



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, May 21, 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.

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

Considered the agenda. Commissioner Haney motioned to add a few items to the agenda: MOU between EMA & CVB and Travel Authorization Form. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Commissioner Holifield motioned to add May 29th Town Hall meeting. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motions carried 3-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 5/16/2025 - \$1,494,545.01. Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,318,734.11. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the operating claims. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the May 7, 2025 minutes. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

Donna Johnson, 1037 Indiana Ave, La Porte, addressed civility. Dictionary definition 'civility' comes from the Latin word *Civilis*, meaning relating to public life, befitting a citizen, in other words, being friendly and nice to everyone. When you show civility, you use kindness and good manners. You are respectful, even if you do not like that person very much or do not agree with them, which we have a lot of strong personalities, I'm one of them, and *Civility* can also mean formal politeness, like your behavior at a fancy dinner. "I would like to say that each one of you have been given a place of honor in our community and I want to respect that and I do respect that and won't - I don't respect that I'd like to be let known, you also have a position of responsibility. The community is trusting you to take care of us. I'm concerned about the civility and after watching some of the meetings, I'm concerned and grieved that we do not seem to have civility among each other and that is such a sad situation and I don't think it's befitting us. A lot of tempers seem to be out of control but I received this (holding up the Recorder's insert in the tax bill) with my property tax this year and actually I kind of looked at it but I didn't pay much attention to it, I thought 'oh, this is really cool' and I wouldn't have known about it except for the fuss that was made about it so thank you, I guess, in the sideways speaking there but I don't see anything harmful in this but that's not the point, it's about how it was treated and I think when an employee has something that needs to be addressed by their peers or by their superiors that also just like everything else should be done with respect and may maybe not in a private setting, a public setting such as this but in a private one, so that's where I'm at, you know, it's not like we are not each other's enemies. We live in a community that relies upon each other and each and every one of us is responsible for our own behavior and we have to, you know - I was thinking, you know, there are civic classes, I don't know what they teach in civic but maybe we just all need to and especially our elected officials, everybody, when I hear all these nominees coming up for election that's why I hear we don't want all this chaos, look all that chaos and then when they get elected there's more chaos, there's still chaos, what happened? There must be something in the drinking water so again I just plead to you, this - we look, we don't look good when this is going on and I don't look good, nobody looks good. Finally, I would like to say that there is a Lincoln Day dinner coming up the 31st of this month at the Barrel House in Michigan City and two of our leading Indiana, you know, leaders, the Governor... Lt. Governor and the Attorney General are coming to speak, these people...and I don't know if you agree or disagree with some of the things they're doing but they've been very active and very...I think they have their heart on our Country and on Indiana and I respect them for that, I would like to see a really good turnout. The registration deadline was today but I would invite anybody who hasn't responded to that, I would like to see everybody there that's our elected officials regardless of whether you disagree or agree with somebody in this room.

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These are our elected officials, you want the respect and I want to give it to you, I think our State people coming in from State and they, like Beckwith, I think he is at a meeting every day and he's going to town halls and a lot of people are coming up to him and they're not happy with him but he's accepting that, he's talking to them and he's addressing it so that's my invitation, now I understand that it was registration today, the last day but I'm trying to see if sweet Bonnie can extend that to at least maybe Monday or so, she's going to check with the caterers, that's the only thing, so again, I would like to see everybody's face there and I appreciate everybody and we just - I pray for my community, thank you."

