



# LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202  
La Porte, IN 46350-3400  
(219) 326-6808 ext. 2229

Connie Gramarossa  
President

Steve Holifield  
Vice President

Joseph Haney  
Member

## La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3

**President Connie Gramarossa** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Steve Holifield.

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** called the roll: **Commissioner Joe Haney** - Present; **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa** - Present; and **Commissioner Steve Holifield** - Present. Quorum present therefore meeting commenced.

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **President Gramarossa** added **Resolution honoring La Porte Little Theatre Celebrating 100 years**. **Commissioner Holifield** amended his motion by adding the Resolution. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the February 5, 2025 minutes. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** read the Claims with Payroll ending 2/7/2025 - \$1,969,543.17. **Auditor Rosenbaum** reported bonuses from ARP Funds are included in this payroll. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,184,462.70. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve the operating claims. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

### Public Comment

None

### Department Reports/Comments

**Amanda Lahners**, Health Department Director, reported on recent changes in the office. Next week Immunization Clinic hours will be extended on Mondays until 6:00 p.m. and then in March the first Saturday of every month 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Confidential Services Clinic has been extended to Tuesday through Friday with walk-ins in the La Porte office.

**Heather Stevens**, Clerk, proper Thank You to Tim Perry, Long Beach, for a painting of the La Porte County Courthouse, she is donating it to the Clerk's office.

**Commissioner Joe Haney**, addressed a few items: post Commissioners' Claims on our website; Motioned to have IT, Executive Secretary, or the Auditor's office post Claims on our website, twice a month. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 2-1. **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Nay. Following up on an item from last year. Former Commissioner Rich Mrozinski signed a contract that was not approved by the Commission but it was nipped in the bud. Requested our County Attorney to direct IT Director Hale to go through outgoing emails from Commissioner Mrozinski in the 4th quarter of 2024 to see if there are more contracts. **President Gramarossa**, would that include the Nyhart contract you (Commissioner Haney) signed that was not approved by the Commission? Discussion took place between President Gramarossa and Commissioner Haney. **Commissioner Haney**, La Porte County has been 'ravaged by corruption over these past several years.' At the end of last year, Commissioner Mrozinski unlawfully executed a \$65,000 contract that thankfully you (Commissioner Gramarossa) caught and was able to interrupt and stop. Commissioner Mrozinski attempted to scam the tax payers out of at the end of December as he was leaving office.

ORIGINAL

We don't know if there are additional contracts out there, we direct our County Attorney to meet with the IT Director and go through outgoing emails to look for any contracts sent to companies. **Commissioner Holifield**, I was not here at the time, I've heard about this, Mr. DiMartino, do you see anything here that we should look into? La Porte has gotten a reputation for this and its nonsense to keep nitpicking and going after any contract that was signed lawfully or unlawfully should be in our possession, the Commissioners' office, we can look at them and find out, correct? **President Gramarossa**, I would like to say we did approve the contract later on, its no difference than the ones Joe went ahead and signed, Commissioner Haney signed contracts without the rest of the Commission approving it in a meeting or agreeing to it. **Commissioner Haney**, I did not sign any contracts. **President Gramarossa**, yes, you did and there are four months of Commissioner Haney as President with no records of any of it in the office. If we do an investigation then I want an investigation on Commissioner Haney as well, we've kept our mouths shut, we plow through County business and now here he is wanting an investigation, it will be done on everyone. **Commissioner Haney** agreed, he added an investigation on all 3 sitting Commissioners plus former Commissioner Mrozinski for the last two years as far as contracts. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, there was a motion by Commissioner Haney, right? Are you amending the motion? **Commissioner Haney**, sure. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, there needs to be a second for discussion. **Commissioner Holifield seconded for discussion to take place. Attorney Guy DiMartino**, the signed contract by Commissioner Mrozinski was for the Road Use Agreement regarding Solar and I did rescind the contract. It's up to you all if you want an investigation, if you want IT to access emails you need a majority of the Commission, two of you, I can't say whether you need an investigation or not. **Commissioner Haney**, if Commissioner Gramarossa would not have found that document Commissioner Mrozinski unlawfully signed, we would not have known about it, especially given our current policies and procedures of how the contract follows the bills, the company in question regarding that contract does other work for La Porte County and as their bills come across our Claims Docket, there may be no way of knowing that line item was tied to an unlawfully executed contract. **Commissioner Holifield**, I believe it would have been caught eventually. **President Gramarossa**, the same way we caught the one he (Commissioner Haney) signed. **Commissioner Holifield**, I don't want to argue and bicker about this, this is what the reputation of La Porte County's gotten for, we need to take a vote, move on and do the work for the people. **Commissioner Haney**, you would agree though, Commissioner Holifield, that unlawfully trying to spend \$65,000 of taxpayers' money would qualify under fraud and corruption, correct? **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, I don't know that it would be scamming taxpayers because I think that the work would have had to be done should the solar stuff happen and the road use agreement would come into play but it would have been done with that vendor as opposed to another vendor so it's not like the work would not have been done but right now that's not even happening because the road use agreement is not even signed, nothing has happened. **President Gramarossa called for the vote. Commissioner Haney - Aye, Commissioner Holifield - Nay and Commissioner Gramarossa - Nay. Motion failed 2-1.** Just for clarification, **Commissioner Haney said**, there could be multiple other unlawful contracts that were executed by Commissioner Mrozinski and neither of you two care. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's not what I said, don't put words in my mouth. **President Gramarossa**, I know of contracts that you signed. **Commissioner Haney**, stop lying. **President Gramarossa**, moving on.

