



LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Connie Gramarossa
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Richard Mrozinski
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Joseph Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 16, 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**.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to add **Consider** permission to approach the Council by Judge Thorne and **Consider** approval for Marquiss Electric/WJE to solicit sealed bids for the Franklin Street Bridge for Fall 2024/2025 rehabilitation per the provided drawings. **Commissioner Gramarossa** added: 11 'a' will be removed due to FMEC will open the bids at their meeting and move item 11 'b' up the agenda after Claims then **Commissioner Mrozinski** removed item 10 'b' from the agenda. **Commissioner Mrozinski** considered the agenda amended. **Commissioner Haney**, if President Gramarossa would like to step down and seconded then he would be fine with it. **President Gramarossa** questioned if he was uncomfortable with any of the motions. **Commissioner Haney**, couple of things, FMEC likes to/wants to continue to try and be self-sufficient funding, they receive cell tower rent even though the County owns the land. Questioned if FMEC should be opening the bids since it is on our agenda for today but FMEC will open them tomorrow at their meeting...was that noticed properly? **Attorney DiMartino** replied the notice indicated bids would be received at Attorney Doug Biege's office, the contract is written that FMEC's attorney, Doug Biege, has the authority to receive the bids at his office. **Commissioner Haney**, he would have to look into it. **President Gramarossa** stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-1. **Commissioner Haney** - Nay.

Considered approval of the October 2, 2024 minutes. **Commissioner Mrozinski** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Claims with Payroll ending 10/4/2024 - \$1,463,909.77. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Tim Stabosz read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,802,608.98. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the claims. **Commissioner Mrozinski** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Presentation by Lisa Daugherty, President/CEO of Center of Workforce Innovations, 2024 La Porte County Workforce Update and 2024 State of the Workforce Report booklets handed to the Commission.

Public Comment

Steve Holifield, 6782 E. 100 S., Mill Creek, consider the Burn Ban, we've had some rain but not enough and hopes the ban stays in place. Neighbor's field caught on fire, bit of crop damage, no one injured and the machine was saved. Seven different fire departments worked the fire. Please consider the ban at least until harvest is over.

Tommy Kulavik, 1316 Ohio Street, Michigan City, via Zoom, Public Service Announcement: two more Saturdays for Michigan City's Farmers Market at 8th Street and Wabash Street. Happy Halloween.

Kaylie Sampson, 353 North Clark, Chicago, Bluestem Solar Project, active support for our project here tonight. Communications with the Highway Department and we have implemented their concerns in our latest draft for the Road Use Agreement. We look forward to seeing the agreement on your November 6th's agenda.

ORIGINAL

Randy Novak, Fire Chief Association/Councilman/FMEC President, agrees with the extension of the Burn Ban however a clause could be added that if special permission is given from the local Fire Chief then he would support it. As FMEC President he addressed Commissioner Haney's comments of the Farmland bid opening at their meeting tomorrow. He discussed it with Commission President and the County Attorney to determine the process for the Farmland bids. The Farmland is part of the Lease Agreement between the Commissioners and FMEC so due to that it was decided to allow FMEC to handle it. The land rent last year was \$23,000. The Commissioners have overseen the agreement previously and there have been other farmers inquiring how to rent the land themselves. FMEC requested to bid it out. **President Gramarossa**, FMEC works for the Commissioners and the money generated by them is invested right back into the fairgrounds. FMEC President **Randy Novak**, the funds given to FMEC from the Council are only for infrastructure for the fairgrounds, it is not used for personnel or anything else. When FMEC rents out the buildings for events, that money is used for personnel and other projects out at the fairgrounds. Replaced two refrigerators at the Small Projects Building while Absentee Voting uses the building for voting because the refrigerator went out, FMEC bought them.

Department Reports/Comments

Monique Thomas, HR, over the past 8 months both Human Resources and Payroll have been working together with vendors for a Time and Labor system, she requested a joint meeting with both the Commissioners and Council to discuss funding for this project. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the request for a joint meeting. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.** **Monique Thomas** requested permission to conduct a 'spirit week' to boost morale among employees November 12-15, 2024, strictly voluntary. Tuesday-Ties/Pearls Day, Wednesday-Hat Day, Thursday-Sports Day, and Friday-Pajama Day. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve Spirit Week. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Sheryl Lestinsky, Director of Facilities, requested permission to approach the Council for additional appropriations for six items: Juvenile Service Center Gym floor, not to exceed \$145,000; Water/Sewage, \$13,000, for remainder of the year; Waterproofing the La Porte Courthouse Basement, \$48,389.70; Koorsen Fire & Security-\$7,522; Generator rental for the Juvenile Service Center-\$172,600 but there will be funds left over when the new generator is purchased of \$61,692 therefore requesting permission to apply that amount to the rental leaving \$110,908 and La Porte Courthouse water heater replacement-\$16,900.63. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve the requests. Commissioner Haney** suggested each of the six requests be voted on separately. **Commissioner Mrozinski**, we have no money, she is simply requesting permission to approach the Council for the money. **President Gramarossa stepped down and seconded the motion.** Discussion took place on the requests. **Attorney DiMartino** instructed Sheryl Lestinsky on ways to requests bids. **President Gramarossa** explained she is requesting right now due to the deadline for the Council to have their requests in by November 4th and the Commissioners' next meeting is November 6th. **Deputy Auditor Rhonda Graves** stated the deadline of the 4th would be extended to the 7th for requests to get on the Council's last meeting of the year in November. **Commissioner Haney** had a question on the process of the water issue in the La Porte Courthouse basement. **President Gramarossa** reminded him that he has been downstairs in the basement himself and is aware of the situation and now Building Maintenance is addressing it. **Commissioner Haney**, the information should have been brought to us sooner so we don't make a snap decision. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Department, gave a 'shout out' to the Highway Department for their quick action on Sunday when a very large tree cam down at the entrance to Creek Ridge County Park, trapping visitors inside the park. By time he received the call and arrived at the park entrance, Frank Lile was cutting the tree up and Daryl Lambert arrived with the skid loader. On Tuesday they arrived to clean the rest of the debris from the fallen tree. Cooperation between departments is very helpful. He then reported several programs coming up at the parks, go to laportecountyparks.org for more information. Pumpkin carving contest, Halloween night hike with hayrides at Luhr County Park, and new is a Local Flavors Dinner where our program staff cooks with items from the woods of La Porte County, for example, elderberries and hickory are two items used for the dinners. In December Santa Claus and a reindeer will be at Luhr County Park. Most of the programs are free.

Requests

Considered permission to approach the Council to replace trailer, **Jeremy Sobecki**, Parks Department. We have an old 12-foot trailer that needs to be replaced and we really need a 16-foot trailer. He will transfer funds from one account to another for the new trailer. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for ARP funds, Tony Cox and **Stasi Benning**, Michigan City Commission on Social Status of African American Males. Treasurer **Stasi Benning**, all of you should have received correspondence from last year's request for funding along with pictures. This year we are requesting permission to approach the Council for a \$4,000 allocation to sustain outreach initiatives targeting African-American males within our County. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Mrozinski seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for \$500 in additional appropriation for travel account, **Judge Jeff Thorne**, Superior Court 3. **Commissioner Mrozinski motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

