

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
LAPORTE COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD  
JANUARY 14, 2025  
8:30 AM, LAPORTE COUNTY COMPLEX MEETING ROOM 3  
LAPORTE, INDIANA**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeff Mitzner; Pat Vance; Connie Gramarossa; Chad Hertges; John Matwyshyn

STAFF PRESENT: John South, Brad Adamsky

MEMBERS/STAFF ABSENT: Mark Scarborough

PUBLIC PRESENT: See sign-in sheet.

REORGANIZATION FOR 2025: Brad Adamsky called the 2025 reorganization meeting to order and asked for nominations for President. Connie Gramarossa nominated Jeff Mitzner for President. Pat Vance seconded. Jeff Mitzner was elected President. Brad Adamsky handed the meeting over to Jeff Mitzner. Connie Gramarossa nominated mark Scarborough for Vice-Chairman. Pat Vance seconded. Mark Scarborough elected Vice-Chairman. Jeff Mitzner appointed himself to serve on all external Boards.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Attendance was taken. Connie Gramarossa motioned to approve minutes from last meeting. Pat Vance seconded. Motion passed.

Representatives for the Scipio Sunrise Urban Drain were running late, so this item was bypassed.

DAVEY ARM OF THE RODMAN DITCH MAINTENANCE PROJECT: John South stated that this is a request from Audrey Hagenow who lives to the north of this ditch area. It's roughly 1,252' of the Davey Arm of the Rodman that she is requesting to be cleaned. South introduced a map of the area and pictures he took of the area. South stated that it hasn't been cleaned in a long time. Elmer Varro actually cleaned the north part for us. He did a great job on that. South requested a motion to put this out for bid. Pat Vance motioned that we send this out for bid. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed.

TREE REMOVAL, BULL DITCH: John South stated that he put this on the agenda because he wanted to thank Connie and the Highway Department for taking care of the two trees that were out there. They did a good job and we appreciate that. Connie Gramarossa added that the ones we should be thanking are the Highway Department, they did a great job of removing the two trees. Jeff Mitzner stated that we need to keep a good relationship with the County Highway, because they did save us a lot of money by going out there and doing it and maybe we can have them do a few other things for us too. Appreciate that.

MCKELLIPS DITCH PROJECT REBIDS: The sealed bids were opened by the Board. Four bids were received for the McKellips Ditch Project:

**Heritage Drone Service (reseeding only) - \$22,500**

**M & K Excavating, LLC - \$22,590**

**Beaver Excavating - \$32,500**

**Carl Netzer - \$23,900**

Jeff Mitzner asked if there is money available. John South replied there is not enough money in the fund and we would need to borrow from the GDIF to cover the project. Connie Gramarossa motioned to table this, unless there is a dire need, so we can figure out the finances on it. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed.

TOBIN ARM OF THE RODMAN DITCH PROJECT REBIDS: The sealed bids were opened by the Board. Three bids were received for the Tobin Arm of the Rodman Ditch project:

**M & K Excavating, LLC - \$15,500\***

**Beaver Excavating - \$20,878**

**Heritage Drone Service (reseeding only) - \$7,200**

Pat Vance motioned to accept the bid of \$15,500 from M & K Excavating. Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion passed.

KANKAKEE RIVER TREE REMOVAL PROJECT: John South reported that both he and Jeff Mitzner had spoken to Scott Pelath on this. South stated he had spoken to him last Thursday. South stated that in case people were not sure what was going on with this, they, (KRBC), rejected the bids we sent to them. Scott Pelath said that they have been cleaning these areas on a regular basis, in fact they had been down there a few weeks ago and cleaned from 421 to the County line and removed about 30 trees. Jeff Mitzner stated that he has talked to Scott on this too. Pelath had called and talked to him. Mitzner stated what he thinks we need to do is take the money we have from FEMA and pay for one or two days or whatever we can afford to pay for, so they can go a little bit further and it doesn't come out of their funds. Pat Vance motions that we move that money over to KRBC for a couple of days work. Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion passed

