



La Porte County
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Steve Holifield
President

Connie Gramarossa
Vice President

Joe Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 4, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. County Complex Room 3

President Steve Holifield called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by George Callas. A moment of silence was held for Employee Darren Boyd that passed away, he was employed with the Highway Department for 40 years, 2 years as a Bridge Tender.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** moved to add 9 'd' travel for JSC, remove item as 11 'b' due to more work is needed but add an 'Emergency Declaration' for a previous snow event as 11 'b.' **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered approval of the January 21, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 1/23/2026 - \$1,588,290.29. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$1,533,590.07. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Public Comment

Gary Metcalf, 4205 N. 325 W., La Porte, distributed paperwork to the Board, compelled to comment on the agenda today. Travel limits, we need to be fiscal in the County, maybe we should use Zoom instead of travel time, especially for out-of-state. Defensive driving classes are now going to be incorporated into the County, it's a good idea. In the private sector, when he worked, he had to keep logs, maybe the County can do this or use GPS on the vehicles. Commented on 'open door' rules for a quorum when more than two County Officials are together, it probably shouldn't be done because it only takes two to make a quorum. Maybe not going to lunch more than one of you at a time is something you need to look into. Thank you for considering him for the Park Board, he came to the party late, won't do that again, he's going to be here, he's not going away. Part of the problem that started for him was all of the excessive emergency funding that goes to one company only, won't mention any names, we know what we're talking about. Sees HVAC proposals for consideration on the agenda...**President Holifield**, it's been removed. **Gary Metcalf**, ...something that has to be looked at, in the past we've seem to be falling under emergency situations more so than ever in the past. Been a county resident for 40+ years, lived in the City of La Porte prior to that, he's 65 years old. Under the current administration, the last few years, we've fallen under that 'emergency status situation' way too much, the system is old so if it was working before why isn't there enough training to know how the system was working prior to people leaving. All of the companies he has worked with will give you training, you may have to pay for it, they may have to come here, you may have to send people there but training needs to be seriously looked at...**President Holifield**, it is being done. **Attorney DiMartino**, Mr. Holifield, this is Public Comment, you can talk to Mr. Metcalf at a later date. **Gary Metcalf**, lastly, he gave information filed on NIPSCO, we're all hurting from the increases that went from normal to epidemic proportions, more people are going towards burning wood, he knows there are ordinances on freestanding wood furnaces, something we tried to get away from in the past. Let's use natural gas, it's more efficient, readily available, and sustainable. Muncie, Indiana is a perfect example, it came out of the ground, that's why the Ball Mason manufacturing started there, they use sand from right here in Indiana, La Porte County. Does not think throwing \$40,000 - \$50,000 to Shaw Friedman was a good idea, we did not solve anything by that, the rate increases still happened, as a County we need to look further down State, need to force them to do something about that and it starts with the Governor on down, he appoints them to the IURC. They're terrible at protecting the citizens. The Data Centers are supposed to be self-funded or try to be but they're not, we all know that and they are an energy hog

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when it comes to electricity. Everybody worries about water, we in the County just saved people in KIP area from having that problem because we were going to put a deep well in, thank you Steve for showing up before anyone else knew what was going on, we have to look at that. Lastly, we should think of a one-year moratorium on all Data Centers in the County. We can't stop the cities but at least in La Porte County we can look at it, what our options are going to be, where they should be or not be, and how they're funded on a county basis. Thank you. **President Holifield**, reach out, stop by my office and I'll answer your questions for you.

George Callas, 708 Toronado Drive, La Porte, lives off 18th Street by the fire station, driving down I Street, it was decent, good for the Fire Department, gets to Lincolnway, Pine Lake Avenue, all drivable but not really good, but he gets to Johnson Road, from one end of Johnson Road to the other end of Johnson Road, you could eat off the ground, absolutely fantastic job whoever plowed, it was as if it did not even snow there, compliment your Highway Department, thank you, great job. Maybe give them the money to paint the stripes, he knows we disagree but those are busy streets, busiest roads in the County and it's hard for older drivers to see the sides of the streets/roads. Thank you.

