



LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Connie Gramarossa
President

Richard Mrozinski
Vice President

Joseph Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom

President Connie Gramarossa called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Rich Mrozinski.

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

President Gramarossa welcomed six students from South Central High School's Government class.

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the September 6, 2023 minutes. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 9/1/2023 - \$1,459,557.95 and Operating Expense Claims - \$3,683,194.43. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** **Commissioner Mrozinski** requested a vendor's July litigation invoices in the amount of \$16,817.50 to be included in the Claims total, usually miscellaneous non-litigation invoices are disputed. **Auditor Stabosz** had no comment except to say the dispute with the vendor is a matter of pending litigation and is going before the Indiana Court of Appeals. **Attorney Pejic** clarified for the record the invoices are not from a current litigation *case* but litigation *work* done for the County during June 15 to July 15, 2023. **Auditor Stabosz** questioned why two of the three Commissioners do not support the statutory authority of his office for the dispute with that vendor. The vendor is engaging in coercion and abuse of power with two of the three Commissioners and he believes it will come out in court. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the claims, President Gramarossa stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Abstained** due to being on vacation this week and not having a chance to review the claims prior to the meeting.

Public Comment

Stan Wruble, Attorney for Commissioner Connie Gramarossa, via Zoom. A special prosecutor was appointed to investigate allegations of criminal activity against Commissioner Gramarossa, who has completely cooperated during the investigation over the last several months. Two separate Indiana State Police Detectives have interviewed her. A Special Prosecutor concluded that she broke no laws and no criminal charges will be filed against her. Attorney Wruble found it interesting that the allegations alleged only after the Commission President was removed and replaced with Commissioner Gramarossa. Tax payers' dollars were used to investigate the allegations. As a former elected official in St. Joe County, he knows that the reputation of La Porte County up until recently, was one of the highest in the State in terms of bipartisan cooperation in terms of good government for the citizens of La Porte County. It is not good for any county to have investigation after investigation or a 'witch hunt.' He is pleased that Commissioner Gramarossa has been exonerated.

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Connie and her husband Rich have a great reputation as honest, ethical business people in the community and it is unfortunate she and her family has had to go through this investigation. Attorney Wruble thanked Special Prosecutor Nelson Chipman, from Marshall County, who provided a ten-page report to Judge Alevizos, with details of the reasons why Commissioner Gramarossa is not being charged with a crime. **Special Prosecutor Chipman's** words at the end of the report, 'One final observation, even a cursory review of La Porte County media outlets reveals a continuing and often bitter conflict among elected and appointed officials - past and present - that may seriously undermine public confidence in the effectiveness of local government. The people's business is far too important for that to continue. La Porte County government is no exception. This squabble is better resolved at the ballot box rather than a jury box.'

Department Reports/Comments

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department, **thanked** Charity and Andrew from the Highway Department for dirt brought to Creek Ridge Park during work on a new restroom. **Announced** Pioneer Days will be this weekend, Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Ham and beans over the fire, kettle corn, and members of the Fair's Pioneerland will be included, cost is \$2 for Adults and \$1 for Seniors and Children.

Christen Zabel, Republican Co-Director in Voter Registration, reported on the upcoming Municipal General Election. Called upon all poll workers, Mobile Voting Van and the new Vote Centers will be used. October 10th is the last day to register to vote for the November 7th Municipal Election.

Joe Haney, Commissioner, **over** the past few months he has been meeting with emergency services to get a handle on the fires related to hand sanitizer storage in our county. The fires have caused massive property damage with tens of thousands of dollars to fire department equipment. The water usage is staggering. Environmental concerns with contamination in the water running into streams, lakes and drinking water. As a member of the Plan Commission, he is calling upon the process of changing the Joint Zoning Ordinance to put additional guardrails around any facility storing, processing, manufacturing or handling any highly flammable materials. He formerly asked for an investigation into Glycerin Traders LLC and DBAs. **The county's** self-funded insurance plan is currently running 1.2 million dollars ahead to date which is fantastic news. **Lastly**, as a housekeeping note, the report made to law enforcement was done a month prior to his removal as Commission President in May, the report went out in April. Encouraged everyone to read the report by the Special Prosecutor. **President Gramarossa**, no comments on this topic. **Commissioner Haney**, an attorney provided substantially inaccurate information to the special prosecutor as well.

Heather Stevens, Clerk, confirming Absentee Voting locations in both La Porte and Michigan City.

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council for additional appropriations. **Lynn Swanson**, Coroner, **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Old Business

Considered changing Commissioners' Administrative Assistant position to Office Manager and Change from appointed to hired at Comot VI level. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to send favorable recommendation to the Council and the Employee Review Committee to consider the changes. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, this should be two separate motions therefore he did not second Commissioner Haney's motion which then died. Job Evaluation Committee voted in June of 2022 to move the position of Administrative Assistant from Comot V level to Comot VI. It went to the Council in June, 2022, but was tabled with other employees requesting a step increase. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to pass the pay level/increase on to the Council for the position to be a Comot VI, **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Considered changing Commissioners' Administrative Assistant position to Office Manager.** **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Considered amending his motion to include position of 'hired' and not 'appointed' Office Manager.** **Commissioner Mrozinski** then motioned to approve his amended motion. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

New Business

Considered policy update in Employee Handbook on Paid Parental Leave. **Attorney Scott Pejic** reviewed the policy and had no issues. **Commissioner Haney**, he just received it this morning, **Commission Mrozinski**, we all received it on Friday. **Commissioner Haney** thanked Councilman Kiel and Clerk Stevens for getting the ball rolling on this topic several months back.

President Gramarossa, she never saw them at committee meetings with Councilman Novak and Interim Human Resources Director Monique Thomas. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**


Considered settlement approval for accident claim in the amount of \$11,082.24 which involved a county vehicle. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered additional road miles maintained by the County for inclusion on the State's Road inventory map. **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, identified additional 60 miles to add to the inventory for more funds, we currently get roughly \$6,000 per mile but for MVH funds the amount would be an additional \$420,000 per year. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Peterson Consulting Services, Inc for GASB/GAAP Compliance. **Tim Stabosz**, Auditor, this is in regards to requirements for accounting and providing financial statements to State Board of Accounts. Keeping track of Capital Assets and having a plan. **President Gramarossa** asked if this work can be done 'in-house.' **Auditor Stabosz**, maybe in the future. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 6:31 p.m. Commissioner Joe Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE _____ 10-4-2023


ATTEST: _____ Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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