



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, July 17, 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 Steve Holifield. Commissioner Haney requested a moment of silence for the recent attack in Butler, Pennsylvania on former President Donald Trump. During the assassination attempt, Corey Comperatore lost his life while shielding his family at the rally. Corey was a former chief of the Buffalo Township Volunteer Fire Company in Pennsylvania.

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

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Haney moved to add five items: Consider appointment of Animal Shelter Director; Consider generator replacement at the Juvenile Service Center; Consider approval to proceed with next two phases of rehabilitation work on the Franklin Street Bridge; Consider DEF contract to facilitate DLGF and TIF areas in compliance with reporting for the Auditor's office and Consider placement of dehumidifiers in the annex building, today's report came in at 81% humidity. Commissioner Mrozinski, seconded only for the first three mentioned, not the 4th/5th items. Commissioner Haney's motion failed for lack of a second to add five items to the agenda. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to add three items: Consider appointment of Animal Shelter Director; Consider generator replacement at the Juvenile Service Center; and Consider approval to proceed with next two phases of rehabilitation work on the Franklin Street Bridge. President Gramarossa stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioners Gramarossa and Mrozinski - Aye. Commissioner Haney - Nay. Commissioner Mrozinski then motioned to add one last item: Consider request from the Encore Society, La Porte County Symphony Orchestra, to use the Circuit Court room on Wednesday, November 20th to hold their quarterly meeting. President Gramarossa stepped down to second the motion. Motion passed 2-0.

Attorney Guy DiMartino filled in for County Attorney Scott Pejic.

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

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 7/12/2024 - \$1,492,956.05. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Operating Expense Claims - \$3,402,044.47. Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the claims. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

Justin Hullinger, 5309 E. Iroquois Trail, Rolling Prairie, requested gravel be put in to finish a road to begin building his house in Saugany Lake. Commissioners requested his contact information be given to Attorney Guy DiMartino.

Juanita Haney, 2695 W. Joliet Road, La Porte, set the record straight on her role in past elections. "Let me be perfectly clear, I was not and *never* have been employed by the County, my contribution was solely through my dedicated work during early voting and on Election Day, just like many others who assist during elections. Despite not being a county employee, I fulfilled my duties diligently and with upmost commitment. It is essential to emphasize that I went through proper HR procedures to ensure fair compensation for my services underscoring contractual agreement rather than employment. I am compelled to address and refute any misinformation suggesting otherwise. My involvement must not be distorted nor exploited for ulterior motives particularly when it involves baseless

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accusations, malicious lies intended to harm. I appreciate your understanding and must insist that my name not be used to perpetuate false accusations against my husband any longer. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.”

Department Reports/Comments

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department, updated the Commissioners on the former Rolling Prairie Highway property that will now be a County Park, a plan is being created but a roof is needed for the ‘office building’ which will probably be converted into a public restroom, small office space with maybe a lunch room. Requested permission to approach the Council for \$5,300 as per a quote from Freese Builders. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the request. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** **Jeremy** gave a report on the recent storm which took out power to the buildings. Luhr Park had trees down crossing a trail, the trail will remain closed until all trees are cleaned up, possibly not until winter.

Mike Seitz, Office of Community & Economic Development, Joint Task Force meeting was held between St. Joseph County and La Porte County for water/sewer for housing in the New Carlisle area. Thanks to Mitch Bishop and Carlton Bishop for their input at the meeting. He attended a meeting with the US 30 Coalition Group in Warsaw.

Commissioner Haney, received an email with humidity levels in the Complex Building, one coming in with 81%. Photo attached to the email showing condensation forming and dripping. Urged fellow Commissioners to act. **Motioned to place dehumidifiers in the offices on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th floors of the Complex Building to prevent any damage. President Gramarossa**, construction meetings are held every Monday and currently looking for solutions. **Commissioner Haney** requested a report from the committee. **President Gramarossa** will have a representative from the committee speak at the next Commissioners’ meeting. **No second was heard therefore motion died.** **Commissioner Haney**, we did not discuss the contract for the Auditor’s office but he wanted to pass good news to the Auditor that in accordance with I.C. 36-2-2.9-1.1 that the Auditor himself can execute the contract, the Commissioners have failed in their statutory duties, he will provide the Indiana Code to the Auditor. The code gives the authority to the Auditor to execute the contract on his own so the timeline can be met at the end of the month since the Board has failed in its duty. **President Gramarossa**, did you fail in your duties as a Commissioner when you voted to ‘table’ a contract yet you signed it five days later? **Commissioner Haney** asked which one. **President Gramarossa**, you signed the Nyhart Contract by yourself. **Commissioner Haney** stated any of the three Commissioners can sign a contract. **President Gramarossa** asked Attorney Guy DiMartino to look at the Indiana Code. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, Commissioner Haney sited the code, if Auditor Tim Stabosz decides to act then the Commission wishes to do something about the action that will be done later. **Auditor Stabosz** stated he did not say whether he would act on the code or not. **Commissioner Haney**, concerning to him that unfortunately the Board sat on the contract since April, there is a deadline for reporting requirements, same vendor that has been providing services for 13 years and after testifying in a recent court case involving Shaw Friedman and Tim Stabosz, this vendor testified that he was threatened that he would never work in La Porte County again by Shaw Friedman, now here we see this vendor thrown out and jeopardizing our standing with TIF districts and other things, its concerning. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, I did see the contract, at one time the contract was with SEH and this person worked for SEH but that’s all I know right now. **Auditor Stabosz** pointed out that the bid is a 20% reduction roughly from what it was under SEH, it is a low price, it is a continuation of the same vendor relationship dating back to at least the previous Auditor and possibly even earlier.