WHITE DITCH MAINTENANCE PROJECT BIDS: Jeff Mitzner stated he wanted to talk about this a little bit before we open up the bids. Jeff Mitzner stated he was up there driving around yesterday to take a look at this project and it's going to be a major project. It's going through some houses, we have people who have planted trees on our easement, we have buildings in our easement, we have a lot of issues going on up there that is going to have to be taken into consideration and we did talk about hauling the spoils out, we are not going to do that. If someone wants the spoils hauled off their property, they can pay for it. It's not going to come out of our fund. If any bid was given and it included the spoils being removed, we are going to reject that bid. I think we tried to make so it was on a separate line, is that correct John? John south responded that is correct. So, if anything says in the bid that the spoils be removed, we are going

to reject that bid ahead of time. Al Allsop of Allsop Excavating approached the Board and introduced a couple of pictures of the job to the Board. Allsop stated that he scouted the area, like he would do for any other job. He stated he has worked in this area before, it is a very sensitive area. They have walking paths, shrubs, really close to the people there. Basically, there are concerns on how to do the project. He stated they are fully capable of doing the project. Jeff Mitzner asked if we bid this in three sections. South responded by stating that section one was from Oakdale to El Portal, section two was from El Portal to Pokagon, and section three was from Pokagon to the state line.

The sealed bids were opened by the Board. Two bids were received for the White Ditch Maintenance project. Both bids included all three sections.

**Al Allsop Construction, Inc.:**

**Section #1 - \$25,000**

**Section #2 - \$25,000**

**Section #3 - \$25,000**

**Price to do all three sections - \$50,000**

**\*Will not be able to proceed with the project until the fall\***

**Beaver Excavating:**

**Section #1 – Brushing, Mulching, Dredging - \$37,050**  
**Seeding - \$14,250**

**Total price - \$51,300**

**Section #2 Brushing, Mulching, Dredging - \$14,950**  
**Seeding - \$4,025**

**Total price - \$18,975**

**Section #3 Brushing, Mulching, Dredging - \$26,650**  
**Seeding - \$8,200**

**Total price - \$34,850**

Jeff Mitzner asked if we need to replace the walk stone? Brad Adamsky stated that it's a little more sensitive than a traditional, because this is where we relinquished control to them briefly, and part of that I believe was the creation of the walkway, so it's not a normal situation where someone puts a shed in the easement and that's at their own risk. Would have to look at the agreement back when we ceded control of that section to the town.

Kenneth Purze approached the Board and stated that he is a land owner in that area and is very familiar with the topic the board is discussing. The walking path is a byproduct of what was created for drainage access. It is a drainage access road that the community uses for a walking trail. It was made wide enough for equipment to get in there to maintain the Ditch and to mitigate

