



**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, March 20, 2024 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 Sheryl Lestinsky.

Auditor Tim Stabosz called the roll: **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** - Present via Zoom; **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** - Present; and **Commissioner Joe Haney** - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced. **Commissioner Haney**, for clarity, is **Commissioner Mrozinski** claiming a medical exception? **Commissioner Mrozinski**, yes.

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to add under Requests to the agenda: Consider travel request for Superior Court 2 Judge Rich Stalbrink. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to add: Consider change to the Policy Handbook; Consider use of Blind Copy in emails; Consider resignation of Director of Facilities; Consider appointment of new Director of Facilities and remove item 11 'b.' **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Aye; **Commissioner Mrozinski** - Aye and **Commissioner Haney** - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the March 6, 2024 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Haney** - Aye; **Commissioner Mrozinski** - Aye and **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the March 11, 2024 Special Meeting minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Aye; **Commissioner Haney** - Aye and **Commissioner Mrozinski** - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 3/8/2024 - \$1,487,87.00. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Mrozinski** - Aye; **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Aye and **Commissioner Haney** - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,778,876.54. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the claims. **Commissioner Mrozinski** questioned the claim for East Isles for Stop Loss insurance. Discussion took place between **Commissioner Haney**, **Commissioner Mrozinski** and **Auditor Stabosz**. **President Gramarossa**, were bids advertised for this service? **Auditor Stabosz**, General Insurance would have that answer. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Roll call: **Commissioner Haney** - Aye; **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Aye and **Commissioner Mrozinski** - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

Steve Holifield, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, continued to speak on the solar problem to Commissioners, he is against the use of solar on farms in our County. Reminded the Commission that two are up for reelection.

Mike Ekovich, Jr., 2828 N. 500 E., Rolling Prairie, the current Solar Ordinance is vague, written during COVID and if it was drafted now there would be more input from the community against using solar in our County.

Dean White, 3066 N. Highway 35, La Porte, (former Pine Lake Grange), handed out two photos to the Commission on property at 4747 N. Highway 35 that should be cleaned up, it is an automobile junkyard. Addressed three issues: trucks using engine brakes downhill on Highway 35 going south into La Porte. Requested a 'no engine braking' sign be posted on this curve, he spoke to the Highway Department; and requested the Commission to clear the area overlooking Stone Lake at Pine Lake Avenue and Waverly Road for a 'Vista View' as drivers go south on Pine Lake Avenue.

ORIGINAL

Tommy Kulavik, 1316 Ohio Street, Michigan City, via Zoom, commended the Commissioners for the cleaning crews that were out on 400 North picking up litter. Michigan City needs an Absentee Vote location, should be at the County owned building at 8th Street and Wabash Street.

Department Reports/Comments

Commissioner Rich Mrozinski asked if there were high school students in attendance. Three South Central High School students were attending the meeting.

Commissioner Joe Haney, on the Vista View, City of La Porte has been helpful. As per Tim Franke, an arborist is being assigned to tag what trees should or should not be removed from our property. If there is an agreement now with the Board, he would **motion** to move forward with tidying our piece of property in conjunction with the City. **President Gramarossa**, met with both La Porte City and County Park Superintendents, there is a steep slope in that area, it will take time to clear and it is not feasible to conduct this task or request. **Commissioner Haney**, that is part of the reason why La Porte City is going to have an arborist out there, to be sure any tree removal would not have any 'fall off' from the slope. As for the **East Isle** question, it was determined by the Insurance Committee, it was put out, searched for and gone through options by the Insurance Board. Reminded the Commission that he was replaced by Commissioner Gramarossa on this Board, he would be more than happy to be on the Board and **motioned to be reappointed to the Health Insurance Board. Motion died for lack of second.** He has received emails and phone calls on possible solar projects in our County on both sides, for and against, it is not an easy decision moving forward on this issue. When he came in as a Commissioner, one of the first things he did was push for a Solar Ordinance, he also pushed for a bond provided by the solar companies looking to do business in our County. He requested all input from citizens who have concerns or are in favor of solar. **President Gramarossa**, a public hearing was held a few weeks ago on this solar issue. It is being said that the bond covers 30 years yet some research indicates the bond is only for 15 years.

