



LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Connie Gramarossa
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Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, December 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.

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

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Haney motioned to add two items to the agenda: Consider two separate travel requests for Adult Probation. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to add a third item to the agenda: Consider request of Cender/Dalton to make an inquiry into the County's fund balances, year-to-date expenditures and available funds on hand for purposes of year-end reporting and account reconciliations. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the amended agenda. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the December 6, 2023 minutes. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney motioned to amend Commissioner Mrozinski's approval by adding clarity to the minutes of individuals that gave their opinions on the moving of the Voter Registration office to a different location, no indication in the minutes whether their opinions were 'for or against' the move. The members of the public have a right to have their comments accurately recorded. President Gramarossa, back in January, Derald Borton made a comment at the meeting that Commissioner Haney was 'king of the county', and Commissioner Haney had the Secretary strike it from the minutes. Does everything said have to be in the minutes? Commissioner Haney, it should be recorded if a statement is 'for' or 'against' a topic. President Gramarossa, motioned the January minutes show that Derald Borton, a member of the public, stated Commissioner Haney was 'acting like the king of the county.' Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

May this record reflect those individuals that spoke during the December 6, 2023, meeting on the Voter Registration office move: Juanita Haney, Francine Kalita, Allen Stevens, Angela Henzman, and Christen Zabel all opposed the move of that office to a new location.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 12/15/2023 - \$1,511,250.97. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** Operating Expense Claims - \$3,817,505.09. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, an employee in the Clerk's office has been transcribing the minutes for the Council meetings and getting paid for it. The Auditor is the 'secretary' for the Council, yet the minutes are being done by an employee. **Auditor Tim Stabosz**, his office is short one full-time employee, so part-timers are being used to save money. Part-time money was approved by the Council therefore the funds are being utilized and one way is by paying a contract employee to do the minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, how many employees are in your office and is there someone in the office that could do the minutes? **Auditor Stabosz**, currently 14 employees which includes one part-time in the office, the minutes are an outside contract employee relationship. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, one set of minutes done were for a Commissioners' meeting and the contract employee was paid by the Commissioners' account, not the Council or Auditor. The employee works in the Clerk's office, the Claims amount paid to this employee is \$1,200 for transcribing the minutes and he will not approve the amount. **Commissioner Haney**, using a part-time employee to do the work for \$5,000 over three years is better than having a full-time employee to do the same job for \$120,000 over three years. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, there are already 14 employees in his office and is this employee in the Clerk's office doing it during work hours or after hours at home?

ORIGINAL

Auditor Stabosz, if you want to get into a game of harassment over funds that were authorized by the Council, this county will grind to a halt because he will stop payments to the Commissioners' people. **President Gramarossa**, you've already done that. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, deduct \$1,200 from the Claims total. **Auditor Stabosz**, the minutes are done professionally, and this is simply harassment. Services have been provided by a vendor and to make a choice by saying 'we're not going to pay them', you destroy the confidence of any vendor in La Porte County. **President Gramarossa**, we've had a lot of vendors provide services and payments are delayed. **Auditor Stabosz**, we can't pay something that isn't submitted properly or where the funds are not coming from the proper account. There are 3 examples of bills not paid and all three were for attorneys; one is in court right now, another one is hopefully being resolved and the other one... **President Gramarossa**, amount minus \$1,200 is \$3,816,305.09. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Gramarossa stepped down and seconded the motion. Auditor Stabosz**, this is pure harassment of the Auditor's office, and both Commissioners should be ashamed of themselves. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Mrozinski and Gramarossa - Aye, Commissioner Haney - Nay. Claims amount is now \$3,816,305.09.**

Public Comment

Linda Lancaster, Vice President of the League of Women Voters in La Porte County, 111 Wilshire Avenue, Michigan City, speaking on behalf of the League of Women Voters on civility at the Commissioners' meeting. Members are deeply concerned about the actions of the Commissioners at the December 6th meeting. Lack of common decency and respect for each other. Meetings are recorded and are on demand replay. Members of the Indiana Legislature are watching La Porte County Commissioners meetings, a laughingstock is not the reputation we want for the citizens.

Steve Holifield, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, four developers attended the last meeting, we need more jobs brought to the county. Our taxes are going up every year. We are a laughingstock, behave like adults. If you want to argue and bicker, do it outside the meeting, I have supported all three of you in the past. We have an election coming up for two of you.

