



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

Joe Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 15, 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.

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

Considered the agenda. President Gramarossa moved item 11 'a' up the agenda and placed it at Requests for the Department Head to review any bids then return at the end of the meeting with a recommendation. Commissioner Holifield motioned to add under Old Business 10 'd' - Invoices due by October 31, 2025 for the work done at the Solid Waste Fire; Under New Business 11 'd' - Consider Commissioners' Deed Sale for property not sold at tax sale and 11 'e' scheduling for meeting rooms. Commissioner Haney seconded motion to amend. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the October 1, 2025 minutes. Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Deputy Auditor Joie Winski read the Claims with Payroll ending 10/3/2025 - \$1,467,117.42. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve payroll. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Deputy Auditor Joie Winski read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,477,927.71. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve operating claims. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Steve Holifield announced the Resolution on the agenda is already being looked at by the Plan Commission. A lot of you may be here because of rumors floating around by a bunch of cowardly losers on Facebook. There is an ordinance being passed around by Lake County that is a template that we're going to be using to try and enact our own ordinance against Data Centers. Nothing has been proposed yet; there are people looking at doing things but it has to go through BZA to be zoned differently so that's where you need to be concerned about, I wanted to make that clear before you start.

Public Comment

Ken Layton, 1498 W. 500 S., La Porte, **against** Data Centers in residential neighborhoods. After listening to Commissioner Holifield, not even sure if it is even needed to be here or not. **Commissioner Holifield**, I love a full house. **President Gramarossa**, we can still pass the resolution here with the Commissioners. **Ken Layton** spoke on behalf of himself and wife Rita, they favor the proposed resolution that they have read this evening. Requested the Commission to approve/enforce an ordinance of this kind to move forward to the Board of Zoning Appeals and Plan Commission. Yes, there are innumerable rumors out there but there are two known facts, we have been contacted to lease our farm for solar use and the State of Indiana has approached us to buy a small portion of our land so they can fix State Road 39, why now after 50 years do they want to fix the road? Possibly due to the traffic from the new facility that they're planning. Two different ones being talked about; Highway 35 between Boyd Blvd and 250 South/400 South and on Highway 39 between 400 South/500 South. If this is to be considered, the best place for this would be the KOP, another rumor is NIPSCO will invest \$8 million dollars in a new substation inside the KOP. Kingsbury Utilities has water and sewer as well as the Kankakee River as backup on the back side. The Kingsbury Industrial Park has a built-in buffer zone so you cannot see what is happening inside unless you go inside KOP. There are production plants already there, including fertilizer plants that many people may not even know is there because they don't go in that area. **Commissioner Steve Holifield**, as Vice President of the Plan Commission, this will be on the next month's agenda. Please attend the Plan Commission and BZA meetings.

Carolyn Tole, 410 E. 650 S., La Porte, **against** Data Centers in KIP. Lives in the KOP around the circle, Aspen Lane, Oakwood, Oakwood West, along with others residences, does not want a Data Center in their neighborhood. They already have water problems from Kingsbury Ordinance. In the last two weeks, the neighbors on each side of her, have been approached to sell their properties. Realtor will not say who the client is or what it is for but they did want an NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement) signed. She directed a question to President Gramarossa, saying a statement was made about coming out and speaking to the residents. She had been on the HOA until recently, none of the residents spoke to anyone on the Commission. KIP has been there since 1942, people in the 'city' are so quick to throw something out 'there,' residents already have issues with their water, at times she has seen 'blood red' water coming from her faucets. She has not drunk the water in the ten years she has owned the house. Neighborhood cannot sustain a Data Center.

Christine Schmutte, 4924 S. 150 W., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. She works for a trucking company, GridHawk is a locate company, they had lots of locate flags in the truck, she asked a driver if any Data Centers were going in/or near Kingsbury and he replied, 'yeah, there's a couple of them going out there.' She started crying, she is religious and Data Centers are evil, they are meant to mind people's data unless you are the elite billionaires who want to buy the farmlands. They want to put these monstrosities, disgusting buildings on farmland to destroy them, we can't farm any longer, food will be harder to come by, you control the food, you control the population. The aquifers, electricity, water would go away, not sure if city water can be brought out to where she lives, electricity would be a drain on the grid which is already vulnerable, it could destroy everything we know as it is now. What a horrible existence going forward, especially for children, what are they going to have? The Data Centers would employ maybe 15 people. What happens if the center closes, an empty giant building sitting there in disrepair, the farmland not being used and we don't have food, we would have to rely on other countries for our food, to her it is a battle of good versus evil. Bill Gates is one of the biggest proponents, she is not ashamed to say the man is totally evil, he has been quoted as saying he wants the population to be 250,000 globally, that's how demented he is, he has bought almost 10,000 acres of farmland in Indiana. They look at us as 'useless eaters' because we are not billionaires. We do not know what the Data Centers will do to humans, animals, and noise pollution. They've said wind and solar would be great but she has not seen either work, wind kills all the birds. Noticed the railway at the entrance to KOP has been completed, thinking this is going hand-in-hand with all of this, possibly. Technology we've got 5G, her friend at Google says they can't go any further, no more bandwidth. That is a detrimental effect on our health as well. It breaks her heart to see what is happening to the human population here and it's not good, if you believe in God, he wanted good for us, for us to live in peace, contentment for us. '1st Corinthians 14:33, for God is not a God of disorder but of peace.' Thank you. **Commissioner Steve Holifield**, keep an eye on the BZA for this to be on the agenda, you can remonstrate and as for wasted farmland, solar and wind, I'm backing you 100% there, I've been fighting with the Plan Commission the last three years.

