



LA PORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Connie Gramarossa
President

Steve Holifield
Vice President

Joe Haney
Member

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

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

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to add the appointment of **James Irwin** as Proxy for **Joe Tuholski** on the Plan Commission and Consider December 3rd Commissioners' meeting as 11 'c' due to the ICC Conference scheduled the same time. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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

Auditor **Mike Rosenbaum** read the Claims with Payroll ending 11/14/2025 - \$1,479,925.76. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor **Mike Rosenbaum** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,480,818.43. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

Bob Garrelts, 3001 S. US Highway 35, La Porte, thanked Plan Commission President **Rita Beatty**, Commissioners **Steve Holifield** and **Joe Haney** for hosting a small get together on November 8th of about 100 people at the Scipio Township Fire Department, they were allowed to ask a lot of questions regarding data centers and what all would be happening in the County, the input helped with the Ordinance. Sorry Commissioner **Gramarossa** was not at the meeting because now she will have to get the information second-hand from her fellow Commissioners. **President Gramarossa**, the meeting was not 'noticed' or published in a paper so if there are more than two Commissioners at a meeting then it is a violation of Open Door. **Commissioner Steve Holifield**, asked Attorney **Guy DiMartino** if there was a violation, they had spoken before about it. **President Gramarossa**, she sent emails out the day before inquiring about the meeting and no one could give a clear answer. **Attorney DiMartino**, discussion was whether it was a Board of Commissioners' meeting, he understood Commissioner **Holifield** set the meeting up and Commissioner **Haney** attended but Mr. **Haney** is a resident of that neighborhood, Scipio Township. **Commissioner Haney** said he was invited by Scipio Township Trustee **Kaelynn Deckard**. **Bob Garrelts**, it was not a Board of Commissioners' meeting, it was a fact-finding - **President Gramarossa**, but you said they discussed the ordinance. **Bob**, no, the discussion was input from the area's citizens who would like to see put into an ordinance to eliminate a data center taking over their land, their house, and their property. **Attorney DiMartino**, but that information would not be something that the Commissioners would decide on that... **Bob**, no, there was no decision made. **Attorney DiMartino**, information from that meeting would be taken back to the Plan Commission who would be working and doing an ordinance. **President Gramarossa**, she was advised by the attorney not to go, sent an email out asking for clarity on the meeting, whether it was 'noticed' or not, that is why she did not go. **Bob**, the meeting next week is not open to public discussion. **Commissioner Holifield**, the nine Plan Commission members only which you'll be able to hear, have information for ideas the you want to see, yes or no, and inputs into it. **Bob**, the point of this meeting was to have input because we cannot do it at the Plan Commission meeting. I'm part of the group; they want to buy my house. **Attorney DiMartino**, we need to follow proper form, this is Public Comment so stop question and answering please, thank you. **Bob**, on February 19th Commissioner **Haney** led a discussion to have all claims published so the citizens can see where their dollars are going to be spent. The vote was 2-1. **Joe**, you put the claims on the Facebook pages, it is important for the citizens to know how our money is spent. Salaries are published of County Employees.

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Sue Antonszewski, 101 Belden Street, La Porte, addressed Commissioner Holifield's public display of disdain towards La Porte County residents in the way he addresses the community. During the October 15th meeting, he publicly referred to residents who share information online as 'cowardly losers on Facebook.' Remember the residents of this County give you your voice and provide you this mandate, you are accountable to us. It is within the Community's rights to express dissent or share information they believe is relevant, even if it conflicts with your perspective. With approximately 111,000 in population across our County, if you cannot represent citizens equally and without resorting to juvenile name calling, perhaps you should step down. Furthermore President Gramarossa, when Commissioner Holifield made those remarks, there was no condemnation of his lack of professionalism and decorum as you are County President. You allowed the incident to occur without any feedback on public record. If you fail to recognize this as a serious issue, perhaps you too should resign. I implore you both to uphold a higher standard, your words and actions resonate and extend beyond this chamber, this attitude is unfit for public service and is an embarrassment to our County and the people you serve. Thank you.

Department Reports/Comments

Joe Haney, Commissioner, follow-up on our claims, I'd be happy to get with our Auditor to get those published online, right now I'm posting them on a Dropbox account, I share that link on my Facebook page just because the link is pretty darn large so it's hard to give that out. Anyway, I update that right before a meeting for the past couple of months and it would be nice to see that up on the County website. **Commissioner Haney motioned for the 'description' box on that report be filled in next to each expense to better show the Public where that money is going for transparency. Attorney Guy DiMartino**, will you amend the motion to **include only if the Low software allows it to be filled in, that category, if the folks who are inputting can fill that information in.** **Commissioner Haney**, yes, I'll include that in my motion but I believe it can be filled in. **Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioners Holifield and Haney - Ayes.**

Requests

Considered pay out of three (3) sick days for retiring employee, Paramedic Scott Erickson, in EMS, **Eric Fenstermaker**, Director. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded**, thanked Scott for his service to the County and have a Happy Retirement. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Old Business

Considered bid recommendation for 1st floor bathrooms and Assessor's breakroom in the Hiler Building at 555 Michigan Avenue, La Porte. **Angie Davis**, Facilities Director, and **Reed Smith**, Assistant Facilities Director. **Angie Davis**, five (5) bids came in: Taza Construction - \$79,000; Gibson-Lewis - \$135,900; NewTech - \$153,900; Larson-Danielson - \$139,995 and BluSky - \$108,440.77. **Recommendation is Larson-Danielson who had a very detailed bid with a clarification sheet, they reached out with questions.** NewTech was very detailed as well. The other three (3) were not really considered, they were not as detailed, some had 'to be determined' in the bids which tells me they are not accurate bids and we would have surprises at the end. **President Gramarossa**, they come in half-way? **Angie Davis**, about in the middle. **Commissioner Holifield**, they're a local company, have done a lot of work in the County and do a good job. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, since I've been on board as County Attorney, we've had issues with, not necessarily Larson-Danielson, but other contractors, so if you approve this, what I would like to do is sit down with them and hammer out a contract so it's good because we've seen the issues we've had with some things in the past so it would be contingent upon an acceptance of a contract that agrees between you and Larson-Danielson. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to accept the bid contingent on a contract between La Porte County and Larson-Danielson. Commissioner Haney seconded for discussion**, you have Taza as an outlier, several open-ended with 'to be determined' and whatnot, we had the 79, the 108 for BluSky, next is Gibson-Lewis 135, then Larson-Danielson 139 and NewTech 153. Looking at Gibson and Larson are very close, 4,000 but then you have BluSky down at 108, for that 31,000, is it just simply labor costs that are the main difference? **Angie Davis**, they could not give us a number for electric and plumbing so it was listed as 'to be determined.' **Reed Smith**, they left open a certain part of plumbing and electrical for any 'unforeseeable' that could not be planned. **Commissioner Haney**, for Larson-Danielson specifically but if you remember for Gibson and NewTech, were their bids all inclusive with blanks or spots left open like BluSky and Taza? **Angie Davis**, Gibson-Lewis was not very detailed, basically 'here you go.' Larson-Danielson reached out with questions they had and NewTech did too, both extremely detailed in their bids. For Gibson-Lewis there were a few things in their bid that said we would supply which was not in the scope. **Commissioner Haney**, so take Gibson-Lewis out of the equation, between NewTech and Larson-Danielson, Larson's obviously the lower between the two, Larson doesn't have any open-ended things. **Angie Davis**, they were in contact with us asking questions just to be sure everything on the scope was verified. **Commissioner Haney**, out of the two, Larson-Danielson and NewTech, those two were the most responsive to what was put out there and of course Larson is the lower of the two. **Angie**, correct. **Commissioner Holifield**, it's nice to see us get multiple bids on these projects because in the past we wouldn't have any bids due to no one wanting to deal with La Porte County. **Commissioner Haney** thanked Angie/Reed for the hard work put into this process to have several options. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Proxy appointment to Plan Commission for one Board Member. **Commissioner Holifield motioned to appoint James Irwin as Proxy for Plan Commission member Joe Tuholski.** **Attorney DiMartino** clarified that Mr. Irwin votes with his conscience versus voting the same way as the Board Member, he votes Democrat, lives in the County therefore he meets the criteria. **Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

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New Business

Considered 2026 Commissioners' meeting dates. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered USI Engineering Design contract for Bridge 180. **Mitch Bishop**, Planner, the County received roughly \$1.6 million to replace Bridge 180, the bridge is about 2 miles south of Hanna, it was advertised for engineering services and scored. USI came out on top of the scoring. Before you tonight is a contract for USI that needs to be signed and delivered to INDOT's offices as soon as possible, according to them. This is the procurement of engineering services for the project. **Commissioner Holifield**, just the services for the design work, correct? **Mitch**, yes and then from there would be an inspection and construction as well. It's about a five-year process. The County has 11 Federal Aid Projects now and we just applied for another one so hopefully we'll have 12 soon. There are bridges in La Porte County that need to be replaced. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to approve. **President Gramarossa** stepped down and seconded. **Commissioner Holifield**, again, this is only for design, correct? **Mitch**, yes, and usually I go before Council, there is three phases of the project, normally the grant covers 80% of every phase so I would seek 20% and we have 20% covered as well, I already went in front of the Council for 20% of the cost for engineering services. Once that is done, we'll go for inspection services and construction dollars but this is over a five-year period. **Commissioner Haney**, I've had my concerns about the company that's before us here tonight, I know it was a few months ago there was a contract we had to extend regarding them and we were up against the gun with INDOT and not, wasn't comfortable with moving forward with that but that was a continuation of an existing one, we weren't able to change midstream, here we are tonight, understanding, we had a conversation earlier. I understand that their engineering or their design group is separate from their inspection group but the parent company is still the parent company. Of course, obviously we know I've talked about the issues that I've had before with the bridge up on E Street in Michigan City with the inspection work that was done there, using photographs that were many years out of date on a report. We obviously had the horrible situation with Bridge 39, which we had to close down on 525 East if my memory serves, over the Little Kankakee there, a massive, massive hole in the pylon there (showed a photo), you can see all that green grass through there, that massive hole from that and of course we had school buses driving across that bridge every single day when school was in session, we had to do an emergency closure and repair once that was found. All the engineers I talked to, no one knows how a large metal pylon, that was encased in concrete, gets eaten through in that very short period of time but there it is. Obviously, some of the stuff we've heard from issues with them, the one sewer project, so that's recently kind of, this isn't a game up here but if it was three strikes and you're out so that's why I couldn't support this here tonight, it would be my opinion that we should go with the number two score as opposed to this company but obviously we have a thing here and we'll see if it passes here this evening but to my knowledge I don't think the company's ever reached out to us or offered any apologies or anything on behalf of the work or lack thereof that was done in regard to these three different incidents I've described and again, those are all very fresh within the past couple of years, it just doesn't speak well for their company as a whole and I can't divorce those issues from the parent company, even if it's just separate division, it's still that same company. **Mitch Bishop**, I understand. **Commissioner Holifield** asked Mitch if he has an issue with using USI for design. **Mitch Bishop**, we've used them for bridge design before and had successful projects, for instance, Otis Road Bridge, it's a beautiful bridge, a lot of good compliments with no issues whatsoever with that bridge. **Commissioner Holifield**, thank you. **President Gramarossa**, has INDOT gone after them for their engineering? Where are they ranked with INDOT? **Mitch**, no, as part of the scoring, you've all seen the scoring sheets before, there's past performance scores that INDOT assigns and they were actually the top third of all, maybe in the top two, there was eight (8) that applied that responded to the RFP so they were two out of eight, I think, with INDOT so they're high on INDOT's list for design. **Motion carried 2-1. Commissioners Gramarossa and Holifield - Ayes. Commissioner Haney - Nay.**

Considered Commissioners' December 3rd meeting date. **Commissioner Holifield** motioned to cancel the meeting due to Indiana County Commissioners Conference December 2-5, 2025 being held in Indianapolis. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. There is an existing ordinance in La Porte County that authorizes expedited payment on certain things like payroll, we'll approve that cycle of payroll after the fact at the following meeting, everybody will be getting their checks on time, no delays. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 6:31 p.m. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

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

DATE

12-17-2025

ATTEST:

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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