



# LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202  
La Porte, IN 46350-3400  
(219) 326-6808 ext. 2229

**Connie Gramarossa**  
President

**Richard Mrozinski**  
Vice President

**Joe Haney**  
Member

## Laporte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, July 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom

Commissioner **Connie Gramarossa, President** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by **John Carr**.

### Roll Call

Auditor **Tim Stabosz** called the roll: **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa - Present; Commissioner Richard Mrozinski - Present; Commissioner Joe Haney - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.**

### Consider Agenda

Commissioner **Gramarossa** asked for consideration of the agenda.

### Consider Approval of Minutes

Commissioner **Gramarossa** asked for consideration for approval of the July 7, 2023 minutes. The minutes will be submitted and reviewed for the August 2, 2023 BOC meeting.

### Consideration of Claims

Auditor **Tim Stabosz** stated **Payroll** ending 07/07/2023 in the amount of \$ 1,480,600.99 and **Operating Expense Claims** in the amount of \$ 6,183,241.51. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve **Operating Claims and Payroll as advertised. Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

### Public Comment

**John Carr**, President, La Porte County Regional Sewer and Water District. Stated they have been working on the project to extend sewer and water to Hudson and Saugany Lake for the last year. He was joined by Ken Jones, Engineer from JPR to give a brief overview of the project. They have been working diligently to prepare this project and building construction for 2024. The project has been moving right along and it started back in 2013. He said he would like to talk to the Commission about this a little and realized it is not on their agenda. Mr. Jones stated he would like them to consider the potential for a grant from the American Rescue Plan Funds. They have had some dialogue with the Counsel on this but not on their agenda so there was no formal request. He said the request cannot come from them, but it must come from the Commission to the Council before anything concrete can happen. The budget is standing right about \$43,000,000.00. It is a pretty good size infrastructure project. It does not matter what county you are in and that is a pretty good significant investment. The project will probably result in the service to 1113 residential and business users within Hudson and Saugany Lake users. After so many years of study and consideration that project is much needed how relative to how waste water has been taken care of in that community right now. There are water wells on top of septic systems. We have made application to the state revolving loan fund, Indiana Finance Authority for loan funds. We have scored two years now in the fundable range and we are significantly at the top of that list. They are expecting to see some subsidization come from the SRF for the project. Also, have some commitments pending with the USDA real development programs. Both of those products will be long term low interest loans. Even with the low interest loans we will still have a significant gap and think it is in the \$9,000,000.00 range. When I say gap, it refers to trying to deliver a reasonable rate to the property owners. Our final objective is to get the construction fully going. He asked if there any ARPA funds available for the project. Northern and Central Indiana has donated ARPA funds to their areas. It is not uncommon to see counties to consider these projects to be important. They done quite a bit of research on the overall impact from an economic standpoint. Infrastructure of any size especially this one, has a significant amount of impact on economic development in that area of the county. We would expect it be somewhere in the 911, 920 positions, indirect jobs. This could bring some benefit to La Porte County. He has a handout for the Commission. He stated he was not looking for them to decide anything but to keep them in their thought process. Construction to start in the spring of 2024. Commissioner Mrozinski mentioned that he was familiar with Hudson Lake area, most people are interested in the value and want to save their homes in Hudson Lake. He wished them luck and that they are in for an uphill battle, he is familiar with their work and has seen what they can do and he knows they can do it.

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**Alex Holiday**, Millcreek, said he has been trying, over ten years now, tried to get in touch with the county building. On numerous occasions he has talked to supervisors. There is a stretch from 875 to his driveway that is not being maintained. He stated he was using the railroad property to get to his driveway. They keep telling him they are going to come to check this out and he hasn't heard anything from anybody. Never asked anything only if they could put some asphalt graining down through the road. They do not have to maintain or even snow plow it. Mr. Holiday said he would take care of this and even maintain it after they do it. He has been approved to have a bait and tackle shop back on his property. The other side of 875 is paved. He said his property is about half mile back. **Commissioner Mrozinski** asked him for his address and informed him that he would have the highway superintendent to come out and look at it tomorrow and if not next week for sure. He told Mr. Holiday he will see what we can do.