Timothy Stabosz, 1501 Michigan Ave, La Porte, prior La Porte County Auditor. "Members of the Board of Commissioners, as a citizen I wanted to publicly express concerns I had about one of your members service and comportment, that member ran on a platform emphasizing a purported return to civility and elimination of nepotism and on the importance of transparency in government. With regard to civility, at the last County Council meeting, as the Council considered funding a no-bid contract request brought before them at the request of you Commissioners, Councilman Justin Kiel very respectfully asked that in the future in situations that...I lost my spot...very small text...in situations deemed to be emergencies, the County follow the Indiana Code and seek to get at least two quotes so the public can know that a bare level of due diligence...I guess I got to read it because I keep losing my spot...a bare level of due diligence on cost containment was performed. Commissioner Holifield strode up to the podium and told Kiel, a member of the body that is supposed to be a rightful check and balance on the Commission's power to contract, quote 'why don't you come and shovel the g-d sewage out of the building the next time we have an issue like this boy, how does that sound to you?' This was intemperate, highly offensive, insulting, lacking in civility, demeaning, degrading and disrespectful to the rightful station of a County Councilman. Worse, Commissioner Holifield's referring to an elected official with ten (10) years of government experience as boy merely because he is 28 years old implies that Mr. Kiel somehow has less legitimacy or less credibility because he is a young person and is an insult to all young people. The Chair of the Republican Party has called on Commissioner Holifield to apologize, pointing out that an executive with a firm representing a \$70 million-dollar economic development project was in the audience when Mr. Holifield made his outburst and arguing the Chair of the Party, our economic development efforts were compromised by the lack of professionalism. My question directly to you rhetorically anyway, Mr. Holifield, is will you apologize to Councilman Kiel for your inappropriate behavior? Finally, as one of your opponents in the Republican Primary over a year ago, you sent out thousands of glossy full color postcards purportedly paid for by the Committee to Elect Steve Holifield, you had a legal and ethical responsibility, in my opinion, to disclose who exactly paid for that postcard and yet, a year later, the public and your two former opponents still don't know. The La Porte County Election Board received a formal complaint in January from me and possibly others, I don't know, and asked you many weeks ago to provide updated campaign finance reports to correct your errors and omissions. You updated your reports, I saw them a few weeks ago unless you've updated them since but you steadfastly refuse to disclose how exactly the postcard you authorized and you claim to have paid for was funded nor the expenditure for the postcard in any way disclosed on your campaign finance reports. With your refusal to disclose this and over a year having gone by since this expenditure I am formally asking the Election Board and the County Prosecutor to hold you accountable for your lack of transparency and for your willful refusal to disclose what our campaign finance laws require, which is who paid for what. The public deserves an explanation, Mr. Holifield, are you going to tell us right now who paid for and who funded that postcard? What are you waiting for, sir? Thank you."

Department Reports/Comments

Angie Davis, Interim Facilities Director, and **Scott Cooley**, La Porte County Project Management, they will tag team on a couple of items. **Scott Cooley**, discussed the showers in the jail that were just waterproofed on the 5th floor. Distributed handouts with photos to the Commissioners. These showers have leaked for a long time, maybe as long as 20 years +, it has caused quite a bit of damage over the years. The first picture is before we started, approximately 20 cell blocks in the jail and most of them look like this - a bank of three showers, two regular showers and one handicap shower. Second page is really the reason why the showers were leaking, failed epoxy on the floor, that should be a nice seal there but you can see that it is pulled away, the other issue is that bracket you see is a seat in the shower. When the seat is sat on, it puts pressure on the bottom of the shower which was not ever connected to the concrete floor, it caused that gap right there and water was going right down into the floors below. In the next photo, after we exposed, we removed some of the epoxy, you can see that the bottom of the shower does not have a floor in it, just the flanges that were never attached to the concrete. Anytime anyone kicked them, leaned on them, sat in that seat, it was causing more of an issue over the years. We anchored the shower to the floor. Next picture is of prep work we were doing, removed epoxy, removed concrete, on the next page we removed, cleaned and sealed the access panels, there's two that are horizontal and two vertical, we removed those, they never had any type of seal, just metal to metal connection, so without any seal water will run right in there but they are sealed now. Next page is the finished floor. We put in a four-step or four layers of a two-component urethane quartz floor system. Every layer has its' own waterproofing so four seals are there now. We are very confident that this did fix the problem. Tomorrow morning, we are going to flood test that bank of showers, we're going to put an inch and a half of water in there, mark the wall where it is, leave the water there for 24 hours, come back and check it all, making sure it has not lowered. There is a proposal behind the set of pictures for another set of showers that is leaking into the back 40, into the boiler room in the Jail. On that set of showers, it is leaking directly on this 3-inch gas line. That gas line is extremely corroded, we have put sniffers on it, it is not leaking. There's no immediate danger but that 3-inch gas line is extremely corroded and every time someone showers, water continues to drip on that gas line. One of the photos shows the leak was not stopped so pans were placed under to catch the water and they would drain into another drain. If a decision is made to move forward on the leak, this is on two showers that are back-to-back in cell block S2 and S3, you can see the blueprint showing they are back-to-back so the repair would be on two showers. **President Gramarossa**, this is a gas