**President Gramarossa** read a Press Release on the NIPSCO Rate Case into the record. **\*\*\*Attached to minutes.**

#### Requests

**Travel** request from Recorder Ela Bilderback to San Antonio, Texas was **removed** from the agenda, should be 'state called meetings' and this was on behalf of a vendor.

**Considered** travel permission to Norfolk, Virginia, May 18-22; Atlanta, Georgia, August 11-14 and St. Paul, Minnesota, September 8-12 for training. Ft. Wayne was added to the list. **Sean Fagan**, Prosecutor, these are Child Support conferences that are held every year. Child Support personnel are required to have ongoing training throughout the year. **Commissioner Holifield**, are the same employees attending *all* these conferences and are they learning the same thing? Can the Ft. Wayne conference give them all the questions/answers they need? **Sean Fagan**, some information is gathered from each one of these conferences, not all personnel will go to the conferences and the same people will not go to all of them. **President Gramarossa**, who holds the events? Vendors? **Sean Fagan**, regional organizations, Child Support Professionals, IPAC, Indiana Prosecutors, are just a few examples. No additional appropriations are being requested. **Commissioner Holifield**, while attending the conferences, will you have staff remaining in the office? **Sean Fagan**, right, there will be staff in the office. There are about 13-15 employees and 3-5 may go to these conferences at a time. **Commissioner Haney**, it would stand to reason that you will be able to cycle all your folks through over the period of those three different events, not including Ft. Wayne, and not leave your office unattended. **President Gramarossa**, so all 15 people are going to go but maybe five at each conference so that everyone gets to go? **Sean Fagan**, everyone will have the opportunity but not everyone is going to go. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** permission to approach the Council to purchase a new vehicle. **Barb Huston**, 911 Director, Assistant Director Matt Deckard has an old vehicle, 160,000 miles, he does go out to service the towers. He carries an air condition in the vehicle in case the equipment gets too hot. Sheriff's garage does not want to even change the oil in the vehicle. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, have you provided any qpa information on the quotes? **Matt Deckard** approached the podium; two quotes are both State QPA (Quantity Purchase Agreement) prices through the State. President Gramarossa has a copy of one. Ford Explorer and Chevy Tahoe are the two vehicles being considered. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

ORIGINAL

**Considered** permission to approach the Council to change job classification. **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department Director, this is not necessarily changing a job description, currently one MA position and she would like to have two. She currently has two clerical positions; she'd like to go to one clerical but gain another MA. Like when she requested another MA position instead of a nurse. **Commissioner Holifield**, the eliminated clerical position, is that person retiring or what? **Amanda Lahners**, the current clerical is already an MA and she would remain in that position. **Commissioner Holifield**, no additional employees? **Amanda**, no. The immunization clinic is running two days and this will allow us to run three days. **Commissioner Holifield**, are you running behind on immunizations? **Amanda**, La Porte County is very far behind in their immunization rates and there is a big push from the State to come current, it is one of their KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