flood hazards in an area that is residential, is part of a regulatory floodway and is known to have flooding where streets were flooded. Any restoration to the path is not how are drainage assessment funds should be used. I've been paying into that drainage assessment since it was created. I was behind getting that to be designated a regulated drain and creating the assessment, that walking path is a byproduct of a path for the Drainage Board's access. Any spoils, any trees still fit in the easement, not on the path, but alongside the path. I would suggest to this Board that any consideration given to any maintenance on that path that isn't necessary for this Board's access to maintain the Ditch. Don't spend my money there. Jeff Mitzner asked Kenneth Purze who paid to put material on the walking path? Kenneth Purze stated that when the walking path was created, it was created after we had a flooding event in the community and we needed to access for ditch maintenance that had been neglected. It was a partnership between the Drainage Board, the Town, and the Solid Waste District of La Porte County. The Solid Waste District after the Drainage Board did the Project, funded recycled concrete to be put on a portion of the path where we would have access for equipment, so that you guys could maintain the drain, but because of some additional funding from the Coastal Program, which is through the DNR, where we re-sloped the banks. The DNR wanted an agreement with the Drainage Board that they would surrender maintenance of that section. The town had an agreement to maintain that section. The town had a vested interest in creating a walking path as a result of the access that was created for drainage maintenance. Pat Vance asked if we need to table this just to investigate the implications. Jeff Mitzner stated we have a lot of things to investigate. Jeff Mitzner request that John Matwyshyn get with the Berrien County Surveyor about our outlet that goes through up to the state line. Jeff Mitzner showed pictures to the Board that he took last night comparing the Indiana side with the Michigan side. Kenneth Purze pointed out that there are files that Mr. South will have access to that Christine had compiled over decades. When we addressed Berrien County in the past, we didn't get a lot of cooperation. La Porte County took the action to have the Highway Department to install an overflow culvert pipe at the state line and I that the water that would back up at the state line was handled by the overflow pipe. Jeff Mitzner asked if any knows how much fall there is between Lake Michigan and the state line? Kenneth Purze stated it is the County Surveyor's responsibility to know what that fall is. Jeff Mitzner asked John Matwyshyn to get a hold of Berrien County, Michigan and see if we can work together with them to see if we can get this project dug a little further to the north, so we can get more dug past the state line and help out with this drainage, because it's just terrible when it gets into Michigan. John Matwyshyn said he would be happy to. Jeff Mitzner stated that one thing we need to do is let homeowners on both sides of the Ditch, in a letter, know that we are going to be working on this project. Brad Adamsky stated that typically this is done by letter. You're talking about a project in the fall, so you are just providing them notice of the project. Kenneth Purze asked to have Mr. South look into the records of the last time this was done. The Town has not allowed any additional new construction, so I think in your records you already have the path you described and which sections and which side the contractor is going to work from. You also have a record of anybody that was required to have a Hold Harmless Agreement, because those were required in the past and you'll have all of this information, that's new to you and this Board, already in the file that will make John's work a lot easier in terms of who we notify and even the contents of the letter. The Town has to remove wooden fencing to allow access, the property owners will need to relocate some of their shrubbery or accept the fact that they are going to lose

it. Communication is the key. Pat Vance requested Al Allsop to approach the Board. Vance asked Allsop if he is familiar with this area and comfortable doing this work, obviously there will be challenges, have you done this before? Al Allsop responded, yes, about 10 years ago. Vance responds ok, I just wanted to make sure. Jeff Mitzner states that we have 2 bids on it. Jeff Mitzner asks Beaver if his total bid is \$105,125? Beaver answers yes. Mitzner states that Allsop has a bid of \$50,000 if we do all three sections. Allsop is suggesting they do it in the Fall, Mitzner is suggesting we do it when the ground is frozen, you can do a better job and do minimal damage, less damage. Mitzner asks the Board what their decision is on this. We are going to table it until next month until we can get more stuff figured out. The lowest bid is from Allsop. Pat Vance asks Allsop if he is comfortable doing it on the frozen ground or do you have to do it in the fall? Allsop responds that with the time constraints of trying to do it now when a majority of those people are not even there. I don't think they will have enough notice to do it within this season, before April or whenever people are coming in. Allsop agrees with Mitzner that it would be better to do it when it's frozen. Allsop states next winter of 2025 not this current winter would be a better time. Mitzner states that would also give us time to get the letters out and do a little checking with Michigan. Allsop states that it would be huge if they could get some that done before we start. Mitzner states that would help out a bunch, you would get the flow then. Pat Vance moves to accept the bid from Allsop.

Jeff Mitzner states that there is only \$37,000 in this account, so we are going to have to borrow some money to do that. Mitzner asks Brad Adamsky if we can accept this bid. Adamsky states you can accept the bid contingent on communication with the town as far as scheduling and a minimal amount of disruption, so that you can do the investigation part of it and obviously that would factor in the finances of it as well. Pat Vance makes a motion to accept the Allsop bid, but conditionally because of further investigation, notification of the homeowners, and financing to make sure we have enough money in that fund and the general fund to cover it. Chad Hertges seconded the motion. Motion passed.