Requests

None

Old Business

None

New Business

Considered MOU with NIRPC, Lake and Porter Counties, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, regarding a Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program that provides a road safety plan. Once completed, all the unincorporated areas will be reviewed of all crash histories then a recommendation for best practices and improvements to intersections will be given. It is a two-step process with the road safety plan being the first step. The grant covers 80% and the Counties will be 20%, split four ways. Cost is \$500,000, La Porte County’s share is \$30,000, Lake and Porter Counties \$30,000 and NIRPC will be \$10,000 but they will do all the administrative paperwork. It has been reviewed by Guy DiMartino. We will end up with a safety plan and to use the plan, engineers would be hired to make improvements to the roadways in our County. It’s a good program. No need to go to the Council, the highway has the funds for our share. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Weaver Consultants Paser Road Rating/Asset Management Contract, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, requirement that comes up every two years. This is to apply for the Community Crossings Grant, we must do an asset plan for all the roads and submit to LTAP down state. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

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Considered Ordinance reducing speed limit on 500 West, **Jay Sullivan**, Engineer. INDOT requested a 40-mph speed limit on the north side of State Road 2 and 500 West prior to a round-a-bout, the south side is already at 40-mph speed limit. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve by title only for first reading. Commissioner Haney seconded. Auditor Stabosz read the title: Ordinance setting new speed limit on 500 West from State Road 2 to 1000 feet South. Motion carried 3-0. ***1st Reading**

Considered quote for concrete deck seal for Bridge 186, **Jay Sullivan**, Engineer. Methacrylate coating recommended by INDOT to seal cracks on bridges. Quotes were collected and La Porte Construction is the lowest. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. President Gramarossa** asked if this application will affect the life of Bridge 186. **Jay Sullivan** received mixed feedback on the question, La Porte Construction doubts they will have to reapply the Healer/Sealer, the bridge is structurally sound, and this is to the top deck. **Attorney Guy DiMartino** attended a meeting with engineers, this application should not affect the life of the bridge.

Considered appointment recommendation for Animal Shelter Director. **Monique Thomas**, HR Director, over the past few months a committee on behalf of the Animal Shelter Advisory Board have met, interviewed, and selected a candidate for the Director's position at the Jane Bernard Small Animal Shelter. Five candidates were interviewed, two were internal, all posed great qualities, and had phenomenal animal handling skills. The choice was Emilie Levesque, a La Porte native, and the recommendation of the Advisory Board. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to support the recommendation. Commissioner Haney**, just received the application an hour before close of the business day, sent over by Councilman Randy Novak to Commissioner Mrozinski Monday night but has not seen it until today. Hasn't had a chance to contact this individual, ask any questions. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, that's what the committee is for, we have a selection committee. **President Gramarossa** stepped down to second the recommendation. **Commissioner Haney**, did we have an explanation for the dates, timeline of employment, did you meet with the individual or did you meet on the phone? **Commissioner Mrozinski** said he was not on the committee. Randy Novak set the committee up, they did the work and now we can support their recommendation. **Monique Thomas**, this is their recommendation. **Commissioner Haney**, we only have a recommendation and no other information? **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, it's a recommendation, it's your call. **President Gramarossa**, we have Boards and Commissions that make recommendations to the Commissioners, it's not a unique situation, we have a recommendation, we have a motion, do we have a second? **Commissioner Haney**, trying to figure out if we have other information, my biggest curiosity is why do we have to go to Plant City, Florida and pass over folks in-house or individuals here in the area. **Monique Thomas**, HR, she will talk to Commissioner Haney after the meeting. **President Gramarossa called for the vote. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney abstained due to lack of information.**

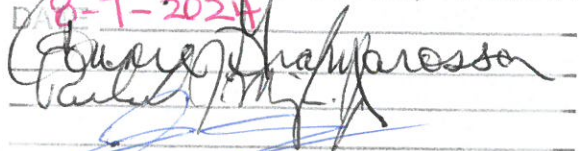
Considered generator for Juvenile Service Center. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, this went before the Council who have agreed to appropriate not-to-exceed \$300,000. This generator is on a 31-week lead time, currently paying a rental fee of \$12,000 per month, Sourcewell, a Minnesota Governmental Agency which meets all the bidding requirements for the State of Indiana was used, the total cost that came in was \$238,038. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Franklin Street Bridge Phase 2, **Andy Skwiat**, La Porte County Project Management, requesting permission to send WJE a purchase order for professional services for the Fall of 2024/Spring 2025 and the Fall of 2025/Spring of 2026 work. This would allow WJE to assist us with designing the plan spec for work and this would be sent out for bid for field work. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered the Encore Society, a group of about 25 who have included the La Porte County Symphony Orchestra in their estate plans, to hold one of its quarterly gatherings in the La Porte County Circuit Court Room on Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., Judge Alevizos supports the request. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 6:35 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 8-7-2024



ATTEST: _____
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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