



La Porte County
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 202
La Porte, IN 46350-3400
(219) 326-6808 ext. 2229

Steve Holifield
President

Connie Gramarossa
Vice President

Joe Haney
Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 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 Clay Turner.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to add under **Old Business: Consider authorizing Commission President to affix signature to amend settlement agreement negotiate between NIPSCO, Genco, OUCC in the IURC case number 46322.** **Commissioner Haney** seconded with an additional item: **Consider hourly/flat rate for attorneys working for La Porte County under New Business.** Motion carried 3-0.

Considered approval of the February 18, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor **Mike Rosenbaum** read the Claims with Payroll ending 2/20/2026 - \$1,563,659.93. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor **Mike Rosenbaum** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$1,600,392.40. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

Jim Lefeber, 1285 E. 400 S., La Porte, any word on what is happening on 250 South? White trucks, white banners all covered up. Nothing at all? There is something going on there. **President Steve Holifield**, I'm aware of that.

Gautama Logwood, 104 W. Greenlawn Drive, La Porte, yesterdays' announcement for Microsoft sounds like a great plan, it is for the City, 85% of the proceeds from a TIF district will go to the City's RDC, fenced off from the County, fenced off from schools and libraries, other than the 15% allowance that Dermody is giving which is the max on a TIF district. He hasn't come out and said that it's a TIF district yet or his plans, I'm sure it's not in place yet but he'd like to advocate for the County not to be cut out of this \$1 billion investment, especially facing a wheel tax this year and shortages. The whole County could benefit and not just the City.

Department Head Comments

Monique Thomas, Human Resources, announced 'Wellness Days' this year will be done through Franciscan, in-house, May 6, 7 and 8, 2026 at both Michigan City and La Porte. Requested permission to host the 3-day event. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Angie Davis, Director of Facilities, requested approval for the Request for Proposals for HVAC/Plumbing Advisor. This has been previously discussed. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Charity Glaser, Highway Superintendent, Frost Law was lifted on February 23rd, signs were left up in case it needed to be reinstated. That doesn't seem to be the case so the signs will be taken down tomorrow. Gave a "Shout Out" to her staff at the Highway Department for all the hard work they've been doing during the snow removal. Every day they work hard and for a while there it went to almost four weeks without a day off, kudos to them.

Dakota Euler, Weights and Measures, recognized Weights and Measures Week for March 1-7, 2026. ***Attached to minutes

ORIGINAL

Commissioner Joe Haney, coming up on America's 250th Anniversary of our Nation, usually City of La Porte is named Capital of the Day, **motioned to form a committee to decorate the Courthouse for festivities**, recommended himself, County Historian Bruce Johnson, bring some 'original flare' back to the outside of the courthouse. Envisions an assortment of flags, Nations' flags, bunting, we can do a good economical job and make it look good as well. A member of the Council to be on the committee, maybe Adam Koronka or Brett Kessler would be amenable to that, but we'll let the Council decide. His motion is for getting ourselves ready for what's going to be a truly historic day. **President Holifield**, please check with Angie Davis to be sure it doesn't interfere with their jobs. **Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered opening bids for paving, chip seal, crack seal and pavement markings for Highway Department, **Charity Glaser**, Superintendent. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** separated sealed bids by class then proceeded to open each one. All bids were timely received. Four different classes: 11, 12, 13 and 14. **Commissioner Haney motioned to accept them as timely, all were given to Charity Glaser and she will return at the end of the meeting with her recommendations. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Requests

