



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 Thursday, June 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 Dion Campbell, JSC Director. **Commissioner Haney** asked for a moment of silence for La Crosse Volunteer Firefighter Ken Caldwell who passed away on June 6th, a few hours after responding to a brush fire as tank operator.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the June 5, 2024 minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 6/7/2024 - \$1,474,542.31. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,046,631.30. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the claims. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

Steve Holifield, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, kudos on the KIP new rail connection. The BZA made a terrible mistake Tuesday evening by approving the Solar Project. Drive around New Carlisle to see what happens when these projects are allowed. Section 19 of the new ordinance requires the Commissioners to approve the decommissioning of the solar panels and the road use agreement, hopefully a close eye will be kept on these people. Asked the Sheriff to have officers patrol the area to ensure weight limit restrictions are followed. Next Tuesday the Plan Commission will make recommendations for a moratorium and to 'beef up' the ordinance. Believes two people on the Plan Commission will vote against it. Urged the Commission to listen to the public comments on the new ordinance. It is not as strong as it could be, in his opinion it is a weak ordinance. It will impact our County for decades, please listen to the comments of the public.

John Tucker, 7385 Oakmeadow Drive, La Porte, La Porte County resident since 1998, currently resides with his disabled 71-year-old mother. Filed 23 Citizen's complaints five weeks ago against the Sheriff's Department, attended the Sheriff Merit Board meeting only to be defamed and lied about by the Sheriff. The Commissioners approve the budgets for the departments and there have been improper use of four false charges against his mother and himself. Deputies have not requested their side of the story nor have they filed accurate reports. He believes there is drug activity at the house across the street from his house. He had been in contact with the Indiana State Police, Indiana Attorney General's office and the Prosecutor's office. Has lost \$10,000 in wages over the last three years over false charges and accusations by neighbors. They are victims of harassment. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, is there a 'pending' criminal case currently against your mother or yourself? **John Tucker**, yes, against his mother right now which is false. **Attorney Pejic**, it would not be prudent for the Commission to interfere with a pending case. **John Tucker**, it's been a complete runaround, no one wants to resolve the issue, we may not be the only ones that have fallen victim to these issues of improprieties and disregard to equal laws.

ORIGINAL

Dean White, 3066 N. US Hwy 35, La Porte, here once again on the Vista View at Soldier's Memorial Park. Herald-Dispatch's May 14th edition stated a resolution would be drawn up in 2-3 weeks and its' been six weeks. Recently scrub brush has been cleared on Waverly Road but no attempts to clear the Vista View yet. **President Gramarossa**, a meeting with MS4 was held this morning, a project is planned and you will be notified by either Mike Polan or Paul Vicari, funding is the question right now. You stated you had donations to contribute. There are a few trees that need to be 'raised' for the view. The trees will not be taken out but trimmed at the bottom to help with the view from the street. There is drainage from a parking lot across the street. **Dean White**, there is no parking lot across the street, water is coming from Pine Lake Avenue. **President Gramarossa**, it is not coming from the motel side but the other side of Pine Lake. MS4 has a plan that you can look at, you stated you have donations. **Dean White**, well, pledges.

Allen Sevens, Hanna, President of the South County Community Coalition, briefly read an email he sent earlier in the day to the Commission. 'Good afternoon, Commissioners, South County Community Coalition discussed at a recent meeting the need to have more representation from La Porte County on the US 30 Coalition. The county is entitled to two representatives and two proxies. Currently, Justin Kiel is the only representative. At the upcoming Commissioners meeting, we would like to request that the Commissioners appoint Don Parker of Wanatah to fill a representative seat. Mr. Parker has been an active participant in the US 30 PEL process and is aware of the issues facing Wanatah and all South County regarding the future of US 30 through La Porte County.' A representative from INDOT presenting on the Pell Study a few meetings ago and it is important that we have a seat at the table.

Mike Seitz, 212 Lakeside Drive, Walkerton, I was one of the original members of the US 30 Coalition while President of the Chamber of Commerce. Redevelopment Commission pays for the Membership to the Coalition and I was instructed to be the representative from the RDC on the Coalition.

Department Reports/Comments

Steve Eyrick, Adult Probation, requested permission to purchase food/drink for next Monday/Tuesday for training at Red Mill Park for both Probation and Community Corrections by the Indiana Office of Court Services. Probation fees will pay for the food/drink. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the request to approach the Council for permission. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department, thanked the Commission for the property in Rolling Prairie, he will be working with a consultant to determine the cost of making it a park for the public.

Rich Mrozinski, reported our HR Director Monique Thomas organized a Food Truck Day last Thursday for employees at both Michigan City and La Porte locations. It was a great event. Music, comradery, and it was a beautiful day here in La Porte. Appreciate the effort Monique put into it. Yesterday the Golden Spike took place in KIP, CSX Railroad has access to the entire park. It was a nice event after at least 18 years of planning, the Northern loop will be completed to bring in the Canadian National Railroad. The roads that we own in KIP need repairs. Today is Darlene's birthday! Happy Birthday Darlene!

