

MINUTES
La Porte County Council
2024 Budget Public hearing
October 19th, 2023 at 6:00pm CST

A 2024 Budget Public Hearing by the La Porte County Council was held on October 19th, 2023 at 6:00pm (central time) in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex, 809 State St., La Porte, IN 46350.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by President Mike Rosenbaum.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROLL CALL

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the roll: Councilman Kiel, Councilman Rosenbaum, Councilman Novak, and Councilman Koronka were physically present for the meeting. Councilman Yagelski appeared electronically via Zoom, while Councilman Cunningham and Councilman Mollenhauer were absent from the meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 19th, 2023 AGENDA

- i. Motion to approve the October 19th, 2023 agenda was made by Mr. Kiel and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

SOLID WASTE 2024 BUDGET

1. Presentation of Budget

Mr. Rosenbaum noted that the proposed budget for the Solid Waste District was \$4,266,140, and that the recycling contract needed to be renegotiated for 2024. In this new recycling contract, there was a 5% increase each year for five years. Mr. Kiel asked what the percentage was that the budget had increased from the year prior, to which Solid Waste District Director Clay Turner explained that there was a 10.52% increase, 5% of which was to off-set the 5% increase brought on by the new recycling contract, while the remaining percentage covered potential paid salary increases and all of Solid Waste's 200 and 300 accounts. When Mr. Kiel noted that the Council did not intend to do pay raises given the current financial situation that it was in with the General Fund, Mr. Turner stated that the actual percentage increase for his budget would come out to less than the proposed 10.52%. He noted that the approval of this budget would occur during the regular Council meeting on October 30th, 2023.

2. Public Hearing

Bill Newton, 604 Black Oak Dr., Trail Creek; asked if Solid Waste served all La Porte County or if service was limited to certain areas. Mr. Kiel confirmed with Mr. Newton that the services provided by the Solid Waste District covered all La Porte County, and was not limited to La Porte City, the City of Michigan City, or otherwise.

Ralph Malecki, 8251 S. 900 W., Wanatah; asked if Solid Waste was the county's recycling service, to which Mr. Turner explained that the Solid Waste District provided not only the recycling for the county, but also managed a compost site, electronics collection sites in both La Porte and Michigan City, had an educator who served at schools and clubs for area schools, and coordinated seven mobile collections per year. He added that the user fees for these services were collected through the property tax bill, in the amount of \$72.00 per taxpayer annually.

WANATAH PUBLIC LIBRARY 2024 BUDGET

1. Presentation of Budget

Mr. Rosenbaum noted that the total proposed amount of the budget for the Wanatah Public Library was an estimated \$85,350, with the maximum amount being raised from the tax levy being \$73,250. Director of the Wanatah Public Library, Don Parker, explained

that the library was not proposing raising its revenue stream past the circuit breaker limit for 2024, however the library did propose to raise its expenditures past the circuit breaker limit. He explained that ten years prior, when the county was re-aligning property taxes, there was a year when the Wanatah Public Library did not receive its tax funding for a year and a half, and like other smaller agencies that this happened to, the Wanatah Public Library opted to borrow money so it could cover operating expenses and resume functioning until the tax funding was acquired. Since then, Wanatah Public Library had been setting aside 10% of its total revenues that the library raised every year, to build up a reserve. Mr. Parker felt as though the library had accumulated enough funds in the reserve for now, and noted that there were things that the library wanted to do with the budget, including raising its expenditures in 2024, and then going back to the normal processes in the years to follow. Mr. Kiel asked Mr. Parker how much the budget for 2024 had been increased by compared to 2023, which Mr. Parker stated was 15%.

2. Public Hearing

There were no public comments during the public hearing.

LA PORTE COUNTY 2024 BUDGET

1. Presentation of Budget

Mr. Rosenbaum explained that the proposed budget was \$89,183,675 overall, \$45,925,646 was the maximum estimate raised, with the current tax levy is the difference of \$42,581,458. On the available pages of detailed line-items, one of the largest items was Public Safety LIT, and additional items such as Economic Development LIT. A few items, such as funding for the Opioid Fund, Public Defender, and Adult Probation, received some funding from the State of Indiana. La Porte County would also be receiving a Local Health Maintenance Fund in the amount of \$1,356,548. Regarding Economic Development LIT, Mr. Rosenbaum clarified that of the \$5,906,999 that was proposed, \$5 million would go directly to the Highway Department, and another \$220,000 would be distributed to the county's economic department. Mileage reimbursement had also been increased with the State of Indiana. Mr. Rosenbaum noted that money for the Ameresco bond payment would also likely be taken out of Economic Development LIT. Chief Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves informed the room that anyone who wanted a detailed list of the budget items could receive one at the Auditor's Office located at 555 Michigan Ave., STE 205, La Porte, Indiana, 46350.

2. Public hearing

Jason Fry, 983 Park Ave., Porter; asked why line item 9507 on page five for Community Corrections did not align with the information on Gateway, to which Mr. Kiel explained that the budget with line items would not show up on Gateway until it had been approved, and offered to send Mr. Fry a copy of the budget via e-mail.

Mr. Novak explained that he had a meeting with MS4, in which MS4 was requesting to alter their line items, however the total of the budget would remain the same. Mr. Rosenbaum noted that the changes that were made could be addressed at the October 30th, 2023 regular Council meeting.

Bill Newton, 604 Black Oak Dr., Trail Creek; asked if the \$187,965 budget that was proposed for Drug & Alcohol Services met the needs of the department to fulfill their goals, and how the budget was calculated. Mr. Kiel explained that the account's total was likely carried on for many years and increased appropriately over time, however he was unsure of the history of the fund in question. Ms. Graves added that the 9508 account was the state's name for the account, while La Porte County referred to this department as LADS, and continued that when LADS turned in a budget, it was based off a grant that they received. Mr. Novak clarified that each department approached the Council during budget hearings to present their proposed budgets, and each budget was subsequently scrutinized and potentially amended as the Council saw necessary. Mr. Stabosz added that these presentations were available to be viewed on the Access La Porte County website.

Mr. Newton asked what the county's plan was to reduce its financial deficit, and questioned if it planned on primarily reducing spending, or increasing revenues, to which Mr. Novak answered that La Porte County planned on doing both, while Mr. Kiel added that the county could also shift expenditures to areas with surplus revenues as a financial tactic as well.

ADJOURNMENT

- i. Motion to recess until 5:30pm on October 30th, 2023, prior to the regular Council meeting, made by Mr. Kiel and seconded by Mr. Koronka.
- ii. All members voted in favor.

Examined & Approved by the La Porte County Council this 27th day of November 2023.



Councilman Earl Cunningham



Councilman Adam Koronka



Councilman Justin Kiel



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



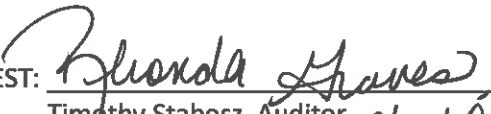
Councilman Randy Novak



Councilman Mike Rosenbaum



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 
Timothy Stabosz, Auditor *Chief Deputy Auditor*