



**LA PORTE COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202  
La Porte, IN 46350-3400  
(219) 326-6808 ext. 2229

**Connie Gramarossa  
President**

**Richard Mrozinski  
Vice President**

**Joseph Haney  
Member**

**La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, May 1, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

**President Connie Gramarossa** called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Steve Holifield.

**Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves** called the roll: **Commissioner Rich Mrozinski** - Present; **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** - Present; and **Commissioner Joe Haney** - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to add to the agenda: (1) Consider Special Detail Agreement between Sheriff's Department and Ag Association during Fair week; (2) Consider favorable recommendation for re-zone from B2 to R1B in Kankakee Township; (3) Consider final approval for One Lot, Phase One, at US 421/300 North Northwest Subdivision and move item 11 'c' up to Public Comment. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the April 17, 2024 minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves** read the Claims with Payroll ending 4/19/2024 - \$1,496,891.91. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$1,898,720.02. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve the claims. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Public Comment**

**Discussion** held on moratorium for Solar. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, Blue Stem applied for a permit with the BZA for the special exception use. A request for a moratorium to consider did not pass at the Plan Commission meeting. An application for a special permit was submitted by RWE therefore the permit process has started, a moratorium was requested by several people in hopes of stopping any permits. A moratorium is considered a zoning law or an ordinance and the rule must be followed by either adopting or amending any ordinance. Recommended this be done through the Plan Commission. Solar Ordinance 2021-13 originated in the Plan Commission then had a final approval by the Boards of Commissioners at the time in 2021. If a moratorium was to pass in the proper measure, pursuant to the zoning ordinance changed law, it would not affect this application for the present permit. Any changes or issues with the current zoning ordinance can be addressed to the Board of Zoning Appeals who have the authority to have reasonable conditions on any application for a permit, there are guidelines that must be followed if a special exception is to be granted. The BZA does have flexibility and any concerns or questions can be addressed to that board. If changes are to be made or a moratorium requested for the Solar Ordinance, that would be through the Plan Commission. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to defer issue to Plan Commission. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Steve Holifield**, Mill Creek, the Special Meeting that was scheduled by the Plan Commission was not 'noticed' in enough time. Will the meeting be rescheduled? Was the lost generator ever located? Hopefully the Board of Commissioners will put pressure on the BZA and Plan Commission to issue a moratorium. **Commissioner Haney**, the generator from 8<sup>th</sup> Street went to the Sheriff's Garage.

**Emily McDuff**, RWE Clean Energy, team submitted a permit application yesterday for the 400-megawatt Bluestem Solar Project. The application exceeds both La Porte County and State requirements.

**Michelle Bonick**, 4888 E. 200 S., La Porte, stands against Solar. Understands questions and concerns needs to be addressed to the Plan Commission.

**ORIGINAL**



**Steve Miller**, 988 N. 250 E., La Porte, stands against Solar. Daughter is a realtor and believes the information is not being presented correctly to the public on Solar. Scott Pejic, County Attorney, reiterated that issues, concerns and/or comments are to be addressed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

**Anthony Novak**, local counsel for RWE, clarified the application was filed on Monday and adjoining land owners will be notified plus publication in the paper as required by State statute with a ten-day notice, approximately 170 neighbors. Building Commission has posted all information online for the public to view.

**Nancy Moldenhauer**, Michigan City Council, Michigan City Sustainability Commission, via Zoom, commended the County for having an Ordinance in place supporting Solar. Regulations within the Ordinance are substantial and protects the property owners. Supports solar. Allows property owners to maintain their land and provides a source of income.

**Lisa Riemenschneider**, 1898 N. Shebel Road, Michigan City, not a farmer but lives in our County. Go back to 2010, Association of Engineers articles warning the public of Solar Farms. Are we getting all of the information? Is there still time to say no to the application that has been filed by RWE?

**Cindy Kusper**, 5253 E. 150 N., Rolling Prairie, family is a part of this Solar Project, goal is a 35-year plan that will be decommissioned and returned to farmland for the future. Their vision is the land will go back to farmland, as the population of our County grows, and their family financially secured for the future.

**Jennifer Miller**, 988 N. 250 E. La Porte, requested better ways for agendas and information on meetings getting out to the public.

**Rhonda Haverstock**, 2591 N. 600 E., Rolling Prairie, family is part of the Solar Farm Project. Property/land has been in her family for generations. After her husband retired from farming, they have leased their land out to others farmers. Leases only pay for property taxes and a bit of insurance, really no benefit to leasing their land. Look forward to their children and grandchildren benefiting from the land. "Americas founders understood clearly that private property is the foundation not only of prosperity but of freedom itself. That's through the common law, state law and the constitution. They protect property rights, the rights of the people, such as us, to acquire, use and dispose of property freely. It is no accident that a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to 'Justice for All' protects property rights." Requested everyone involved to consider their property rights.

**Patricia Parker**, 366 Hawthorne Street, La Porte, asked what kind of information is recommended to present to the Plan Commission or BZA? **Attorney Scott Pejic**, not 'I heard from someone' but articles reported nationwide or location of where it was reported but state the source.