Considered Tire Amnesty Day June 13 and September 19, **Clay Turner**. IDEM requires land owners' notification that a Tire Amnesty Day will take place, once the form is filled out by the Commissioners it goes towards a \$10,000 grant for tire disposal. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to replace a vehicle. **Jeremy SobECKi**, Parks Superintendent, has a 2012 Chevy Silverado, ¾ ton, that has been used as a plow truck since it was new, a salt truck. It is starting to rust out and has been having major problems, it is currently in the shop now since last Monday. A quote is from Sourcewell, a Government price, and we're looking to have a service bed with a toolbox that will carry most of the tools to all of our 5 parks. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs report, **Mark Gourley**, Northern District Service Officer with the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs. On behalf of Governor Mike Braun and IDA Director Jake Adams, he thanked the Commission for allowing him to present his report. Handouts were distributed of the Veteran Service Officer Accreditation Standards that was finalized by the Veterans Affairs Commission in December of 2025. It includes new rules pertaining to County Veteran Service Officers, one being a requirement to make a biannual report to each County Executive and this will be the first of two reports for you this year. Each County Veterans Service Officer will need to access certain systems for Veterans' information which are necessary to timely and properly complete applications for Veterans' benefits both at State and Federal levels. Our County VSO, Eduardo Lozano, has everything that is required by the State to perform his duties for Veterans. He uses the mandated claims management system, Vetrospect, a piece of software provided by Tyler Technologies that the State pays for one user so if our County decides to add another credited VSO Officer, the County will have to pay that themselves. Each Veterans' Service Officer must have a Personal Identity Verification Card that is issued by the Federal Government' Veterans Affairs to use a direct remote access portal to the VA systems. If a Veteran has lost any paperwork, it can be accessed through this site for any claims. Two district level trainings, one in the spring then one in the fall, is required for the County VSOs as well. In the Accreditation Standards are defined Key Performance Indicators or KPIs, that can be found on the Transparency Portal at dva.in.gov. Included are the active use of the PIV card, training attendance, passage of all mandatory examinations and training modules and active use of the Vetrospect software for claims management. If a County VSO is non-compliant with any of these standards, steps are provided for action taken, if necessary, by the State. Ed is a good guy and has met the requirements to service our County Veterans. **Commissioner Gramarossa** thanked Mark for assisting our County with the Veterans Counseling provided by VETCenter out of South Bend, every Thursday in the Hiler Building here in La Porte. **President Holifield**, is there a date set yet for the annual fall training? **Mark Gourley**, not yet, there have been staffing changes within the department, going from six district service officers down to five which has caused a realignment of territory, hopefully by July, the fall training location will be scheduled. Thank you.

Old Business

Considered appointment of E-911 Director by E-911 Advisory Board recommendation. **Commissioner Joe Haney motioned to appoint Matt Deckard as the E-911 Director. Commissioner Connie Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0. Matt Deckard** thanked the Commissioners, the 911 Board and Human Resources for support and getting everything done. He has spent the last five years as Assistant Director and will have Nikki Nixon as his Assistant Director.

Considered Agreed Addendum with NIPSCO for Cause number 46322. **Shaw Friedman**, Commission Attorney while in front of the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission. Cause number 46322 is a case that involved NIPSCO, GenCo, and the Office of Utility Consumer Counselor largely about contracts that would be executed with Data Centers and other terms of new generation. We accomplished what you originally directed us to do with this cause, get guard rails in place to ensure Data Center energy costs do not get passed on to existing NIPSCO customers. We now have written assurance that we're in line as well for priority evaluation of sites for new NIPSCO Generation in our County in industrially zoned areas like KIP, which is what you've also directed. Whether that be gas-fired generation or battery energy storage.