Don Laskowski, 3037 S. 150 W., **against** Data Centers. Lives across the road from Luhr County Park, retired operating engineer, he rents his farmland out to a bigger farmer, he owns the land where the water well is, an 8-inch water well with an electric pump on top and the green box so this water well supplies water for 260 acres of formerly his parents' farm, he's lived there since 1952. He's worried about losing all the water that comes from La Porte airport, going South through Luhr County Park, its already very dry. The water has stopped flowing South towards Kingsbury Creek. Our water wells may get sucked dry, wildlife will leave. Luhr Park is one of the nicest Parks we have in La Porte County, it's beautiful. Worried about the truck traffic at Kingsbury School. Concrete trucks on our county roads are not good, let's keep the grain, corn, soybeans and wheat trucks moving but not the concrete trucks. Everything South of La Porte is flat as a pancake, the water table is 48 inches underneath the natural terrain, in Springtime, you can dig down 48 inches and hit water. If this big Data Center needs a retention pond, you lose that water table. If this center goes on Highway 39, between 400 South and 500 South, the whole neighborhood will be screwed up. Hopes the Commissioners will look at both the positives and the negatives, thanked the Commission for listening to him tonight.

Rodney McCormick, 617 Union Street, Michigan City, **against** Data Centers. Here for two reasons, Data Centers are coming here to our cities, our County because they know we have people that will do anything for a buck. Doesn't know how any elected official can vote to have any more Data Centers in this community. There is a video out there showing what will happen to our communities. He's 58 years old, we all need to stop thinking about ourselves and start thinking about our kids, our grandkids, put your self-interest behind. Unfortunately, in Michigan City, that's not happening. There is nothing good coming out of these Data Centers other then coming in here and use six or seven thousand - million dollars, that's a drop-in-the-bucket to them. After they are done tearing up natural resources, killing the wildlife, destroying our way of life as we know it, what will be left, who repairs it, who is responsible for bringing it back together? All of this is about AI, cornering the market on AI. Everyone knows what this is about, they got us in Michigan City because we have a Mayor that is thirsty for money and will do anything. Does not care about the people, and if they do not get reelected or decide not to run for office again, they will go to Florida or somewhere else with a big pocket of money, looking at us poor people left behind. Like it or not, when the winter gets here, you turn your furnace on for 30 days in a row, your NIPSCO bill will be outrageous, what about those on fixed incomes? How are you going to help us? It's not going to bring any workers here; all we are going to have is security guards. You're not going to be able to get in there, they will have their own people on the inside. Nothing good comes from it, short-term, finances, means nothing and we shouldn't do it. Everyone can hear me, if you see elected officials voting for the Data Centers, be against them next election. Vote them out of office right away.

Keith Kozlowski, 1304 E. State Road 4, La Porte, **against** Data Centers. The benefit of the Data Centers to the County must be tax money, believes this will hurt us in the long run, it will only hurt the community, who will come in and clean it up once it goes bad? The community. Thank you.

Jason Teets, 1502 W. 500 S., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. Moved out of the city to live in a rural community because he loves farmland. Four big environmental components are electrical usage, water usage, leeching of toxic chemicals into the soil and reallocation of farmland for industrial use. Risks include rezoning of farmland, no clear data or exact number to tell us how much of the farmland has been taken in the name of progress for the data centers but there will be the loss of thousands of fields, eventually it will impact everybody. We're told that we need AI therefore Data Centers to compete in the global market, matter of national security, provides jobs in the community which isn't proven yet, tax revenue, economic growth. Believes this ordinance/resolution can stand as a backdrop against the pressures of big business who act with no regard for the welfare of the community. If we allow these companies to dictate our boundaries, to bend our laws and precedents to fit their needs, fill their wallets, we will find the price of progress is higher than we can really afford. Hope you all see, we have a good turnout tonight of people at this meeting, and I pray that you do what is right. **Commissioner Holifield**, for reference, the State of Indiana did a study last year and reported approximately 345,000 acres had been lost to development, La Porte County alone only has 244,000 acres.