**WHITE DITCH PROJECT – KENNETH PURZE:** Ken Purze approached the Board and stated that the topic and your concern is exactly what he wanted to talk about. I know that some of you know me well and that I served in your position for at least 15 years. Purze asked Adamsky to write this down, he referred to Drainage Code IC 36-9-27-42, increases and decreases to assessments for periodic maintenance to drains procedure, Section 42. The Board may, at any time, increase or decrease the amount annually assessed for periodic maintenance of a regulated drain if the board finds the County Surveyor's estimate of the cost of maintaining the drain was insufficient or excessive. The Board may decrease the amount annually assessed without notice to the affected owners, if the percentage of benefit assigned to all tracts and land affected is not changed from that originally determined by the Board. The Board may increase the amount annually assessed, once, without notice, to the affected owners if 1) the percentage of benefit assigned to all tracts of land affected is not changed from that originally determined by the Board and 2) the increase does not exceed 25% of the amount initially established. I bring this to your attention for legal review and consideration because what you are faced with is if you don't have enough money in the fund to fund the cost of the current maintenance. If we don't have enough money in the fund you have to borrow from the general drain fund and then pay back the general fund with whatever funds are in that assessment. This Board has the tools available, with

whatever legal parameters exist, whether it's the White Ditch or any other Ditch, to increase that assessment based on current costs. I don't know if that can be done in this case, I ask that your attorney advise you accordingly. Keep that in mind for all the struggles that you have with all of the regulated drains that you have, because most of those assessments were determined with old data. The costs today and the costs when those assessments were made are a lot different. I think Commissioner Gramarossa is very good at making sure the Board questions, do we have the money before authorizing a payment. The payment mechanism does exist within this Board to not have to keep borrowing from the general drain fund. Please look into it for White Ditch and keep it in mind for your other drain funds. Jeff Mitzner introduced the costs from the last maintenance performed on the White Ditch. Total costs for tree removal sections 1,3, and 4 and silt removal sections 1,3, and 4 was \$37,000. This time we are doing 4,3, and 2 for \$50,000 and that's not even including section 1 where it starts at, so keep that in mind. Mitzner asked Adamsky if he knows anything about this (increasing assessments). Adamsky said he is familiar with the section of code that Mr. Purze referenced. Adamsky will look into that for the Board.

**TRAVIS ARM OF THE RODMAN DITCH, DRAIN TILE REPAIR PROJECT BIDS:** The sealed bids were opened by the board. We received two bids for the Travis Arm of the Rodman Ditch Drain Tile Repair Project:

**M & K Excavating - \$3,352**

**Varro Services, LLC - \$11,325.60**

Jeff Mitzner asked if anyone from M & K was here. He then asked South if this is the tile that needs to be fixed at Tuholski's. South answered yes. Mitzner reads from the M & K bid that if a trench box is required to minimize excavated hole size then the cost will be added to the rental of the trench box with no upcharge. Varro says that he is going to replace 60' of tile and replace it with pipe and adapters. Mitzner read the specifications from The Varro Services bid and the M & K Excavating bid. Elmer Varro approached the Board. Varro stated that he has done the last four of these drain tile repairs and if these guys have no clue how to plug off an 18" tile that's traveling nearly 3/4 of a mile, they are going to have a real mess. You've got to be able to plug it off upstream. The area that we are looking at is approximately 10'-12' deep based on where the last repairs were. It was 20' deep, but it was further up. I don't know what they are bidding, they didn't even put the trees on there, the trees are cheap. The main thing is to do the blow-out properly, safely, so that nobody gets hurt and so the farmer can actually farm it when you're done. I'm going by my past experience in knowing the project. Jeff Mitzner suggested that we go with Varro Services, LLC because they have done a project before. He knows where we're at, he knows what we're doing. Chad Hertges made a motion to accept the Varro bid. Pat Vance seconded. Motion passed.

**BRIDGE 94 REPLACEMENT DRAIN CROSSING APPLICATION:** John South stated that this is one that he and Tony Hendricks looked at before he left. We had no issues with it because it's just a deck replacement and shouldn't affect the ditch at all. The only we would recommend is a Hold Harmless Agreement. Pat Vance motioned to accept the application with a Hold Harmless. Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion passed.

**BRIDGE REHABILITATION PROJECT DRAIN CROSSING APPLICATION:** John South stated that this is similar to the other application. He and Tony Hendricks reviewed it before he left. Tony said he was ok with it. So, the only thing with this would be the Hold Harmless. Connie Gramarossa motioned to accept the application with Hold Harmless. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed.

**SCIPIO SUNRISE URBAN DRAIN MAINTENANCE:** Nancy Frigo-Svetanoff representing Scipio Sunrise HOA approached the Board. She stated that Lou DeYoung, who was their developer, recently passed away and we are trying to close everything out and turn it over to the homeowners as far as the association goes. She has brought along Robin who is in charge of it too. She stated that they are here to formally request the Drainage Board to take care of the drains there. She stated she understands there is already a fund allocated for maintaining that drainage, the basins there. John South responded yes, we do. Jeff Mitzner asked if there are any pictures of the area. John South handed out photos of the basins in Scipio Sunrise. Jeff Mitzner asked if we are in charge of maintaining these. John South responded that it is one of our Urban Drains and that we collect assessments. John South stated that the basins have not been cleaned in a long time. Jeff Mitzner asked what maintenance is going to pertain to this? South answered by removing the silt from the detention basins. Robin approached the Board and mentioned a no cattail cutting ordinance. Pat Vance asked who had a no cattail cutting ordinance? Robin answered the County of La Porte. Jeff Mitzner asked Nancy what it is she would like us to do? Nancy answered to clean it up. Jeff Mitzner asked if this silt will need to be removed from the site or can it be spread on the banks? Jeff recommends that we table it and have both Johns go out and investigate it and see what it is and come back to us at the next meeting. Nancy asked what the amount of funds are in the account. South responded over \$27,000. Connie Gramarossa motioned to table it and have the Surveyor and John South go out and investigate it. Pat Vance seconded. Motion passed.

**BANK SPRAYING 2025:** John South identified four ditches for bank spraying this year:

**Rodman Ditch - 42,000'**

**Bull Ditch - 30,350'**

**Little Kankakee River - 23,000'**

**O'Hara-Rice Ditch 40,663'**

South passed out maps of the areas and requested a motion to put these out for bid.

Jeff Mitzner stated that the O'Hara is a lot of feet and asked if we need to break it down a little or is this what we have normally done in the past. South responded that it is pretty close to what we have done in the past. Jeff Mitzner asked Brad Adamsky if we've worked on anything for people who don't want to be sprayed? Brad Adamsky stated that we were going to put them on notice if anybody said don't spray, they were going to have to enter into an agreement with the County. Pat Vance motioned to put it out for bids. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed.

HUDSON LAKE: Georgette Joyce was unable to attend this month's meeting, but she requested that John South read her report into the record.

Lake Level Information and Data Collection Needs:

The lake is still low. We are working on issues with the ToltHawk battery. The lake is currently measuring between 3-4 inches above the weir. There are no incidents that we are aware of.

LARE Lake Grants:

We submitted our annual LARE grant application to assess and treat invasive species last week. We also submitted a grant to do another sediment removal plan study to complement the one done in 2021.

The dredging efforts are now deferred to July 2025. Late harvest, weather and equipment repairs inhibited sufficient progress to complete either site of the public ramp and the southern channel.

DNR/HLCA Drain Agreement:

The draft of the drain agreement continues to move through the approval process. With the change of administration, current officials need to re-sign the document. The goal is to have a signed document within the next month or so.

Thank you.  
Georgette Joyce

BRAD ADAMSKY, ATTORNEY: No report

JOHN MATWYSHYN, SURVEYOR: Jeff Mitzner wanted everybody to know here that John is not a licensed Surveyor, so that means that anytime we have to get surveying done we have to pay for it out of our fund. Mitzner has a quote from Tony Hendricks documenting his hourly rate on what it would be if we need to get anything done. Mitzner states that all he knows is it is going to cost us a lot of money for the County, so we have to be real about what we're doing as far as things that need to be surveyed. It's a bad situation. Mitzner just wanted everyone to be aware of that and what's happening with that situation. Mitzner asked John Matwyshyn if he had anything to report. John Matwyshyn responds not at this time, since this is my first meeting. I don't want to get involved, deeply, in projects that are underway. I didn't get a packet for this meeting, so this is my first exposure to many of the things that you're discussing. My background is not surveying, it's general engineering. I'm familiar with doing surveying work, I'm just not registered to the work. 70% of the counties in Indiana do not have a registered Surveyor. The County Surveyor is not a registered Surveyor in 70% of the counties, it is not unique, it is not novel, it's something they have worked they're way through and I hope that we can also negotiate our way through whatever is going to come up. I hope to get together with the Board members in the future, so we can hash this out, because it is going to get complicated. That's pretty much what I have to say for the first



