



# LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Connie Gramarossa  
President

Steve Holifield  
Vice President

Joseph Haney  
Member

## La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, June 4, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3

**President Connie Gramarossa** called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by **Tommy Kulavik**.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to add a few items to the agenda: Support letter for Lions Paws for Veterans in Fish Lake and Request for shower bids in the Jail. **Commissioner Haney** seconded then added Advertising for County Engineer. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the May 21, 2025 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** read the Claims with Payroll ending 5/30/2025 - \$1,489,592.65. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,327,009.04. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve the operating claims. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

### Public Comment

**Tommy Kulavik**, 1316 Ohio Street, Michigan City. **Public Service Announcements**, Michigan City Area Schools, Little Wolves Learning Center at 1001 US Highway 20 in Michigan City will be having an Open House, Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. #219-873-2035. Staff members will be available for the tour. Four-year-old niece, first one in his family to graduate from the Head Start program. High School and College graduations are taking place, congratulations to all in the County. Mayor Angie's daughter graduated. His niece graduated. Spoke about Commissioner Bohacek, not really going to bad mouth but mention prior to being Senator, he was an eight-year Commissioner. Back in 2009 Tommy interviewed for a Bridge Tender job however he learned later that the position went to Mr. Bohacek's wife. Always found him dishonest, untrustworthy public servant, glad he doesn't represent his district because he would have him voted out. Thank you.

**Atley Price**, 4767 N. 400 W., La Porte. Appeared in support of naming a Bridge honoring Susan Hay Hemminger. The Bridge Naming Committee has done a phenomenal job over the years in selecting names of individuals who are truly deserving and need to stay in our recognition for citizens of our County. "Susan though is one of those individuals that certainly I would add to that group from a retrospective standpoint of what she - who she was and what she accomplished, but there's a prospective element to her being named for a bridge and I'll come to that in just a minute. For those of you who may not be familiar with her, she was in fact the first female Judge elected in La Porte County in 1990. She won that election by the largest margin of any contested judicial race ever in the history of La Porte County, unfortunately, because of the ravages of cancer, she only sat on the bench for a little over two years. And during the final days of her life, her brother and I were very close to her, I've known Susan since High School, basically, we met with her for some period of time from the standpoint of being able to plan out her estate and we all came to the conclusion that since she was - had no children that perhaps the best thing she could do is to endow a scholarship with basically what the remains of her estate would entail so her brother David and I set out to accomplish that in forming a trust, the Susan Hay Hemminger Scholarship Foundation. It was endowed with the proceeds from her estate. Since then, it has gone forward with David and I as trustees and Judge Paul Baldoni until just his passing here in the past few years. We were the three trustees for the first 20 years of that project and every year we averaged between anywhere from eight to twelve recipients on an average of at the least amount of \$2,000 and many years it was the maximum of \$5,000." Some being the first people that received the scholarships, their children are now receiving

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scholarships as well. David and I are no longer an active part of that committee, Judge Baldoni has passed away but Susan's niece and nephews have now taken on that task. This past May was the 26<sup>th</sup> year and over that period, over 500 individuals in La Porte County have received roughly \$2 million dollars in benefits to help them attend post-secondary education. You must be a resident of La Porte County to apply for the scholarship. Atley urged the Commission to approve the Bridge Naming Committee's recommendations. Committee member Sue Webster approached Atley on recommending Susan Hay Hemminger's name for a Bridge. Although previous named bridges are throughout the County, Atley wanted a Bridge with more traffic flow for Susan Hay Hemminger and the bridge on Michigan Boulevard, over Trail Creek, was chosen in her honor. "And the reason why I wanted to insist upon or try and make that the bridge that received that honor is it puts her name out there, and here's where the prospective aspect comes because we've been around for almost 26 years now, hopefully it'll be well into the future beyond with other generations another 25 or 26 years and I can't tell you how many times individuals say, 'Well, I didn't know who Susan Hay Hemminger was, I had never heard of her.' 'Well, I knew that there maybe was a scholarship out there but we never thought to apply.' With the Susan Hay Hemminger on both abutments of the northbound/southbound of Michigan Boulevard and everyone seeing it, each and every day when they pass that, hopefully that name rings a bell and somebody who might not otherwise been able to afford to go to college will think 'oh, well there's a scholarship maybe connected to that and I think I might apply,' thus giving a prospective element to carry forward in the future." Thanked the Bridge Naming Committee and Commissioners for considering it. Urged their approval.

#### **Department Reports/Comments**

**Angie Davis**, Interim Facilities Director, requested permission to approach the Council for additional appropriation for repairs to the Complex's roof. An estimate was given a year and a half ago so a current estimate was needed. There were three original estimates by previous Directors however Council was never approached. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve**, he has been on the roof, seen the condition. **Commissioner Haney seconded for discussion**. We can see down the hallway here we've got some issues. Is the updated price inline with the previous one? **Angie Davis**, it's gone up a small amount, \$20,665.00. **Motion carried 3-0**.