Lindsay Loniewski, 4662 S. 150 W., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. Made my point last month here at your meeting, you know how I feel about Data Centers, you all seem to agree they should not go on farmland. Since then, people have been getting purchase agreements, it's county property around Highway 35/300 South. You've said you do not know what is going on, I feel like we need answers, if you don't have them, if you can provide them. Last month I was trying to get this ordinance passed, it's been a month, I was hoping to leave this meeting and have a timeline. Steve, you said you're going to present it at the Plan Commission, it's not on the agenda. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's where it starts. We do not start the ordinance here. **Lindsay**, will it be put on there? **Commissioner Holifield**, at the beginning of the meeting I'll add it on there for discussion. **Lindsay**, okay, thank you, and BZA as well? **Commissioner Holifield**, the BZA will take it up as a special exception to change that but the Plan Commission will be the one that presents the ordinance to start with. **Lindsay**, how long does it take to get that going? **Commissioner Holifield**, I can tell you this much what I've learned in the last year in government, it'll probably take six months. **Lindsay**, so what if they already have permits going and application process? **Commissioner Holifield**, right now the only place a Data Center is allowed in La Porte County is on industrial land so there would have to be a zoning change through the BZA to do it on farmland. That means you all will have a chance to attend the meeting and remonstrate against it, there are three members of the BZA who's votes are up in the air most of the time, there are two solid farm backgrounds that will, I guarantee you, keep the farmland. The offers you're talking about being made by Cressy, a real estate company. **Lindsay**, right, for light industrial use. **Commissioner Holifield**, I'll go out on a limb and say what they're doing is snooping around for ground to purchase for future Data Center but nothing firm has come through yet with the Plan Commission, BZA or our office. **President Gramarossa**, currently we do not have a Data Center... **Commissioner Holifield**, no permits. **President Gramarossa**, but we do not have a Data Center Ordinance. **Commissioner Holifield**, according to our Planner, other counties have done it, they are considered to be as a warehouse which is only permitted in our County in industrial area only, they'll be considered a warehouse. I've talked to other counties across the state that have the same issues as we do, a Commissioner and two Councilmen in St. Joe County told me they wish they would have dragged their feet. I've taken over, Ms. Gramarossa has relinquished, I'm in charge of the Data Centers so if anyone wants my number, contact information afterwards, come see me. I've spoke with you on the phone, through email. Ms. Tole, I've spoke to you, I'm open to talk to anybody. I love packed houses, when I was in township government, my trustee used to freak out when I would bring a full house. This is where you start, where you speak out. **Lindsay**, I appreciate you speaking with me outside of the meetings, trying to fill me in, I just feel like something has to be done in order to stop these... **Commissioner Holifield**, it's a process. **Lindsay**, we should not have to worry that our backyard is going to turn into a Data Center, an ordinance would be a security. **Commissioner Holifield**, keep coming to these meetings, check the county website for the Plan Commission's agenda and the BZA. **Lindsay**, Thank you.

Christine Ward, 1862 W. 500 S., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. Moved here eight years ago for the peace, quiet, and ruralness. Don't appreciate nor does she want this data center to be something she looks out her front window at, she does not want to lose property value, she plans on retiring in six years. No one will want to buy her home if looking at a piece of crap sitting out in the front yard. She does not want a data center. Has a new neighbor that built a half a million-dollar home for the same thing, quiet, his children to be able to enjoy themselves outside. They would not want the disturbance. These things are noisy. All of us are here for the same reason, we don't want it.

President Gramarossa, anyone else for Public Comment other than Data Centers?

Donald Laskowski, 3037 S. 150 W., La Porte, what's the story with the 200, 400 acres bought right there by Boyd Boulevard, across the street from INDOT, the sewage treatment plant, is that project a done deal or is it still up in the air? **Commissioner Holifield**, Microsoft owns that ground, that is in the City of La Porte, according to Mayor Dermody, construction time zone is probably somewhere around 2027-2028. The County has no authorization to prevent the City from annexing ground. That falls on your guys' hand when the annexation comes in for you to say no to annexation. If 51% of the people say no to annexation, the City cannot annex. 39 North took almost two years to annex in to the City.

Michelle Copeland, 1555 W. 400 S., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. Brought information to read, the people do not want this in their area, hoping the ordinance passes. **President Gramarossa**, resolution. **Michelle**, (to Commissioner Holifield) going back to your comment about losers online, don't know who you meant by that because information is *everywhere* and if you do a simple google with the AI, it will tell you how horrible it is. **Commissioner Holifield**, I can also tell you that there are some that are spreading rumors that are not true about anything. **Michelle**, that's internet, yes. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's what I called losers. **Michelle**, but I didn't know who you were calling losers, it was just weird. **Commissioner Holifield**, I use a different term of language than most people. **Michelle**, because I am spreading the word, I am telling people we don't want this in our yard. **Commissioner Holifield**, if you spread the truth, there's no problem. **Michelle**, no, no rumors, I don't want it, that's why I'm telling people. For the BZA, how many members have to pass it, is it 5? **Commissioner Holifield**, there's five members, it takes three or majority. **Michelle**, thank you.

Christine Schmutte, 4924 S. 150 W., La Porte, (directed to Commissioner Holifield) so you basically said we have to keep coming to meetings to find out if these are literally going to start constructing? **Commissioner Holifield**, yes. **President Gramarossa**, you can also go on our website for the agendas, they can 'add' items though as well to the agendas. **Christine**, you being government officials, you would know this...can they say 'eminent domain' and just take the land and not tell us? **President Gramarossa** requested Economic Development Matt Reardon to the podium to explain how eminent domain is for governmental use.