Department Head Comments

Angie Davis, Director of Facilities, LG was here on Monday at the La Porte Courthouse, not great news, the second floor unit when it was fired up, both compressors in the secondary unit grounded out, even though there are Phase Monitors, there's no real fail safe for the type of power loss or in these units, they do not make anything for a power safe so those compressors will have to be replaced even though they were replaced at one time. Rick from LG said yes, they do see it in units like this, it is not uncommon for them to ground out. We also have EEVs not closing properly on units, it's a control issue, it optimizes the refrigerant to make sure there's enough flowing through to keep the units running the way they are supposed to be running. On the first floor, we did have a leak in the coil that had been running on approximately 8 pounds of refrigerant and thinks it is to be 40 pounds or more. **President Holifield**, yes, it was. **Angie Davis**, knows he was involved with it, the concern is it is running but the coil will have to be replaced even though it was repaired, possibly could break again. No idea how long it had been leaking or running on only 8 pounds. There is concern for those two compressors in that unit will fail from it running so long on low refrigerant. We had a failed power supply board and an inverter board again; we had those in the shop; they were salvaged from Michigan City. We don't think we're going to have any more issues with that, we do have a Zoom meeting with Ameresco next week, we've also talked about more training for the guys. LG has said they can train staff once the units are running. Currently waiting on proposals for new compressors, the coil, and whatever else we need to keep moving forward. Community Corrections has had heat issues, a pressure switch that needs to be changed, everything's controlled manually, right now the heat is good and at JSC we are working on a proposal for the control system. We have one from OJS and we've reached out to Johnson Controls, those two are compatible, comparable what we can do out there, the gym floor has been installed, waiting on lines right now. In the Hiler Building, finishing up the taping and mudding in the bathrooms then in the break room. Painting will be done tomorrow or Friday, tiles will follow the painting. There is a change order for the tiles in the bathrooms, the tiles were to go halfway the walls but it would be right at the mirrors, looking unfinished so L&D gave a quote to complete the tiles up to the soffit on just one wall, this will be an additional \$905 to complete the tiles on one wall in each bathroom. Cabinets and partitions were five weeks out when they were ordered, ceilings will go in when the painting is finished. We're closed on February 16th so the duct work will be done in the Assessor's office without interrupting business during the day. Heat in the Hiler has air coming through and getting stuck in the VAVs, bleeders are being installed in the highest point and the pressure valve downstairs, which releases the pressure, has not been proper, will be replaced and hopefully that will be tomorrow. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the Tile Change Order. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.** **Commissioner Haney to Angie Davis**, looking back at the systems installed in the La Porte Courthouse, boilers continue to get more efficient, the system installed was to address both heating and cooling at the same time, it may be worth looking into can we update the old boiler for heat and use the current system just for cooling, at least look to see what the cost would be to heat the building using the old boiler, that building was designed for a boiler system. It could possibly save us money as far as heating costs. **Angie Davis** spoke to Rick with LG and Ken, throwing ideas around. **Attorney DiMartino** asked Angie if there are still maintenance meetings held or not. **Angie Davis**, we haven't had one in a while. **Attorney DiMartino**, it might be beneficial to have a rep from LG attend a meeting via Zoom. Some things can be lost in the translation.

Brian Beach, EMS Assistant Director, Jeff Rose has been an employee with EMS for 45 ½ years, about 5-6 years in when the department was established, exemplary career, worked in just about every role within our department. Thanked Jeff Rose for everything he's done over the last 45 years, he has helped to progress the services. One of our first paramedics.