#### Old Business

None

#### New Business

**Considered** Timber Sales contract for FMEC. Across the street from the Fairgrounds, on the east side of Zigler Road, 27 trees will be cleared out. Timber Sales will pay FMEC \$3,200 for the removal of the 27 trees. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded contingent on the dates of completion by FMEC. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** Discussion for RFPs for the EMS Base in Michigan City. **Attorney DiMartino**, on multiple occasions we have tried to get bids for the Michigan City EMS Base, based on the information provided by County Engineer Jay Sullivan, the individuals that attended the bid meetings could not make heads nor tails of the project. Request for proposals for an architect or engineer firm, get square footage, get specs, have them do a professional service for the building. There will probably be two sides to this: demolishing the current EMS building then rebuild from the ground up or doing it in two phases with staff having to relocate temporarily elsewhere at another location. Right now, you cannot move forward with the project as it sits, we thought with the County Engineer that we could get this done, there were problems with the prints, the individuals interested in bidding on the project have questions and there are too many issues. If there are no specs, there may be a lot of change orders along the way of the project and the cost will not be controlled. Guy suggested putting together a scope for the RFP for Commissioners' review or you could get ideas from architects or engineering firms that can do the prints. **Commissioner Holifield**, timeframe for the construction so we'll have to know how long a temporary location will be needed, correct? **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, that would not be at this level or time right now; plans, prints, and options on how to do the project is needed for now, professional services. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded with **Attorney DiMartino** putting it together. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** Resolution honoring 100 years for The La Porte Little Theatre. **Superior Court 4 Judge Greta Friedman**, thank you for continued support of the arts, we are lucky to have a City Band, a Symphony, and a thriving theater in the City of La Porte. We have four theaters in our County. This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the La Porte Little Theater. In the fall of 1925, Graeme Young, a professional actor in London, came to La Porte where his love of theater continued, along with Librarian Flora Case, he wrote an article for the La Porte Herald Argus announcing that on November 11, 1925, there would be a meeting at the YMCA to explore the idea of establishing a community theater club. In the 1800s there was a movement to bring theater to small villages so the communities could be exposed to live theater, then that movement came to the United States. By 1917, there were about 50 community theaters in the nation. What is now the Boston Administration Building, a meeting was held in 1925, on November 11<sup>th</sup>, free to the public at the High School. The YMCA was home to the La Porte Little Theater Club, sets were stored at Fox Woolen Mills, the High School and at the Fairgrounds. In 1951, the Little Theater Club was incorporated and then in 1954, the Club purchased the building on A Street. Footlight Players in Michigan City, Dunes Theater and Stan Holdcraft Theater, formerly Elston School, is home to the newest theater in Michigan City. There are generations of families, volunteers, that give up their time for the love of theater. Help celebrate this Sunday at an Open House for the Little Theater in La Porte on A Street from 1-3 p.m. Greta encouraged anyone interested in any part of the plays to get involved, maybe you can sew costumes, build sets, work with lights or be on stage. It is a wonderful place for families to congregate. The first show of the 100<sup>th</sup> season opens not this weekend but the following weekend and it is The Music Man. **Commissioner Holifield** read the Resolution into the record. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0. \*\*\*Resolution 2025-1**

**Considered** changing Commissioners' meeting date from March 19<sup>th</sup> to March 20<sup>th</sup>. **Commissioner Haney**, there is a Farm Bureau chili supper that evening at 6:00 p.m. in La Crosse. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve moving the meeting to 10:00 a.m. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Commissioner Haney** motioned to adjourn at 6:51 p.m. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

ORIGINAL

PRESS RELEASE BY LA PORTE COUNTY COMMISSION PRESIDENT CONNIE  
GRAMAROSSA ON ELECTRIC RATE CASE SETTLEMENT BETWEEN OUCC AND  
NIPSCO

For release Wednesday, February 19, 2025

I want to take this opportunity to make perfectly clear that La Porte County did NOT and will NOT support the settlement agreement that was negotiated between NIPSCO and the state's Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) that provides NIPSCO with a 15% residential rate increase on top of the increases they received just two years ago.

In fact, we were fully prepared to make our case at contested hearings in front of the Utility Regulatory Commission that were scheduled to start February 5<sup>th</sup> in Indianapolis.

But once I got word that the OUCC - the state's public advocate - was willing to settle the case rather than go to contested hearing, I instructed our attorney in the case Shaw Friedman to begin negotiating and get whatever he could for the county in return for us "not opposing" the settlement worked out between the OUCC and NIPSCO.

As I said at the meeting two weeks ago, I am pleased that for the \$50,000 investment we made in the case between attorney fees and expert witness fees, we had the leverage to win millions of dollars in concessions from NIPSCO including \$5 million for site development at a location to be determined in our county, a full study on potentially keeping the jobs and tax revenue at the Michigan City gen station by converting it to either gas fired or battery storage and also keeping the \$3.5 million we'd previously won for electric infrastructure improvements for Kingsbury Industrial Park.