Matt Reardon, Economic Development, La Porte County has their own ordinance that they passed prohibiting eminent domain, specifically for Economic Development purposes, you cannot do that here. The private sector cannot condemn property and take it, they have to pay fair market value, if you don't want to sell, don't sell. That's how its done, we don't do that through the Redevelopment Commission, the only way governments typically use eminent domain is for a specific public purpose. The meaning of specific public purpose for roadways/water and sewer, that's it, not for factories and facilities. Since Commissioner Holifield brought it up, the ordinance template from a County very similar to this one, I believe there are 20 different trigger points that have to be covered and whoever printed that out, thank you...**President Gramarossa**, you're welcome. **Matt Reardon**...because it is very thorough, when the committee got together, the Commissioners were asking 'what are some good ideas,' 'what have other people done,' so in Lake County the same questions were brought up; water, power usage, setbacks, location, how high can it be, what it will look like, environmental statements as well as what kind of incentives do you want, all of those things are done up front. Moving forward, putting that ordinance in front of the Plan Commission for consideration adoption then returning to you all is the best way to understand where things should/could go then it puts it back on the private sector to determine is this a place you want to follow these rules, go in locations where directed or if you don't want to then you figure out somewhere else to go. Leaving it open-ended leaves too many opportunities for questions, discussions, pathways to get around an ordinance so put it into law.

Dan Gurnicz, 756 E. 250 S. La Porte, reported that the deal Microsoft got is somewhere around 587 acres, two farmers were approached, one farmer had two residents on his property but he owned them so there was nobody to oppose anything, the deal was cut. We only received a certified letter telling us to come to the Zoning Board meeting and there was about 2, 3 or 4 of us there, it was a done deal so my question is, I'm putting my faith you all, but La Porte City has their nose in this somehow, if that is the case then people need to keep on their toes, he doesn't think much will be said about it because they didn't before, he doesn't want to see this happen either, he already has Microsoft in is front yard, these people will have it in their front yards too or be displaced. The need for housing is another topic in our county yet people will be run out of their homes that have been established for years, people that move to our area, it's kind of ironic. Please pass this ordinance, thank you.

Kelly Jernigan, 4644 S. 150 W. La Porte, her son is a union carpenter and has not spent one minute at the Amazon job site in New Carlisle. Most of the construction workers are from out-of-town, we are not even putting local construction workers to work and on top of that, through her job, she was able to get a personal tour with Tom Dakich, builder of the Data Center in 2018 in Hammond. The building is already outdated and expansion is going in across the street. During her tour of the Data Center in Hammond, she only saw the receptionist and two security guards working in the building. One of the security guards did say he makes \$20+ so we're not bringing in big, high-income jobs to the area nor will we be employing local construction workers to do a lot of that work. **Commissioner Holifield**, he also has toured the Hammond Facility and has the same concerns. Kelly is **against** the Data Centers.

Margaret Hannon, 1727 W. 500 S., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. Margaret is 75 years old and all 75 years have been spent living on the farm ground in her area, seen things get better for worse, her children and now grandchildren are all being raised in the same farmland area. Her husband has serviced farm machinery his whole life and now it's time to retire. She is a retired school teacher for La Porte Schools and South Central Schools. People in the South didn't have much so we put in our own Pre-School which she taught for 30 years with not much of an income, everybody was happy, it's a nice community. The changes are out-weighting what is being given up, National Geographic contacted them twice to film what happens on their farm. The monarch butterflies come up that hedge line, the Data Center would be built along the other side of that hedge line. Are the Data Centers worth it? Her 4-year-old granddaughter was asking where the butterflies are at right now, we are slowing losing what we had, we worked hard all our lives to enjoy retirement on the same farm area that we've lived in.

Jason Teets, 1502 W. 500 S., La Porte, quick comment about Boyd Boulevard and Highway 35 (directed to Commissioner Holifield), approximately 2-3 years out? **Commissioner Holifield**, according to the Mayor, the construction on that for Microsoft is '27-'28. **Jason**, attended the County's Comprehensive Plan meeting last night, spoke to Harold Parker and he said that will be starting in a few months. **Commissioner Holifield**, unless he has different information than the Mayor. **Jason** was just asking for clarification. **Commissioner Holifield**, that is in the City and we have no control over the City.