Heather Stevens, Clerk, several options for Absentee Voting locations in Michigan City including the 8th Street and Wabash Street location which is not an ideal location. Election Board meeting on Friday when the locations will be voted on. Questioned whether the 8th Street location is still available. **President Gramarossa**, an email was sent by the Clerk stating the 8th Street building was not viable therefore the Commissioners needed to find the locations then it was stated that the County Election Board would have a meeting to vote on the locations prior to the Commissioners' meeting. The former Coolspring Library is available on Johnson Road and 400 N. **Clerk Stevens**, the location needs to be within the city limits of Michigan City. **President Gramarossa**, what are the locations you are looking at for Absentee Voting? **Clerk Stevens**, Wanatah location, a possible location in the east part of the County and for La Porte, 210 Division Street is offered. A contract will need to be signed for the La Porte location. Requested support from the Commissioners on the 8th Street building before the County Election Board meeting on Friday. **President Gramarossa**, you sent an email to the Commissioners stating it is our responsibility to secure locations for voting yet one of the attorneys on the Election Board sent an email stating it is a combination of the Commissioners, Clerk and the Election Board. **Commissioner Haney motioned to support the use of 8th Street/Wabash Street building in Michigan City and 210 Division Street in La Porte. President Gramarossa**, how about the former Coolspring Library? **Clerk Stevens**, it is not maintained, it is not clean and possibly mold in the building. The workers struggled the last time they worked in the building. **Commissioner Haney**, its not an ideal location inside anymore, not even sure if the heat is running in the winter. It's getting rough in there; we appreciate the offer but it would take our facility staff a lot to get it cleaned up. **Commissioner Mrozinski seconded the support. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Requests

Considered travel request to Anaheim, CA for National Association of Drug Court Professionals May 21-25, 2024, **Judge Greta Friedman**, Superior Court 4, via Zoom. Four individuals will travel, Magistrate John Link, Corrisa Strader, Eric LaRue, and Ashley Ortega. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered travel request to Anaheim, CA for National Association of Drug Court Professionals May 21-25, 2024, **Judge Rich Stalbrink**, Superior Court 2. Six individuals will travel as the Reentry team, Judge Stalbrink, Kae Stewart, Delora Garner, Dennis Caviston, David Payne and Dan Peck. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for 20% grant matching funds for Bridges 46 & 189 reconstruction; County Comprehensive Plan and construction phase of Bridge 512, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, recently the County received four separate grants; three from INDOT and one from NIRPC, for Bridge 46 - 2.2 million, Bridge 189 - 1.8 million, Bridge 512 - 3.68 million and for the Comprehensive Planning Project - \$144,000. This is 80% of the amounts and a request for the 20% will go in front of the Council. A support letter from the Council was given at the time the applications were submitted for the grants. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

ORIGINAL

Considered permission to travel to Tampa, Florida July 11-16 to attend the 2024 NACo Conference, **Ela Bilderback**, Recorder. **President Gramarossa**, previously a Councilman requested permission to travel to Washington, D.C. two hours before our meeting stating this would be paid through the Elected Officials fund however now we are told it cannot be paid from that fund and needs to be taken out of the Commissioners' Training Fund. There are conferences that are 'required' for training purposes and others that are 'informational' only, no credits for attending. We should table this item until we get further information, is it required or only informational? **Commissioner Mrozinski**, is this for certification or does AIC offer similar classes within our state? **President Gramarossa**, it is in July and we are only in March so there is still time to get a bit more information for this request. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to table due to more information is requested. President Gramarossa stepped down and seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Nay and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 2-1.**

Considered road closure for annual Triathlon & Duathlon in Soldiers Memorial Park on July 13, **Ashley Konwerski**, Triathlon Race Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Old Business