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line that all Commissioners, Councilmen and Commissioner Attorney DiMartino have looked at and needs to be addressed before it becomes a major problem. Requested permission for Interim Facilities Director Angie Davis to approach the Council for additional appropriation. What would it cost if we replaced the whole system versus the way that we did it? **Scott Cooley**, the initial budget to replace those three showers and waterproof the floor was \$249,985, this was for one cell block and they have to be welded in place, they will not fit through the doors, you will need air extractors, there's a lot that goes into it. There are 20 cell blocks, at \$249,985 each cell block, it will be \$4,999,700. We did \$20,000 worth of repairs, inspected it, repaired the shower and the floor. Showers appear to be in very good condition, no corrosion causing issues however the handicap shower did not have a floor, just flanges which surprised us. If repairs were done at \$20,000 each cell block times 20 cell blocks, then you'll be looking at \$400,000 opposed to \$5,000,000 for replacement. We are confident this will work and will have a savings of \$229,000 per cell block or about \$4.6 million dollars if all cell blocks are done. **Angie Davis**, maintenance staff used caulking but it did not work. **President Gramarossa**, waterproof caulking was used but did not work, correct? **Scott Cooley**, this will not truly be fixed unless the epoxy is removed and attach the showers to the concrete floor, every time the handicap fold-up chair is used with pressure put on it, the bottom of the shower moves about a half inch on the shower base. **Attorney DiMartino**, these issues came to light late last fall when we had the water loss in the jail that was in the wall and had to be demoed. The jail is still being repaired, still dealing with Travelers Insurance claim. Beginning this month, we're pretty much self-insured because the deductibles jump into \$250,000 for any type of water loss claim with the new approved carrier. Look at that, if you're going to spend \$200,000 now to repair those potential areas that are leaking, sequentially if you were to lose the pipe that it's leaking on now, the current water loss claim is at \$600,000 that the carrier has paid to date, giving you an idea, a bit of possible prevention and fix might be better in the long run. **President Gramarossa**, I don't believe we need to do all the pods at once, we need to handle the two that are leaking onto the natural gas line, if the Board decides tonight on the \$40,000 and work something out with the Council, maybe a schedule repairing so many at a time until they are all done. What is the pleasure of this Board? **Commissioner Holifield motioned in one caveat**. Flood test tomorrow? **Scott Cooley**, correct. **Commissioner Holifield**, if everything works, approach the Council for the next two and see what the budget looks like in 60 days. **Commissioner Haney seconded for discussion**. He heard Commissioner Gramarossa had asked Angie to get quotes, is it one or more quotes? **Angie Davis**, one. **Commissioner Haney**, we've had \$20,000 so far for this, we knew more would be coming up in the future, so \$40,000 with the \$20,000 would put us over the \$50,000 that is required to get three quotes, as we progress and we need to fix more, we're going to be over the \$150,000 mark which would require sealed bids. There is a provision in state statute that specifically prohibits dividing up projects so that they hit under the \$50,000 or \$150,000 to circumvent getting either sealed bids or quotes, whichever would be appropriate. I'm concerned here that what I've heard today from fellow Commissioners as well as Interim Facilities Director and La Porte County Project Management is that we are going to be surpassing \$50,000 and \$150,000 ultimately on this which would mean, since we know that and we've admitted it here in an open meeting, we need to at least