Commissioner Steve Holifield motioned to move the Resolution item up the agenda and vote now. **Commissioner Joe Haney** seconded. Considered Resolution requesting the County Plan Commission to consider a Data Center Ordinance restricting siting to only industrially zoned areas and imposing other reasonable requirements. **Commissioner Steve Holifield** motioned to approve the Resolution and read by title only. **Commissioner Joe Haney** seconded. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, sitting in for County Attorney **Guy DiMartino**, read by title 'Resolution 2025-7 of the La Porte County Board of Commissioners requesting the County Plan Commission to consider a Data Center Ordinance restricting siting to only industrially zoned areas and imposing other reasonable requirements.' **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to accept the Resolution. **Commissioner Haney** seconded for discussion. It is awesome seeing everyone here today, one concern with the Resolution is it's a little procedurally deficient in so far as normally these things start in the Plan Commission so one of the things I want to impress upon you all here tonight is that this is a bit out of order for how this is supposed to go, make sure you keep the same level of enthusiasm and turnout when this does come up in the proper order starting in the Plan Commission, that's exceptionally important that I want to impress upon all of you to make sure we have this turnout or even better when it does come up for discussion. There is a Public Comment section at the Plan Commission, they have different rules on what is or isn't on the agenda for discussion, there isn't a blanket open format like here but a proposed ordinance like that does come up, there is Public Comment for that, keep an eye on the website and of course we'll push it out on social media as well. One of the interesting points brought up was involving KIP, putting things out there, Kingsbury Industrial Park is exceptionally well suited for heavy industry but one thing that's important I think everybody should remember is that from where we're sitting right here, it's about seven (7) miles as the crow flies to get to KIP from where the City of La Porte's water treatment center is and where the Data Center in the city is going to be, its close to about five (5) miles from there so as we look at it, some different areas and not just here in Indiana but around the Country where Data Centers are going in, water is a key component even in some of the closed-loop systems, some having significant issues still with them and we look at what's being reported just next to us in St. Joe County where people are experiencing issues with their wells as far as two (2) miles out in a radius. One of the issues I have with an ordinance like this, not an ordinance but a resolution like this, I don't want to put constraints on the Plan Commission, I want them to be open minded to everything as possible so say how close can one Data Center be to another, for example, and since there is going to be one in the South of City of La Porte, go 2-2 ½ mile radius out to KIP, they'll basically be touching each other, there are thousands of homes all around that area that rely on wells for water, of course the City of La Porte relies on wells to draw water for them, they don't get their water out of Lake Michigan. There are so many facets of this to be considered, I'm glad we've got **Commissioner Holifield** to be leading this up; to be sure we consider every aspect because the last thing we need to do is compromise our water supply here in La Porte County. **Commissioner Holifield**, those issues are on a list to talk about, (to the public) you all showed up tonight in strength, I wish we had this much strength when we fought the solar ordinances because now we probably wouldn't be sued because they didn't get their way, keep an eye on things, attend meetings, speak, if we do have any of these in KIP, your issues are going to be considered first, energy and water usage as well. Thank you.

President Gramarossa, there is a gentleman here that has had his hand up, we usually don't do this but I will allow you to speak if you would like to come to the podium.

James Baum, 402 Melrose St., La Porte, **against** Data Centers. La Porte resident for 29 years, how come they already get a Data Center in industrial, that is not right, like that just brought right up upon us right here, it just sprung upon us, we don't want no Data Center at all around here, it's going to destroy everything around here, everybody's just going to pick up and move, it will destroy what's so great about La Porte County and this great area, it will raise utilities, NIPSCO will give the Data Center a break and the people around them will pick up the bill, then when we have a power outage how will the Data Centers be supplied? Generators will be used. Pollution will be created, water gets contaminated, it gets into La Porte's water system, then we'll have an epidemic of cancer like over in Westville with Cam-Or when all of that oil got down in the drinking table, the water, I lived 11 miles south on Highway 421. All of my neighbors are gone from that and everybody in Westville is gone from that, now do we want that to happen here in La Porte? No, do we want people to have respiratory problems, problems with their lungs? No. Can't you take a lesson from Cam-Or over here in Westville? How many years was that? That was in the 80's. **Commissioner Holifield**, that's why we're trying to strengthen the ordinance. **James**, why do we have to go through this all over again? It's stupid. **Commissioner Holifield**, to answer your question as to why Data Centers are not listed in the Joint Zoning Ordinance is because when the last Comprehensive Plan that was done, there was no such thing as Data Centers so now they have to be put in there somewhere. **James**, we pay our taxes, we're honest, and now we have to put up with this dishonesty...**Commissioner Holifield**, I don't believe we're being dishonest. **James**, it is, we don't want these Data Centers. **President Gramarossa**, thank you, we need to take the vote now. **Vote taken for Resolution. Motion carried 3-0. ***Resolution 2025-7**

This will move to the Plan Commission; their next meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on October 28th. **Commissioner Holifield**, it will be discussed at the next meeting to how we're going to propose an ordinance, Government does not move at the speed of light, it will be addressed, propose an ordinance to be brought up then a public hearing on it. Minimum time could be two months or it can take up to six months, notices are sent out, it could be nine weeks. **Commissioner Haney**, while it's bad in a situation like this, it's good in a situation like others because I don't think any of you would want an ordinance passed let's say, one of the things that got me to run was the gun ban they attempted ten years ago, it got me interested in County government, that had to go through a public hearing process and a bunch of other things, obviously citizens turned out in mass to oppose it and it was shot down so there are good reasons why it takes government a little while to move slowly because you don't want certain things to move too quickly, the downside in something like this where we want to move quickly is we still have to follow the same rules. About 8-10 weeks is the quickest it can go. **Commissioner Holifield**, let your voices be heard at the Plan Commission because there are nine, it takes five to pass an ordinance to move through so let your voices be heard, that's your first amendment right, use it. **President Gramarossa** thanked all for coming to the meeting then called for a two-minute recess.

Recess taken for 7 minutes. Out at 6:59 p.m. Reconvened at 7:06 p.m.

Department Reports/Comments

Angie Davis, Facilities Director, reported on current projects. It's crow time, devices have been ordered and should be here anytime to put in the bell tower in the La Porte Courthouse, two are ordered and should be here tomorrow. Museum elevator will have an inspection tomorrow and that should complete the work on that; the windows in the Building Department and Prosecutor's office were to be repaired on Monday but was delayed due to NIPSCO, should be done tomorrow and then the elevator in the complex went through a safety inspection so just waiting on the paperwork, that should be up and running.