meeting. Thank you. Connie Gramarossa states if she can add, typically, he is right there are a lot of counties, but those counties are prepared for that, we were not prepared for that, and unfortunately, we do not have a large amount for surveying in our budget. We are going to find ourselves going back to the council and if we quickly exceed the amount we have set aside for surveying, we are going to have to go before the council and request more money. We are going to go into four years of this, so we are going to have to prepare for the next four years.

**JOINT BOARDS:** Jeff Mitzner reported that the meeting got changed to next month for the 4-County Drainage Board.

**CLAIMS:** No claims

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Daina Dumbrys approached the Board. She stated that she has been President of the Town Council for the last five years. Dumbrys stated that she would like to address some of the things about White Ditch. Most of the homes in Michiana Shores, especially those that are White Ditch, were constructed starting somewhere in the '30s up until maybe the '70s. Our home, which we built a new home, on a lot which had an old, old cottage, but because we could not add to it and it was within the Drainage Board easement and in the floodway, we had to move the house further up. Most of the property that is along White Ditch is not developed property, so any kind of trees, shrubs, etc. has grown naturally. Yes, homeowners have added improvements and planted trees and whatever it is. The last time the Ditch had to be cleaned we removed the trees that we had on our particular property. We moved the fence that we had so that anything could get through. Some properties have a great big barn-like structure on their property, somebody has a gazebo, somebody has a shed, we have a shed, but there's more some people have playground equipment and all kinds of other things. The current new plantings are all being taken care of by the homeowners. The nature path was developed, Mr. Purze gave us a history, it's an access road for the Drainage Board. Those fences are easy to remove so we can get in and out to do some work, but this particular nature path is for the benefit of the Town and anybody who comes to visit us as well. People love walking on this, it's very nice. I hope working forward that we are able to do something so the entire path area is not decimated. A lot of attention has been paid to this, the Town and the Park Board have worked on it to make sure it's nice and we have made agreements with DNR, FEMA to maintain it the right way and if we are talking about DNR and FEMA, the Town has to be careful because we signed an ordinance through the DNR, which comes from FEMA, that we are going to make no matter what we do within that floodway is done according to the rules. One of the things I did find out, because I was doing research as well, is the silt removed from the Ditch should not be placed in the floodway without FEMA's actual agreement that you are putting it in the floodway. That's a concern for me. Now it does say that if it is stabilized in the right way, packed down, vegetation is added, whatever to keep it in place, would probably be a safe idea. Because we are so concerned about all of that, I hope the Town can work together with the Drainage Board when these things go forward and when a project is being worked on. Kenneth Purze approached the Board, but before he speaks Jeff Mitzner had a question. Since he was out there and looked at that, we're talking about flooding here, where your house is at on El Portal, that ditch is pretty deep there, you're telling me that ditch filled up, was your house flooded? Purze responded that

the water was all the way up to the back of his garage. But I can tell you that when we had the woman who was an amputee who the fire department had to rescue in a canoe on her street and that was on Pontiac & Hiawatha, so that was not a block away and if you look at the topography map you'll see that that is the lowest point in the town. That's why we are concerned about flooding. I wanted to make two points: #1, Mrs. Dumbrys is correct about the floodway and deposits in the floodway, but, your attorney can verify, Drainage Code in the State of Indiana trumps that Federal/DNR stipulation. Farm Bureau is the strongest lobby at the Statehouse and I can assure you Drainage Code addresses ditch maintenance and depositing silt in the floodway. Last issue on White Ditch, and I'm doing this one from memory. The County Highway Department maintains a small structure inventory and I believe small structure number 1170 is the bridge at Pokagon. These culvert pipes were replaced. When they were replaced the highway engineer at the time ran into a problem with utilities, a waterline and maybe a gas line, that crossed the ditch. That pipe was not located at the proper depth, so between Pokagon and El Portal you have the equivalent of a giant sediment trap. It's one of the reasons you're now needing to pull sediment out of that section. Prior to this meeting I had a discussion with Randy Novak on the Council. Randy supports any efforts that would be put into looking into that issue in terms of funding from the council, because that would be from the Highway Department. As John does his research and the new Surveyor does his research, you should look closely at the small structure at Pokagon, because if that structure is actually located incorrectly and it acts like a big sediment trap, you could avoid a lot of ongoing maintenance by getting that structure at the right level. So, as we are looking at this for a fall project, I would ask that the Board take some action to have the Highway Department look at the level of that small structure and get those elevations from the Highway Department, so it would not come out of your budget. Connie Gramarossa volunteered to take on that project.

