MEETING MINUTES
LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
February 24, 2025

The La Porte County Council meeting was called to order at 6:07 pm by Council President Adam Koronka, who asked Councilman Mollenauer to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call followed by Auditor Rosenbaum confirming a quorum.

Several agenda modifications were suggested, including the addition of a Zoom ordinance discussion, the replacement of a clerical position with a medical assistant position in the Health Department and the removal of a "naturalist" position in the Parks Department.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments addressed concerns about potential property tax revenue reductions and the need for workforce attrition.
Commissioner Steve Holifield talk about the need to reduce the county's workforce through attrition.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

LAPORTE COUNTY JUVENILE CENTER MONTHLY REPORT/ Dion Campbell, Director
The LaPorte County Juvenile Center reported on its functions, which include a juvenile detention center, residential care unit, and educational programs. The facility serves both troubled youth and those who are victims of circumstances, with a current population of 24 youth. The center also highlighted its financial contributions to the county and the need for improved resources.

UPDATE ON DEPARTMENT CHANGES AND HEALTH INITIATIVES/Amanda Lahners, Director
Amanda Lahners announced that the department has implemented extended clinic hours for immunizations, with clinics now open until 6 p.m. on Mondays and on the first Saturday of each month. Additionally, a walk-in confidential services clinic will operate from Tuesday to Friday, and a partnership with the Aliveness Project will provide free HIV and hepatitis C testing.
* Extended clinic hours and new immunization services. Information is included on the county's website.

STEVE EYRICK, CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER
Steve EYRICK presented the TrackWatch program, which offers an alternative alcohol monitoring option for individuals on bond for drunk driving cases. He sought approval to use $120,000 from probation fees

to reimburse an invoice from Conference Technologies that had been previously settled. The discussion included clarifications on budget appropriations and the nature of the funds involved.
* Implementation of the TrackWatch alcohol sensing program
* Appropriation processes for various departments
A motion to grant permission to reimburse the $120,000 back to the county's Rainy Day Fund, was made by Councilman Novak and supported by Councilman Yagelski. The original invoice was paid from the Rainy Day Fund. The reimbursement will come from 2102.30107.000.0334 LaPorte County Adult Probation.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								0

PARK DEPARTMENT
JEREMY SOBECKI, DIRECTOR
Becky from the Parks Department shared significant achievements, including a budget of $550,000 and a record of over 500,000 visitors in 2024. The department acquired new properties for future development and made various improvements to existing facilities, funded by the park foundation. Additionally, the program staff conducted numerous public and school group programs, engaging thousands of participants throughout the year.
* Highlights from the Parks Department's annual report

AUDITOR MICHAEL ROSEBAUM
The council is moving towards GAAP reporting for improved financial accuracy, with Baker Tilly's support. The insurance committee is considering alternatives to North Shore for potential cost savings, while the assessor's office reported early submission of a ratio study. Additionally, the Finance Committee is working on a comprehensive package to address various financial matters.

ASSESSOR MICHAEL SCHULTZ
The County's Ratio Study has been submitted on track for next year.

SEAN FAGAN/PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
Mr. Fagan spoke to HB1006. Also, the Prosecutor's office has reduced the level of cases to the lowest number of cases in 15 years.

DISCUSSION ON HIRING AND FINANCIAL APPROVALS
The council addressed the hiring of a system tech and a payroll administrator, both replacements for current roles, with motions made by Mr. Novak and seconded by Mr. Keel and Mr. Yagelski, respectively. The legacy hiring freeze ordinance was also reviewed, with Mr. Novak proposing to keep it unchanged, which received unanimous approval. Discussions included the need for a more discerning approach to future hiring requests.

DISCUSSION ON REVENUE CONCERNS AND LEGISLATIVE CHANGES
The meeting highlighted significant concerns about reduced revenue from property tax changes and the potential requirement for a wheel tax to access community funding. Participants discussed the necessity of cost reduction and exploring new revenue sources, with a focus on workforce management strategies. The urgency of conducting a study to assess workforce needs was also emphasized.