Dakota Euler, Weights and Measures, thanked Commissioners for their consideration of the 2026 Holiday Schedule, the days off allows him to go out in the community and participate in other events, requested considering days off for 'community service time.' Good morale for employees to 'give back' to the community and helps our public image as well. He mentioned a local bank that allows employees to use 8 hours to do something in the community, **President Gramarossa** asked for the information to be sent to all three Commissioners.

Matt Reardon, Office of Economic Development, asked if the Commissioners would be the Petitioners for the proposed ordinance with the Plan Commission or will the Plan Commission be organic? Deferred to Counsel, usually there is a Petitioner for the ordinance. **Commissioner Holifield** understood it to be an update or amendment to what we currently have for the County, also working on a Comprehensive Plan. **Matt**, Lake County amended their existing ordinance. **President Gramarossa** read the title of the Resolution. **Commissioner Haney**, both times in the Plan Commission with the solar ordinance, it was done internally, we heard the request from the public and we just did it. **Commissioner Holifield**, a solar committee was formed, we took all the information and concerns from the public, put them in the ordinance and apparently the solar companies didn't like it because they're suing us currently right now.

Joe Haney, Commissioner, since our last meeting there have been a couple of incidents regarding folks, an individual trying to either speak for us or indicating that they wanted to speak for us. **I would move that the La Porte County Board of Commissioners immediately cease and restrict Attorney Shaw Friedman from performing any legal services, representation or work on behalf of La Porte County unless and until such engagement is explicitly authorized by a majority vote of this board at a duly noticed public meeting in compliance with Indiana's open-door law and applicable to county policies.** **Commissioner Holifield** seconded for discussion. **One thing I'd like to amend on that, instead of singling out one attorney, how about we make that for any attorney has to come before the Board and get approval by the Board before they do anything?** **President Gramarossa**, do we have proof of this? I mean or are we just making accusations, I'm very confused. **Commissioner Haney**, I definitely do think we have proof so we have an email from our actual County Attorney DiMartino, outlying Shaw Friedman reaching out to various Economic Development people, asking questions, acting like they were – he was advocating...I could pull up that email if you'd like we could read it. **President Gramarossa**, I have it as well. **Commissioner Holifield**, I remember that email. **Commissioner Haney**, we've got that as well, we also have Attorney Friedman making threats to the public in regards to their First Amendment and in regards to First Amendment and saying he would have the Board of Commissioners reach out and sue them, I won't get into the details of what that was over but obviously the First Amendment exists to restrict the Government's ability to restrict free speech and we are most certainly a Government entity so and being a, you know, threatening lawsuits out to people who host a page or whatever else attempting to insinuate to get the Board to sue to stifle someone's free speech, which again, I'm not going to get into the merits of what was or wasn't said but we can't have a rogue attorney going out there and acting like they represent the majority will of this Board, it's not appropriate. **Commissioner Holifield**, I agree. **President Gramarossa** read an email, "Commissioners, as you know, I'm serving *pro bono* as a volunteer member of the Data Centers Working Group and this memo and the enclosed are sent to you in that spirit." So, when you talk about that one email..." **Commissioner Haney**, that's not the email I'm referencing. **Commissioner Holifield**, I believe the email you're referencing was addressed to Bert Cook and LEAP? I remember the email. **Commissioner Haney**, in part, yes. **President Gramarossa**, I'm still confused, are you saying he threatened Bert Cook? **Commissioner Haney**, I'm not saying he threatened Bert Cook, we've got a couple different issues here and you were asking for proof of that, one of which is the

email we, information we received after the fact about Attorney Friedman reaching out threatening to stifle someone's First Amendment rights, and acting like he's going to get the Board to sue them. We have the issue with phone calls being made from Attorney Friedman... **President Gramarossa** asked Commissioner Holifield if he knew, did he receive the email. **Commissioner Holifield**, yes, it went to all of us. He then asked Attorney Scott Pejic if they should wait until Attorney DiMartino returned since he was on the email. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, the better course of practice would be to table it, to be better informed and not speaking for Mr. DiMartino but as far as internal legal issues, I do not know if that's appropriate for Public Comment or Public Discourse and as far as requiring any attorney other than Mr. DiMartino to have authority from the Board to serve as an attorney, I don't have an objection to that, I can't see that as being objectionable. **Commissioner Holifield** asked Commissioner Haney if he would entertain tabling it until the next meeting when Attorney Guy DiMartino will be present. **Commissioner Haney**, sure, the Commission operates by a majority vote, and personally my thought would be if you have anybody reaching out on behalf of the Board of Commissioners who isn't either a Commissioner or our County Attorney, between now and the next meeting, take it up with our actual County Attorney, the appropriateness of this is just ridiculous what folks have had to endure over these last two weeks. **President Gramarossa**, I want you to clarify, you're saying that, what are your claims? **Commissioner Haney**, the emails that we both saw, Commissioner Holifield and I are both aware of it as are you, we've seen all these emails, as Attorney Pejic said, we don't necessarily need to get down in all the minutia as some of this does involve legal events, but to sit here and pretend you don't understand what's going on, you've been aware of all of this. **President Gramarossa**, I want to understand what the accusations are so even though I just read to you he worked as a pro bono volunteer for the Data Center Working Group, you feel that he doesn't have the right to talk to anybody. **Commissioner Joe Haney**, not and give the auspices that he speaks for the actual county or for this Board. **President Gramarossa**, and then he threatened somebody, so there's that and what else? **Commissioner Haney**, we saw the emails for that, I mean, and all these actions he's taken, he's gone absolutely rogue without the knowledge of our actual County Attorney, we're finding out after the fact. **President Gramarossa**, so the County Attorney had nothing to do with it? **Commissioner Holifield**, according to Attorney Pejic, this shouldn't be discussed right now. **Attorney Scott Pejic**, anything concerning legal issues sometimes is better for Executive Sessions. **Commissioner Holifield**, Mr. Haney, if you don't mind, can we just table this until next meeting and discuss it? **Commissioner Haney** motioned to table. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Requests