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council for roof replacement at Red Mill Park, **Jeremy Sobecki**, Parks Department, The shingle roof was installed in 1999 and signs of needed repair are starting to show, the roof on the south building was just replaced using non-reverting funds, that roof did fail and was not as old as this one. I would like to see a metal roof on the building. The bids are as follows: **Metal**: JB West - \$51,030.25 + \$2,954.39 (skylight) = **\$53,984.64**; R.L. Roofing - \$76,400; Arnett - \$79,120 and **Shingle**: Arnett - \$27,135 + \$2,390 (skylight) = **\$29,525**; JB West - \$28,880.80 + \$2,954.39 (skylight) = \$31,843.19; R.L. Roofing - \$30,650. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Friends of the Barn Committee discussion of possible utilization of the barn across from the Fairgrounds. **Steve Jensen**, about 2012 the group was formed to save the barn located on State Road 2 in front of the former County Home, across from the Fairgrounds. Indiana Barn Foundation, county member **Mark Kurth** is present, we are hoping to open the barn one day during the week of the Fair, possibly Friday, July 12th, to the public for viewing the historic barn, educating them. In 2013, about 20% of original, wooden barns were in Indiana. Prior to that there were 30,000. We are fortunate to have the barn in our County. There is a tunnel under State Road 2 from the barn to the fairgrounds across the street that was used to run dairy cows to pasture then bring them back. The Rumely Allis-Chalmers La Porte Heritage Center is across the street in front of the fairgrounds. We know J&B West purchased the former County Home so we will have to get permission from them to use the property. **Commissioner Haney**, we have an easement there for the barn. **Mark Kurth**, 969 S. Forrester Road, La Porte and member of the Indiana Barn Foundation, in 2019 La Porte County was featured in the Indiana Barn Foundation annual barn tour, this would be just like that year where the IBF would be responsible for staffing for the one-day event, there will be no charge to the public and they will be responsible for cleaning the barn in advance of the open house and making sure the site is clean when they leave. **President Gramarossa**, we will check with the Sheriff's Department in case of extra traffic that day. We will notify Randy Novak with FMEC. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve contingent on approval from several entities. Commissioner Haney seconded to include a waiver if one is needed. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to add Fleet Tracking/Telematics to Highway vehicles, **Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent, after a meeting last year with the County Insurance Agent, it was suggested to add tracking to the fleet. Cost is approximately \$1200 per month; no additional funds are requested. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered travel request to Albuquerque for Adult Protective Services training September 16-18, **Katherine Schmidt**. No County funds needed; this will be paid through a state grant. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for vehicle replacement and trading 3 used vehicles, **Eric Fenstermaker**, EMS Director. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for projects: County Museum heating units - \$51,568.92; 3 bids received with D.A. Dodd being the lowest. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney**, did you forward us the bids? **Sheryl Lestinsky**, Director of Facilities, no but I have copies with me if you would like them. **Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** Superior Court 3 Traffic Department countertop and Security Glass - Countertop - \$28,599 and Security Glass - \$15,000 for a total of \$43,599. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney** asked if Sheryl received three bids/quotes, no because it is under \$50,000. He stated he would stand. **Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.** Juvenile Service Center - \$41,459 for toilets, repair a leak and secure two cells which are currently inoperable. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney** asked if any quotes or bids were received. **Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.** Juvenile Service Center Director **Dion Campbell** approached the podium and reported to the Commission that parts have been on order for the two cells. Currently there are six residents with adult gun charges, his facility is filled to capacity, housing only ten and the need for the two additional cells is a priority. DOC requires a minimum of 12 beds, they have been understanding knowing the parts are on order. **Dion Campbell** has been the Director for a year and a half, the cells have been inoperable due to the age of the building and unavailable parts. **Sheryl** reported she is in the process of getting quotes for the gym floor at the Juvenile Center. She is requesting the roofs on both the JSC and the Mobile Classroom. **Director Campbell** added the building has been in service for 31 years. Last year the Juvenile Center generated over two million dollars that went back into the County.

Old Business

Considered 2nd reading on Property Transfer Ordinance, **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department. **Auditor Stabosz** read by title only. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ***Ordinance 2024-3**

Considered 2nd reading on Health Department Fee Ordinance, **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department. **Auditor Stabosz** read by title only. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ***Ordinance 2024-4**

New Business

Considered Addendum to Bridge Inspection Contract/USI for 2020-2023 fiscal years, **Jay Sullivan**, County Engineer. There are two 4-year contracts for a total of eight years for Phase I/Phase II/Phase III/Phase IIA for the bridge inspection. Currently the Federal Highway Department has not approved the funds for the 2023-2027 contract so INDOT has directed him to addend the 2020-2023 contract to get money to proceed for the 2023-2027 contract. **President Gramarossa**, will this contract tie the next Commission until 2027? **Commissioner Mrozinski**, there are eight years here divided by five and three instead of four and four, no additional costs to the County, just paperwork. **President Gramarossa**, are we tying the hands of the next Commission by signing this addendum? **Jay Sullivan**, that contract has already been signed by the Commission. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. President Gramarossa stepped down and seconded. Commissioner Haney - Nay. Motion carried 2-1.**

Considered signatures for Cover Sheet on Bridge #97 on 50 East over the Kankakee River, **Jay Sullivan**. Acknowledgement of sitting Commissioners at the time it was signed. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

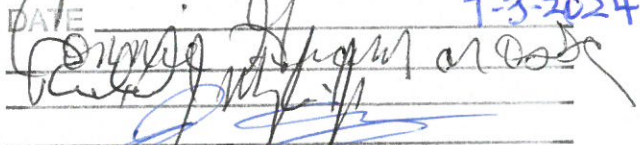
Considered resignation/sick days of Animal Shelter Director Eric Hayes. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

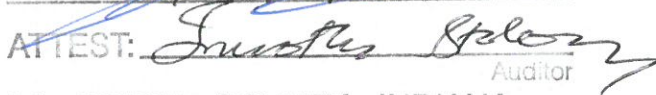
Considered Transitional Duty Program, **Monique Thomas**, Human Resources. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, this will assist employees that have a Worker's Comp claim to transition them back to health, back to full duty status sooner rather than later. Our Worker's Comp attorneys have reviewed/approved this document, this is the final draft. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

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Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 7:01 p.m. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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

DATE 7-3-2024


ATTEST: 
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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