to table and put assessment out for bid. **Original motion and second was retracted. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to consider to table and put out for bid. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** opening yearly bids for the following supplies and services: Class 11 (Bituminous Material), Class 12 (Hot Asphalt Concrete), Class 13 (Pavement Markings), Class 14 (Fiberized Crack Sealant), Class 15 (Micro-Surfacing), Class 16 Asphalt Emulsion Slurry Seal), and Class 17 (Cold Pace Recycling) – **Allen Stevens, Highway Superintendent**. All bids were received in a timely manner. **Attorney Andrew Jones** opened envelopes, red off proposed costs and expenses if applicable from each. Bids submitted from Bit-Mat Products of Indiana, Asphalt Material, Central paving, Pavement Solutions, Inc., Reith-Riley Construction Co. Inc., Milestone contractors North, Inc., Avalanche Snow Removal & Maintenance, Inc., The Airmarking Company, Inc., Accurate Striping, and Traffic Control Specialist. All submitted documentation put back into original envelopes for further review and discussion per Attorney Jones and given to Allen Steven. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve turning all bids over to Allen Stevens, Highway Superintendent for their review and approval and recommendations given at the next meeting. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** permission to approach Council for funding regarding IT equipment – **Michael Callahan, Juvenile Services**. Michael stated they wanted to get another camera for the back area. They had the IT Department to go through their computers. He has discussed the facility's computer needs with Darlene Hale and got recommendations on replacing computers and cables. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** temporary nursing contract – **Michael Callahan, Juvenile Services**. Michael stated they are seeking permission to approach the council to pay a temporary nurse for the Juvenile Services Center. Their wanting to be able to hire on an eight week term until a nurse is hired full time. They have some funding for this for the short term. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve for short term and if any additional monies needed, they have permission to approach the council for this. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** executed Attorney Certification; and findings of Fact and Conclusions of law of the La Porte County Plan Commission for review by the La Porte County Commissioners – Drayton, Beige, Sirugo & Elliott, LLP. **Attorney Andrew Jones** reviewed and approved of this. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** contract engaging Integritas Search to source and recommend Human Resources Director; Joint Commission and Council consideration. The Council attorney and Commission attorney sought after a firm to fill the Human Resource Director position for the county. They will work with them seeking to the approval to hire for this position. They are attempting to move the process along. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated the acting HR Director is doing the work of two people, well qualified, and doing a good job. He stated as a taxpayer it seems unfair to current HR Director and the taxpayer to hire someone giving them more money to do the job. Attorney Jones stated it was a unanimous decision from the Commission and Council who agreed to hire out for this position. Monique Thomas commented that she sought to get a part time person that was working in the office to become full time. She stated she went to Kelly Services and Elwood Staffing and sought after a temporary person to come into the office to help out but did not want to be in the position of

telling them they would no longer be needed. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to continue with contract as designated not only with the Commission but also with the Council to approve contract. President Joe Haney seconded. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski opposed. Motion carried 2-1.**

**Consider Task Order update for MS4 permit submittal - Reggie Korthals. Attorney Andrew Jones stated this is just about extending out our current contract with them. Reggie Korthals reported that the current contract will be extended to April 2023. She stated she is going to work with IT to get information that may have been lost during the flood. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider permission to purchase/approach County Council for 1 ambulance and 1 support vehicle - Andrew McGuire, EMS. Andrew stated he's asking permission to submit pricing and purchase due to build time and lead time. Asking for permission to replace a support vehicle. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned for permission to purchase vehicles and to approach Council. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider Singing Sands Trail Resolution – Mitch Bishop. Mitch commented on the progress and plans pertaining the Singing Sands Trail. He stated they negotiated and created an inter-governmental agreement in regards to Liberty Trail. He is asking permission to approach the Council and stated there are some matching funds available for some improvements. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded and complimented Mitch for a great job. Motion carried 2-0.**

**Adjournment**

**Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to adjourned at 12:02 p.m. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

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

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

**ORIGINAL**