Considered opening bids for Franklin Street Bridge work. **Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent and **Andy Skwiat**, 203 Harrison St., Michigan City, received one partial bid from Halyard Corporation, Portage, Indiana. Cover letter stated advising last year they performed Phase I of the Franklin Street Bridge along side Marquiss Electric, respectfully requested to work with Marquiss Electric on Phase II of the Franklin Street Bridge repair. Structural repairs itemized. **Andy Skwiat**, Marquiss Electric, 203 E. Harrison Street, Michigan City, worked last year with Halyard after going out for bids, same situation, no bids except one partial proposal and that was Metropolitan Steel, it was to do work but not furnish any material, notifying Coast Guarding, or renting a barge. Due to that being incomplete, Andy advertised in the newspaper that he was the Project Manager and would participate in the work. Halyard would like to help in the work; they are Union Ironworkers but would need the assistance of added scope which his company would perform to their proposal they submitted similar to last year. Due to this being the only bid, a partial one at that, Andy would have to advertise in the newspaper that he is the Project Manager for the job and would be participating in the work. He will return with a whole package price put together for Commissioners' approval. Two years in a row that the work was requested to go out for bid yet only one partial bid came in. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to show the partial bid was timely received. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to allow Marquiss Electric, to participate. **Commissioner Haney** seconded for discussion then asked if Andy wanted to look over the partial bid that was submitted. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Charity Glaser** requested permission to approach the Council in their October meeting to spend out of her budget, she is hoping no additional funds will be needed, if needed, it will be a small amount. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to allow Charity to approach Council. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Attorney Scott Pejic** remembered the work on this Bridge is timely, advertising notices, pending weather and we do not want to fall behind. **President Gramarossa**, Andy knows what to do, he will advertise, notify the Coast Guard and after looking at the submitted partial bid from Halyard, is he willing to accept their assistance? **Andy Skwiat**, the bid is slightly above what he was thinking then adding his work to it would still put Charity at requesting permission to spend only, no additional funds will be needed. If allowed, he will notify the Coast Guard for the Bridge closing for the work to be completed. Requested permission to participate. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Old Business

Considered second reading on Ordinance Establishing County Community Corrections Marketplace. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Attorney Scott Pejic** read by title only 'Ordinance 2025-5, an Ordinance establishing the County Community Corrections Marketplace.' **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve second reading. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** ***Ordinance 2025-5

Considered Health Indiana First, **Amanda Lahners**, Health Department Director and Health Board Attorney **Laura Nirenberg**. Amanda reported this was presented to the Board of Health July 15th, a vote was taken to 'opt out' of the program. Health Officer has agreed to withdraw from the program as well. She submitted information to the Commission on what is still expected if they 'opt in'

