



**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
Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

President Joe Haney called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. followed by the **Pledge of Allegiance** and a brief moment of silence for Richard Stalbrink, Sr. and Mark Sobecki.

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

President Joe Haney stated there are two things that need to be added to the agenda to consider: Polling locations and BOCs official position in regards to discussing prosecutor's request for documents and emails.

Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to add election board polling locations and prosecutor's request for emails. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider Approval of Minutes

President Haney suggested Considered approval of the March 1, 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 03/03/2023 in the amount of \$1,455,279.06 and Operating Expense Claims in the amount of \$4,069,293.24. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** motioned to approve.

Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Public Comment

Steve Holifield, 100 South, commented on the county's previous HR Director salary and the salaries of HR Directors from neighboring counties. He feels the hiring of a new HR director for the county and increasing the salary is something the county cannot afford to do because of the potential ramifications it would cause. Steve asked that the Board of Commissioners and Council would reconsider this.

Shawn McClokin and Father, Lakeshore Drive, Fish Lake stated currently we are hoping that the Commissioner could help them with an issue with the neighbor filling in the creek next to their properties. The fill is causing their property to flood significantly and there is some blocking of water. Shawn asked if he could setup an appointment to talk to the Commissioners about this. **President Joe Haney** informed him to contact office to setup appointment and stated he would be willing to discuss this further. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** stated he did forward this information to the Building Commissioner and MS4 and at this time he has not seen anything significantly being done.

Donna Johnson, La Porte says she would like to talk about the State Bill before Congress now and what does health care look like now. She read information that she had discovered on various reported information in regards to health such as vaccines, pharmacists, costs and fundings, ratings, etc. Donna stated Centralized Health Care would be putting our health in control of the state that basically is controlled by the federal government.

Rick Kentaft, La Porte, stated that it's a disturbing to him and a burden on the taxpayers to engage in a contract with Integritas paying them \$17,000 to search for a qualified candidate for the Human Resource Director for the county. He says our elected officials were elected to run the county and they should do the job. It's unnecessary and stated the county should utilized a civilian or group to do the job search instead of paying out \$17,000 of taxpayers' monies. This is not about race it's about hiring the most qualified person to do the job. Rick said if the current HR director is doing the job and if not, there are current disciplinary guidelines process in place that should be followed to take care of any issues they may arise. He does not see the need to fill the position with another person because he feels the current HR Director is doing the job. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski**, stated he agrees with Mr. Kentaft and he supports keeping the current HR director and said she was doing a good job. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated we can't put out the dirty laundry about what has been going on in HR. She believes certain things cannot be addressed at this time about what's going on in HR. She asked Attorney Jones could we talk about some of the HR issues we have going on. Attorney Andrew stated no, we have a very clear policy for Commission meetings and believes there are copies that have been circulated. He said it would be completely inappropriate for Commissioners or anyone of the public to be speaking about a specific county personnel and what has been transpiring, it exposes the county to legal liability to do so.

Rodney McCormick, Michigan City, stated he would like to say something about the stuff going on in regards to covid. He feels we need to quit pretending and that some people are using it as a weapon to go after certain parties. He lost family members to covid and he himself was pretty sick with it himself. We have a choice to get vaccinated or not. Rodney asked when are we going to be able to see voting centers in Michigan City or throughout the whole county. Every election we have been promised that we were going to get voting out of the Michigan City Public Schools, there's no accountability and there has been a lot promises made. He commented on how German Shepherd dogs and policeman were stationed at the polling places only in the black communities. We continue to pretend this stuff is not happening. He hopes that the Commissioners start working with the Board of Elections and hopefully we see some of these centers come to light. He don't think \$17,000 of taxpayers monies should be used to hire a HR Director. Rodney stated he could use the \$17,000 at the martin Luther King Center or the HOPE program. He believes the county should just do the hiring of the HR director themselves. Rodney stated Michigan City needs help to become better community. He asked for people to reach out him and he would be willing to help in way he could to get them into office.