**Monique Thomas**, Human Resources Director, the Hiler Building now has a wheelchair for public use and is in Suite 104. Food Truck Event is scheduled to take place June 12<sup>th</sup> in Michigan City and June 13<sup>th</sup> in La Porte in the Circle Drive. We have job openings, check the County's website for all postings, or stop in the office, looking for dedicated people who want to work for La Porte County. Monique then introduced Eric Gibson with GIS to bring forth a proposal for a clinic. **Eric Gibson**, GIS, acknowledged service issues with NorthShore Clinic, extended wait times, closing the Michigan City location without notice, general lack of staffing as well. Members will still be able to use NorthShore, it is an in-network facility, if the decision is made to cancel the contract. It would move towards the normal UMR medical plan so no one's losing access to anything, we've been evaluating other clinic options. We're still evaluating them, one of the first ones that came to the table was the Franciscan Clinic, they've got a great footprint here in Northern Indiana, they may be a good fit. It is slightly different from NorthShore setup, the Healthy Access Program is targeted for Primary Care, Urgent Care and Wellness. They've got a list of cabinet meds. I'll have Tim or Leslie come up here in a moment and give a broader overview of their program, but the main difference is that they don't have that full pharmacy and that 340B Program that NorthShore does today, so again, folks can still use that pharmacy, it is an in-network benefit however it would not be completely free, it would go straight to the medical plan as it would be any other pharmacy that's in-network. **President Gramarossa**, nothing is really free, someone is paying for it, it's just not the employees currently paying it. **Eric Gibson**, absolutely, the County is currently paying for it. **Tim Ross** and Leslie Schroeder with Franciscan Health, thanked Commission for having them here today, grateful for the business opportunity in La Porte County, the City of La Porte and others, working with us on our new venture, we opened a clinic just over a year ago and it's going very well, anything we can do to help make a decision either way, we're more than happy to answer questions but as Eric said, the medications, we do carry a list of medications that would be dispensed at the clinic for free as part of the program would be paid for by the County, employees, dependents and spouses would not have to pay anything at the clinic level that's being performed at the clinic. There are about 65 different meds we carry would be included and could be dispensed but if we don't carry them as part of the formulary then they would have to go to the local pharmacy to use their plan. There are a lot of drugs covered in the 65 different ones. Labs are included. We're looking at expanding our footprints at the current location which has extra space in the building, adding clinical operation space due to the business community in La Porte. We're growing, we want to expand the space and looking at the hours. One of the unique things about our model is our pricing model is a tiered pricing based on usage so you're not just paying a flat fee up front, no matter who uses it, it's based on usage. We have locations in La Porte, Michigan City, and Valparaiso. We have Saturday and Sunday hours at the Michigan City location for an acute care type visit as part of that program. **Commissioner Holifield**, the La Porte location, is that at the west end of town? **Leslie Schroeder**, it is off Monroe Street in the Legacy Plaza area. **Commissioner Haney**, directly across from NorthShore. **Leslie Schroeder**, yes. **Attorney DiMartino**, is staffing only mid-levels? **Tim Ross**, currently, yes. **Attorney DiMartino**, if somebody needs to see a physician then they go outside the clinic? **Tim Ross**, yes, we do have physicians at the Valpo location and the other locations have Nurse Practitioners that handle pretty much everything a physician can, we have not had any issues where somebody comes in and says, 'I have something that the Nurse Practitioner can't see.' **Commissioner Haney**, similar services provided to what the employees are getting now so - **Tim Ross**, similar plus probably extra, we have yoga, wellness, labs, x-rays, and a few other services that might not be offered currently. I know in comparison in talking with others, our offer is robust for the program. **Commissioner Holifield**, is it the same program that the City of La Porte currently uses? **Tim Ross**, yes. **Eric Gibson**, the main difference is going to be the drug program we talked about but also the specialty services, if you have to see a specialist, it's probably not going to be done through the clinic but instead primary care, urgent care, wellness, all of that covered by healthy access.