Commissioner Haney, touched on a few of the comments made earlier. Data Centers, urged all La Porte County residents to consider reaching out to State Senators, a recent bill passed, House Bill 1333, pertains to Data Centers, power issues, storage and according to what was passed, it could apply to more projects that aren't even delineated in there, how vague the language is, it strips some of the local control here. Say there is a Data Center or Solar Farm that wants to go in, they come before the County, in the unincorporated areas, they would go before the BZA. Unfortunately, under HB 1333 any farmland that's deemed 'poor soil quality' which for La Porte County is a very significant portion of our soil, he would argue that is truly not poor soil quality but the way it's written in the bill it would remove any input from the Commissioners, Plan Commission, BZA, basically any say we may have here locally, the same would apply to municipalities across the State when it comes to ag land, wouldn't need to be rezoned, no special permit or anything, I would encourage everybody, that's headed to the Senate right now and we definitely want local control, reach out to your

Senator, we have two here in La Porte County, reach out to your district and voice your concerns to them. Reach out to your reps on concerns for utility bills, we had commentary on NIPSCO earlier, we're all hurting, our rates are up significantly, much more than the predicted amount. My delivery charges alone this past month were up over \$90 from last year's delivery, almost the exact amount of gas to the therm from last year. Reach out to your Senators on that as well, they need to make additions to the bill that was passed out of the House, that Bill number is slipping my mind at the moment but the Senate will be looking into that and they need to put teeth in there to be able to have something to go in because otherwise having just a secondary look while optimistic that some of the Governor's new appointments are going to do a better job than our previous IURC Commissioners that were down there, they're unelected and that's something I think we need to see change as well, but obviously won't see that this session. As a citizenry, reach out to the ones that can make a difference, reach out to your State Senators right now, then make sure that anything they're going to do when it comes back to the House that the House accepts it, we need protections here for land and help on our utility bills.

President Holifield spent a week at the State House in Indianapolis, with 1333 what shocks/disgusts him is one of the sponsors is a fourth-generation farmer from Jasper County and former Jasper County Farm Bureau President.

Requests

Considered 3 travel requests for IV-D staff to Wisconsin, Kentucky and Arizona for 2026. **Sean Fagan**, Prosecutor, we have training opportunities for IV-D staff in various locations and it allows our staff in small numbers to attend, bring the information back for better process, better practice, ultimately benefitting the citizens and children of La Porte County. **President Holifield** asked how many staff members are attending. **Sean Fagan**, we try to have smaller numbers go and paid out of incentive funds which are Federal dollars given to us based on production, productivity, that by meeting certain standards, Federal and State requirements, or benchmarks, we receive money. We fund these projects, travels, with these funds, no tax dollars are ever used or at least we try not to for this travel. We did provide an 'in-state' travel request earlier that's not on, that's not really required for the public meeting but we try to send more folks to the 'in-state' one since its by nature cheaper, more Indiana centered, more Indiana law natured, these out-of-state ones we do so that we can bring small groups to them, they can bring back whatever wisdom and nuggets that they have of information, better practice, we try to implement within our office. **President Holifield** spoke to people in Indianapolis on this, can you do Zoom meetings so you don't keep spending on travel requests? **Sean Fagan**, I'm a big fan of online meetings because I think they're more productive, saves travel and helps bring whole bunch of people together, as for these travel conferences, not sure I can do anything with that, in a post-covid world, different things are being done, to each his own but as to what I can control, I try to do Zoom/Teams meetings as much as possible. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered 16 - 24-hour sick days pay for **Jeff Rose**, retiring in the EMS Department. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.** No additional funds are needed; documentation has been verified.

Considered 60 sick days pay for **Pat Hodges**, retiring from Superior Court 4. **President Holifield**, both Magistrate John Link and HR Director Monique Thomas have verified all documentation. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered travel for Juvenile Service Center staff member to Louisville, Kentucky, February 23-27, 2026, Dion Campbell, Director, request. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Old Business

Considered La Porte County Defensive Driving & Vehicle Safety Training Policy. **Attorney DiMartino**, the Commission approved this so now you need to appoint someone to be the liaison to coordinate the in-service with the insurance company. **President Holifield**, the insurance company is paying 100% of this? **Attorney DiMartino**, they're not paying for it, they're doing it, providing it. No cost to us, they will do multiple sessions to accommodate the employees. **President Holifield** suggested Commissioner Haney since he is liaison to the Insurance Committee. **Commissioner Haney** would be happy to unless HR should handle it. **Attorney DiMartino**, no, it would be better if you handled it. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** suggested a tracking system or reporting of who takes the classes. **Attorney DiMartino**, use a sign-in sheet. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Attorney DiMartino noted for the record that ALL employees need to complete Internal Controls training. If employees do not take the Defensive Driving & Vehicle Training course, they will not be able to drive the County-owned vehicles.