Considered bid recommendation for paving, bituminous material, signs and pavement markers, **Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent, four classes for our annual spring bids. **Commissioner Haney motioned to accept the recommendations with preference given to the lowest prices for each category. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0. ***Bids attached to minutes**

New Business

Considered contract with the Howard E. Nyhart Company, **Tim Stabosz**, Auditor. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the contract;** these are general accounting issues that need to be tidied up that we deal with every year. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, a good question was asked by President Gramarossa, did we get bids for this contract? **Auditor Stabosz**, no bids were put out for this certain contract because the services have been used for years by the Auditors, the services are specialized by a firm recommended by Baker Tilly, who oversees our GAAP reports. Discussion took place between President Gramarossa and Auditor Stabosz on the bidding process for contracts with vendors. He will get further information from Baker Tilly if the Commissioners wish to table this contract. **Commissioner Haney, change my motion to table this until the next meeting and noted this is a Professional Services Contract which is slightly different in nature. Attorney Scott Pejic**, the phrase 'motion to table' is done often when really the item is being 'postponed' until a definite time or the next regular meeting. **Commissioner Haney amended his motion as such. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded the motion. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Haney, point of order here, I amend my previous motion prior for the election locations from 212 Division to 210 Brighton in La Porte. President Gramarossa, the Clerk said Division, did she send you a text and change it? **Commissioner Haney**, I'm pretty sure its 210...is the Clerk still on? **Clerk Stevens**, yes, I'm here. I also texted your attorney because I did misspeak, it is 210 Brighton in La Porte. **President Gramarossa**, let the record show that the text was sent to Commissioner Haney and Attorney Scott Pejic, do we need a vote on that? **Commissioner Haney**, I made a motion. **President Gramarossa**, we have a motion, do we have a seconded? **Commissioner Mrozinski seconded to change the street from Division to Brighton for the record in La Porte. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

The **Resolution** urging Governor Holcomb to veto HEA 1338 to protect the independence and integrity of the Indiana Office of Public Access Counselor was **removed** from the agenda however **President Gramarossa** stated it was put on the agenda because the department of Public Access Counselor is an important job, takes a lot of calls from elected officials and the public, and the length of time to serve was changed.

Consider contract with Butler, Fairman & Seufert for Right-of-Way purchase of 2 parcels for Bridge 94 on 200 South over Long Ditch, **Jay Sullivan**, Engineer. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the addendum to the original contract. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered amendment to the County Handbook Policy, **Monique Thomas**, Human Resources Director. **Attorney Pejic**, to section 11.0 'Selection and Appointment' of the Employee Handbook Policy added paragraph 'F' Part-Time, seasonal, intermittent and volunteer employees must participate in orientation as outlined in Paragraph C. This is for insurance/liability purposes. is a better practice and requesting approval from the Commission. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