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**President Gramarossa**, Eric is working with other providers but they are the first to come out and speak to us. **Attorney DiMartino**, if the County were to come aboard, we have 700 employees, that's a pretty big footprint that might start using the facility, are you able to staff that because that's the issue that we've had. **Tim Ross**, that's what we've heard, yes, we've already been making plans, not based just on you but others have approached us and want to join. We're already looking at our additional space, providers and staff. If a decision is made for us then there will be about a 45-day onboarding process before we would be able to start, for example, if you started August 1<sup>st</sup>, you would have until the end of July to be able to start September 1<sup>st</sup> so it's about a 45-day outlet, giving us time to ramp-up, bring people in. We are already in that process because we already see all the communications, people bringing us in to talk. **Leslie Schroeder**, we have consistent providers whereas I've heard 'it's a different doctor every time we go and we can't create that relationship with the provider' so that won't be an issue with us, we have the same providers depending on the day of the appointment, it will be the same Monday through Thursday. **Commissioner Haney**, have you given any thought to adding on a 340B type pharmacy option or are you capable of doing that? **Tim Ross**, without saying anything, the 340B plan by the Federal Government, we don't feel really falls under the category of working with businesses, okay? So, I think some of the new state bills passed in this legislation also puts more restrictions on that 340B plan, and we don't see it as a plan that could be offered through something like this, 340B pricing wasn't designed for that, that is how we feel. **Commissioner Haney**, I've seen that, that was one of the things. **Tim Ross**, that is our interpretation. **Commissioner Haney**, I kind of looked at some of this when we were first delving into that option because it does save, can save a tremendous amount of money on prescriptions and being able to, you know, as a governmental agency as opposed to a for-profit business, there's kind of that carve out there that doesn't improve it, I haven't seen the newest legislation to see how that tightens it down, I feel like it did under the last one but I guess my question for you Eric, not right now but you're not going to be able to answer this right now but when you come back, losing the 340B option, how is that going to affect our insurance or our prescription costs moving forward because some of that stuff, like obviously we still have Magellan we use to get rebates through but you have to spend the money to get the rebates back. Talking the other day with our HR Director, say you've got a \$17,000 a year prescription and you're getting back \$4,000, you're still out \$13,000, under 340B that prescription may only cost \$4 or \$5,000 so then you're coming out ahead roughly \$7,000 at the end of the year by doing that and then the employees aren't paying anything out of pocket, but of course we've seen creative usage with a few of the medications that have come out of there that aren't necessarily directing indicated. There's a medication that is indicated for insurance, let's say you have a coexisting morbidity like diabetes or something, if you don't have that then that would fall out sometimes of some of that stuff. There's been a good mix of that, I think our current clinic worked well for the first two years but we've seen over this past year and a half or so, there's been a number of different issues. Hopefully there's a way you can bring some of those numbers so that we know that, how much money we may or may not be losing depending on access to that 340B. **Eric Gibson**, absolutely, it's going to be sort of a two-part analysis, one of the analyses is going to be the clinic to clinic comparison but then the other is going to be those drugs to your point coming back on to the plan, what's the financial impact on that and then within the pharmacy benefit, the Magellan, Prime Therapeutics, where do we go from there because there are other options out there and some of them do have access to 340B, that's going to be part of that analysis that we will be doing and bringing to you guys. **Commissioner Haney**, thank you. **President Gramarossa**, the reason why we reviewed the health care is because last year alone we had to cut a check due to our health care account was short, we had to put \$600,000 the first time and then six months later we had to put another \$500,000 into it so we last year alone in order to catch up the deficit, it was \$1.1 million dollars that was put into that health care account. I know one of the problems we had going through NorthShore is it wasn't being filed with our insurance so we were not getting the rebates on the medications so I guess I would defer to Attorney DiMartino, at this point, what would be the next process in order for us to... **Attorney DiMartino**, we need to look at apples to apples, Franciscan's model is a lot different than FQC and that's where those prescription models come but part of the problem with that is they have been indiscriminately writing prescriptions. If you see a patient that has high blood pressure, you always want to start with a formulary drug instead of going to a new drug that comes out so having that step program we've lost with what is going on now but I think probably the better and listen, I don't love Franciscan but they're here and they do a good job, no offense, but what you have here is that you have a lot of people that will not use NorthShore because their second tier provider is not a - they're part of Franciscan network and so you lose that continuity but I think you'll grab a whole bunch more folks because if you're going to start with a Franciscan provider, even though they're mid-level, then they can kick them off and refer them to private pay in the Franciscan network so I think that's going to be the biggest benefit where the current provider just doesn't have that. That's something that I think we all need to look at because that's what we hear. **President Gramarossa**, would we need a motion to have you cancel NorthShore? That would give the Insurance Working Group time to look and interview other clinics to determine which one would serve us best. **Attorney DiMartino**, you have a six-month notice period in the contract, looking at whether there is cause to that is another issue, if it is the Board's pleasure, you probably want to give me the authority to give them a six-month notice. A six-month notice that you are going to terminate their services. **Commissioner Holifield**, at the end of the six months, we could still re-sign with them? **Attorney DiMartino**, if they want the work. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to allow Attorney DiMartino to give notice to NorthShore to terminate the contract. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried.** **Tim Ross** distributed booklets to the Commissioners.