The only way we had leverage to bring NIPSCO to the table was because as Commissioners, we voted to intervene in the case back in December.

For anyone concerned about these continuing double digit rate hikes that NIPSCO is getting which makes their rates not only the highest in Indiana but also among the highest in the country, I urge you to call the Governor's office and insist that when three of the appointments to the Utility Regulatory

ORIGINAL

commission come up this spring that he replace the current appointees with new members who will worry more about what's happening on Main Street than how our utilities are viewed on Wall Street.

From what I can tell, the only reason the OUCC took a dive and settled for fifteen percent increases is that they feared a worse result if they went to hearing in front of the current IURC.

This IURC has recently granted massive rate hikes to two other Indiana electric utilities - CenterPoint in southern Indiana and Duke in central Indiana - and has gotten a reputation around the country as routinely "rolling over" and approving requests from the big utilities.

I personally supported Mike Braun for Governor and one of his important pledges during the campaign was making utility rates more affordable. I'm asking him publicly to make good on that promise by shaking up the establishment in Indianapolis as he said he would do and appoint completely new utility commissioners who will hold utilities accountable.

My constituents are hurting, Governor, and whether they are residential ratepayers or owners of small businesses - high utility rates are breaking everybody's budgets.

We need changes NOW on the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC).

# # #

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

DATE 3-5-2025

[Signature]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-1 OF THE LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**WHEREAS**, there are currently 70 community theatres operating across Indiana, and

**WHEREAS**, a small group of dedicated volunteers first came together in 1925 to put together the La Porte Little Theatre Club, an organization that has continuously put on shows and plays for 100 years through two World Wars and the Great Depression at various settings including the old La Porte High School, and

**WHEREAS**, the club was formally incorporated in 1951 and purchased the St. John's Lutheran Church Building on 3rd and "A" Streets as the permanent home for La Porte Little Theatre where shows have included side-splitting comedies to remarkable and unforgettable musicals to historical dramas which have played to appreciative audiences over the generations, and

**WHEREAS**, live theatre has had to compete of late for our time and attention with podcasts, streaming platforms, and all manner of entertainment and yet community theatre continues to thrive, and

**WHEREAS**, community theatre in La Porte County has flourished with shows and plays undertaken by volunteer actors, directors, producers and supporting cast and crew at not only La Porte Little Theatre but settings in Michigan City including Footlight Players, Dunes Summer Theatre, Canterbury Summer Theatre and now the Holdcraft Players at the former Elston High School Auditorium, and

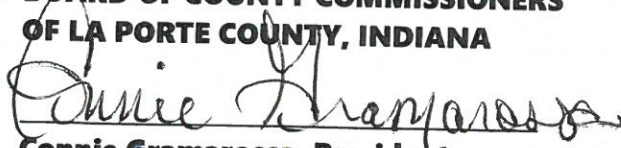
**WHEREAS**, the art of storytelling is as old as time and there is nothing quite as special as waiting in a darkened theatre for the curtain to go up and be able to share the collective excitement and anticipation of "Opening Night" with friends and family as volunteers put on yet another storytelling experience, and

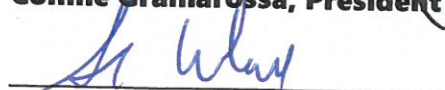
**WHEREAS**, this body greatly appreciates the efforts of hundreds of volunteers over the years who have made community theatre special and worth supporting and preserving in our county.

**NOW THEREFORE THE LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HEREBY RECOGNIZES THE 100TH SEASON OF LA PORTE LITTLE THEATRE BY DECLARING THIS COMMUNITY THEATRE WEEK IN LA PORTE COUNTY STARTING AT 1 P.M. CT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD WITH THE OPEN HOUSE AT LA PORTE LITTLE THEATRE AT 3<sup>rd</sup> and "A" STREETS IN LA PORTE AND LASTING A WEEK TO COMMEMORATE THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY THEATRE IN OUR COUNTY AT LITTLE THEATRE, FOOTLIGHT PLAYERS, DUNES SUMMER THEATRE, CANTERBURY SUMMER THEATRE AND THE HOLDCRAFT PLAYERS.**

**All of which is resolved this 19<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2025.**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Connie Gramarossa, President**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Steve Holifield, Vice President**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Joe Haney, Member**

**ORIGINAL**