Wes Scully, 508 Pinetree Drive, Trail Creek, President of the NAACP, stand here tonight in solidarity for Monique Thomas, current Interim Human Resources Director. The attacks that have been going on against her, against her integrity, her professionalism and she holds a master's degree. She has been doing the job as Interim Director for over a year and now that the time has come to hire her for the Director's position, false accusations have come out from the Auditor's office, from Commissioner Haney, and this is a serious problem. He has known Monique Thomas for many years and when these accusations have been brought against her with no proof, it makes you look bad. It doesn't set well with the NAACP organization nor the people that see her work every day. He listened to the back and forth about paying the employee for doing the minutes, yet they have an issue with Ms. Thomas who has been working the Director's position for over a year but not getting the title for what she deserves, its an offense to the community and to the voters that elected Auditor Stabosz and Commissioner Haney. He questions **their** professionalism, **their** integrity, so if they have something against Ms. Thomas, it cannot be because of her credentials then is it because she is female or African American? The attack she is under is unfair and unprofessional and they should be ashamed of themselves.

Commissioner Haney, he has no idea what attack Mr. Scully is talking about. **Wes Scully**, the article or email that was posted about her position and office. No names were mentioned on purpose because there is no proof, 'it's the same old trick, before you are handed that position that we don't want you to have, they are going to smear your name with acquisitions to make it look like you're incompetent.' She is very competent, very professional and has the credentials to back it up. We will stand up for her to the end.

Mike Seitz, 212 Lakeside, Walkerton, commended Commissioners and Maintenance for the wonderful job on the decorations around the County buildings for the holidays.

Heather Stephens, Clerk via Zoom, stated the employee doing the minutes for the Auditor's office does not do that work while in the Clerk's office, it will be done during lunch hour or at home, not on the Clerk's time. Also commented on the move of the Voter Registration office, their office does not run elections but under the Direction of the Clerk, at the previous location across the hall, they would assist with the elections. She will be going to the Council to ask for additional staff to help her during the elections.

Department Reports/Comments

Tim Stabosz, Auditor, the employee in the Clerk's office is a paid contractor for his office doing the minutes of the Council meetings. She is paid on a 'per page' basis and usually done in the evening hours when not working for the Clerk. You are weaponizing your office. The Council approved the funds, we are going to pay this person.

ORIGINAL

You are engaging in harassment and intimidation. You've chosen not to pay my attorney in defense against Mr. Friedman, with regards to aspects of him engaging in political activity, lobbying, community organizing and other items not in his contract, you will not defend the authorities of the Auditor's office with that attorney, you've refused to pay that bill, and now two of you are being sued by three employees for things involving intimidation, coercion and abuse of authority. You have been sued both personally and professionally, if you expect me to pay your legal bills because you are being sued, good luck to you. We have an employee, in good faith, that has provided services to the Council and you're going to say don't pay them? That is corrupt, sick and you should be ashamed of yourselves.

President Gramarossa invited Attorney Guy DiMartino to speak about an issue, the roughly \$650,000 overpayment that was posted on social media. Since this was made public, a bit of explaining will be done about the health insurance. A meeting was held with the insurance company to verify the dollar amount on the post and it was not anywhere near the amount stated, Commissioner Haney did not remove the post. On November 20th, a vote was to be taken for the Human Resources Director's position. There were two applicants at this time, Monique Thomas and another individual. Commissioner Haney's post stated the Auditor's office, Commissioner Haney and two Councilmen, Justin Keil and Mike Rosenbaum, started an investigation in September on the employees' health insurance. Prior to the vote for HR on November 20th, Auditor Stabosz notified the insurance company of a possible overage payment. This group knew in September but did not say anything until the day of the vote for the Human Resources Director in November. She explained the process of the employee health insurance and how it is paid. We are self-funded/self-insured.