solicit quotes if not possibly bids since we're going to be looking at over \$150,000 ultimately. I would ask County Attorney DiMartino on his opinion. **County Attorney DiMartino**, it's your call, if you think you're looking at the two repairs for maintenance and later on, if you think you're looking at a bulk, you can get them quoted. If you know vendors and if Angie has the scope out there, she can reach out to two, Mr. Haney if you want to bid it out then we'll go through the bidding process and see what transpires. **President Gramarossa** clarified, the first \$20,000 was due to the first initial water loss so that was one project, now we have water dripping on a gas line and we could take a chance of it breaking through or would you prefer doing all the cells at one time? Is your proposal **not** to take care of this immediate problem, roll the dice with the gas line, I believe that all the other pods can be put to the side because right now there is no 'active' problem, they *may* be leaking... **Inter Facilities Director Angie Davis**, I'm not aware of any others leaking. **Attorney DiMartino**, how about a compromise, why don't you solicit bids - solicit quotes for this project right now - **President Gramarossa**, for the \$40,000? **Attorney DiMartino**, for those two showers then if you want to look at the scope for the rest of them, put it on your Capitol Improvement and then you can bid it. **Commissioner Haney**, that would probably put us in compliance. **President Gramarossa**, we're in compliance because it is under \$150,000 so don't - I just want to establish the fact that this is a \$40,000 quote, up to \$50,000, we are in compliance so if you're (Commissioner Haney) not comfortable doing it and you want to get bids, you can but it is not because - I don't want it to go out to the public tomorrow that we were not in compliance because with a \$50,000 - \$40,000 bid, is that not in compliance? **Attorney DiMartino**, right but I think what Mr. Haney is saying is if you take the \$20,000 and now, you're looking at \$40,000 and the statute does talk about not separating things out in order to meet those requirements that somebody in the public could look at it and say, 'well, it's really a \$60,000 job.' **Commissioner Haney**, that's correct and you compile that with that fact we've talked here tonight that we're going to have to do more, and we'll look at budgeting those out in the future as Commissioner Holifield said earlier, we know there is going to be all of these different tiers...the showers are cohesively one issue, the fact that they are causing water leaks over a detective's desk versus over a gas line versus over other areas, it's all water loss, some may be more urgent than others obviously, water loss is water loss, damage is damage and leaking showers are leaking showers, they're all in the same building, they're all in the jail, I think a good argument and case could be made that I'm sure or more than likely at least, it's more likely that in all the other cells we've seen that those accessible benches that are there for the inmates in the shower bays, probably none of them are anchored like they were supposed to have been, if some of them haven't given out, they will, and unfortunately that leaking water is while it is urgent to get that taken care of over that gas line which has been leaking for several years. **Attorney DiMartino**, are you all okay with giving Angie direction to go ahead and solicit quotes for those two? **President Gramarossa**, if we're going to do it, do it for the whole project. **Commissioner Holifield**, can I make an amended... **Attorney DiMartino**, whatever you guys are going to do. **Commissioner Holifield**, I think we should fix that gas leak and then solicit for the rest of them to do all at once, but that gas line needs to be addressed sooner than later. We all saw what happened last week, we had a natural gas leak in town. **Attorney DiMartino**, I get that but if the gas line needs to be addressed