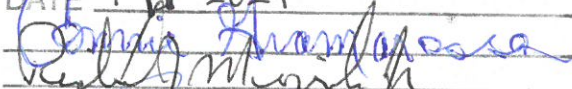
ORIGINAL


Considered change of policy for using 'Blind Copy' in emails. **Darlene Hale**, IT Director, while working on a subpoena on a court case and after training, it was discovered that 'bcc' or 'blind copy' in emails were not archived. If an employee sends out an email, bcc themselves and others, there was no record of the email except to/from that employee and not everyone else that was blind copied. After notifying the Commissioners and the Data Board that when a request comes in for certain emails, the information will only be located if the content is known in the email. One example is if the Prosecutor needs information contained in emails, it will be difficult to locate if 'blind copy' was used. **President Gramarossa**, we are county government, we are not transparent when using 'bcc' via emails. She was on an email between her fellow Commissioners and the County Attorney when another individual 'jumped in' the conversation after being blind copied by a member of the email group. **Attorney Pejic**, from a legal standpoint, information requested in a subpoena or APRA request, are we able to comply if the blind copy is not available? "If I emailed you (directed at Darlene Hale, IT Director) and I blind copied the Commissioners and Auditor Stabosz, would you be able to capture the blind copy?" **Darlene Hale**, IT, the issue was in a request for emails between certain individuals, the blind copied recipient would **not** show while pulling the information but it does now when blind copy is not allowed to be used. **Attorney Pejic**, spoke to employees that use blind copy and the intent was as a reminder to themselves of the information within the email. **President Gramarossa**, for transparency we are a governmental entity, this is not your personal email. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to adopt the policy of turning the blind copy off while using county email. **Commissioner Haney**, possibly send out email etiquette for responding to group emails. Whether you bcc or forward an email, all emails are public record and you shouldn't send anything if you don't want it sent to someone else. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered resignation of Facilities' Director, Sean Fitzpatrick and Appointment of Sheryl Lestinsky as Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to appoint Sheryl Lestinsky as Acting Director. **Commissioner Haney**, how long has Ms. Lestinsky worked in Facilities? **Sheryl Lestinsky**, has been Office Manager for one year, County employee for 22 years. **Commissioner Haney**, is a one-year experience sufficient to run the department? **Sheryl Lestinsky**, absolutely, she has been in the budget process for 22 years previously working in the payroll department within the Auditor's office, experience in soliciting proposals for maintenance projects, worked directly under both Director and Assistant Director and filled in when they were absent. **Commissioner Haney**, Commissioner Mrozinski's motion was for 'acting' or 'interim' Director? **President Gramarossa**, the motion is for Director of Facilities. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, restated his motion as 'appoint Sheryl Lestinsky as Director of Facilities. **President Gramarossa** stepped down and seconded. **Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney**, supports 'acting' or interim' Director but not with only one-year experience versus others within the department that has longer experience - **Nay and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 2-1. Sheryl Lestinsky** thanked the Commission for the consideration and looks forward to the challenges ahead in this position as Director of Facilities. **President Gramarossa**, Sheryl has stepped up when she arrived in the building maintenance office, she oversees the housekeeping staff, she works all hours making sure the job is done. **Commissioner Mrozinski** has known Sheryl a long time and agrees she is a hard worker. **Commissioner Haney** congratulated Sheryl on her new position.

Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 7:16 p.m. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 4-13-2024





ATTEST: _____

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL



LAPORTE COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

1805 W 5th Street

LaPorte, IN 46350

Telephone: (219) 362-2051 Fax : (219) 362-4221

March 11, 2024

RE: LaPorte County Highway Material Bid Recommendations Class 6, 11, 12 & 13

Class 6 – Signs

Two Bidders

Osburn Associates, Inc.

Michael Todd Industrial Supply

We will accept both bids. Prices vary from product to product so we will use whoever is cheaper on the products purchased.

Class 11 – Bituminous Materials

Two Bidders (Material Only)

Bit-Mat Products of Indiana

Asphalt Materials

We will accept both bids. Asphalt Materials will be used as our primary bidder and Bit-Mat Products of Indiana will be used as our secondary bidder.

Alternate Bid for Application of Bituminous Material:

Three Bidders

Bit-Mat Products of Indiana (Chip Seal)

Central Paving (Chip Seal)

Pavement Solutions, Inc. (Chip Seal)

Chip Seal Application:

Central Paving will be used as our primary bidder and Bit-Mat Products will be used as our secondary bidder. We will not accept Pavement Solutions bid for application because price is high.

ORIGINAL

Class 12 – Hot Asphalt Concrete

Two Bidders

Rieth-Riley Construction Co., Inc.
Milestone Contractors North, Inc.

We will accept both bids. Rieth-Riley Construction Co. will be our primary bidder and Milestone Contractors North, Inc. will be our secondary bidder.

Class 13 – Pavement Markings

Two Bidders

Avalanche Snow Removal & Maintenance, Inc.
The Airmarking Company, Inc.

We will accept both bids.

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