Guy DiMartino, Attorney, via Zoom, the Health Insurance program is a little different than what most people think, a PowerPoint was used to explain. Standard First Dollar Plans, a premium is paid, and all the risk is on the insurance company, once you pay the premium and deductible then the insurance company pays according to your plan. That's not the case with our Health Insurance Plan here in the County. La Porte County is self-funded, but it is a plan with multiple layers and multiple parties involved. We have UMR as a third-party administrator, claims are preapproved by them, employees enroll through them, they pay according to the terms of the plans selected by the employees. They have no money in the game. They are not an insurance company but instead, they manage our funds. Our funds are funded with County money, every year claim histories are reviewed and the cost for individual and/or family plans are determined. The County pays 85% of the decided premium and employees pay their 15% contribution. That money does not leave the County, the money is not paid to an insurance company but goes into a self-funded fund or account. On the other hand, La Porte County is **not** totally self-funded, we have a Stop-Loss Insurance Company, Berkley. If someone were to have a large claim within a year, more than \$200,000 for that individual, to protect the self-funded plan, that is a second layer of insurance. The County would only be responsible for \$200,000 of that employee's plan claim. UMR get an administrative fee, based on those enrolled in the plan, for the work they do as the third-party administrator. For an individual person, the fee is \$160 per month and for a family plan, the fee is a bit over \$300 per month. All the premiums go into this fund and then the fund pays claims and administrative expenses, but it also pays a 'per person' or 'per enrollee' premium to Berkley to cover the Stop-Loss or if somebody has a claim higher than \$200,000. Even though we have claims that are paid at 85% for the County and 15% for the Employee, those monies do not leave the County until such time for the monthly administrative expense or there's a claim that's paid. There were a number of folks that were carried in the plan and because of that, La Porte County was charged by UMR the fee of either the individual or family plan rate however because those were administrative expenses and UMR never did any work for those people that were carried in the plan, UMR has refunded all that money that was originally charged, on the other hand, Berkley, because it's like an insurance company, they would only go back 90 days for the refund of those that were no longer employees but were listed in the plan. Statements were made that the plan had 'overpayments' or 'paid premiums' or paid out in excess of \$650,000, that's not true, that's not how it works. That money is sitting in the County. Currently, the amount is around \$15,000 that will not be reimbursed from the premiums from the Stop-Loss carrier Berkley, all the UMR administrative expenses have been reimbursed or are in the process of being reimbursed. Every year our plan administers somewhere around \$11.5 million dollars. It's about a 1% cost that shouldn't have been there but the County is working on safeguards so this can be caught in the future, but the \$650,000 amount is not correct. **President Gramarossa**, this group knew about this in September but didn't say anything to stop it. Commissioner Haney sat on this health board for the last 3 years. **Commissioner Haney** brought up President Gramarossa's accident. **President Gramarossa**, read a sentence from the post. **Commissioner Haney** requested bank statements from the Treasurer's office for Bank 6 two months earlier, where the health insurance premiums go, and the Auditor's office requested them as well. There was an overpayment of \$650,000 and they were trying to figure out exactly what money left the county, what money was in the county, majority of those payments should have went into Bank 6, however there's the other amount that isn't so the morning of December 11th he contacted the local agent who told him he was ordered not to speak to Commissioner Haney

about the \$650,000, this comes on the heels of not getting the bank records when requested, bank records are public records, any of you can fill out a Freedom of Information Act request on this, there was \$650,000 of overpayments, where is the money? The insurance agent wasn't allowed to speak to me or the Auditor as per Commissioner Gramarossa, the bank records had been withheld for two months. None of this would have happened if the information had been simply turned over. **President Gramarossa**, for several months this group did not share their concerns with anyone else. This was done by design to keep Monique Thomas from getting the Director's position, you waited until the meeting for the vote to bring this out. There is an email from Ms. Thomas to the Auditor with a proposal for time sheets/payroll but no cooperation from the Auditor. **Auditor Stabosz** took responsibility for the \$650,000 amount; he regrets the aspect of the amount of the number but they were still investigating the issue. The public deserves the truth and the truth is Monique has made terrible mistakes, and when John Boyd and Sheila Matias are still on the County insurance in October of 2023, we do not put them on and take them off, she does, that's a problem, so the losses aren't as large as...(discussion takes place between Auditor Stabosz and Monique Thomas who is in the audience then approaches the podium). **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, via Zoom, Monique can speak after Auditor Stabosz. **President Gramarossa**, you could have said something earlier. **Auditor Stabosz**, we may very well lose \$10,000 because of your actions (directed to Monique Thomas), I did not go public because we've been in the process of an investigation which we've kept quiet about except the Council and a Commissioner, it's all been behind the scenes because we weren't certain of how it all worked and so now its out publicly...**President Gramarossa**, not Commissioners. **Auditor Stabosz**, ...because of you. **President Gramarossa**, no, (as she held up the post made by Commissioner Haney) its because of this, sir. More discussion took place between Auditor Stabosz and Interim Human Resources Director Monique Thomas. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, please move on unless there are any questions for Attorney Guy DiMartino. **Commissioner Haney**, the amount of \$15,000 is just for the 2023 year, correct? **Guy DiMartino** agreed, just 2023. **Commissioner Haney**, this will most likely be repeated for 2022 and 2021. **Guy DiMartino**, not sure because we know both Matias and Boyd were employed during those times. **Commissioner Haney**, there is at least 82 on this list here. **President Gramarossa** requested the past two years audit from the Auditor's office however the only report or audit that has been made available is the one that came out on the day the vote was to take place for Monique Thomas as Director of Human Resources on November 20th. **Commissioner Haney**, Councilman Mollenhauer asked for an audit back in April of 2021, this was completed in September 2021 and cost \$20,000. Not every single piece of paper is gone through but rely on information from other Elected Officials or Department Heads. **President Gramarossa**, do you understand the amount of \$650,000 is held in an account with the County? **Commissioner Haney** stated an amount of \$35,000 was given by GIS the other day, the Auditor's office showed \$90,000 and that is just for 2023. Why are you trying to hide it? **President Gramarossa**, not hiding anything, you held the information for August, September, October, and November and only brought it up right before the meeting for a vote to hire the HR Director. You put doubt into the members of the Commission and Council so they would not vote for Ms. Thomas. You blamed Monique Thomas for all of this, an email stated the payroll department did not have access to the information however somehow payroll was able to go in and gain access in September. **Commissioner Haney**, access was gained in September to figure this out. **President Gramarossa**, that is not why they gained access to the information. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, to end on a high note since this topic has been broached, it might be important to the public that this issue is being solved and a protocol that we are in a much better situation now so this will not happen again, we do not know how long this has been happening, it could be 4 or 5 years or more but I think we have it solved now. **President Gramarossa**, Facebook knew about this before we did, UMR is at \$15,000 and Anthem, our dental, is at \$1,000. **Auditor Stabosz**, we felt there was inaccurate internal controls about putting people on or taking them off the insurance where this solely lies on the HR Department. This was still in an investigative stage, it was being considered by the committee and we regret the amount of \$650,000 did not reflect the actual loss to the County but we were still in a process of analyzing, it was complicated, we had trouble getting information, you eventually told the principal at GIS not to speak to Commissioner Haney or speak with me and that was outrageous but - **President Gramarossa**, you held on to the information for months and did not tell the rest of us. There were only four of you on this self-appointed group and the information was not shared among the other six members. You did not even contact Monique Thomas to let her know of the issue, you dropped this as a big bomb in the amount of \$650,000 overpayment three hours before the vote was taken for the HR Director. Two councilmen, the Auditor and Commissioner Haney held the information for fours months, no corrections made yet they knew it was going on and then presented it during the Executive Session. **Monique Thomas**, protocols have been put in place so this does not happen in the future however when there are discrepancies between payroll and myself, we handle those internally, it does not go outside our offices. If extra money is paid in a paycheck, it does not go public, it is corrected. This could have been resolved. Why was this not done to my predecessors? **Auditor Stabosz**, there have been problems since he came into office. **Monique Thomas**, you should have done your job and audited, you sent an email out with employee's personal information, that could be a

