

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL
January 8th, 2024 at 6:00PM

The 2024 Reorganizational Meeting of the La Porte County Council was held on January 8th, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex, 809 State St., La Porte, IN 46350.

CALL TO ORDER

Fulfilling a customary role until the selection of the Commission President was completed, Auditor Tim Stabosz called the meeting to order.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Auditor Tim Stabosz.

ROLL CALL

Chief Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves called the roll: Councilman Kiel, Councilman Mollenhauer, Councilman Novak, Councilman Rosenbaum, Councilman Koronka, Councilman Cunningham, and Councilman Yagelski were all physically present for the meeting.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION OF 2024 LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICERS

Mr. Stabosz opened the floor for nominations for President.

- i. Motion to nominate Mr. Novak for President made by Mr. Mollenhauer and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. Motion to close nominations made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- iii. All members voted in favor.
- iv. Mr. Stabosz called the roll to appoint Randy Novak as President; all members voted in favor of the appointment.

- v. Mr. Stabosz congratulated Mr. Novak, and relinquished the Chair to him.

Mr. Novak opened the floor for nominations for the Vice President.

- i. Motion to nominate Mr. Koronka for Vice President made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- ii. Motion to close nominations made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- iii. All members voted in favor.
- iv. Mr. Stabosz called the roll to appoint Adam Koronka as Vice President; all members vote in favor of the appointment.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY 8TH, 2024 AGENDA

- i. Mr. Rosenbaum motioned to approve with the following additions: Under New Business item no. 2, Planning for Year of 2024, move the Regular Council Meeting for May from May 27th – Memorial Day – to May 28th, and additionally move September 23rd to September 30th, so the meeting did not interfere with a conference. Additionally, under New Business item no. 4, add the letter “f” for the appointment of a NIRPC representative, as well as the addition of item no. 8 under New Business: 1782 Notice Discussion & Motion. The motion was seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rodney McCormick – 617 Union St., Michigan City

Noting his frustrations with the PTA/BOA Board as a representative of the Martin Luther King Center, Mr. McCormick stated that – while he had not received a denial form for the center’s request for an exemption – he had experienced trouble in working with the board, which he believed was under the control of the La Porte County Assessor, Mike Schultz. He questioned how the board would be able remain independent and make equitable decisions if an appointee, such as the Assessor, ran control over it. He urged the Council to ensure that boards remain independent to prevent retaliation against those they served.

Additionally, Mr. McCormick asked the Council to prevent the closing of Michigan City's Coast Guard Station. He emphasized that closing the station would ultimately result in a loss of life at the Michigan City coastline.

DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS

Mike Schultz – La Porte County Assessor

Mr. Schultz debated Mr. McCormick's claims, stating that the reason that the board hadn't issued an approval or denial on the Martin Luther King Center's request for exemption was that it had changed attorneys multiple times following the request, and that the current legal counsel had continued said request until February of 2024. Mr. Schultz emphasized that he did not have control over the board or its decisions.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 2024-1 – Opposing the Reduction in Staffing at the Coast Guard Station in Michigan City and Making Said Station a "Part-Time" Station.

- i. Motion to read the resolution made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. Mr. Stabosz read aloud the resolution in its entirety.

Mr. Rosenbaum requested that the resolution be forwarded to Congressman Rudy Yakym. Mr. Cunningham noted that there was a string of scrivener's errors in paragraph 2, where the acronym "CSG" was incorrectly drafted, and should be drafted as "CGS" instead.

- iii. Motion to adopt the resolution as amended made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- iv. All members voted in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Appointment of Legal Counsel

- i. Motion to reappoint Guy DiMartino as the Council's Legal Counsel made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.

- ii. All members voted in favor.

2. Planning for Year 2024 (approval of Regular Meeting Dates)

- i. Motion to approve with the two amended dates (moving the May 27th meeting to May 28th and moving the September 23rd meeting to September 30th) made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

3. County Council Appointments of Citizen Board Members

a. La Porte County Public Library Board of Trustees

- i. Motion to nominate Dara Jeffries made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer. *(Editor's note: no motion to close nominations was made.)*
- ii. All members voted in favor of the appointment of Dara Jeffries.

b. Alcoholic Beverage Commission

- i. Motion to nominate Matt Sikorski made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Cunningham. *(Editor's note: no motion to close nominations was made.)*
- ii. All members voted in favor of the appointment of Matt Sikorski.

c. PTA/BOA Board (2 Appointees)

- i. Motion to nominate Erica Miller made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. Motion to nominate Robert Bailey made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Mollenhauer.
- iii. Motion to nominate Ken Purze made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Kiel.
- iv. Motion to close nominations made by Mr. Koronka and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum. *(Editor's note: no vote was taken on the motion to close nominations.)*

- v. During the first roll call, Mr. Rosenbaum voted for Erica Miller and Robert Bailey; Mr. Novak voted for Erica Miller and Ken Purze; Mr. Cunningham voted for Erica Miller and Ken Purze; Mr. Mollenhauer voted for Erica Miller and Robert Bailey; Mr. Yagelski voted for Erica Miller and Robert Bailey; Mr. Kiel voted for Ken Purze and Robert Bailey; and Mr. Koronka voted for Ken Purze and Erica Miller. The total was 6 votes for Erica Miller, 4 votes for Robert Bailey, and 4 votes for Ken Purze.
 - vi. During the second roll call to break the tie between Robert Bailey and Ken Purze, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Koronka, and Mr. Kiel voted for Ken Purze, while Mr. Novak, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Mollenhauer, and Mr. Yagelski voted for Robert Bailey. Robert Bailey won the vote 4-3.
 - vii. Erica Miller and Robert Bailey were selected as the two PTA/BOA appointees by the Council.
- d. Regional Sewer and Water District
- i. Motion to nominate John Carr made by Mr. Yagelski and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
 - ii. Motion to close nominations and appoint John Carr made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
 - iii. All members voted in favor of closing nominations.
 - iv. All members voted in favor of the appointment of John Carr.
- e. County Board of Health
- i. Motion to nominate Lauren Arnold made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
 - ii. Motion to close nominations made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
 - iii. All members voted in favor of closing nominations.
 - iv. Six members voted in favor (Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Yagelski, Mr. Kiel, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Novak, Mr. Koronka) and one member voted not-in-favor (Mr. Mollenhauer) of appointing Lauren Arnold.