sooner rather than later and it is put out for bid, it's not going to be sooner, it's going to be later. **Commissioner Holifield**, how about we do the one they started... **President Gramarossa**, do the entire project, we put out all the pods at once, what? 200 pods? How many pods are there Angie? **Interim Facilities Director Angie Davis**, 20 pods. **President Gramarossa**, we put out all 20 pods at once, we're over \$150,000 and the Council can figure out where they're going to get the \$250,000. **Attorney DiMartino**, okay, so, if you want to put it out for bid, we can work on that, Angie can put together a scope and you can put it out to bid. **Commissioner Holifield**, I'm still concerned about the gas line. I mean, the rest of them, I have no problem with the bid, that's fine. **President Gramarossa**, but Joe says it's okay, it's been leaking for months. **Commissioner Holifield**, I'm not going to debate semantics on that one right now but that gas line does need to be addressed...from your experience? Okay, because otherwise it's going to get continually worse and we're looking at probably 60 to 70 more days before we can get the bids done, opened and awarded. Get the materials in because the materials will take a timeline too, but that gas line's not going to get any thicker. **Andy Skwiat**, 203 E. Harrison Street, Michigan City, I work with Mr. Cooley at La Porte County Project Management, I understand both sides here, I understand Commissioners Gramarossa and Holifield's concern about the gas line and I also understand Commissioner Haney's process of like jobs possibly being over the limit of \$50,000. Irregardless of which way you decide to go, a proposal for the \$40,000 or a proposal for the whole package at once, in my opinion, we're one step ahead because if that's the process, then we're going to probably need an engineer or someone to write a specification. The showers have been repaired many times over the last 20 years but not properly so to make sure that the right products are used and the right steps are followed, you should probably look to engage a firm to do that because we did that research in-house. Thank you. **President Gramarossa**, we would not try to take or steal your project so I guess that is true, I think we're looking at 20 pods. **Attorney DiMartino**, if this is going to need an engineer, I think we need to put a Request for Proposal or Request for Qualifications out there to get somebody to engineer it, spec it and then go through the process. **President Gramarossa**, and we roll the dice on the gas line. **Attorney DiMartino**, if that's the Commissioners' decision. **President Gramarossa**, I think that's what we're going to have to do. **Commissioner Haney**, in relation to that area for the gas line, as we see here, there was a pan that was placed over it to keep the water from dripping on it. I would think our Facilities could take - get another pan or contraption to take that water and make sure what's leaking right now gets diverted temporarily off the line and into one of the sump drains. **President Gramarossa**, it wasn't working, if you remember when we walked through it, we had gallon, we had cans and everything else catching it from the floor. **Commissioner Haney**, they should be able to fabricate something...**Angie Davis**, ...how much they use the showers and we're not fully staffed, I don't know how aware you are of that but we are not fully staffed to have someone monitoring that daily, we have so many projects going on in maintenance right now and depending on how often they use it. **Commissioner Haney**, they could just get some visqueen and make a little tunnel, duct tape and visqueen to the drain, it may not be perfect but there's different ways to do it. **Angie Davis**, we have so many quick fixes. **President Gramarossa**, we're just going to duct tape it? **Commissioner Haney**, if you want to get the water off of it and you want to stay in compliance, there are ways to do this, there's probably a much better way that Facilities people could come up with it, I know when I had a short...my short...above my boiler, the pressure valve started blowing when I got it replaced and in the meantime when I got it replaced, I took duct tape and aluminum foil, I diverted it down off of it because it was a cold weekend, they couldn't get there for 3 days, I didn't have any water dripping on my boiler, went right down to the sump pit, it was fine. **Angie Davis**, we're talking about a facility that is a 24-hour facility and the water is running on a gas line. When that gas line breaks, that becomes an emergency and has to be evacuated. In my honest opinion, getting this done and fixed the proper way first and then bid out the rest of them. Why create an emergency we can fix a problem and then move on to bid out the rest of them. **Commissioner Haney**, currently we have the original motion pending before the Board, the President hasn't called for the vote on it so if you want to vote on that, see how it goes. **Attorney DiMartino**, I'm confused, what is the original motion now? **Commissioner Holifield**, the original motion is to fix the leak of the gas, get it done since it's going to get worse. It's not going to get any better regardless of what you try and do. I'm deferring to Angie's experience with it and she is - her staff is short-handed so **the motion would be fix the first pod like they did, fix the gas leak, put the rest of the project out for bid**. We'll have to have it engineered, get RFQs, and then once you get the RFQs then we'll have to get a bid process for a scope and start over again, probably 90 days out? **Attorney DiMartino**, on a good timing. **Commissioner Holifield**, but at least we'll get the gas line fixed so we don't have another incident inside a building like they did last week down town. **Scott Cooley**, for clarification we're not fixing the gas line, just the showers. **Commissioner Haney**, the good news is there's no one boring fiber through the bottom of our jail right now so that's a plus. **Vote called for: Commissioner Holifield - Aye, Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Nay. Motion carried 2-1.** **Attorney DiMartino**, for clarification, do you want to go ahead now as to the Request for Qualifications to find...**President Gramarossa**, yes, we're going to have to hire an engineer to come out and engineer it. This is just to fix the problem right now with the gas line, fixing the two showers above the corroded gas line. The Councilmen and Commissioners have all seen it, this is not the final because we're just giving you (Angie Davis) permission to approach the Council, if they deny it you can come back to us. In the meantime, for the remainder of the Pods...to me, whether they're leaking or not, it still needs to be addressed. If the pleasure of this Board is to put it out for bid, we get an engineer to look at the remainder of the project, you're looking at over \$200,000 then we go from there...would that be the proper steps? **Attorney DiMartino**, you're going to need a professional...**Commissioner Holifield**, RFQs. **Attorney DiMartino**, for RFQs, yes. **President Gramarossa**, what is the pleasure of the Board? **Commissioner Holifield**, we've made so many motions here to start with so, she's (Angie Davis) going to go to the Council for this one, we need **a motion to request or get RFQs for an engineering study for the remaining 18 pods...make that my motion.** **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Scott Cooley**, do you have any questions for me on the Hiler Building? **Commissioner Holifield**, no, you guys did an amazing job, especially in the circumstances with the emergency that was signed by the Commission and Council.