HIPPA violation. Auditor Stabosz, I only sent it out to county officials. Monique Thomas, it does not matter, names and information was in that email. Protocols have now been put into place to prevent this from happening in the future.

Requests

Considered PulsePoint AED Registry and contract for 911, **Matt Deckard, Randy Novak**, on behalf of the HealthCare Foundation, designating La Porte City as a ‘Heart Healthy Community.’ HealthCare Foundation has distributed Automated Emergency Defibrillators (AED) throughout the City. PulsePoint is an application downloaded on cell phones and as subscribers, the public and medical professionals, will be notified in case of a cardiac arrest, the location of the nearest AED within a quarter mile. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for funds to pay Motorola, **Barb Huston**, E911, two quotes were given: one year - \$82,214.62 and five years - \$388,138.60, the five-year contract has a savings of \$22,934.50. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered signature request for Tigg’s Canteen contract for food service, **Ron Heeg**, Sheriff. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Old Business

Considered Second/Final Reading Storm Water Ordinance and Technical Standards. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve on second/final reading. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adopt the Ordinance. Commissioner Haney seconded. No remonstrators were heard. Motion carried 3-0. ***Ordinance 2023-4**

New Business

Considered on-call contract with Lochmueller. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

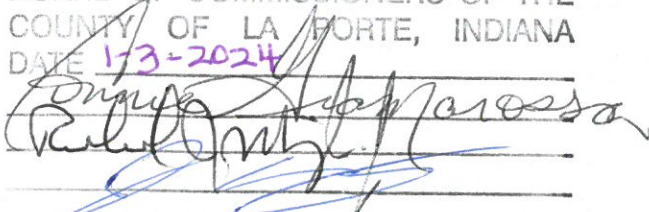
Considered Agreement between La Porte County and Purdue University. **Randy Novak**, sits on the Board, budget has been approved by the Council. Great things are happening and are better than ever, attitudes improved. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission for one employee to travel to Washington, D.C. for annual Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America National Leadership Conference, January 29-February, 2024, **Steve Eyrick**, Adult Probation. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission for 3 employees to travel to Seattle, Washington for the American Probation and Parole Association Institute, February 25-28, 2024, **Steve Eyrick**, Adult Probation. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered requesting Cender/Dalton make an inquiry into the County’s Fund Balances, Year-to-Date Expenditures and Available Funds on hand for purposes of year-end reporting and account reconciliations. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Gramarossa stepped down to second. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney abstained due to no information on the topic.**

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 7:12 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 1/3-2024


ATTEST: _____
Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL