



# 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, June 5, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3 & via Zoom**

Vice President Rich Mrozinski called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody. A moment of silence was observed in honor of D-Day, June 6, 1944, Normandy invasion of the beaches by allied troops during WWII. 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 4,500 allied forces died that day.

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

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Mrozinski requested a motion to add to the agenda: Consider permission to approach the Council with Fleet information - Enterprise; Consider permission for travel to Denver, August 26-28, for annual IAAO conference - Mike Shultz, Assessor and Consider permission to approach the Council for restroom ceiling repairs at Community Corrections - Sheryl Lestinsky, Director of Facilities. Commissioner Haney motioned to add: Consider Cover Sheet for Bridge 97. Commissioner Gramarossa, that was not brought to us prior to this meeting. Attorney Scott Pejic, County Engineer Jay Sullivan presented the cover sheet prior to the meeting and legally, I'm okay with it. Commissioner Mrozinski, is there a time-frame on it? Commissioner Gramarossa, review it for the next meeting. Commissioner Mrozinski, do we have a motion to add the first three items? Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to add the items. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered approval of the May 15, 2024 minutes. Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney - Nay.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 5/17/2024 - \$1,502,904.13 and 5/31/2024 - \$1,487,942.69. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Commissioner Mrozinski reminded that roll call should be taken while Zoom is in use. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Operating Expense Claims - \$3,343,772.71. Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve the claims. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.

### **Public Comment**

Stephen Nightingale, 998 E. 1000 N., La Porte, publicly thanked the Commissioners and former Commissioner Sheila Matias for their support, Shaw Friedman's efforts to enforce the 'Stop Work' order that was issued by former Commissioner Sheila Matias on April 4, 2022. Publicly thanked Shaw Friedman for his efforts on behalf of the Commissioners and all other County residents who feel similarly about Judge Steele's May 23, 2024 verdict and who feel that the verdict is in no way a negative reflection of how Mr. Friedman pursued this matter. The Judge's decision means anyone can do what exactly Mr. Versaw has been doing since December 6, 2021, on any property in La Porte County, regardless of zoning, as long as they obtain an MS4 permit.

Steve Holifield, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, glad to see the County and City working together on the expansion for Park Street in La Porte, this might lead to an annexation of Severs Road. Extended an invitation to Elected Officials/Department Heads to Fish Lake on July 20<sup>th</sup>, Lions Paws for Support is hosting a fundraiser to benefit veterans with service dogs. Emily Howard will have food gift cards for veterans.

**ORIGINAL**



**Terry Zimmer**, 5642 S. Highway 421, Westville, owns/operates Tazco Redi-Mix, under the circumstances with construction going on in front of his plant, the detour that the State provided has resulted in 25% more cost on his product, he is looking for relief or help from the County to use the County roads. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, spoke to INDOT, Highway Department, and Sheriff.

**George Callas**, 708 Toronado Dr, La Porte, green sheets sent out by Assessor's office, started looking at all non-profits that don't pay taxes. Commissioners should set a **fee** (not a tax) for those not paying any taxes and yet they have several parcels. La Porte Hospital pays \$20,000 a year in taxes yet Franciscan pays nothing because they are a non-profit. He is aware that most of the churches 'give back' to the community but being a non-profit should still be made to pay something, at least to cover the cost for mailing out the appeal sheets or taxes mailed out.

### Department Reports/Comments

**Matt Reardon**, Office of Community and Economic Development/Government Affairs, Golden Spike ceremony on June 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. at JBC Rail. This has been in the works since 2012.

**Amanda Lahners**, Health Department, will be participating in the HIV National Awareness Day on June 27<sup>th</sup>, partnering with Walgreens at 1816 Franklin Street in Michigan City providing free HIV tests and syphilis tests. Since 2018, an increase of 2,300 congenital syphilis cases have been reported in the State of Indiana. Partnering with Aperion Health, distributing Walgreens gift cards to the first 20 people to be tested on June 27<sup>th</sup>. Announced her office will be moving back into the Complex Building on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor after the flood in December 2022. June 24<sup>th</sup> will be their first day opened back in the County Complex Building after almost 18 months since the flood. Water lab will need to be recertified prior to opening.

### Requests

**Considered** permission to approach the Council for additional appropriation for City of La Porte, **La Porte City Mayor Tom Dermody**. Great employees that work for both the Cities and the County, Matt Reardon and Bert Cook are two experts in Economic Development. What is good for the County is good for the City and what's good for the City is good for the County. We need more housing. Other communities have received funds from the County for infrastructure and the \$500,000 requested is 25% of the overall commitment and the City of La Porte will cover 75%. The County Council has already approved the request at their last meeting for the Park Street expansion and Mitch Feikes Builders' project. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve the request.** **Commissioner Haney**, has the City of La Porte repealed its ordinance yet in regard to refusing to provide services, water or sewer, to any County residents who have not been annexed into the City? **Mayor Tom Dermody**, we have not. **Commissioner Haney**, any plans to do that? **Mayor Dermody**, because? **Commissioner Haney**, the Vibrant Communities' study show we need housing everywhere in our County, the issue though is the City has for the last two years taken a hard line against providing any services outside of city limits without annexation and if the City wants to engage in good faith with the County I believe they should be actually entering, willingly entering into a partnership, it goes both ways and we've had the recent annexation of 39 North where the City threatened to cut off water to all those residents out there if they didn't annex into the City. It seems to me that if the City wanted to engage in some good faith here today... **President Gramarossa**, that is resolved. **Commissioner Haney**, ...they would be repealing that ordinance if they wanted to enter a partnership with us. **Mayor Dermody**, I'm not sure what this has to do with housing but what I will tell you is - **Commissioner Haney**, what it has to do with Mr. Mayor is that we have here in La Porte County and we want to partner with folks, right, so like in Michigan City we partnered with them... **Mayor Dermody**, you say you do. **Commissioner Haney**, right, the issue is that we can't have - it's not appropriate for the City to come to us for ARP money for water and sewer infrastructure in the City when they're refusing to provide any of those services to anyone else in the County. **Mayor Dermody**, we actually are which you're not paying any portion of for all the improvements that you've ignored for years and we're going to take that on, also, if we talk about team work and partnership, how much do you pay us for our fire departments to come out on emergency calls, every single day 8 to 9, we partner with EMS, 911 - how much do you pay the City for that? **Commissioner Haney**, how much does the City pay the volunteer departments to help us out? **Mayor Dermody**, I'm asking because we're doing this work for the County, how much do you pay in that? **Commissioner Haney**, the same amount the City does for volunteer departments. **Mayor Dermody**, I'm sorry if this is a confusing situation for you, we've also partnered with the County LIT to make our County Sheriff's Department benefit more than we have, we treat waste water, Rolling Prairie's waste water and on the island, we've partnered financially with the corridor and I don't know if this is just political on your part, we transcribed your comments from a podcast you did at WLOI where all you talk about, because you were quick to announce the Microsoft deal when you knew that was under NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreement) and no one was supposed to announce it and maybe this is political, if it is... but you said, 'the Microsoft, we have executives coming in and La Porte County all their paycheck and taxes go **here** instead of splitting with Porter County and St. Joe County. I want my family to live here with me, we need housing of all types, we need water and sewer.' I could read all of this and I understand people say things politically to get elected but this is something where 'hey, \$360,000 of homes need to be built so people can move up.' I'm fine with the pettiness. We are solving problems on 39 North, we are improving lives, financially a homeowner will pay less in their property taxes, in their water and their sewer and while you chose to ignore it, and this is fine because 'vista views' on Pine Lake are important and I know that's your top priority, **our** top priority is housing in La Porte and making a difference for families. This is a 25% ask and this is a great partnership. **President Gramarossa, I made a motion to accept.** **Commissioner Mrozinski seconded the motion.** **Commissioner Haney, it will not be fiscally responsible for the County.** Roll call: **Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Nay and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye.**

ORIGINAL



**Motion carried 2-1.** Commissioner Mrozinski, thank you for the invite to your presentation. You've got a great team and you all work together. I'm envious of that because I don't always enjoy that but the progress that you've made since you've been Mayor is absolutely amazing, you'll leave a legacy and I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work together, the Golden Spike thing is going to be pretty awesome, we've been working on that for a long time, sorry that you got caught up in this – 210 more days and you won't have to put up with either one of us so...**Mayor Dermody**, I just want to thank you two for thinking big and Mr. Haney, this is not personal, this is professional, we don't take it personal, I mean we're still, from the City Park, going to work on those five trees that we're going to move for the 'vista view' on Pine Lake as well, that is a top priority, and we will continue to dig holes for housing and we're going to change lives and La Porte is the place to be so thank you all. **Commissioner Haney**, that's awesome, I would recommend reaching out to Kingsford Heights, they've got 70 houses under development, another 300 on the way, they haven't need to reach out to the County for that, it would be fantastic for the City of La Porte to take some pointers from Kingsford Heights, it's a community everybody's moving to.

**Old Business**

Considered proposed settlement of *Board of Commissioners v. D&M* litigation to allow sale of disputed parcel to unrelated entity or individual with injunction/stop work orders remaining in place until sale closes.

**Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

**New Business**

Considered Property Transfer Ordinance, **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department. **First reading** for this ordinance. **Commissioner Haney**, when was the mandatory testing for the drinking water instituted? **Amanda Lahners**, 2016. Homes built prior to 1973 requested lead and arsenic be added to the ordinance. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Health Department Fee Ordinance, **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department. First reading for this ordinance. Fees began in 1985, there have been multiple ordinances since then and she would like to repeal them all to one ordinance and increase the fees, last increase was 2012. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.** **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to suspend the rules for both ordinances and pass on 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> reading. Commissioner Haney, does not see a need to rush these through in case the public has any questions and will not second it. He would like to see it on the next agenda. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Nay; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion failed 2-1. Must be unanimous so the ordinances will be back on the next agenda for June 20<sup>th</sup>.**

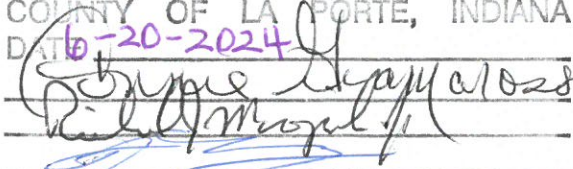
Considered Quit Claim Deed for new County Park in Rolling Prairie. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council with Fleet information, Nate Berg, Enterprise. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Haney - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission for Mike Schultz and Brent Banic to attend the annual IAAO conference in Denver, Colorado, **Mike Schultz**, Assessor. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye; Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for restroom ceiling repair at Community Corrections, **Sheryl Lestinsky**, Director of Facilities. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Haney - Aye and Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to adjourn at 10:38 a.m. Commissioner Haney seconded. Roll call: Commissioner Mrozinski - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Aye. Motion carried 3-0.**

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA  
DATE 6-20-2024  


**ORIGINAL**