**Amanda Lahners**, Health Department Director, updated the Commissioners on legislative changes that occurred this year, specifically with the Health First Indiana funding. The County 'opted in' in 2022, supposed to be a long-term program, providing funding to the Health Departments to help expand services, what they were referring to as Core Public Health Services, at the time we said yes, we were doing 75% of that very well so we decided to 'opt in.' This year for our operating budget from the State we were given \$2.6 million dollars, there was a drastic cut in the funding for the next two years. Next year we will only be receiving \$655,000

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from the State, that puts us in a hard place. Some of the other changes that also occurred was in House Bill 1427 that passed says that we can now, if we take Health First Indiana funds, we can only service Indiana residents. We have a large population of secondary homeowners, especially in the Long Beach and the beach communities that pay a lot of property taxes that we cannot service, even if they came to us paying cash for a flu shot, we cannot service them which doesn't make a lot of sense to me. **President Gramarossa**, that's if we continue with Health First? **Amanda Lahners**, correct. **President Gramarossa**, if we do not have Health First we can service them. **Amanda Lahners**, yes, we can service anybody. In our ordinance we do have a provision for out-of-county residents in need of services, they are charged an additional fee. We will not be able to do anything with tobacco prevention and cessation including vaping, no dollars can be used for that, education or assistance in helping people to stop using them. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's with the Health First Indiana? **Amanda Lahners**, yes. **Commissioner Holifield**, either a yes or no for these funds? **Amanda**, correct. Also, for a job opening, it has to be advertised for 30 days before we can interview and hire. The person needs to give notice after those 30 days after you've interviewed, it could be months out and that is a big inconvenience. My department has several 'legacy' employees, or long-term employees, having more than 30 years with the County. Patricia Wozniak celebrated 35 years on May 29<sup>th</sup> with La Porte County. Looking at a minimum of four (4) people retiring next year and we currently are short employees. **President Gramarossa**, you spoke to us individually, how can we help you? **Amanda Lahners**, it is a County Executive decision whether we stay in the program or not, at first, it was an 'opt-in' every two years and this year we need to decide. **Attorney DiMartino**, has this been presented to the Health Department Board? **Amanda** replied she has discussed this with her Board Members individually as well, no formal action yet. The next Health Board meeting is July 15<sup>th</sup>, Health Officer Dr. Deausy, Board President and Board Attorney have all been in on the discussion. The end of the year is the deadline for opting in or not however she would like to get ahead of the budget hearings. **Attorney DiMartino** preferred she go in front of the Health Board first and possibly have two budgets available, one with opting-in and one opting-out. **Amanda Lahners** recommended if they did opt-in the funds would go to the community partners. The requirements have not been taken away with the funding, the funds were taken away but not the requirements that still need to be met. **President Gramarossa**, no funding from the State so the County would have to pick up that cost. **Attorney DiMartino**, this was Mr. Haney's concern when we went into this. **Amanda Lahners**, she was optimistic, hoping it would be great but both Mr. Haney and Mr. Stabosz questioned it. **Commissioner Haney**, watching what has happened with the State over the years made him wonder if the funding could be turned off at any time. How much of the roughly \$600,000 that you may get is the County able to maintain to subsidize your budget versus giving out to community partners? **Amanda Lahners**, there are things we have to work on, for example, suicide prevention, lowering the cancer rate, lowering the number of people going to the ER as opposed to Urgent Care, there are a list of items that we just don't do and don't have the capacity to do, we would have to work with community partners helping them expand their programs. **Attorney DiMartino**, the Council will still have to fund your program for what you do. **Amanda Lahners**, yes. **Commissioner Holifield**, would these be the eight programs you brought to us last meeting? **Amanda Lahners**, we were able to fund that this year, yes. We are losing \$2 million dollars which was not my operating budget before, we were working way under that \$2.6 million. **President Gramarossa** clarified Amanda will go to the Health Department Board meeting then return to the Commissioners. **Amanda** thanked the Commissioners.

**Darlene Hale**, IT Director, new cameras going in at the Courthouse have been mounted, a few more may go up outside. Waiting on Pemberton Davis for equipment to complete the job. A phone upgrade took place last week, overall, it went well. This morning, we received a quote for budgetary numbers for financial and tax software for next year, currently requesting a signature which was never done in the past. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum**, same continuation just acknowledgment required.

**John Matwynshyn**, Surveyor, the passage of the Stormwater Management Ordinance brought up an issue that there also is a section of Indiana Code with the exact same title, in consultation with Attorney DiMartino and Attorney Meyer, the author of the ordinance, a distinction has been made between the two, it's not apparent to me as a non-lawyer but I wanted to mention that the two are two separate concepts even though unfortunately they share the same sequence of words. **Attorney DiMartino**, that is correct, the statute that our Surveyor brought up deals with if we end up taking a step to become a utility, then the makeup would be different but right now our MS4 is under the permit, permit holder and IDEM, it's two different issues. At some point, it may change. **President Gramarossa**, asked Attorney DiMartino if he sees an issue and he replied no. **John Matwynshyn**, I've basically been using the description, the Stormwater Management Department Ordinance and Stormwater Management Department Indiana Code to distinguish between the two, add a bit of verbiage to avoid confusion.

**Mike Polan**, Building Commissioner, two items: still have an opening for a part-time HVAC/Plumbing Inspector and then our software is being implemented, half done with code enforcement and a few others to follow. Regular meetings with technical staff from the vendor, if anyone in the public using the software would reach out to him, letting him know their thoughts on the program. **President Gramarossa** thanked Mike for the software, Highway Department is able to use it as well to report pot holes, the public can go to our website and fill out the form. **Mike Polan**, we're going from Flintstones to the Jetsons, not losing anything in the flood but instead saving data to the cloud. Seamless and more efficient.