4. County Council Appointment of its members to Boards and Commissions

a. Animal Control Board

- i. Motion to reappoint Mr. Novak made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

b. FMEC

- i. Motion to nominate and appoint Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Novak made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Koronka. *(Editor's note: no motion to close nominations was made.)*
- ii. All members voted in favor.

c. Plan Commission

- i. Motion to nominate and retain Mr. Cunningham made by Mr. Koronka and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum. *(Editor's note: no motion to close nominations was made.)*
- ii. All members voted in favor.

d. Redevelopment Commission (3 Appointments)

- i. Motion to nominate Mr. Novak, Mr. Koronka, and Mr. Rosenbaum made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. Motion to nominate himself made by Mr. Kiel. Mr. DiMartino noted that a second was not needed for a nomination.
- iii. During roll call for appointment, Mr. Rosenbaum voted for Mr. Novak, Mr. Koronka, and himself; Mr. Novak voted for himself, Mr. Rosenbaum, and Mr. Koronka; Mr. Koronka voted for himself, Mr. Kiel, and Mr. Rosenbaum; Mr. Cunningham voted for Mr. Koronka, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Novak; Mr. Yagelski voted for Mr. Novak, Mr. Koronka, and Mr. Rosenbaum; Mr. Kiel voted for himself, Mr. Rosenbaum and Mr. Novak; and Mr. Mollenhauer voted for Mr. Novak, Mr. Koronka, and Mr. Rosenbaum. The total was 6

votes for Mr. Novak, 7 votes for Mr. Rosenbaum, 6 votes for Mr. Koronka, and 2 votes for Mr. Kiel.

- iv. Mr. Novak, Mr. Rosenbaum, and Mr. Koronka were selected as the three appointees to the Redevelopment Commission.

e. **Solid Waste District Board**

- i. Motion to retain Mr. Mollenhauer to the board made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

f. **NIRPC**

- i. Motion to retain Mr. Kiel made by Mr. Cunningham and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

5. Mileage rate for 2024: IRS mileage rate for 2024 has increased to 67 cents per mile. State of Indiana, as of July 2023, remains at 49 cents per mile.

- i. Motion to approve a 60 cents per mile rate made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

6. Discussion on Liaison Assignments for 2024

Mr. Novak asked if any of the Council members wanted to change their pre-established liaison appointments from the year prior, to which Mr. Rosenbaum stated that he felt that it was unnecessary to have himself as a duplicate liaison for Community Corrections and the Juvenile Services Center, as Mr. Cunningham was serving as a liaison for these areas. Mr. Novak stated that this change would be addressed at the January 22nd, 2024 Regular Council Meeting.

7. Discussion on NIRPC Resolution of Support

Mr. Kiel explained that NIRPC's programming relied on fees that were paid to them by participating counties, which was calculated on a population-based per-capita calculation.

He clarified that NIRPC had not raised its fees since 1992, and as a result, had slowly been losing a large amount of spending power for its programming, as it could not keep up with thirty years of inflation. NIRPC Executive Director Ty Werner spoke electronically via Zoom to add that money that NIRPC received was utilized toward securing 80/20 reimbursement funding from the Federal Government that was directed toward regional projects and programming. Mr. Novak added that NIRPC had reinvested hundreds of millions of dollars into La Porte County, while Mr. Kiel added that NIRPC programmed upwards of \$1.4 billion in federal funds into the region over the past four years.

- i. Motion of support made by Mr. Kiel and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

8. 1782 Notice

Mr. Kiel clarified that on the updated 1782 Notice, the Council had been made aware of an oversight that was a result of excise, CVET and FIT taxes that were tied to the percentage of levy in the General Fund. He noted that in moving \$1.6 million from general levy to the Health Fund, some of these revenues shifted over, which was resulting in a \$97,255 shortage in the General Fund. He did note, however, that the Council was seeing more revenue than expected in certain General Fund accounts that could be used to offset this negative, including revenue from the Juvenile Services Center.

- i. Motion to approve \$100,000 in additional Juvenile Services Center revenues to correct the shortage made by Mr. Kiel and seconded by Mr. Rosenbaum.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

COUNTY COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Mr. Yagelski voiced concerns that the unforeseen funding, including money brought in by the tax sale and the Juvenile Services Center's unexpected increase in miscellaneous revenue, were not being reported in the year-end budget and could affect the budgeting process for following years as a result. Mr. Kiel clarified that in the past with a normal budgeting process with a higher cash balance, the county was able to rely on estimated numbers, however with the General Fund having a suddenly low cash balance, it was only now that using estimated amounts of funds was detrimental to the budgeting process.

Mr. Mollenhauer congratulated Mr. Novak and Mr. Koronka on their new Council President and Vice President appointments, and thanked Mr. Rosenbaum for his role as Council President in 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

- i. Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Rosenbaum and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Examined & Approved by the La Porte County Council this 22nd day of January, 2024.



Councilman Earl Cunningham



Councilman Adam Koronka



Councilman Justin Kiel



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 

Timothy Stabosz Auditor