Randall Veatch, West Schultz Road, wanted to thanked the Commissioners for following through with the commitment for trying to stop the business operations from continuing in our residential neighborhood. He hopes the commitments will continue and they have been a long time in coming. We have finally found a court willing to address this matter, and they have heard the matter. They did give DM Excavating the opportunity to refrain from doing any hauling until it does see itself in front of the courts which is great news for our neighborhood and the county as a whole.

Darryl Borton, Michigan City, the Rolling Prairie EMS base, he thinks it was wrong for the Former Commissioner Matias and Commissioner Mrozinski to be thanked for it Because it was their work that got it started. And, another thing about Michigan City, it's doing great under democratic leadership. It's Rodney McCormick that's causing the problems over here. He's gone to the minister alliance and calling them corrupt He doesn't own Michigan City the taxpayers do.

President Joe Haney requested motioned to approve the minutes (see Consider Approval of Minutes above).

Department Head Comments

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department wanted to give the Commissioners an update in regards to their staffing due to the retirement of several of their veteran staff. Both full time programming staff are leaving. The Parks Department will have programming up and running soon. They are looking for part time applicants to fill some of their available positions.

Heather Stevens, Clerk wants to say thank you to Sean Fitzpatrick and his team. The Courthouse looks better than she has ever seen it and she's super excited. Sean Fitzpatrick and his team are doing a great job. It's cleaner, brighter, and has a feel of respect.

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski stated he just wanted to give credit where credit is due in regards to the EMS Base in Rolling Prairie. He started to name a few people who had contributed to this project and how they had worked on the EMS base. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** stated she just wanted to thank several individuals as well and we as public servants do what we do to serve the people not to get credit, it's our job, we are here to service the public not beat our chest, pat ourselves on the back. She stated when you start naming people it brings the attention back to the elected officials when it should be about doing the right thing for the public.

President Joe Haney stated several joint sessions have been held with Commissioners and the Council in regards to hiring a new HR Director. It was unanimously voted on to acquire a firm to search for the most qualified candidate.

Requests

President Joe Haney stated at this time if there are no objections discussion on the nature of the prosecutor's request for documents and emails will be next on the agenda. The Election Polling locations will be discussed when Heather Stevens address other considerations later on the agenda.

Attorney Andrew Jones provided background information of prosecutor's has made a request for Public Access to Records Request of emails from five previous county employees under Indiana law for documents for the calendar year 2022. He stated typically this would be handled by him as the county's attorney. But, given the political issue on this he has given it to the Commission to decide on this. It needs to happen at a public meeting with a public vote. It the body who wishes to deny such a request has to state a legally justifiable reason for that.

Commissioner Connie Gramarossa stated Mr. Fagan came to him and asked for open cases information. Later he changed his request to three previous employees and emails. Then to five employees, and all emails. She stated she has a problem with that. He was asked for specific cases and did not state which ones. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa went online and found forty-four open cases for him. She offered to help him to get all emails relating to the forty-four cases. When Commissioner Gramarossa would not give him emails of five previous county employees, Mr. Fagan threatened her with obstruction of justice. Upon working on Flood Project, it was discovered that there are hundreds of cases downstairs in boxes in the Annex building which they were holding for him and Mr. Fagan has yet to come to meet with her and look through them. She stated she was not quite sure what he's looking for and has a hard time believing he's looking for open cases. She denies because request overly broad and not particular. He's changed his story a couple of times.

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski stated he has the same issues with this attorney. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski stated his request was not specific enough and needs to fill in the blanks. He agrees with Commissioner Gramarossa and believes Mr. Fagan is going on witch hunt and disagree with this attorney. He needs to tell them what he is specifically looking for. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski denies Mr. Fagan's request and also believes it's too broad and not particular. **President Joe Haney** said the issue here is due to the former prosecutor left office and did not do any transition work. He never told anyone that there were

outstanding cases. President Joe Haney went on to read information provided from the attorney general's office and other administration recommendations. He agrees that Laporte County needs to turn over documents to Mr. Fagan according to the information he had received and reviewed with Attorney Andrew Jones. for the attorney general's office. You might not know what records are crucial until you review them. President Haney stated his decision is based on information received and recommended from staff from the attorney general's office and archives. Records should be turned over to the prosecutor's office as soon as possible. **Attorney Andrew Jones** stated that if it be found that the Commission was in violation of the Public Access Records, it could be sued, sanctioned, and forced to pay Mr. Fagan's legal fee. He stated he has a duty and an obligation to inform the Commission of the consequences. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned** to deny the prosecutor's request and needs to tell us specifically what records he's requesting. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa asked Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** to take back his previous motion because she would like to make a **motioned to table this. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded the motion. President Joe Haney** stated he did not want to see the county subject to paying out any monies in damages. **Motion carried 2-1.**

Old Business

None at this time.