DISCUSSION ON COST SAVING MEASURES
The council explored opportunities for cost savings by encouraging members to engage with department heads about efficiencies.
Mr. Novak advocated for the continuation of the Zoom electronic meeting participation to accommodate department heads and the public..

- Cost-saving opportunities in departmental operations
- Electronic communication resolution
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LIAISON REPORTS

Councilman Mollenauer: Attended LaPorte Heartsafe Lucheon, EMS Cardiac and Equipment update, Sheriff Merit and Pension Board Meetings
Councilman Kiel: Spoke with the Coroner, Health Dept, Sheriff, EMS. Attended the National Association of Regional Councils in Washington DC.
Councilman Novak: Spoke with Karl Cender about how legislation will affect us. Attended FMEC and RDC meetings.
Councilman Kessler: Attended the Park Board meeting along with Commissioner Holifield.
Councilman Koronka: Spoke with EMS on Cardiac and Equipment update, and attended the LaPorte Heartsafe Luncheon.
Councilmen Yagelski and Pressel had nothing to report at this time.

Fund Ordinance Revision Update
The council addressed the ongoing project of revising fund ordinances, noting the disorganized state of records and the potential absence of older documents. Time to compile a comprehensive list of existing ordinances was requested.

CORRESPONDENCE

Report from Mike Polan, Planning

Annual Report/Pioneer Cemetery

Thank you note from Town of Wanatah.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW BUSINESS
•Permission to hire "Naturalist" for the Parks Department/**REMOVED**

•Permission to hire a Technician for IT – Information Technology
Motion made by Mr. Novak and supported by Mr. Kiel.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								0

•Permission to hire Payroll Administator – Auditor
Motion made by Mr. Yagelski and supported by Mr. Novak.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

•Review legacy hiring freeze ordinance
Motion by Mr. Novak and supported by Mr. Mollenauer & Mr. Kiel to leave as is.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

•Approve encumbrances from 2024
Motion to approve by Mr. Novak and supported by Mr. Mollenauer.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

•Discussion on proposed SB1 legislation

•Mr. Novak presented a sample resolution concerning Zoom meetings. A discussion took place.

OLD BUSINESS

•Ammend Salary Ordinance #2025-01
Salary ordinance amendments and approvals were discussed.
A motion was made to suspend the rules to vote on the ordinance tonight by Councilman Kessler and seconded by Mr. Yagelski.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

A motion was made to approve the salary ordinance on first reading by Councilman Kessler and seconded by Councilman Yagelski.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
Nay		X						1

A motion was made to approve the salary ordinance on second reading by Councilman Kessler and supported by Councilman Yagelski.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X		X	X	X	X	X	6
Nay		X						1

•Status Update of Revision of Fund Ordinance

•Discussion on salary of Insurance Deputy coming from Fund 1216 – Auditor's Ineligible Homestead Deduction Fund. The council reviewed the funding for the insurance deputy's salary, suggesting a shift to the auditor's ineligible homestead deduction fund to alleviate pressure on the insurance fund.
A motion was made by Mr. Novak and supported by Mr. Kessler to approve.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

APPROPRIATIONS, TRANSFERS, REQUESTS

LaPorte County Juvenile Detention Center $125,000
Requesting Additional appropriation to purchase 3 vehicles
1112.42001.0176.0208 LIT Economic Development

Approve on a motion by

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
Nay							X	1

LaPorte County Health Department $10,000
Permission to appropriate from carry forward funds from the Local Public Health Service Fund for Office Equipment
1161.41004.000.0236
•Amanda Lahners presented a request for $10,000 to replace a copier and proposed replacing a clerical position with a medical assistant to support expanding clinic operations. Both requests were approved by the council.