**Steve Holifield**, Commissioner, received a letter from Mill Creek Lions Club requesting support for Lions Paws for Support Paddlefest on July 19<sup>th</sup>. Provides emotional and financial support to Veterans in our community. Sponsors adoption of dogs or cats from our Animal Shelter as support for our Veterans. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to support**. **Commissioner Haney seconded**. **Motion carried 3-0**.

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### Requests

**Considered** permission for two employees to Travel to Atlanta September 14-17, 2025, **Steve Eyrick**, Adult Probation. National Association of Pretrial Services Conference, required to maintain CEUs as part of their job and all cost will be paid with Probation User Fee account. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Holifield seconded**. Motion carried 3-0.

**Considered** 25 sick days pay for retiring employee Kim Barnett with 20 years in the Clerk's office, **Heather Stevens**, Clerk. No additional appropriation needed. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Haney seconded**. Motion carried 3-0.

### Old Business

**Considered** MS4 Board Appointments, **Paul Vicari**, MS4 Stormwater Director. **Requested appointing Commission President Connie Gramarossa, Councilman Randy Novak, and Soil & Water President Don Lode with Mark Parkman, Citizen At-Large, (as an alternate to Don) to the newly formed MS4 Board**. Since August of 2023, they have been consistent with offering support along with previous Councilman Earl Cunningham, and understanding of the MS4 program. According to IDEM, the previous program was deficient and under audit. Currently that has all been corrected. This program is no more, no less, than the Federal Law which is the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, section 402 of the Clean Water Act, not to be confused with section 404. It dates back to 1972 and our stance, our standing as a Phase II NPDES program. IDEM is the administrator of the regulations that are Title 320 to 327, two parts, one is our general permit and the other are construction permits. An important point to consider here is that Mr. Matwyshyn brought up the utility, while it is permissible to use Indiana Code, we're talking about Indiana Administrative Code, so the Administrative Code says 'you will address water pollution' and the Indiana Code says 'these are the regulations and rules behind it.' We hold a general permit, we must abide by the state statute or the state administrative code for our construction permits, no more, no less. We must have six minimum control measures; we implement those measures as a requirement of that general permit and that compliance is what requires us to form this Board. The ordinance is framed accordingly.

**Commissioner Holifield**, do you need anyone from the City of La Porte or Michigan City on the Board? **Paul Vicari**, they each have their own MS4 programs. There used to be a partnership agreement between municipalities but that was dissolved. **Attorney DiMartino**, the purpose of this Board, right now, is we have a program and a continuity of services. Although the Board may be like other Boards, Health Department or Community Corrections Boards, ultimately, they will be an Advisory Board to the Commissioners. A budget will be presented to the Council so that eventually MS4 will be self-sustaining in the next 18 months otherwise Mr. Vicari will not keep his salary that the Council gave him. **Paul Vicari**, we educate folks and hope to have a functional program. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Haney seconded**. Motion carried 3-0.

### New Business

**Considered** addendum to E-911 Employee Handbook, **Barb Huston**, E-911 Director. Revised our addendum a few months ago, it was approved by the E-911 Board with minutes reflecting the approval and it was approved by Attorney DiMartino. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Haney seconded**. Motion carried 3-0. \*\*\*Resolution 2025-5

**Considered** third addendum between Assessor and Tax Management Associates, Mike Schultz, Assessor. **Stacey Swietzer**, Deputy Assessor, this is just an update on the fees. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Haney seconded**. Motion carried 3-0.

**Considered** Bridge Naming Committee Recommendations for 6 (six) bridges, **Bruce Johnson**. **Bridge #507 - Roeske Brothers, Bridge #512 - Susan Hay Hemminger, Bridge #38 - John B. Chaudonia, Bridge on Tryon Road over I-94 - Anita Keppen King, Bridge #253 - Private First-Class Martin Stark, WWII Veteran and Bridge #500 - Hazel Harrison**. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve**. **Commissioner Haney seconded**. Motion carried 3-0. Information on all Bridge Naming Honorees will be on our county website. **Bruce Johnson** thanked the Commissioners for the 2 lanterns in the La Porte Courthouse tower honoring Paul Revere 'One if by Land, Two if by Sea' for the America 250 La Porte County.