New Business

Consider permission to go before the County Council to request monies from ARP to construct (mostly in house) the attached restroom building at Creek Ridge County Park and monies for parking lot and trail sealing/repairs – **Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department.** He stated this is the only park out of the four that doesn't have any running water. The goal is to build a bigger restroom with a septic system. Total cost would be around \$100,000. Jeremy would like to put unused monies from last year not spent and to go to the Council for the rest of it. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve request. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motioned carried 3-0.** Also, Jeremy stated there was damage from roots and some cracking on lot and trail. The total for this is \$39,000 and he asks the Commission for permission to go to the Council. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve to go to the Council. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider contract for Forte, the new credit card company – **Joie Winski, Treasurer.** Our present credit card company does not give us any support and is not user friendly. We have had multiple complaints over the past two years and went looking for a new vendor. They found Forte and is requesting the Commissioners to approve request for a new credit card vendor. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider bid recommendations for Classes 11-17 – **Allen Stevens, Highway Department.** Allen recommends that we accept all the bids submitted with precedent is given to the lowest bidder. His reasoning for accepting all the bidders is in the event the primary or lower bidder can't deliver we have a fall back. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider permission to approach the council to purchase new equipment and pick-up trucks, not to exceed \$1.3 million – **Allen Stevens, Highway Department.** **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider proposal from Marquiss Electric, Inc. in reference to emergency sirens. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa stated she has met with Marquiss Electric and EMA. It's been a long time coming and this would give the ability to send out siren signals throughout the counties. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider renewal proposal for the county's aviation insurance policy – John Jones, Michiana Insurance. John stated renewal is May 12, 2023 for aviation policy. Cost down by \$95.57 this year from previous policy. The

new premium is \$5597.00. We have nine drones used by the Sherriff's Department and one in EMA office for a total of ten drones and we have three certified pilots. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider out of state travel to attend the 16TH Annual Fidler Symposium in Davenport, IA May 22-24, 2023 – Elzbieta Bilderback, Recorder. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Rich Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider requesting permission for travel to the National Drug Court Institute Coordinator Training in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma from March 27-30, 2023, for Corissa Strader, and Eric LaRue – Steve Eyrick. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider request approval for road closures for YMCA Tour de La Porte event - **Jessica Durham, Director of Marketing & Events.** Jessica was not present and had spoken with **President Joe Haney.** He stated we have done this every year. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** said that this is a great event. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motioned carried 3-0.**

Consider donation of new wheel chair for La Porte County Courthouse – **Heather Stevens, Clerk.** Heather stated there was a need over at the courthouse. She purchased the wheelchair to help but does not want any liability for it and spoke with Mr. Jones, Michiana Insurance. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** asked if we assume any responsibility or liability at all on chair. **John Jones** stated there is broad and comprehensive coverage in place. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Consider contract with State Street Church for Polling location – **Heather Stevens, Clerk.** Agreed fee was \$1.00 for use of location. It will be used for Primary Election Day and Early Voting for \$1.00. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motioned carried 3-0.**

Consider primary election polling locations for May 2 - Heather Stevens, Clerk. She spoke on finding voting locations for the upcoming election and stated she did not want to rush this. When we vote at the schools in Michigan City there is a small rental application. **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motioned carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Connie Gramarossa stated April is Child Abuse Prevention month. A and county is acknowledging with the blue ribbons.

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski mentioned not to forget Vietnam Recognition Day.

Adjournment

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to adjourned at 7:36 p.m. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa 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