Motion to approve by Mr. Yagelski and supported by Mr. Kiel.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

* Discussion on the Health First Support County fund applications

LaPorte County Coroner
Approval from carry forward appropriations for Coroner's Non-Reverting Fund 2053 $4,000
Appropriate accounts 20200 - $2,000; 30027 - $2,000

Motion to appropriate funds made by Mr. Yagelski and supported by Mr. Kessler.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X		X	X	X	6
Nay				X				1

Permission to spend/appropriate funds from the Coroner's from carry forward $835
Non-Reverting Fund for text books ($450), Training ($325),
And Training Reimbursement ($60)
2053.30027.000.0973

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X		X	X	X	6
Nay				X				1

•Approval of Appropriations and Discussion on Equipment Purchases
Lynn Swanson explained her appropriations request for the Coroner's Non-Reverting Fund, which was approved by the council, allowing her to spend $835.

The conversation shifted to a TV purchase made without council permission, which raised questions about spending authority and adherence to established protocols. The council expressed frustration over the lack of communication regarding the purchase, emphasizing the need for transparency in future transactions.

LaPorte County Clerk of the Circuit Court $25,566.61
Requesting a transfer for Election
Expense Supplies
1000.20022.000.0131

Suggest:
1000.30003.00000.0131 Travel $7,000
1000.30005.00000.0131 Printing O/T Office $15,000
1000.30027.00000.0131 Emp Education & Training $3,500

A discussion took place about transferring funds from the Election Board's budget or granting an additional appropriation to cover the invoice for Election Expense Supplies.

Councilman Novak made a motion to transfer funds and pay the invoices. Motion died for lack of second. Councilman Kiel then suggested the Clerk return in March.

LaPorte County Auditor
Permission to appropriate funds from the Auditor's
Ineligible Deductions Fund 1216

Approval of support to spend/appropriate funds from the Auditor's Ineligible Deduction fund
1216.20200.00000.0352 $20,000*

A discussion took place on the motion of support granted by the council in January for supplies. A list of the supplies purchased was requested and will be presented at the next meeting.
A motion to table was made by Councilman Yagelski and supported by Councilman Kiel. Motion passed.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								0

LaPorte County Highway Department
Determine remainder of payment for work Performed on the Franklin Street Bridge $882,736
1135.20200.000.0213 Cumulative Bridge
1171.20200.000.0275 Major Bridge
1172.20200.000.0223 Major Moves

The balance of the Cumulative Bridge Fund was given as $3,400,000.

Motion was made by Councilman Yagelski and supported by Councilman Kessler to pay from 1135 Cumulative Bridge.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								0

LaPorte County Juvenile Probation
Request to appropriate $700 from
2511.02061.000.0321 to
2511.30120.000.0321

Request to appropriate $1000 from
2511.02061.000.0321 to
2511.20021.000.0321

Motion to approve was made by Councilman Yagelski and supported by Councilman Mollenauer.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								

LaPorte County Prosecutor $12,441.86
Request to appropriate
(Carry forward amount) into
1234.20200.00000.0231

Motion to approve made by Councilman Novak and supported by Councilman Mollenauer from the forfeiture account.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	7
Nay								0

LaPorte County Parks Department
Request to appropriate and carry forward $35,935 from
1179.00000.00000.0000 (Non reverting Operational) to
1178.41007.00000.0560 (Non reverting Capital)
Capital equipment (generator for Red Mill Park)

Motion to approve made by Councilman Yagelski and supported by Councilman Councilman Kessler.

	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenauer	Novak	Pressel	Yagelski	**Total**
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
Nay							X	1

COUNCIL/ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Councilman Kiel would like to see the Capital Projects Study keep moving.

ADJOURNMENT
Motion to adjourn made by Councilman Novak and supported by Councilman Kessler. 8:28 pm

EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL this 24th day of February, 2025.

Councilman President Adam Koronka

Councilman Justin Kiel

Councilman Randy Novak

Councilman Brett Kessler

Council~~woman~~ Mike Mollenhauer

Councilman Jimmy Pressel

Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST:
Michael Rosenbaum, La Porte County Auditor