New Business

Considered appointment to La Porte County Parks Department, replacing Michelle Braddy who resigned. **President Holifield**, list of applicants was sent to Parks Director Jeremy Sobocki for his recommendation. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to appoint **Evan Wooding** to the Board, finishing the seat previously held by Michelle Braddy. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. **Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered County Disaster Emergency Declaration. President Holifield, a snowstorm occurred last weekend, EMA Director Rob Sabie and La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody reached out to Commissioner Holifield on time/hours spent cleaning up as well as fuel for vehicles, we could apply for assistance from the State but an Emergency Declaration is required. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the Emergency Declaration for the recent Snow Event January 23 - 31, 2026. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

President Holifield spent last week at the State House in Indianapolis, spoke with DNR, Public Access Counselor, Office of Energy Development, met with several Representatives, watched several topics in House Sessions, some shocking things for La Porte County Citizens' checkbooks. Under NIPSCO bills, HB 1002, every amendment that was there to help tax/rate payers was shot down. Senate Bill 83, take sales tax exemption for utility bills, shot down. Senate Bill 184, phase out sales tax, shot down. Now for land use, House Bill 1333, Mr. Haney spoke about earlier, it does not help us, basically it lets Data Centers decide what they're going to do, takes local authority away from us. Senate Bill 258, Ed Soliday from Porter County is the sponsor, it has switched houses, repeals public hearings for any nuclear facility, meaning if someone wants to build a nuclear facility in our area it will not go to Plan Commission, BZA, no public hearings, nothing. Data Center Bills are very disheartening; HB 1043, Data Centers qualify quarterly for their water usage, shot down. HB 1189, sponsored by our own Randy Novak, Data Center Labor Agreements. What's happening in Michigan City right now at their Data Center, this would have ensured local labor unions for any Data Center complaints, this too was shot down. SB 79, Water Usage Study, Data Centers would have to report quarterly how much water was being used along with electricity to the IURC, shot down. IURC bills, HB 1068, rearrange how board members would be retained, shot down. SB 114 would have allowed elections of these IURC board members to be done by the people in the State, shot down. Near and dear to the people in the south side of La Porte, annexation bill would have made it easier for the people to say no to annexing, HB 1205, shot down. SB 55 requires mailing notification to the County Commissioners prior to annexation, that one is still alive and crossed over to the House. Indiana Economic Development Council, Senate Bill 20, required oversight by the State Board of Accounts, there was a debate for about 45 minutes and currently there is no oversight. Edward Delaney fought against it and the bill is now dead. House Bill 1179, term limits, dead, they would not allow that to happen. There was a bill to eliminate straight-ticket voting in both Houses, did not make it through committee. One bill with Mr. Novak, House Bill 1048, volunteer fire departments' clothing and vehicle allowance went from \$100 to \$250, currently in the Senate side now for debate, \$250 won't even take care of any of that now but that is everything from time spent in Indianapolis. We're working with the DNR, Office of Energy Development is pushing, the main goal they have right now is conversion of - natural conversion of coal over to natural gas, considering nuclear energy facilities provided they're regulated enough, it was very eventful. Anyone that wants to complain, Mr. Callas, not your complaint but the roads are taken care of up here, the roads in Indy are not plowed, the entire State was at a stand-still at the State House last Monday because nothing was getting through so if anybody has any questions, reach out to me. Thank you.

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 10:45 a.m. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

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

DATE 2/18/2026

[Signature]
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ATTEST: _____

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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