**Considered** advertising bids for Hiler Building 1<sup>st</sup> Floor renovations. **President Gramarossa**, the initial Emergency Declaration stopped the water from coming in the basement of the Hiler Building but now repairs are needed for both Men/Women's restrooms on the first floor of the building as well as the kitchen/break room in the Assessor's office. She handed out two notices with information, one for the showers in the Jail and the other for the Hiler Building. For the Hiler, do we try doing the repairs internally or send it out to a firm. **Commissioner Holifield**, are there any scopes that Building Maintenance can do? **Angie Davis**, Interim Director of Facilities, currently her staff is short-handed. **Commissioner Holifield**, a scope of work needs to be developed or straight to bid? **President Gramarossa**, when you put it out to bid you will need a scope of work, decisions will have to be made. Does the wallpaper come down? Do we fix the walls behind it? Tile was up four feet on the walls. In the men's restroom there was a mirror and during the demolition it was removed from the wall in one piece. There were leaks behind the sinks in the wall. There's an issue with the HVAC pipes. I recommend we bring in a firm, get a scope of work and then it will be put out to bid. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to put out a request for an engineering firm to do the scope of work**. **President Gramarossa**, it doesn't have to be an engineering firm, just a construction firm/company. **Commissioner Holifield** changed his motion from an engineering firm to a

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**construction firm or company.** Attorney DiMartino, suggested a general contractor come in and bid on the demo and remodeling of the bathrooms. **Commissioner Holifield**, the demo has been done and it's down to the studs. **Discussion** continued on HVAC pipes, wall paper, demo and tile. Attorney DiMartino recommended bidding out the restrooms and Assessor's kitchen/break room. **Commissioner Holifield motioned for the project to go straight to bid.** Commissioner Haney seconded. Attorney DiMartino, the County Engineer has handled a few advertisements before so who will do it now? **Commissioner Haney**, Facilities Director. **President Gramarossa**, that's why I wanted to have a firm give us a scope. **Discussion** held on scope of work and who does it. **Commissioner Holifield**, boy government is complicated. **Commissioner Haney**, we do have a motion and a second on the floor. We can deal with that and then appoint the scope after that. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Commissioner Holifield**, now on the scope, we will have Angie and Connie do the scope and bring it back to the next Commissioners' meeting. Attorney DiMartino, sort of lost on the whole scope thing, the bathrooms are demoed. You have walls but they need repaired, tile, wallpaper could come down. **Commissioner Holifield**, make an appointment with general contractors, walk them through, show them the project. Motion stands.

**Considered** the shower pods in the Jail. **President Gramarossa** showed four photos of the area in the Jail that needs addressed. Two photos were of damaged ceiling tiles/light fixtures and the other two were corroded pipes that were leaking. Last meeting there was discussion on the showers over this pipe causing the corrosion. There are 20 pods, one was fixed, two more where the pipe was being affected and now, we need to look at sending the remaining 17 pods out to bid. One of the photos with the damaged ceiling over a light fixture, spoke to Sheriff Heeg, he is aware that instead of using the vendor that repaired the other ones that now it will be sent out to bid and requires a scope of work for the pods, demolition then reconstruction will take place. It will be a longer process than the previous pods that were fixed. **Commissioner Holifield**, the price to do all pods was \$400,000. To replace them was about \$5 million dollars. That's a big difference. **President Gramarossa** asked Andy Skwiat to the podium to explain. **Andy Skwiat**, 203 E. Harrison Street, Michigan City, does not have information as far as how long they have been leaking. His family business has worked on the building for about 25 years, as far back as when Al Ott was Director of Facilities', the pipes have been leaking since that time. There have been attempts to fix them in-house. There are pans underneath the units in multiple areas. One area is that one that caused the insurance claim and the other one is the corroded gas pipe that you see in the photo. This photo is on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor where legal counsel meets with their clients, this ceiling/light fixture picture here is above right outside the meeting rooms. Not sure how long this has been leaking, obviously a longtime. I understand the process with state requirements for bids versus no bids. We did the research to replace the shower units in the pods. The cost would be \$4.5 to \$5 million dollars and with that the manufacturer will not give any recommendations on how to install them, basically sell you equipment and you figure it out yourself. **Commissioner Holifield**, that dollar amount does not include repairing the ceiling or anything else. **Andy Skwiat**, it does not, you just had a million-dollar insurance claim from the same situation that was caused by the same thing, no one giving it attention, repairing it. The gas pipe could be another issue. As a resident, a tax payer, a local business owner, this needs to be addressed. **President Gramarossa**, these are in an area that water cannot be rerouted using visqueen and duct tape. We have to take action. We have seen 'quick fixes' in the ceilings yet the issues remain. **Andy Skwiat**, has three privately owned businesses in our County, employs La Porte County residents, we pay union wages well above the median income, people should be proud of that, lives and owns property in La Porte County, putting all of that aside, when you walk through the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Jail in the Complex, you come off the elevator, you kick the tiles that have fallen from the ceiling leaking above, attorneys are meeting with their clients and the ceiling is falling down with possible growth, I don't think it matters what side you're on, whether it's 'we should bid this' or 'we should take the best solution' side, all sides should agree when we all live here and call this home, something needs to be done. Clearly speaking, you have issues that need to be addressed; however the Board chooses. **President Gramarossa**, what was the cost for all new equipment and installing it, for all 20 pods? **Andy Skwiat**, between \$4.5 and \$5 million dollars, those were budget figures based on equipment cost and removing old/installing new but once the new pods arrive, they have no instructions, you would rely on the contracted firm doing the work to figure out how to install them, seal them, in the type of facility you have here. **Commissioner Holifield**, until the leaks are fixed, the showers repaired, the issues remain. We need to get the showers fixed, Andy started on the showers, the rest of the issues can be put out for bid once the showers are repaired. It will only get worse. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to get the showers fixed.**

**Commissioner Haney**, could you clarify the motion as far as how to go about that? **Commissioner Holifield**, La Porte County Project Management has already repaired three pods, finish the 17 remaining and then we will get a scope to fix the damaged ceiling tiles. They've done a tremendous job. If it is not fixed, it will get worse than those ceiling tiles. **Angie Davis**, referred to the photo with the damaged ceiling tiles, there is a light fixture in the center that was removed due to the leak. The other area shown in another photo has water going on to the light fixture. **Commissioner Holifield's motion dies for lack of a seconded.** **President Gramarossa** asked Commissioner Haney if he had a solution to these issues. **Commissioner Haney**, obviously we're going to be spending north of \$300,000 to finish the other 17 pods, we simply cannot give that dollar amount work under the statute without either getting bids or going a different route, if you two truly believe that this is... **President Gramarossa**, don't say 'you two.' **Commissioner Haney**...if the Board truly believes that this is such a unique opportunity to save money that exists under something along the lines of a special purchase statute, there's always the option to go that route but again that would need to be - **Commissioner Holifield**, would this qualify under that? **Attorney DiMartino** does not consider this a special purchase issue, it is not. **Commissioner Holifield** asked Commissioner Haney what would be his motion to proceed. **President Gramarossa**, last week you were talking about visqueen and duct tape, so now after we see that (referring to the displayed photos) we know that... **Commissioner Haney**, yes, I've seen that, I was specifically talking about the pipe and water flowing directly onto the pipe which again I think anybody, you know, it's a... **President Gramarossa**, what is the solution? **Commissioner Haney**, I think part of the statute we have no choice but to comply with the statute. **President Gramarossa**, okay, so what is your motion? **Commissioner Haney** motioned to