Angie Davis continued with a few current projects, Fairgrounds is on track with electrical maintenance, painting the fence, community building roof is scheduled to be completed June 15th, weather permitting, sound system/speakers in the show arena will be completed by the end of next week, sound system for the fairgrounds itself - the cable is pulled, speakers are in place with temporary boxes until permanent ones arrive. Concrete for Commercial Building One along with concrete footings and the wall for the Hog Barn is scheduled to take place between May 27-30, weather permitting, those are the updates. The museum elevator, Otis Elevator is waiting on material and hopefully by June will have it done. Distributed emails showing communications with Otis Elevator to the Commission. JSC roof is complete, there was an area of caulk that needed to be replaced, JB West will repair that once it dries up. **President Gramarossa**, talk to Danielle at the Museum, find out when the Board meets so they can be informed. **Commissioner Holifield**, liaison to the Museum, he will reach out and tell them as well. **Commissioner Haney**, their meetings are the second Monday of the month.

Requests

Considered Zigler Road closure during the week of the Fair, July 5-12. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Michigan Street closure during Kankakee Township Fire Department's Open House on May 31st in Rolling Prairie. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to purchase a new vehicle, **Rob Sabie**, EMA. The current truck is too small for hauling trailers, one generator that we have access to through our District requires a one-ton to pull it, it's big. We went to Indianapolis a month ago to pick-up surplus from the State, I pulled an empty trailer yet I could barely keep it at 65 mph. The truck is a 6-cylinder, half-ton and I'd like to replace it with a one-ton truck, it's safer, heavier duty, braking capability, and transmission, basically a bigger truck. **President Gramarossa**, what year was your truck purchased? **Rob Sabie**, it's a 2019, a 7-year-old truck with 60,000 miles on it. Nothing wrong with it but not serving the purpose, it's not big enough, a safety issue. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve the request and wished Rob luck. **Commissioner Haney** seconded, having access to some of those other resources from the Northwest District here in Indiana would be great and having to borrow one of their trucks to pull it in is yet another hurdle as far as...**Rob Sabie**, we assist Hazmat, I've pulled a Hazmat trailer before and it's huge, has a lot of equipment. I'm not here to just get a new truck, it's something that's going to actually service the community. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Commissioner Holifield**, last week during the gas incident, your staff and you reached out to me, fire department, Matt Deckard, we were on the phone all day, fire departments, I was on the phone with the Mayor a couple of different times, the City and the County worked flawlessly together. **Rob Sabie**, we brought our trailer out for that as a cooling station, there are coolers filled with water for the firefighters or whoever, we're there whenever anyone needs us, just a phone call away. **Commissioner Haney**, thank you and your assistant and also a shout-out to the La Porte City Fire Department, it was a bright sunny day, a little on the warm side and they were standing out there in their gear for several hours to keep an eye on that while they located, tracked it down and actually the expertise and equipment there to get that shut down. **Rob Sabie**, we lucked out, the gas went down the sewer towards Lincolnway instead of coming this way and having to evacuate the whole building but we were keeping up on it, Hazmat was there and they carry a bunch of meters to monitor for that, we had a meter with us, everything was good. Fire Department, Nipsco, everybody was out there working. We all worked together and it was a good outcome. Nobody got hurt, that was the main thing.

Old Business

Considered Requests for Proposals for Michigan City EMS Base, **Brian Beach**, Assistant EMS Director. Out of six (6) companies that submitted RFPs, both EMS Director Eric Fenstermaker and Assistant EMS Director Brian Beach have scored the companies according to their needs for a new EMS Base in Michigan City. Everyone qualified, we looked at location and previous projects were considered, we put them in two separate piles to see where we would score them individually and we scored them identical except the last two, those were flip-flopped without even knowing, just to see where we would land. **La Porte County Project Management - 1; Jones Petrie Rafinski - 2 and K2M - 3.** La Porte County Project Management is out of Michigan City, JPR is out of South Bend and K2M is out of Indianapolis. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to accept the recommendation. **Commissioner Haney** seconded for discussion. Sat down with Director Fenstermaker and went through all of the proposals, one thing that comes to mind is that as a relatively new company, La Porte County Project Management, has done good work for us but to my knowledge, they haven't built any public safety buildings or any ground-up construction either which is something that you know, it's going to be an EMS Base up there for you guys for quite a while, it'll probably be a long time before we revisit that because there's other bases that we need to either build new or start over like the base for example and I would still love to see us get a base out in Westville for when the prison and their population goes up substantially especially with their aging population that well, you guys know better than anybody, between the two facilities you guys run a lot of calls and now it's all going to be condensed to that one area in about three years. **Attorney DiMartino**, this is not for the building, this is not the actual building, that would have to go out for bidding. This is for design concepts and project management. **Brian Beach**, that's the way we took it too. **Attorney DiMartino**, this is not for the actual construction, this is just the first step in trying to find something that's workable that will work for the County, just to clarify. **Brian Beach**, the one thing that stood out for me, I can't speak for Eric, with La Porte County Project Management, was in their RFP they showed more of an understanding of our concept of what we were looking for, even though they're not doing the actual project but for managing it, we are struggling for finding a separate location to house ourselves, they had a 'plan of attack' already in place for

us staying on the property which was big for us and hopefully to save the County money in that aspect. **President Gramasossa**, that would save us a lot of money. **Brian Beach**, that was one thing that stood out for me, I can't speak for Eric. **President Gramarossa**, you, I and Eric spent a year and a half visiting many, many, many sites, looking at alterations that we would have to invest on top of renting the building and it just wasn't working for us, we couldn't find any place that would work for us so it's definitely a good option. Vote called: **Commissioner Holifield - Aye; Commissioner Gramarossa - Aye and Commissioner Haney - Nay. Motion carried 2-1.**

Considered Baker Tilly Contract, Auditor Mike Rosenbaum, this is a contract for getting written Internal Controls, in the past several years of audits, the findings of the SBOA is that we are not compliant in many things and so it forces them to do additional testing which costs us more money because they can't rely on the systems that weren't in place, there's no systems in place. Baker Tilly is one of the preferred financial advisors that was approved at the beginning of the year, we approached them to get assistance, they're very well known in this area, they have specific people that handle these specific items, one of the gentleman's name is Todd Caldwell, not that it matters but he is not part of the normal crew of people that we usually see at the conferences. The idea is to get these in place to make sure that they're properly working so then in future years we do not have these issues and that we can get by with cleaner audits with doing what we're supposed to be doing, one part of Internal Controls is having someone prepare something and someone else review it. That is one of the key factors of making sure that things are being done right, an error could happen but the big deal is having the approval process or the review process. We are constantly going through that from every angle. A remote claims policy was put in place however the documents put in to the remote system are not properly signed by the Department Head as being approved, we've set up July 1st as the date to correct that issue, this has been discussed with the SBOA, they like and approved the idea, they haven't tested '24 when this first system was first put into place. The key to having a professional organization that has done this for a living, knows the ins and outs, other counties use them but we are not looking at spending the type of money they are partially due to my background and once we get a system and format we'll be able to do a lot of it and have them double check with us so that's why we brought this proposal to you. **Commissioner Holifield**, they're recommending \$60,000 to start. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum**, it won't cost us \$60,000, the idea is to keep it in the \$25,000 to \$30,000. **Commissioner Holifield**, okay, \$60,000 is what they're asking to appropriate for. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum**, we will go to the Council and we will appropriate what we need to do for that. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve approaching the Council for permission up to \$60,000. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered 2nd Reading for Ordinance establishing La Porte County Stormwater Management Department. Commissioner Haney motioned to read by Title only. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0. *Ordinance 2025-1 ***Second Reading Title Only. Attorney Guy DiMartino**, the La Porte County Board of Commissioners, Ordinance 2025-1, Establishing La Porte County Stormwater Management Department managed by a Board of Directors. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve on Second Reading. Commissioner Holifield seconded** then asked a few questions, will this be funded by fees? The salaries and everything else? **Attorney DiMartino**, you have to have the Board prior to setting the schedule, it's being looked at currently. Right now, you just have the outline. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Attorney DiMartino, you have a Baker Tilly contract before you, you approved to sign it contingent upon funding from the Council? It was not clear. **Commissioner Holifield**, Joe's motion was to approach the Council, not to exceed \$60,000. **Attorney DiMartino**, we can't delay it and him coming back to you again because this work needs to be done. **President Gramarossa**, correct, but he doesn't have money in his budget. **Attorney DiMartino**, he can get support from the Council, he does not have to come back to you. **Auditor Rosenbaum**, we have \$20,000 available but would need to get additional funding, possibly \$5,000-\$10,000.

New Business

Considered Phase II of the Franklin Street Bridge structural repairs. Andy Skwiat, 203 E. Harrison Street, Michigan City, distributed photos to the Commissioners. Requested two items for consideration, last year Marquiss Electric was hired to design, in conjunction with WJE and La Porte County Project Management, it was a 2-year project with the first year having structural repairs that were needed to the bridge and the second year, this year in the fall of 2025-2026, was for the tread plate replacement. There are four (4) tread plates on the bridge, a few years ago when INDOT did an inspection, nothing to do with our work or our firm, those tread plates failed inspection due to cracking so there was work done which it was agreed at the time was temporary because the bridge had to be put in operation that Spring. We only got half of the structural work done last fall, which we knew going into it when we obtained bids on your behalf because of timing so we assumed that would be split into the second half, hopefully this year. With that being said, the tread plates, which I have pictures of for you here, the first photo is one of the four tread plates, one on each corner of the bridge, that shows the current level of the concrete and the following pictures are the excavation work that we are currently doing on site which is part of the work we were hired to do last year - design, project management and tread replacement - so, WJE, the engineers, are unsure what condition the structural steel is in or the rivets or how that was originally installed, on-site investigative work will have to be done while the bridge is currently in use so the engineers can collect their data. The **first request** is obtaining bids for the second half of the structural work, once bids are received, I could request the sealed bids to the Commissioners' office like last year. We could review together then I could go to the Council on your behalf for funds for this fall. I would like to get that started now so we won't be up against the wall on timing. **Second request**, consider extending my agreement to a three-year agreement, you wouldn't be committing to the funding for the tread plate work, you would just be allowing me to take my two-year

contract to a third-year because we assume that once we're done with our preliminary work, get the design done for the tread plates, we obtain pricing which would be another process, sealed bid, those can take a year to get made. Ideally if we had an obligation to continue through with that process then hopefully later this summer or this fall we would finish the drawings for the tread plate, come before you once we have the drawings, get permission to obtain proposals to fabricate and install those tread plates, once received they would be brought back to you, maybe late fall or early winter, if approved then we would release those for manufacturing, taking one year to make, then we'd get those in Fall of 2026, Spring of 2027 making it a three-year project instead of a two-year project.