**Spencer England**, Knox, obvious when government gets involved in anything it usually hurts those they are trying to help the most, look at the subsidies attached to solar, look at the company RWE and go back in their financials to 2016, its all-free information. Look at Culver, Fulton County and Marshall County. Solar does not stand on its own and that is the problem.

**Daniel Straka**, 1845 Azalea Drive, Munster, Land & Liberty Coalition, a project of the Indiana Conservative Alliance for Energy, thanked the Commissioners for allowing Public Comment. Attended several Solar meetings/workshops held within our County. Clarified that yes, the Federal Government does have subsidies programs for renewable energy, they look a lot smaller than those for fossil fuels. Federal/State government as well as Utility Providers and Grid Operators all want to move away from fossil fuels factories.

**Heather Oake**, 3306 N. 50 E., La Porte, how strict of an ordinance do we have to have in place? **Commissioner Haney**, the Plan Commission has not adopted a Solar Ready Community Standard and by doing so then state standards must be followed, we can have stricter requirements because we have not 'opted' in to the Solar Ready Community Standard. **Heather Oake**, people lose property value when solar panels are installed.

**Chad Beadles**, 3052 N. 450 E., Rolling Prairie, jobs were mentioned when Solar Farms come in our area. Don't the Solar Farms bring their own employees? What happens to the agricultural industry when farmland is used for solar panels? The Co-Ops, the fertilizer dealers, the fertilizer/chemical applicators, the seed sales people. The 2600-2800 acres taken out of farmland will have a 'trickle down' affect to more than just a few people.

**Gene Smith**, 0455 N. 250 E., La Porte, every job will be with local carpenters, local operators, cement finishers, and iron workers. All were trained in Wheatfield, Indiana and will come here to do the job.

**Susan Thomas**, Director of Legislation & Policy for Just Transition NorthWest Indiana, via Zoom, covers Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties, addressed the jobs issue under solar. This is a new industry and employees are being trained to repair and maintain solar panels. This is a new and dynamic sector for the job force.



**Carolyn Kapl**, 5977 E. Division Road, La Porte, Planet of the Humans documentary is a good source on solar.

**Darlene Hale**, IT Director, noted laporteco.in.gov has a calendar for viewing scheduled meetings. Next BZA meeting is May 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m. and the next Plan Commission meeting is May 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Agendas are posted 48-hours prior to the meetings.

**This concluded Public Comment on Solar.**

**Dean White**, 3066 N. Highway 35, La Porte, Vista View at Soldier's Memorial Park follow-up. **President Gramarossa**, a committee has been formed for this issue. **Dean White**, April 22<sup>nd</sup> a petition was created, signatures obtained and he handed the petition to the Attorney Scott Pejic.

**Department Reports/Comments**

**Mike Schultz**, Assessor, notice of assessment on green sheets for 2025 were sent in the mail. Rates are based on home sales in from January 1 to December 31, 2023. Sale of homes are still up, the value, but the inventory is down. Appeals can be filed in his office.

**Ron Heeg**, Sheriff, two brand new magnetometers and two brand new x-ray machines for courthouse security, invested value of about \$ 100,000.00 with funds made available through a grant with the Department of Homeland Security.

**Monique Thomas**, Human Resources Director, May 16<sup>th</sup> a Transitional Duty Program with KeyRisk, Michiana Insurance and Department Heads for Worker's Compensation. Meeting took place with Waggoner, Irwin and Sheeley on job descriptions.

**Requests**

**Considered** Emergency Medical Services week, May 19-25, 2024, **Eric Fenstermaker**, Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** permission to invite Food Truck Vendors to both La Porte & Michigan City Courthouse locations, **Monique Thomas**, HR. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** travel request for Deputy Recorder to attend conference in Davenport, IA, May 20-21, 2024, **Ela Bilderback**, Recorder. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** permission to approach the Council for funds to replace Emergency Standby Generator, **Dion Campbell**, JSC. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** permission to approach the Council to purchase a new lawn mower, **Jeremy Sobecki**, Parks Dept. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** removing old arena/replacing it with a new building at the Fairgrounds, **Steve Mrozinski** and **Brett Kessler**, Ag Association. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

**Considered** renewal of property/appraisal and Casualty Insurance, John Jones, Michiana Insurance. **Commissioner Haney** motioned for Option 2. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** MOU between Animal Shelter and HealthLinc for Mobile School-Based Health Center & Human Services for June 20, 2024. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** settlement claim of \$4,262.86 for vehicle damaged by debris from County Highway mower. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** opening Bids for Project Manager to oversee Phase 4/Phase 5 of the Franklin Street Bridge Repair Project for 2025-2026 to create a scope of work. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** temporary right-of-entry upon land agreement, **Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

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Considered Bridge 104 Right-of-Way Services Agreement with United Consulting, Jay Sullivan, Engineer. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered Resolution approving creation of additional allocation for the I-94/US 421 area. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered Special Detail Agreement between Sheriff and Ag Association during Fair week. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered Favorable recommendation for re-zone from B2 to R1B in Kankakee Township. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered final approval for One Lot, Phase 1, US 421/300 North Northwest Subdivision, Vladimir Ganz. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 11:44 a.m. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA

DATE 5-15-2014  
*Donna Haney*

*Richard Mrozinski*  
Auditor  
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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