go out for sealed bids to repair the showers. **Commissioner Holifield**, what about the rest of it, the ceiling tiles, all of that - you want that in more than one project or one project? **Commissioner Haney**, if we're doing sealed bids we could do it as one large project, that'd be fine. **President Gramarossa** asked about a scope of work, 17 pods so how would the scoping be? **Commissioner Haney**, I think part of the issue that we have with needing a scope and whatnot is we - this may be something that we need the Building Committee to take a look at, we need a Facilities Department who can at least scope some of this work because as we just heard from our previous discussion, there were concerns about going out to get the bathrooms fixed, we need some level of expertise in-house to be able to provide some of that scope. **Commissioner Holifield**, some of the reasons we have these issues is because the last person who had 'expertise' is responsible for them and we're just now finding out about it. **Commissioner Haney**, I'm not suggesting we go back to a prior person, I'm saying that the Director of Facilities is a position that requires a certain amount of expertise and education. **President Gramarossa**, we had those folks and they did what you recommended, the visqueen, duct tape, aluminum foil, and pans put underneath catching the water then leading to a 5-gallon bucket and those were qualified individuals with construction background. **Commissioner Haney**, and when you were elected and took office, we took steps to try to change some of that and obviously we haven't been successful yet, hopefully we will be able to. **Attorney DiMartino**, there are different views of who's going to manage facilities. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's irrelevant right now. **President Gramarossa**, this has nothing to do with Facilities. **Attorney DiMartino**, that's not going to address the issue. **Commissioner Holifield**, the issue to address are the shower stalls leaking and creating a bigger mess, a bigger problem. **Attorney DiMartino**, that's the issue today, I mean tomorrow it could be getting a Director, a new Engineer or whoever. **Commissioner Holifield**, and it's in our Jail. We need to be addressing this issue right now. We've got two different options here. **Attorney DiMartino**, the one option is clear, the first option is that you're going to violate the statute, it's north of \$150,000. **President Gramarossa**, right so we need another solution. **Attorney DiMartino**, the second option is you put it out for bid, within that second option you have - do you first get somebody that can do - you put it out for Request for Qualifications or someone that can scope it for you then put that out for bid or do you put it out for bid for companies that have all the expertise to be able to give you an idea of what needs to be done, I don't think anybody can scope it without demoing it. **President Gramarossa**, correct and that's exactly 'any necessary demolition by the selected firm would need to coordinate with the La Porte County Sheriff. It is assumed the pod would be out of service throughout the demolition specification, advertising and construction process,' reading from a document that she distributed to the Commissioners. **Attorney DiMartino**, may I make a suggestion? **President Gramarossa**, sure. **Commissioner Haney**, please. **Attorney DiMartino**, select a pod, request quotes for the demo of just that pod, in the meantime put it out for RFQs, by the time that comes in, they'll have a template of what it looks like so they can scope it. **Commissioner Holifield** asked if they are all the same, the pods. **President Gramarossa**, each one is unique because each one creates different issues. Two years ago, a certain area was caulked but it's not just about the caulking, it's about the insulation of the showers themselves, a handicap chair that when pressure is applied to it brings it away from the wall. Do you have a solution? We have a clear problem here. **Commissioner Haney**, I understand you're not pleased that we don't get to violate state statute here, we have to follow our policy. **President Gramarossa**, nope, it has nothing to do with violating - where's the solution? **Commissioner Holifield**, this is ridiculous. **Commissioner Haney**, how is this ridiculous? Just a moment ago you made a motion to violate state statute, I mean, that's not ridiculous, it just is what it is. If you want to do what you want to do then go ahead vote and do it. **Attorney DiMartino**, let's work through this and see if we can get something that's... **Commissioner Holifield**, yes, then let's see the state statute, follow it directly and it may cost \$10 million dollars but if that's what makes them happy - **Attorney DiMartino**, well, you don't have to accept the bid. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's true and you still got leaky showers. **Attorney DiMartino**, you've had leaky showers for 20 years so but I understand it's getting worse so... **President Gramarossa**, you have no solution (Commissioner Haney) and you'd like to make a motion for what, sir (Commissioner Holifield)? **Commissioner Holifield**, to fix those pods the way Andy has been doing it so far and then the rest of it we send out, once we stop the water leak - **President Gramarossa**, that died for lack of a second. "**I'll step down as President, I'm going to make a motion. I'm going to make a motion that we hire a firm to come in, that we go ahead and we follow the suggestions of our attorney that we - I'm going to do it in multiple steps, the first step will be to hire a firm to come in, decommission one of the showers, preferably the shower that is causing this current leak right now and once we have it taken apart, then we can, once we pay somebody to decommission that, then we will have - we'll come back to the drawing board and then we will ask permission from the Board again, so that once we decommission it then we can send it out for scoping. Would that be acceptable? We have a motion on the table.**" **Commissioner Holifield**, how does the Sheriff feel about losing part of these pods, will that create a problem for him? **President Gramarossa**, I've already talked to him, I went through what I wrote up last night, I talked to him today, he knows that we are going to have a pod that's going to be down, it's going to put a strain on the jailers, we're going to have to be moving participants to other areas to take showers but again this is what we need to do in order for us to be able to get a scope of work, we have no choice and he is well aware of it. **Commissioner Holifield**, I think we're going to wind up spending a lot more money in the long run and taking a lot more time this way but if it'll get the project moving, **I'll make a seconded**. **President Gramarossa**, discussion? **Commissioner Haney**, for hiring the firm, are we requesting doing RFQs? **President Gramarossa**, we're going to hire a firm to do demolition on one pod. **Attorney DiMartino**, I think that would qualify under soliciting three quotes because I can't imagine that being north of \$150,000. **Commissioner Haney**, yeah, I wouldn't think so. **Attorney DiMartino** to Angie Davis, I think you're going to need to try and get an understanding of where the culprit is for that (referring to a photo with the bad ceiling), whether it's one pod, two pods or what's the offending pod. **President Gramarossa**, once you open a pod there's no guarantee that this water isn't running from another pod somewhere else. **Attorney DiMartino**, water's difficult. **President Gramarossa**, we have some single pods and then some that are back-to-back. **We have a motion and a seconded, any more discussion? The motion is to hire someone to come in and do the demolition on the one pod, if we can track where this water damage is coming from. Motion carried 3-0.**

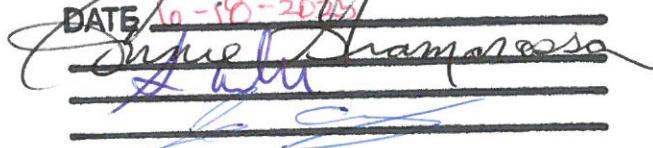
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Considered advertising for County Engineer. **Commissioner Haney**, our prior County Engineer has resigned, the County Engineer does more than just work on bridges here in the County, there's a number of different things they do for state compliance. Speaking with our County Planner, Mitch Bishop, there's about a dozen things outstanding right now for that as well as other duties assigned such as ADA compliance. Some of the bridge work we can, in the interim, we can sub-out from on-call. The County does need an Engineer and **I motion that we direct our HR to advertise for the position to try and find a new engineer. Commissioner Holifield seconded for discussion.** We might as well bite the bullet and get it over. **President Gramarossa**, I personally think we should wait until after budget hearings. I don't think there is anything pressing. The engineer falls under the Highway Department, correct? **Attorney DiMartino**, the position is under the Highway Department but he does do other things besides highway. He'll look at water flow for MS4 for some of the vendors, he does ADA, but under the Highway Department. **Commissioner Holifield**, just because we advertise for it doesn't mean we have to hire immediately. **Commissioner Haney**, given the current rates for that position, it's probably going to take some time to find a candidate willing to work for that amount. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's an issue all governments are having, salaries are not high enough to attract certain individuals for certain things so no fault of any department or anything. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Holifield motioned to adjourn at 12:03 p.m. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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

DATE 10-18-2015



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

*Auditor*

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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