Commissioner Haney motioned to authorize out for bids for second portion then extend agreement to three years.

Commissioner Holifield seconded then asked if the tread plates are made here or send them to Germany to be built. Andy Skwiat, we do not know that yet, we'd like to get them here but right now that is unknown. We don't know how deep we have to go yet into the structure until this is done, testing and of course I will keep you informed every step of the way. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered MOU for Clean Water Indiana Pollinator Habitat Establishment Program. **Attorney DiMartino,** Mr. Vicari needs to attend the meetings and present. **Commissioner Holifield** had a question. **President Gramarossa** asked Commissioner Haney if he had seen the maps. **Commissioner Haney,** yes, he had an extensive meeting with Mr. Vicari and is familiar with it. **Commissioner Holifield,** Paul Vicari stopped by his office and spoke to him about this project as well, wants to get part of the swamp land cleaned up, add a walking trail and possibly that ground could have houses developed on it, bringing more tax base in. His question is on the Treecore contract, anything over ten (10) hours on the 299 head, we've got to approve that, he will come back to us for approval. **President Gramarossa,** we approve a dollar amount and he will get done what he can for that amount. **Commissioner Holifield,** \$2,400. **Commissioner Haney,** \$2,400 pairs in with the grant, 75/25 - no, it's 50/50, it's a 50/50 match program but reimbursement costs per the 75/25 cost. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the MOU for Clean Water Indiana Pollinator Establishment Program. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Eight (8) Core Public Health Service Agreements, **Amanda Lahnners,** Health Department. Our Health First Indiana Funds this year in our budget, we had approved amount set aside for Community Projects, we received 17 applications this year and eight were selected, we'd like to award them to: Boys & Girls Club of La Porte County, Citizens Concerned for the Homeless, Dunebrook (Family Support), Dunebrook (Healthy Families), Franciscan Health Foundation, NWI Food Council, Open Door Community Alliance and Purdue Extension-La Porte County. **Commissioner Holifield,** you are aware that next year they will cut your funds. **Amanda,** I'm very aware and we will not be able to offer this again. We will not be receiving enough funds to operate much less to give out grants. **Commissioner Holifield,** I did hear next session they may open for budget discussions again, they see the 2.4 billion is real or not so there's always hope. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve the eight (8) grants. Commissioner Haney seconded** then clarified for the public, this is grant money from the State that you are awarding that is meant for the Community Programs and not from the General Fund per se. **Amanda Lahnners,** correct. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered authorizing Commission President to appoint Working Group to evaluate development and siting issues for proposed Data Centers in La Porte County. **President Gramarossa,** basically put a "Working Group" together that would assist the Commissioners, as an Advisory Group, on proposed Data Centers. Group would consist of one person from each City of La Porte, Michigan City, and Municipalities that would like to participate to work together to find Data Centers. Hammond, Indiana, has a working group. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded for discussion. Attorney DiMartino,** you might want to consider who else you want as the makeup of the group. **President Gramarossa,** someone from the Plan Commission. **Commissioner Haney,** County Planner. **Commissioner Holifield,** one of the Commissioners. **Commissioner Haney,** Commissioner, Council person, Mayors from the two Cities, that gives us six...representatives from our unincorporated towns? **Commissioner Holifield,** Wanatah, Westville. **President Gramarossa,** we can look at what Hammond currently has for the makeup of their working group. **Commissioner Holifield,** he will be meeting with Matt Reardon and touring the old Gen Station property, I just want to be sure we're not taking any authority away from the Plan Commission or the BZA. **Attorney DiMartino,** this is just a working group. **President Gramarossa,** we met today with a representative from Senator Jim Banks' office. We talked about KIP, Franklin Street Bridge and the need for more options. We are working together for everyone. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Holifield reported May 29th will host a Town Hall meeting in Complex Room 3, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Public is invited. Elected officials and Department Heads will attend.

Considered MOU between EMA and Convention & Visitors Bureau during the Boat Races. **Attorney DiMartino** has reviewed the MOU. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered establishing updated Travel Authorization Form. Discussion took place between the Commissioners on travel. Their budget was at \$20,000 at the first of the year and is now at approximately \$5,000. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded for discussion. Budget Hearings. Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 7:29 p.m. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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**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

Dated 4 June 2025

May 21, 2025 Minutes Examined and Approved by the La Porte County Board of Commissioners.

X Connie Gramarossa

X [Signature]

X [Signature]

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