



LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Connie Gramarossa
President

Richard Mrozinski
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Joseph Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, July 3, 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 **Rich Mrozinski**. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, tomorrow is Independence Day, remembering those that put on the uniform in defense of our Country, especially 161 years ago, 51,112 Americans on **both** sides that died at Gettysburg. All remained standing for a moment of silence.

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 Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, requested the Board add to the agenda the April 22, 2024 Joint Workshop Memorandum. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Attorney Pejic**, researched the law and we're required to do them. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of the June 20, 2024 minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 6/28/2024 - \$1,526,648.83. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Operating Expense Claims - \$3,664,778.31. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the claims. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Public Comment

Tommy Kulavik, 1316 Ohio Street, Michigan City, congratulated President Gramarossa on her Commission seat, looks forward to her next two and a half years along with Sheriff Ron Heeg and Prosecutor Sean Fagan. Commented on the Sheriff's office, last month there were 22 drunk driving arrests, up from 11 last year. Public Service Announcement, State of Michigan's ad on drinking and driving. Wished all a Happy 4th of July. Smoke/Carbon Monoxide detectors saves lives.

Steve Holifield, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, shout out for the wonderful paving of the roads in Fish Lake, thanks to Charity and her crew for repairing the hole at 200 South and 500 East, just wanted to say thank you.

Department Reports/Comments

Darlene Hale, IT Director, working together with Charity at the Highway Department to add to our website a page to notify the County of road issues.

Mike Seitz, Office of Community & Economic Development, Joint Task Force with St. Joseph County, both La Porte County and New Carlisle officials are working together on housing for development of the New Carlisle area. Twenty-three letters were sent out to area land owners inquiring if they were interested in selling their property for housing developments.

Sheryl Lestinsky, Director of Facilities, and **Andy Skwiat**, La Porte County Project Management, two workshops have been held to discuss the HVAC system in the County Complex Building, Councilman Adam Koronka has assisted with his engineering background, reviewed original drawings and noticed existing set points of the system, the leading water temperature of the chillers is currently four degrees above the requested settings recommended on the drawings from 2001. Requesting permission from the Commission to work with Building Maintenance employee Doug Newland, HVAC, to see if he could adjust the set points four degrees lower as per the drawings in 2001 to get the most out of the system. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve the

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request. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. President Gramarossa, understands the request to adjust the settings but the Complex still has issues with the system. Suggestions have been to place dehumidifiers throughout the building. Also, a 200-ton cooling system is no longer in the Complex. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, we cannot 'band-aid' issues anymore, we've got to figure out how to fix it, it's not going to be cheap and we've already got so much money into this building, where does it stop. **Commissioner Haney**, looking at 18-24 months and quite a bit of money to get to where we should be but, in the meantime, we do need to get that 'band-aid' rolling. **Motioned to authorize our Director of Facilities to pick up 4 (four) dehumidifiers, 4500-5500 square foot range, at approximately \$200 each**, to start testing on one floor of the Complex building to see if it knocks down the humidity at least on floor 5, if it does then we can expand out to other floors. **President Gramarossa**, this was discussed yesterday. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, we don't know the cost, how much noise it will make and there will be water to dump out. Not sure if the dehumidifiers will be the solution. **Commissioner Haney**, Costco has household-type units for \$180 for 4500 square feet, they contain buckets with hoses and possibly could set next to drains. **President Gramarossa**, there is a motion on the floor, do we have a second? **Commissioner Mrozinski**, no. **Commissioner Haney**, for what its worth, we've got 18-24 months to do something to knock down the humidity in the building. **Andy Skwiat**, next item is the water event that happened at the Jane Bernard Small Animal Shelter on June 23rd. **President Gramarossa**, this is a continuation from the workshop with all ten members present, Commissioners and Councilmen, a solution has been discussed. **Andy Skwiat**, we were on site the day of June 23rd, mitigation work was done by removing drywall, cabinets, countertops, all breakers and panel were saturated, removed insulation, replaced lights, and stripped some FRP from one of the holding areas for the animals. Visual inspections and moisture readings with a meter, met with the County's adjuster Travelers Insurance and we thank La Porte County leadership for quick action to allow the mitigation work, saved a lot of work in the long run and possibly a total 'gut.' Requested a scope of work be provided with some initial cost so a check could be approved then sent to the County for repairs. Discussion took place at the Workshop for using same subcontractors for the Complex flood, a scope of work could be provided to the County leadership and Travelers so appropriate steps could be taken to move forward on the project. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, amazing job what had been done when he toured the Animal Shelter after receiving a phone call from Director Eric Hayes. **President Gramarossa**, Commissioner Mrozinski is the liaison to the Animal Shelter, we need a motion to request a prepared scope of work to be presented on the damage at the Animal Shelter. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned for a scope of work on the damages to be prepared. Commissioner Haney**, wasn't the insurance adjuster supposed to make that determination? **President Gramarossa**, yes, Attorney Guy DiMartino will get a scope of work on behalf of the insurance company. **Andy Skwiat**, La Pore County Project Management, I met with the adjuster, we did the initial mitigation work however there is still insulation and other material that needs to be removed for the County's protection, asked if an industrial hygienist should be on site, does it have to be one recommended by Travelers or the one currently working on the Complex Flood now, the reply was the preferred hygienist that is currently working would be fine to use. A scope of work would be drawn up, submitted to the Commissioners and Council for their review/approval. **Commissioner Haney** stated he wants to be sure no services are being duplicated. **Commissioner Haney seconded the request. Motion carried 3-0.**

Charity Glaser, Highway Superintendent, 800 East was prone to flooding, millings from Fish Lake Community Crossings were used to build the road up to stop flooding, it is a 'work-in-progress' and we will send the grater out there, it is rough. There are a few yards that need touched up along the berms. The project is completed, paid for and came in under budget by \$22,544. First Community Crossings project that had no overages. County Planner Mitch Bishop submitted paperwork for next year's Community Crossings projects and the State will now match 1.5 million instead of one million which allows 16 miles of roads to be repaired. Johnson Road/400 West Road is near completion (in Center Township near the Toll Road), this is the first road in 17 years that the department has built in-house from scratch, a lot of time and work has been put into this project. We will be moving some of the guardrail over, Rieth-Riley will pave the 'approaches' to Johnson Road as well as the turning lane off Johnson Road onto 400 West.

Brian Beach, EMS Assistant Director, working with the Sheriff's Department and E-911 for **Peer Support**, trained professionals with First Responders experience who work alongside and support others within the same department. There is a fee for the training of \$3,000. Currently do not have the funds in their budget for this training. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to allow EMS to approach the Council for funding of \$3,000 for Peer Support Training. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Haney, brought up issues with the Maintenance Department. Asked President Gramarossa if she knew how many employees in the department have been terminated, resigned, written up or forced to resign since the beginning of this year. **President Gramarossa** replied she does not micro-manage departments, does Commissioner Haney know the number? **Commissioner Haney**, it has come to his attention that President Gramarossa has been in several of these meetings where the employees have been demoted, terminated, or forced to resign. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, questioned County Attorney Pejic as to why personnel issues are being discussed in an open meeting. **Commissioner Haney** said it is not personnel issues but a department issue, the Maintenance Department is being gutted, losing people with years and decades of service, being forced to resign, terminated, demoted, cut, written up for no reason. **President Gramarossa**, here we go again, certain individuals using this time for political reasons, every opportunity to discuss this outside of a public meeting however now chooses to 'showboat.' **Commissioner Haney**, this has to be discussed in a public meeting, where else would it be discussed. **President Gramarossa**, we've had executive sessions for over a month to discuss issues we had at the beginning of the year with a department. **County Attorney Scott Pejic**, does not want to prevent any sitting elected official that has been voted by the public from speaking however it is not appropriate to bring up accusations or motives in a public meeting because of Robert's Rules of Order where the meetings are meant to conduct business,

some of the comments can lead to 'in defense' of those allegations or comments could lead to breaching confidential employee information, that is a concern, we need to protect the employees, there may be information that is not meant for the public and the County should not put itself at risk. Not trying to stop free speech but there is certain employee information that should not be talked about in a public meeting. **Commissioner Haney**, not trying to bring up any specific individual employee but there are a number of folks who are leaving that department plus the desire that we've heard from Council President Novak and Commission President Gramarossa to privatize our Maintenance Department. **President Gramarossa**, there has been no talk about privatizing, where did we talk about privatizing? Another political accusation that he is throwing out in a public meeting. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, and Facebook. **President Gramarossa**, here is a gentleman that doesn't show up to work until 3:00 in the afternoon, is not around all day long to do County business and then he misses out when Department Heads are coming in and out of the Commissioners' office yet he wants us to discuss in an open meeting what we have talked about throughout the week. **Commissioner Haney**, you realize discussing that outside a public meeting is against the law, right? **President Gramarossa called for a 5-minute recess. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded for the recess. Commissioner Haney**, you haven't been here in a month, how do you know who is even here? **Meeting resumes. Attorney Scott Pejic** met with President Gramarossa and Human Resources Director Monique Thomas during the recess, encouraged/advised any Commissioner that has concerns with any department to contact that Department Head and/or Human Resources about the issues or concerns, for every disgruntled or ex-employee that has a complaint, there is a response because employees are reprimanded and there are repercussions. We cannot have employees sleeping in closets, we cannot have employees not showing up to work on time, we cannot have people taking off whenever they want, and we need people to show respect to this Commission and to the Department Heads so not to cast accusations but there is a reason for things and now is not the proper time to speak about it, trying to keep the peace and civility, understands that each Commissioner has strong opinions about different departments and requested to please take this subject offline. **Commissioner Haney**, attempted to speak to the Director of Facilities and her answer was 'we decided to go in a different direction' and that was the only response from her, she seemed uncomfortable in wanting to discuss it any further with him so he did not pursue it. Obviously, we know the culture of retaliation here we've seen, not sure of the total number of people that left from Maintenance but questioned President Gramarossa again on how many write-ups, terminations and/or demotions she has been physically present at for this department. How many of her relatives have been hired by La Porte County and/or facilities since the beginning of this year replacing those that were let go. **President Gramarossa**, she has no relatives working however Commissioner Haney's wife was hired, bypassed Human Resources, and went straight to the Auditor's office where she was hired. **Commissioner Haney**, Nope, she worked for Elections not for us. **President Gramarossa**, stop. **Auditor Tim Stabosz**, that is not true. **President Gramarossa**, we are moving on. Anymore Department Heads? If not, we will be closing Department Heads. **Commissioner Haney**, you don't want to claim how many relatives have been brought on? Nephews, cousins would count, no? I just want to make sure it's on the record that our Facilities Department is being decimated and, in a month or two when they come back and try to privatize it, you know this was retaliation done to absolutely destroy our Maintenance Department (Let the record show both President Gramarossa and Commissioner Haney were talking at the same time).

Requests

None

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to adjourn at 10:37 a.m. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney, corruption county rolls on.

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 7-17-2024

[Handwritten signature]

ATTEST: _____ Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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