or stay in the program, the funding reduction amount, and restrictions if they stay in the program. **Commissioner Haney**, he watched the Board of Health meeting when the Indiana State Public Doctor and assistant or State Administrator was present to answer questions that the Board may have had in July, one of the concerns he has for 'opting out' is we'd be losing money from the State, about \$650,000 and funds from the Indiana Health First is used for salaries, correct? **Amanda Lahners**, yes, salaries are being paid out of this fund. The County only had to provide \$500,000 this year so yes, funds were used for salaries. **Commissioner Haney**, as the County is looking at budgeting, being able to have some of that money from the State available. **Amanda Lahners**, I wouldn't be able to use much of that for salaries, I would have to give that money out to the community in order to meet the demands of program that is required for us to participate in. **Commissioner Haney**, it sounds like one of the concerns you had was meeting some of your KPIs and if you failed to meet some of the KPIs, you may lose out on other funding from the State, the State seems to have offered extra support to the County just in case some of those KPIs fall short, that was their assurance to me at least, they would step in for any help you may need. All 92 Counties, depending on how the vote tonight goes, it may be 91, are still participating in this plan. I was hesitant to get into this the first time around because we were one of the first Counties to 'opt in,' there were still unanswered questions but luckily most of my concerns were addressed by the Legislature, and say 'opting out' in the middle of the season, any monies we had received we wouldn't have to give back, a lot of things were cleaned up with that which made it a more attractive program. If more Counties 'opted out' then it may jeopardize funding for plans like this in the future, some of the Board members had concerns about something on the National level but locally being able to provide services with funds coming from HFI to individuals who are here unlawfully, I'm not necessarily comfortable with 'opting out,' under those pretenses either. That's one thing the State tried to speak to you to address. **Attorney Laura Nirenburg**, with regards to being here illegally, the Legislature has conflicting statutes surrounding HFI, the Indiana Resident Statute trumps being here illegally. **Commissioner Haney** clarified he meant to say 'lawful resident.' **Attorney Laura Nirenburg**, 'opting out' is a request not to renew it for next year, we're not stopping mid-stream, we're continuing through the year. The goal was not to renew it until the Legislature promised to regroup, look at the shortcomings to see what can be done. That was the strategy proposed at the Board of Health meeting. **Commissioner Haney**, glad you're here (directed to Deputy Auditor Joie Winski) because I became aware of right before the meeting that the budget has been advertised by the Council, it appears to me that the funding is in place for 'staying in' the program for next year, if we 'opt out,' how is that going to affect the budget and put us in violation of not having our budget in by the end of the month. **Deputy Auditor Joie Winski**, if an employee is paid through a grant or special program and it ends then the staff position goes away. Don't know if the funds for those positions are available or even if the Council will vote for it. **Amanda Lahners**, during Budget Hearings, it was tabled pending the Board of Health meeting, these are not grant positions, not grant funds but 'funding.' If the funding is not available does not mean those positions go away, it is not a grant. The Health Department has a dedicated tax levy that funds the Health Department, by legislation, Fund 1159 is in every County, we generate revenue, we have positions paid by other grants. If we 'opt out,' we would go back to receiving our legacy funds from the tobacco fund and the local Health Maintenance fund. We will get those funds back. All employees currently in her office would remain, she has money to pay for those positions. **President Gramarossa**, for the \$600,000 + we lose for 'opting out,' your office was having to give money out to different entities or perform duties for the money. **Amanda Lahners**, correct, we do not have the staffing to do the programming, it would have to go out to community grants. **Attorney Laura Nirenburg**, that is the key point that needs to be repeated, the administrative capacity at the department is stretched, and to implement these programs is a challenge. The strings attached to that money comes at a great cost. **Commissioner Haney**, I know the State was enthusiastic about coming and helping La Porte County any way they could, when I talked to them a few months back, they were supportive. Don't know what that translates on the ground versus what I'm hearing from them. **Amanda Lahners**, I could use every penny of the funds left on salaries however, we currently are short four (4) Nurses, even with the additional salaries we were able to secure for this year, we still do not have a Nursing Department because of salaries, two left this year due to pay and one told her today that he will be leaving at the end of the month. Again, this money is to be used out in the community which I'm happy to do, we were able to provide certain programs to the community. **Commissioner Holifield**, your Board made their recommendation knowing all of this about salaries, reimbursement, and still, they agreed to 'opt out?' **Amanda Lahners**, yes. **Attorney Nirenburg**, we're not signing off forever, if we have to 'opt out' due to staffing, the legislature can regroup and address it. **President Gramarossa**, you came to this Board in Spring or Summer, we asked that you go to your Board, bring back their recommendation which is to 'opt out' of the program. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to 'opt out' of the program based on the Health Board's recommendation. **Commissioner Haney** could not support 'opting out' based on his viewing of the meeting, the State answered all the questions of the Board of Health. **President Gramarossa** stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-1. **Commissioner Holifield** - Aye, **Commissioner Gramarossa** - Aye and **Commissioner Haney** - Nay.

Considered Burn Ban for La Porte County Townships. **Commissioner Steve Holifield** motioned to extend the Burn Ban for the next three weeks for Cass, Clinton, Dewey, Hanna, Lincoln, New Durham, Noble and Prairie Townships, will be revisited at the Commissioners' next meeting on November 5th, at 10:00 a.m., added Lincoln Township to the list. **Commissioner Joe Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered all invoices for work done during the fire at Solid Waste to be turned in by October 31st to Commissioners' office. Next Solid Waste meeting is November 6th. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

New Business

Considered 2026 Holidays. Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0. ***Attached to minutes

Considered moving forward for a Commissioners' Deed Sale. Treasurer and Auditor will work together then contact SRI to set it up. Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Considered scheduling of Complex Rooms for meetings to be kept by Commissioners' office only. Commissioner Holifield motioned to approve all scheduling to go through Diane Gonzales in the Commissioners' office. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Holifield motioned to adjourn at 7:49 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

11-5-2025



ATTEST: _____

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA



**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

2026 La Porte County Government Holidays

New Year's Day	Thursday	January 1, 2026
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday	January 19, 2026
President's Day	Monday	February 16, 2026
Good Friday	Friday	April 3, 2026
Primary Election Day	Tuesday	May 5, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday	May 25, 2026
Juneteenth	Friday	June 19, 2026
Independence Day	Friday	July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday	September 7, 2026
Columbus Day	Monday	October 12, 2026
General Election Day	Tuesday	November 3, 2026
Veterans Day	Wednesday	November 11, 2026
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday	November 26, 2026
Day after Thanksgiving	Friday	November 27, 2026
Christmas Day	Friday	December 25, 2026

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

DATE 10-15-2025

Connie Gramarossa

ATTEST: _____

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL