

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
LAPORTE COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD
JANUARY 13, 2026
LAPORTE COUNTY COMPLEX MEETING ROOM 3
LAPORTE, INDIANA
8:30 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeff Mitzner; Pat Vance; Chad Hertges; John Matwyshyn;

STAFF PRESENT: John South, Brad Adamsky

MEMBERS/STAFF ABSENT: Connie Gramarossa; Mark Scarborough

PUBLIC PRESENT: See sign-in sheet.

REORGANIZATION FOR 2026: Brad Adamsky called the meeting to order and asked for nominations for President. Chad Hertges nominated Jeff Mitzner. Pat Vance seconded. Motion passed. Brad Adamsky turned the meeting over to Jeff Mitzner. Jeff Mitzner asked for nominations for Vice-President. Chad Hertges nominated Mark Scarborough. Pat Vance seconded. Motion passed. Jeff Mitzner asked for nominations for Secretary. Pat Vance nominated John South. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed. Pat Vance motioned for the Joint Board's to stay the same. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed. Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Jeff Mitzner asked for nominations for Board Attorney. Chad Hertges motioned for Brad Adamsky. Pat Vance seconded. Motion passed. Attendance was taken. Pat Vance motioned to approve the minutes from the last meeting. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed.

WHITE DITCH PROJECT, FRANK ZOLTAN COMPLAINT: Tabled until February meeting.

SINKHOLE, RIDGE RUN, EMERGENCY PROJECT, TARNOW PROPERTY: John South reported that he received a phone call from Elmer Varro reporting a sinkhole on the Tarnow property and along the Ridge Run Drain. Chad Hertges reported that the sinkhole is within ten feet of the manhole and approximately 2 feet deep. Jeff Mitzner states that we can do this as an emergency. Chad Hertges makes a motion to have Varro Services perform the needed repairs to the Ridge Run tile. Pat Vance seconded the motion. Motion passed.

SCHURZ DITCH, LOUIS SPEAR, COMPLAINT: Louis Spear approached the Board and briefly described the issues he has concerning the Schurz Ditch involving excess water being channeled into the Schurz which has caused the tile to collapse. He described all of the documentation he has in relation to the history of the area. He asked the Board if they have jurisdiction over this Drain? Brad Adamsky adds that Mr. Spear has brought this issue before the Board on multiple occasions. Adamsky stated that he is the only left over from the last time Mr. Spear came before the Board. Adamsky asks if this is similar to the previous issue brought to the Board? Spear acknowledges that it is similar, but it has just gotten worse. Spear requests that the Board order the City of La Porte to attend the next meeting, where Mr. Spear will give a

presentation. Spear states that the Drainage Board needs to hire the engineers to design and reconstruct the Ditch. Mitzner added that this came up when he first started on the Board, and he believes there was a proposal to repair the ditch of \$300,000.

Spear stated that Wal-Mart has never been assessed for this Ditch. John Matwyshyn added that he spoke with Michael Polan from the La Porte County Building Department, who stated there are regulated drains, mutual drains, and private drains in this area and that it is a complicated issue and will take a while to resolve. Adamsky suggests that the County Surveyor get in touch with someone at the City of La Porte and start coordinating efforts with them to get them to the February meeting. Spear requests the Board make a motion to direct the City of La Porte to attend the next meeting. Pat Vance makes a motion to have Louis Spear give his presentation at the next meeting and to have the La Porte County surveyor reach out to the City of La Porte to have them attend the February meeting. Chad Hertges seconded the motion. Motion passed.

GALENA MEADOWS, BASIN ISSUES, JIM BUDZYN: Jim Budzyn approached the Board and described the issue with one of the ponds in the subdivision overflowing due to a lack of maintenance. John South added that he and Pat Vance went out and looked at the pond in question and it appears that there are a few areas around the pond that need to be mowed. Jeff Mitzner asked if South and Vance were able to find the outlets and inlets for the pond and asked where does the water flow to? South responded that he believes the water flows to a private pond on the west side of the subdivision. Pat Vance described that there is a channel there that is meant to be a conveyance between the two ponds, but there are two good-sized trees in the middle of it and it's choked with weeds. Cutting down the trees and weeds would help to take water to the other pond like it's supposed to. After a brief discussion, Pat Vance motioned to put this out for bid to remove the two trees and to mow the overgrowth in the conveyance area. Chad Hertges seconded the motion. Jeff Mitzner requested a discussion where he suggested we find the plans for Galena Meadows and have the Surveyor go out and check to see where the drains are at and to make sure they are open. Mitzner would like to add that to Pat Vance's motion and then report back at the next meeting. Motion passed.

BANK SPRAYING 2026: John South stated that he would read through all of the projects that have been proposed based on field work in all three Districts with Jeff, Mark, Chad, and Pat. South started with the Bank Spraying projects. There are 5 Bank Spraying Projects.

Three of the projects are on the O'Hara-Rice Ditch:

- near 1200 S
- near 1100 S
- near Hunsley Rd

One on the Berringer Ditch:

- near 200 S

And one on the Davey Arm of the Rodman Ditch in Stillwell.

UPCOMING PROJECTS:

There is a tree removal project located on the Rodman Ditch in the Kingsbury FWA

There are two projects along the Little Kankakee River near 800 E.

There is a tree removal project on the O'Hara-Rice Ditch near 1200 S

And a tree removal project on the Moon Ditch near 300 W.

There is also a tree removal project on the O'Hara-Rice Ditch near 1000 S. Connie Gramarossa stated she would ask to see if the highway department could take care of it since it's so close to the road. Mitzner stated that he would contact Gramarossa to see what the status is on that request.

There is one brushing project also located in the Kingsbury FWA

There is a mowing project located on the McKellips Drain which will be bid per foot, since there is only \$8,500 to spend.

There are two mowing projects on the O'Hara-Rice Ditch, One near 1100 S and the other near 900 S

The final mowing project is in Scipio Sunrise Basin #3

Mitzner requested that we bid out the mowing projects separately. He would also like to have a maintenance set-up where someone is mowing these areas every year.

Mitzner added that the only area we have a problem with is the mowing on 900 S. There is a fence in our easement and we will need to send them a letter letting them know they are going to have to remove their fence, if we proceed with this project. Adamsky adds a Notice of Encroachment? Mitzner replied Yes

Pat Vance made a motion that we put these projects out for bid as stated by Mr. South. Chad Hertges seconded the motion. Motion passed.

DRAIN CROSSING APPLICATION, O'HARA-RICE DITCH, SURF INTERNET: John South reported that he received a Drain Crossing Application from Surf internet to place a conduit under the O'Hara-Rice Ditch. South stated that they are placing the conduit at least 48" below the natural bottom of the Ditch, so he doesn't think we need to send this to Tony.

Pat Vance motioned to accept the Drain Crossing Application. Chad Hertges seconded. Motion passed.

DRAIN CROSSING APPLICATION, MULTIPLE DITCHES, ZAYO: John South reported that he still has not received the Drain Crossing Applications for Zayo, but they stated they are close to having them ready. Jeff Mitzner asked if there is anything we can do to get information from them on how deep they placed the conduits under the Ditches. South stated that he told them they needed to be at least 48" below the bottom of the Ditch and maybe wait and see if they provide that information when they submit the applications.

WEBSTER DITCH, GEORGE LEDONNE, TREE REMOVAL: George Ledonne approached the Board and asked if he can get any resolution to the situation occurring at 6633 and 6655 W Hwy 6. He stated that he is speaking on behalf of his mother's property, which continues to be inundated with water. He stated the Drainage Board was out about 4 years ago and cleaned the ditch, but the situation has gotten worse. He added that there is a watershed to the north, in which they are the last property in the watershed. The properties to the north of Hwy 6 have maintained their ditches, but the property to the south of Hwy 6, the Nancy Malone property, was approached in 2022 about becoming a part of this watershed, but she was not interested. His question is where do we go from here? Because you can see a 1' drop in water from the amount of trees on Nancy Malone's property within 100' of Hwy 6. You can see it from the road. The ditch has become more and more narrow. About 55 years ago the whole thing was done, but it hasn't been done since. He added that they have water collecting on this property, (6633, 6655), because it cannot pass. The acres continue to go down that are farmable due to the neglect of the ditch south of Hwy 6.

Jeff Mitzner responds that he has been out there and that he is familiar with this from 2022. Mitzner stated that he actually walked the property to the south. Because the assessment stops at Hwy 6, there is no money to go any further south. So, Mitzner proposes that Ledonne speak to the property owner to the south, (Malone), to see if they want to dig the ditch. Mitzner adds that he doesn't know if he is stepping out of bounds, but if Ledonne wants to dig the ditch, the Drainage Board can give him permission, if you are going to pay the bill, to go on our easement and dig the ditch through there. Mitzner states that he would like to see the landowner work with you, so that we don't have to tell them that you're going to go through. Mitzner reiterated that we have no money to pay for cleaning that ditch. Ledonne asks are the best practices done? The trees left on the side. You're not hauling that stuff away? Mitzner responds that that is up to your contractor or her contractor, whoever she hires, or you hire, to do that job. Ledonne asks if the Board has sent a letter to her regarding taking care of this? John South responds that he hasn't yet, because he is going to wait to see what the Board says. Ledonne states that this is a taking because the farmland has continued to be unfarmable. Mitzner asks Ledonne if he has approached Malone about her digging through there? Ledonne responded that he had talked to her back in 2022 and discussed doing something or joining the watershed. Ledonne added that he received an email from Christy stating that Malone wasn't interested in that. They are aware of the trees in the ditch. Mitzner suggests that before the Board sends her a letter, that Ledonne try to contact her and make arrangements with her, before the Board has to do anything, because technically we can't send her a letter saying we are going to do anything until they can go out there, right? We're just going to send her a letter that says we are giving Ledonne permission to go on the easement? Brad Adamsky stated, in the interest of disclosure, that Mr. Ledonne is a client. Whichever way you want to do it, obviously, the Board can't really take action until it's brought back to give him permission, maybe in February, but in the time between that, whether it's notification directly from you, notification then from John as well, basically what he is suggesting, or proposing, is whether, she cleans it up or you are going to come back to the Board to get permission to clean it up. Adamsky adds that he would send a letter on your behalf and then, if the Board directs, depending on the result of that letter, I'm guessing it's not going to result in immediate action, but some response, then you can get back to John. If the

Drainage Board needs to send a letter as well, or we can even address that in our letter, it won't be approved until this Board takes action to give you permission to work on the easement. Ledonne asks if we will look at this for the February meeting after the letter will be sent next week and that should be enough time. Mitzner adds for Ledonne to come back to the Board next month. I'm sure she will be here next month. We can discuss this and try to figure out what the best resolution is to try to get this resolved.

Mike Coulter approached the Board. Coulter stated that he has farmed the Ledonne land for 40 years and reiterated what Mr. Ledonne had stated that the area became worse after the ditch was cleaned. Coulter mentioned that he had farmed the Malone property back for a number of years in the past and that he had no idea what goes on back in that ditch. Mitzner adds that we will put you back on the agenda for next month and you guys try to handle it yourself first, along with Brad, and then bring it back to the meeting next month.

HUDSON LAKE: Georgette Joyce approached the Board and reported that the lake level is 2.5" below the weir. They gained a little over 3", but it is still very low. The drain continues to be closed. They did apply for all the LARE grants for weed treatment as well as a new dredge plan. They usually review those in January. The sediment removal is done. They finished site 4 and the spur that comes around and the dredger is removing his equipment from the lake. The last effort will be to smooth out the sediment sites. They are still working to secure more grants from Amazon and whoever else we can get because they have a lot of projects to do.