Jeff Mitzner wanted to comment on the White Ditch. We are going to do our best not to tear everything up. I'm sure Al & Allen are going to do their best not to do this. Everyone on that ditch where the easement is at need to understand what that easement is for. That easement is for the ditch and technically we can go in there and do whatever we want and tear the trees out. I just wanted to make sure everyone was aware of that. We will do our best not to tear everything up, but there will be stuff that gets tore up and I know that there are trees planted on there that look like they were planted 3 years ago that are going to have to go. There is nothing that we can do about that because they are planted on our easement.

Connie Gramarossa stated that one of the things someone had suggested is that we go back and look at the records we have, so once we compare the records we have from years past. We'll go out there and take photos from now, we'll be able to see what was installed from back then until now. I think that will give us a good idea of what needs to be moved and removed. Jeff Mitzner added that if we can get Michigan on board with this, Berrien County, if we can get them to dig first, that sand is probably going to go fast enough, that we won't even need to dig, but that's part of the problem.

Daina Dumbrys approached the Board and stated that it wasn't the county who contacted us, but I've had contact with people who live on that side of the ditch on the Michigan side who are also trying to clean it up and try to do what we have with our nature path. FYI there are people there who are interested in cleaning up their side. Jeff Mitzner mentioned that maybe you would want to contact them. Dumbrys said that she will contact the two gentleman who contacted her. She

will share the e-mail with them and with John. There are people that are interested on that side in cleaning it up.

Deb Vance approached the board and stated that she had a question/concern about now having to pay for survey costs. Is there a provision provided within the county budget or is that now something we are going to have to worry about where are we going to come up with that money and will it cost delays with things you guys have going on This stuff is real important. Just wondering how that will work. Connie Gramarossa responded that typically what happens is we are budgeted in July and every department is given a budget. We're in a unique where in the last eight years we've had an actual surveyor. It cuts the costs down tremendously. When the council was working on the budget they never really planned for not having a surveyor, so they put the minimal amount of money in there for the surveying because we had a surveyor who would go out and shot the elevations, do the surveying for us. I mean it wasn't just the actual surveying, it was actual going out there and figuring out our elevations and we did use him, some of the older board members on here will say that we did use him a lot over the past years for that. Right now, we do have, we are short on the budget, we're trying to figure out where we're getting monies from, so it does cause a problem for us. You're going to see a lot of changes in the county as far as commission and council, the way we are handling things. We will have to figure out where we are going to get the money from. Deb Vance stated that's why I asked because average joe's like us don't really know all of that. We know that there are certain things you put in place and knowing that we weren't prepared for that because we had a surveyor in place who was able to do that. I was just wondering if there is a concern how that might affect what you guys have going on. Connie Gramarossa stated that she thinks we are going to be smart enough were we know when we are getting close to the end. We are not going to wait until we use up every single penny and then we go to the council, which will delay our projects. I believe we are going to plan for it, we are going to know what's coming. You can't go before a Board and ask for money when you still have money in your budget. When we get close to that point we will reconvene, and we will figure when is the right time to go there and ask for more money. Jeff Mitzner stated that from the quotes he's got from people doing surveying work, we have about 12 hours of work we can get and that's it.

Jeff Mitzner asked for a motion to adjourn. Connie Gramarossa motioned, Pat Vance seconded. Jeff Mitzner adjourned the meeting at 9:52 AM. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at the LaPorte County Complex Meeting Room #3 at 8:30 AM.

John South, Secretary  
Dated: January 14, 2025