**Tom Sharp**, Millcreek, he said he is an advocate for the recreation trail connecting Millcreek and Fish Lake. Mr. Sharp stated he wanted to piggy back on what the gentleman was saying about the water and with the battery plant. That battery plant is about a twenty-eight-minute commute from Millcreek. He asked can we start drawing people from La Porte County, Lincoln Township into Millcreek? How are we going to do that? This trail will do that. Keep in mind what this trail is going to do. It is a bike trail. It is going to connect Fish Lake and Millcreek with a ten-minute bike trail. You got your infrastructure and community infrastructure, a library, a general store, a restaurant, and a post office. Bringing those altogether with a ten-minute trail that's attraction and that is what that community needs. When you do anything like this the whole community appreciates it. He said he was here June 7 to talk about the petition against the trail and had highlighted all the errors that were in it and such. He said we would like for the Commission to return that petition to the author and get that narrative corrected and we can re-petition it. Mr. Sharp asked what that something we could do, you could do? He said it was presented to the Commission and it is just not accurate and it is more fabrication than anything and it is unfair to the people that signed it, he thinks. **Commissioner Haney** stated we can certainly ask them to take another look at this. Mr. Sharp replied okay and he would certainly appreciate it. Mr. Sharp said and Commissioner Mrozinski's pancake metaphor that we talked about June 7, look at both sides of the issue. **Commissioner Gramarossa** informed him this is public comment, pretty much during public comment you state what the issues are, and then we look at it, write down your names and that and we try to get back with you. She informed him that someone will contact you. Commissioner Mrozinski stated he has worked with Mitch from the beginning on this and knows the challenges we have and we are still working on this. Right now, we have a couple issues and not quite sure how we are going to get by, but guarantee we are working on it. Mr. Sharp asked if they could meet sometime with the Commission about this. Commissioner Gramarossa informed him that the Commission will talk to Mitch Bishop and see if he could coordinate something with the community, something specific to that issue. Mr. Sharp informed them that they have been clearing the woods out and wanted to keep working on it. He asked is that fair? Commissioner Gramarossa told him that the Commission can not give him an answer today but she has his name written down and would have our Planner to contact him and maybe he could talk about some of those issues. Mr. Sharp thanked the Commissioner Gramarossa.

**Rodney McCormick**, Michigan City wished Commissioner Gramarossa a happy birthday. He said he was here to get an answer and did not know if he would get it now or later. He said he was here about the voting center. Mr. McCormick asked about the drawbridge in Michigan City so that we do not have to continue to go through this. Also, he asked was it about money and maybe we should give out beach stickers to all the county residents and not just to Michigan City residents to help make up for some of this. Because I see that might be part of the problem. Maybe the county can come in for free for five years. Something needs to be done. We need a long-term fix with this bridge and we cannot just keep going back and forth with it. People working on now are doing a great job but not sure how long it is going to continue to hold up. Mr. McCormick said he was tired of hearing about it and hope that it is changed in his life time. He said he was also, here for the voting centers and it has been a long time coming. When the other party was here, they refused to do something. It is the greatest thing to be a part of something that makes things greater for citizens. Everyone should be proud and hats off to Heather Stevens, we have been there good and bad. People in the voter's registration office, al Stevens, we have put up with a lot of stuff and now this is the day. Please do not prolong it when voting time come up. We need to do more to work together with one another. He never thought he would ever be talking to Mr. Mrozinski never in his life but here he is talking to him and shaking his hand. He said he has made a lot of mistakes in life, we all have, people make mistakes and we must understand that people can change. We can change, work together and be cordial with one another. We can settle this and have peaceful meetings. He said you are always talking about him changing and if he could change anybody can change. He does not want the dark side of the pancake. Things are moving along and he hopes people in his community would start to take the initiative. He hopes people in his neighbor take the initiative like he does. Today, he has been doing a lot of work in his community, got some garbage bags, got on his moped and started picking up trash in his community. Do your part to make Michigan City clean and the county better.

**Juanita Haney, West Joliet Road**, she stated she has been watching the Commissioners for years and she has a message that needs to be heard. There is a story that comes to mind when she thinks about the way emergencies are handled in this county. It is the story about when the boy cries wolf. When you declare an emergency when it is not truly an emergency when the real emergency comes along, it is like the boy who cried wolf. People will not believe you and it is the taxpayers who suffer. I implore you to think and be responsible with taxpayers' dollars and prioritize the needs of this county. When you do declare an emergency, it should be real emergencies, not for something that should wait or is not a true emergency or for something that should have been foreseeable or planned for instead of put off until you have no choice but to declare it an emergency. Taxpayers need to be up here and voice their opinion, they need to be heard. If you do not say anything nothing will change. So, I am here tonight to be the voice for the people. We want to see effective and responsible leadership from all our commissioners. And, we hope that you will take these concerns

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seriously. And, remember the squeaky wheel gets the grease and I am here to make a little noise. So, please seriously consider my comments through the night, thank you.

### Department Head Comments

**Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department and Mitch Bishop, Planner** – Jeremy wished Commissioner Gramarossa a happy birthday. He commented on an email sent on yesterday in regards to a potential project that they are trying to help Westville with. It would extend Lincon Trail into Westville, all the way from 200 S to Prairie Meadow Park. It would add almost about three quarters of mile to it. Essentially, I am not here asking that the county do this, we are working with Westville to do this project. Mitch and I have the knowledge and stuff with these grants and we are working with them to help them, to put the grant in and hopefully. Hopefully, we will be able to help them to get a million-dollar grant project done for the town of Westville. A map was sent to the Commissioners. Commissioner Haney was good enough to come out with us on yesterday to look at the route and to see that it makes sense. If you have bike traffic, it is hard to cross along 421. Jeremy said that he just wanted to keep you updated on this. Mitch stated about three years ago he received about \$3.5 million grant in both federal, state, and local funds. This was in foundation funds to tie that same trail to Purdue Northwest, adding three miles to the system. If this was added it would be about 7 miles added to that town. They do not have the manpower to do it. Mitch stated they were just informing the Commission about this and that they would like to assist that town with this endeavor. Mitch wanted know if they could have permission and that he does not think that they need any intergovernmental agreement between us and the town or formal agreement, it is just us helping the town. Commissioner Gramarossa informed them that she thinks it is a wonderful thing to see us work together with all the other townships. It really enhances the entire county. She commends both for coming forth and really working with the other townships and making sure we are moving the entire county forward. Commissioner Haney thanked them for showing him the trail that is going to connect those two parks. He said that this is going to be a huge benefit. **Commissioner Haney motioned to let Mitch and Jeremy dedicate some time to help the town of Westville to secure their grants and planning for this new trail. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** Jeremy also stated he wanted to give another update. On yesterday, they had a nice wheel chair assessable picnic table donated to them from the wheelchair shop in Michigan City. His park foundation donated a gazebo to go over it. They are getting things organized. There are some good things happening at the park. Also, they have some restroom construction going at Creek Ridge Park. He said they really have some good things going on. Commissioner Gramarossa thanked Jeremy. Commissioner Haney said it was good that it did not have to get contracted out. Jeremy said he has some good guys working with him to get things done.

**Commissioner Mrozinski** stated the last month or so, Mr. McCormick asked him to check out the ramp at the Michigan City Courthouse. He had Town and Blank to come out with their instruments. And, it is spot dead on as to what it is supposed to be, to be ADA compliant. Commissioner Mrozinski stated he guarantees it is what it is supposed to be. He went up and down on it a few times and watched a couple of people go up and down on it. It is a bit steep but there are certain qualifications it must meet to be ADA compliant and it is spot on. Last week we had the oldest running fair in Indiana to go on. And, being one of the eighteen guys on the board, it is something he really takes a lot of pride in and joy in. Those guys are like brothers and sisters the way they get along, the way they know that fairgrounds, the way they get things done, the way they help each other. They really do set a good example for any team working together. It is a monumental task to put that fair together, it is huge, it is so many different parts. We have already started to work on next year because every year it is going to be a little bit bigger and better. My hats off to the Fair Board for pulling off the 177<sup>th</sup> rear La Porte County Fair.

### Old Business

None

### New Business

**Consider** permission for Marquiss Electric company to approach Council for funding for 2023/2024 drawbridge issues – Commissioner Mrozinski. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve to approach Council for funding. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Commissioner Haney stated nay. Motion carried 2-1.**

**Consider** Commission Liaison positions 2023 – Commissioner Mrozinski. **Commissioner Mrozinski** read off liaison positions so that the they can be transparent per **Commissioner Gramarossa** and so the public will know. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Commissioner Haney stated nay. Motion carried 2-1.**

**Consider** contract with Weaver consultants to inventory all the County Road miles not inventory with INDOT – Mitchell Bishop, county Planner. Mitch stated last month he was working with our latest Community Crossing grants which he just turned in last week. Part of the application you must look at the current inventory map. There is a GIS application you must do and you must put in sections of roadways. This year we applying for Fish Lake community and there are 46 different segments. So, when he was putting in for the budget, he noticed there were 6-7 roadways segments in Fish Lake that were not actually highlighted but do qualify within the state inventory. He went through the process and got those added in the inventory. After that we looked at the whole map of the county and noticed there were quite a few segments that were not on inventory and these were segments that we currently maintain within the county. He said he did not put together how many miles of those segments but he believes there is probably about 40 or 50. And those segments tie into the MVH funds and our local roads funds as well. Most these were out in county subdivisions. Mitch stated he looked at other counties and there is nothing out of line with this. We are probably talking about 300 segments of roadway.

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So, what you have before you are a contract with Weaver for \$12, 200 and it will more than enough pay for itself and to move forth we got to get a jump on it. There is a whole process that needs to be done which he sent in an email. He said he did it for Fish Lake and it took him about two weeks. So, we are probably talking about 300 segments of roadways and Mitch stated he personally does not have the time to deal with this because his work load is full so that's why you have the contract before you tonight. Mitch thinks the contract is at a good price. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** discussion of change of order to Community Crossing paving project in the amount of \$80,950.12 – Mitchell Bishop, County Planner. Mitch stated this got completed this Spring. Our latest community crossing grant project. It was from 600 County Road to 600 West to Hupp Road which is roughly about ten miles. Reith Reiley won the bid. This is basically when the job was completed, this was the last invoice, you see \$80,000. There were two changes orders and they were approved, one was temporary tape via our Engineer, Jay Sullivan. Change order two was removing millings and applying top soil for a couple of residents and that was approved by the past supervisor of the highway. There also were the big dollar items which includes intermediate surface. Typically, the five years we have for the community crossing we would have an inspector on the job but, this year we did not. Commissioner Gramarossa said she wanted to ask one question. In our meeting from April 5, we were trying to get an on-call agreement with Etica Corporation not to exceed \$60,000. And she knows that at that meeting it was said that we had \$19,000 allocated for an on-call engineer. When she went back and investigated the budget, we had over \$120,000 that a contract with USI, so why did we not use them. Mitch said every year they get an authorization to proceed and he believes this year. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** request for limited road closures in the township of Hanna for HannaFest, August 12, 2023 – Heather Stevens. Commissioner Haney said he apologizes, wanted to clarify in the beginning that this was not presented by Heather Stevens, Circuit Court Clerk but she is just simply here to represent HannaFest. Commissioner Mrozinski said he would caution you even though it is HannaFest, the roads is closed we do have an ordinance that strictly lays out the use of golf carts. You need to follow the rules, they need to have a license, they need to have all the stuff on it because when you see six kids, ten years old hanging onto the same thing going through someone's yard, that is not going to cut it. Heather said she is not a fan of that. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** request to keep medical and dental insurance for Jon Patrick Jones, JSC Education Coordinator who will be retiring June 30, 2023 – Monique Thomas, Interim HR Director. **Commissioner Haney** asked what was the timeframe. Monique informed the Commission that he is retiring and he just wants to keep his benefits. She said it would be up until the age of 65 and they pay their own premiums monthly. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Consider** requesting a formal vote and a resolution to be passed to move La Porte County from a precinct based voting county to a vote center county – Heather Stevens, Circuit Court Clerk. Heather had the other two members of the election board here with her. Looking to move from the traditional, basic precinct-based voting. We are here to open it up to a vote center county. What this means is any registered voter in La Porte County will be able to vote at any vote center in La Porte County. We are required to have a total of 8 vote centers in the county and we put in 38. We have 8 in Michigan City, 5 in La Porte, and everything else is scattered and is basically the same. A couple of small changes but it is all in the vote center plan. Commissioner Gramarossa said that her question is she knows only 8 are required and you are putting the 38, it will not pass and a couple of years they will not try to shrink it down. Heather stated that is a good question and we put that in the vote center plan. This plan can only be changed with a unanimous vote by the county election board which will never be all one party and that is by statue. There will be republican and democrats on that board, so no that is not going to happen. Commissioner Gramarossa said so it is the 38 and if they decide they can put in more. Heather replied if they see no one is voting or participating and may be decided they could do away with that location she said 38 down to 8, these two would never let her get away with that. Commissioner asked how many polling places have we had in the past? Heather said basically they gone from 52 down to 38. Basically, they got out of the schools in Michigan City and where they saw vote centers were within a mile or two, they did not need that, so we did away with a few of those. This is going to be a good savings to La Porte County and increase voter turnout. Commissioner Mrozinski said someone who has been involved in county politics a long time he would say it is about time. He said we have been talking about this and like you said it must be unanimous between the democrats and republicans and that just has not happened in the past. Heather replied it did this time. **Commissioner Mrozinski stated it is getting done and he would like to make a motion to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** Commissioner Mrozinski said the next thing you need to do is to do away with declaring your party in the primary. Heather said they were working on this. Commissioner Mrozinski said he knows people who will not go and vote because of they do not want to declare their party. Heather asked him would he like for her to explain this, that is legislative and it is above her pay grade. She said, we have primary elections right now and Commissioner Mrozinski said he knows and it does not mean it can't change. Commissioner Haney informed Attorney Pejic that the Commission was going to have to go ahead and approve the resolution and could it be approved by title only. **Commissioner Haney said he would like to make a motion to approve the resolution by title only and to be read. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** Attorney Pejic read the resolution is by title only

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**Consider** auction for scrap materials for Highway Department – Charity Glaser, Interim Superintendent. Charity informed the Commission that there were mixed loads of scrap and the scrape could possibly yield more money if it was separated. Charity stated so there were some questions by Councilman Yagelski. She asked do we want to table this for another meeting? Commissioner Gramarossa said she just wanted to discuss this and it was a good point. The highway department director got three bids. The issue that we have is, it is a mixed load of scrap and if we were able to separate the different loads of scrap into separate piles. We might yield more money from those piles. Commissioner Gramarossa said she believes there is another part to this and if we would give the highway department a chance to separate those piles out first then ultimately, we always do run short on the roads and the paving and the chip and seal. Trying to yield the most monies out of these piles is the best thing to do, the flexibility of doing more roads later. Commissioner Gramarossa asked for motion to table this until we able to get that done. **Commissioner Haney motioned to table. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** Commissioner Mrozinski said he has been talking to Mr. Parks and Mr. Yagelski about this and we are going to do the old police cars separate and Commissioner Gramarossa replied yes, we are. He said striping and decal had to come off first and Mr. Yagelski was going to send someone out there today to look at this. Charity said she believes the sheriff's cars are behind the sheriff's garage. Commissioner Mrozinski said he believes there was a guy that had been spoken to about power washing this which would save us some money. Commissioner Gramarossa said we had some quotes out there and we can discuss this at the next meeting.

**Adjournment**

**Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 7:28 p.m. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA  
DATE 8-16-2023

*[Handwritten signatures]*

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

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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