BRAD ADAMSKY, ATTORNEY: No Report

JOHN MATWYSHYN, SURVEYOR: Matwyshyn reported that he knows about the Spear issue because he came and contacted him. Some of these others he hasn't heard about until this morning. He stated that he is willing to participate. Perhaps if John could send an email to the people that apply for drain crossings, that he would be appearing and describe what he would be doing and then at the conclusion, he could send an email to both of them that he's concluded his tasks and move on. He doesn't want to appear out of the woodwork, surprise the applicant and they're what he's doing there. Jeff Mitzner responds that Matwyshyn is the County Surveyor. The Board has to approve them first. And once they are approved they become his. Matwyshyn says he is willing to jump in there, but that would be the first time they would know that he is participating. Mitzner adds that is says on the back of the paper that you will approve them once they're done so, that's where he jumps in at. Mitzner states that he guesses he doesn't understand what he's asking. Matwyshyn responds that he'd like to have the applicant understand that he would appear, because up to that point, John South is the only person that has had contact, and maybe notify them that they need to notify me about the specific time they'll be crossing. Mitzner adds, correct me if I'm wrong, John. You have these in a file in your office? South responds He does. Mitzner states that the Surveyor needs to go through those after we approve them and then it's his job. Matwyshyn stated that he hesitated to go through there because he didn't want to mess with the filing system. Mitzner adds you go in his office, you find the files, you contact them and find out when they're going to do it and then you go out there and approve them and then if there's an issue you need to bring it back to the Board. South asked Matwyshyn if he wants to have the applications sent to you and me? South continued that he forwards the applications to Matwyshyn. Matwyshyn states

that he wants the applicant to know that he would be participating, because a lot of crossings have taken place without anyone notifying. South adds that they do know that, because on the second page it says that they need to call the Surveyor for the day before and the day after inspection. Mitzner adds that we need to do a better job of this to make sure that these people are doing these correctly and what they're doing. Mitzner also suggests that Matwyshyn go into South's office and get those and start going through them one by one and you contact these people to see if they're done and make sure they are right, because if they're not we need to make sure they get changed. Matwyshyn states that he needs to sit down and find out exactly what process we should follow. Notification of the Board is something that doesn't have to wait until the next meeting. As soon as he notices something that's not quite right, he can notify the Board at that moment and the Board can address it in some manner, but we will have to work out the details. He just wants the applicants to understand that there's a process, so he doesn't just pop out of the woodwork. Brad Adamsky asks it's on the back of the application, but when John South receives an application, is there any communication back to the applicant? South responds unless there is something wrong with it, something needs to be changed, I will usually just bring it up at the meeting and then I contact them after we have approved it. Matwyshyn adds maybe that is something he could do as part of the start of the process when he receives the application from John South, he can send them an initial email notifying them that the back of the application requires action on their part.

JOINT BOARDS: Mitzner reports that they have a reorganization meeting on Thursday.

CLAIMS: No claims

\$2,735 available in engineer fund

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

Pat Vance wanted to clarify something on the Moon Ditch, just the light debris and tree removal. We weren't going to try and dig that part from 300 to the Bull. South responded that it was just the debris and tree removal. Jeff Mitzner asks if there were any other ones that we only need to go so many feet? Are there anymore that we want to bid that way? South responds that we can do that with the Moon. It has a similar amount of money as the McKellips. Mitzner adds you could go \$1,500-\$2,000 less than what you have, so that next year we put that on the spray program.

ADJOURNMENT: Jeff Mitzner adjourned the meeting. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at the LaPorte County Complex Meeting Room #3 at 8:30 AM.

John South, Secretary
Dated: January 13, 2026

Video replay of this meeting can be found at this location:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wo334UYGxNI&list=PL8L8Y5g9S6bq8rlUrYSH2oxusFpU9ll_Z&index=1