



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 6, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom

Vice President Rich Mrozinski called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Carlton Bishop.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, via Zoom, questioned Attorney Scott Pejic if the contract for work on the Franklin Street Bridge for Marquiss Electric needs to be added to the agenda for signatures, it was previously voted on at a prior meeting, passed 2-1. **Attorney Pejic**, yes, formally for the record and place under Old Business. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to amend the agenda. **Vice President Mrozinski** stepped down to second. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

Considered approval of the August 2, 2023 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of the August 16, 2023 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to table due to not having a chance to review the minutes. **Died for lack of second. Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **Vice President Mrozinski** stepped down to second. **Commissioner Haney - Nay. Motion carried 2-1.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 8/18/2023 - \$1,482,353.59 and Operating Expense Claims - \$5,356,400.07. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0. Vice President Mrozinski**, August 2, 2023 meeting, requested an itemized invoice from Auditor Stabosz' attorney representing him in a personal matter in the amount of \$9,610.00. **Auditor Stabosz**, Commissioners did receive the invoice. It was emailed to President Gramarossa. **Commissioner Haney**, he supplied President Gramarossa with the date/time of email containing the invoice. **Auditor Stabosz**, this has been discussed prior and approved, invoice has been paid. **Vice President Mrozinski**, another invoice paid without Commissioners reviewing the claim to Hunt, Suedhoff, Kearney for \$10,793.16, attorney for Auditor in lawsuit. Asked for a motion to approve the claims minus the invoice for Hunt, Suedhoff, Kearney, **new amount of claims is \$5,345,660.91. Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the claims as presented with a request from Commissioner Gramarossa to reimburse the county for her car accident. **Motion by Commissioner Haney** died for lack of a second. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to deduct amount for paying Auditor's attorney from the Claims total. **Vice President Mrozinski** stepped down to second. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay. Vice President Mrozinski**, some invoices for Attorney Doug Biege are 120 days past due. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to pay the amount of \$27,213.23 to Attorney Biege. **Vice President Mrozinski** stepped down to second. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay. Vice President Mrozinski**, Friedman & Associates invoices totaling \$44,931 need to be paid, they are past due. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve payment. **Vice President Mrozinski** stepped down to second. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay**

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Public Comment

Tommy Kalavik, 1316 Ohio Street, Michigan City, member of the Michigan City Fire Merit Commission. Paid tribute to Starke County MT 49-year-old Mike Wilcox who lost his life in the line of duty on August 5, 2023. Supports the reconstruction of Pabs Road Project. Forty-nine applicants for the Michigan City Fire Department, 37 took the written exam. He commended the Highway Department for chip and seal on Wozniak Road. Is there a site plan for the former Coolspring Township Library located at 400 North and Johnson Road? **Commissioner Haney**, the former Coolspring Township Library was purchased by La Porte Hospital. Also looking forward to a good partnership with Michigan City to get Pabs Road completed. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa**, via Zoom, she has worked for a while with Mayor Duane Parry and Interim Highway Superintendent Charity Glaser to get Pabs Road paved. The last three months as President she has included roads that were not originally on the paving list.

Carlton Bishop, Economic Development, continuing work on getting broadband into rural areas of our county. Introduced the CEO of Surf Broadband, Gene Cruise. Stressed the importance of taking the survey for broadband on the county's website. **Gene Cruise**, CEO Surf Broadband, 228 Waterfall Drive, Elkhart, largest private share holder for Surf Internet, office here in La Porte on State Street. Currently employs approximately 200 team members across Indiana, Michigan and Illinois. Invested over 20 million dollars in La Porte County laying fiber. Surf has been awarded a NextLevel grant from the State of Indiana for 4.5 million dollars and Surf put in 2 million dollars. Today the very first customer was connected to this new system. Timeline for this grant started in 2021 with a bid, grant was awarded in February of 2022 and the contract did not arrive until the Spring of 2023. In the middle of the process, the State changed the grant to a Federal funded grant which now included federal compliances as well as the original State compliances. Surf is laying 250 miles of fiber. A map was displayed to show areas where fiber has been built, areas where equipment is in the ground building and areas that are coming next. Gene stated Surf will apply for another grant that is being offered from the State of Indiana. Indiana Connectivity Program allows any underserved resident in the state to go to a free portal, submit your address to prove by doing a speed test that you do not have adequate broadband, address will be put on a list for providers to bid on and possibly subsidized by the state at \$4,800 per address to have access to broadband for rural residents.

Department Reports/Comments

Rob Sabie, EMA Director, Siren Survey is completed, he thanked the members of the Committee that helped move this project along. Reported FEMA will be doing a nationwide test of the emergency alert system on October 4th. This will be done through all cell phones (not on flip phones), radios and televisions. Even if a cell phone is turned off, the test will override it.

Bob Schuster, Adult Probation, thanked the Commission and Council for helping their offices get back into the Complex building after 8 months of being displaced due to the December flood in the building. The space in the Michigan City Courthouse was a blessing but they do appreciate being back in their own offices.

President Gramarossa apologized for not being in person at today's meeting, her brother recently passed away in a tragic accident. Thanked Carlton Bishop for his work with Broadband.

Tim Stabosz, Auditor, Attorney Biege's invoices have been submitted and will be paid up to date this week. Delays on both Attorney Friedman and Attorney Biege's invoices were due to the Commissioners' office. Attorney Friedman is current except for roughly \$35,000 from invoices that were just recently submitted to his office. An exert from a letter from his office to the Commissioners and Council the previous evening, 'Meanwhile, we have the embarrassment of two unprincipled Commissioners in Gramarossa and Mrozinski, who weeks ago tried to remove my long past due Jones Law Firm attorney bill from their claims docket, even after at a previous Commission meeting, they publicly voted to expedite payment of all of Jones' billing.' The Auditor is assigned to 'audit' claims in La Porte County. Discussion took place between Auditor Stabosz and Commissioners Gramarossa and Mrozinski. **Auditor Stabosz**, his job is to prevent fraud and protect the tax payers of the county, he will never allow Councilmen or Commissioners to take his power away as the Auditor by cutting off funding or asserting that his role is ministerial. If necessary, the Council and Commission will be sued. He questioned why his invoices to Attorney Tom Vetne are being withheld. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, Auditor Stabosz has requested itemized invoices from all attorneys therefore that should include Mr. Vetne's. Does not know what the tax payers of the county are paying for until he reviews the invoices. **Auditor Stabosz**, you have an itemized invoice on Jones Law Firm. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, via Zoom, what about the paid invoice that was slipped in today on the claims docket? **Auditor Stabosz**, accused her of breaking into the email server and stealing

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emails. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, stealing emails? Why is he concerned about making enemies of himself, Joe Haney and Andrew Jones, this was in a text sent by Auditor Stabosz. Andrew Jones does not live in our County. She said the three of them are the 'Trilogy' and asked why are they so important. Auditor Stabosz has made threats in an email or text stating he will not pay invoices for work done on the Franklin Street Bridge until his attorney fees are paid. **Auditor Stabosz**, the Council appropriated the amount to pay Attorney Tom Vetne, authorized it in July and the invoice will be paid. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, look up Indiana Code 36-2-6-2.

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council for computer replacement and budget shortages. **Andrew McGuire**, EMS, annual computer replacement program, will be replacing 9 desktops and 1 tablet, not to exceed \$15,000. Also, two accounts, fuel and household supplies, need more funding for the remainder of the year. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye, Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye.**

Considered permission to travel to Denver, Colorado October 6-12, 2023 for annual NAADAC Conference. **Debra LeRoy**, LADS, has funds available in the budget. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye.**

Considered approval of the July 17, 2023 Joint Commission/Council Workshop. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Haney - Aye, Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye.**

Old Business

Considered Contract with Marquiss Electric for repairs to Franklin Street Bridge. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve the contract that was previously approved at a Commissioners' meeting. **Commissioner Haney**, just received a stack of paperwork before the meeting so he was not able to review the contract. **Vice President Mrozinski** stepped down to second the contract. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

New Business

Considered MOU with Michigan City to pave Pahs Road between Cleveland Avenue and Clover Lane. **Doug Biege**, Attorney, on behalf of La Porte County, gave information on the project. Michigan City will fund \$475,000, La Porte County will pay \$125,000, and Michigan City will provide traffic control and pavement markings. Terms agreed to by County Commission President Connie Gramarossa and Michigan City Mayor Duane Parry. Project has been approved by Michigan City Common Council. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye.**

Considered approving auction for October 10, 2023 for Sheriff Department's used vehicles, County Highway used equipment and scrap. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye.**

Considered Hudson/Saugany Lake projects for the La Porte County Regional Water and Sewer District. **John Carr** introduced Ken Jones. **Ken Jones**, this project has been the efforts of the communities of Hudson and Saugany Lake in Galena and Hudson Township since 2013 when property owners initiated a study. Funding applications are currently pending with the state revolving loan fund through the Indiana Finance Authority and the US Department of Agriculture through their Rural Development Program. Approximately 1,100 homes, unserved by municipal utilities of any kind, no sewer, no water, communities are densely developed. Requested consideration of using ARP funds in the amount of 1.5 million dollar. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned for support to move the project forward to the Council for funding from the ARP funds. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye.**

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Considered Easement agreement with Kingsbury Elevator. **Doug Biege**, Attorney, on behalf of Kingsbury Elevator and they have a First-Class switch with CN, a track on their land, the bridge was funded and may be under construction right now (confirmed by Commissioner Mrozinski that construction is in process), and Kingsbury's part is to install rail from their property to the bridge and then Mr. Carroll and his company will go from there which will complete us up to CSX where another switch will be located. This is a one-hundred-year lease with no cost but Kingsbury Elevator will pay for the rail installation and maintain what is on their section. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye, Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye.**

Considered MOU with HealthLinc. **Ron Heeg**, Sheriff, gave condolences to Commissioner Gramarossa for her brother. Same MOU as the one with the previous Sheriff, just changing names to reflect the current, Sheriff Ron Heeg. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Haney - Aye, Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye.**

Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to adjourn at 10:55 a.m. via Zoom. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0 via roll call. Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 9/20-2023
[Signature]
[Signature]

ATTEST: _____ Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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