Considering we won't know what will happen to NIPSCO's coal-fire gen station on Lake Michigan in 2028, we cannot afford to lose the \$5,000,000.00 a year in property taxes and have that revenue made up by other property owners in our County so it's important to have these studies, the priority commitment now by NIPSCO to talk about a new generation in our County, either by the Lake or at KIP, for either gas-fired generation or battery energy storage. It's important to note that any studies such as the ones just completed by Sargent and Lundy, the National Engineering firm, will be paid for by NiSource Shareholders and **not** NIPSCO rate payers, certainly not by the County, that's part of the addendum as well. We'd ask for the approval of the addendum and I'd certainly take any questions that the Commission may have at this point. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa**, going back to the Resolution at our last meeting, can you in 'layman's terms' tell us why these bills are so high, we did the Resolution but what else can be done? President Holifield will present the Resolution to the IURC in Indianapolis but is there anything else we can do? **Attorney Shaw Friedman**, this County has been involved actively for over 20 years, one of the most active counties on rate and service issues, the last ten years have been particularly bad, while I may disagree with this Governor on certain things, on this issue he is correct, he replaced three of the five members of the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission and if I had to pinpoint three issues that have created these high bills - keep in mind that NIPSCO is a regulated monopoly, it has an exclusive franchise which means it is up to the regulators to do their job and candidly that has not happened over the last ten years. We've had Utility Commissioners that were approving every request by the investor-owned utilities, that really hiked bills, and the newly appointed members, Bob Deig of Evansville, Anthony Swinger who was with the OUCC and then Andy Zay out of Ft. Wayne, is the new Chairman of the Utility Commission. We expect them to be far more aggressive than the previous Commissioners that sat on the Commission the last 10 years. Second big issue, the Office of Utility Consumer Counselor was held by Bill Fine, the last 7-8 years, he rolled over every time there was a case, it is important that the Public Counselor, which has been in place since 1935, there have been 25 Utility Consumer Counselors, be aggressive and to his credit, the Governor has appointed Abby Gray, a real bull dog. I expect we'll get more support out of the OUCC. Good example, last year's rate case, we were out there fighting that and in the middle of it, Bill Fine, Office of Utility Consumer Counselor, rolled over and accepted 16% increase as 'fair.' That was not fair, we all know that it was not fair and it's hitting your constituents hard. Now with a new Utility Consumer Counselor, I think it's going to be a big difference, and a big contributor because when we're out there fighting these rate increases, and the County has done it - I will note that this County has had a bipartisan history of County Commissioners going back to 2002, fighting rate increases and we've had some real success on a number of cases, including 2010 when we impacted that particular rate case but with new Commissioners, a new Office of Utility Consumer Counselor Abby Gray, hopefully that will help as well. Third big issue is legislators, one being Ed Soliday out of Valparaiso, he Chairs the House Utilities Committee and has passed through one bill after another that has supported investor-owned utilities. It is up to all the legislators to take charge of this and stop rubber-stamping anything that the investor-owned utilities want, that is the third biggest issue. The legislators patted themselves on the back in House Bill 1002 for performance-based rate making, **this** (Board of Commissioners) Commission has been pushing for performance-based rate making for 20 years, and we actually got it into that 2010 rate case, Commissioners of both parties going back 20 years, have been pushing for performance-based rate making, this is rate making based on customer satisfaction studies, reliability, pricing, when those are thought about and weighed prior to giving a utility a regulated rate of return versus what is now there, more cost plus rate making, they come in, make an infrastructure improvement and then expect an instant return on it. There is a difference between performance-based rate making which House Bill 1002 now finally provides and this Commission has pushed for the last 20 years; versus cost plus rate making. NIPSCO rates are now the highest in the State of Indiana, some of the highest in the Country and it's partly because the regulators have fallen on the job, both the Utility Commission the last ten years, the Public Counselor and the legislators. All the way back to Commissioners Hager, Harmon, Huston, Bohacek, Ken Layton, Dr. Kora, Willie Milsap, Sheila Brillson and Rich Mrozinski, all of your predecessors, Clay Turner even, was a strong advocate for performance-based rate making so all of your predecessors the last 20 years have been pushing for change, we've had incremental changes and improvements, we've won various cases like the Service Center case where Steve's dad was involved in, we saved the Service Center out on State Road 2, we've gotten refunds, rebates, but a lot of that stopped the last 10 years when it got bad on the Utility Commission. Three reasons: Utility Commission, Office of Utility Consumer Counselor, and some of the Legislation so hopefully with your help that will change. We've got to keep pushing, appreciate the support of the Commission because this Commission is known Statewide for its efforts on rates and service. **Commissioner Haney**, moving forward with this agreement would end our legal involvement with this case and our legal expenses, right? **Attorney Shaw Friedman**, 46322, we still have a hearing coming up in April, we are winding down and doing our level best, one of the reasons we are not supporting or opposing this settlement is we're not having to provide the expense of expert testimony at the April hearing so I'm trying to keep cost in line but I would suggest we get a pretty good return on investment for what the County invests. As you know in 46120, we were able to win \$8.5 million in coverage for the County on infrastructure and everything else but we are winding down involvement in 46322. **Commissioner Haney**, that's a commitment that may or may not go through with depending but I do appreciate that because part of that I think about four or five million of that was from prior that was going to expire that wasn't used. **Attorney Friedman**, yes. **Commissioner Haney**, hopefully we don't see that again, we're able to get NIPSCO to pony up that money and we don't have to. **Attorney Friedman**, that's right, I sent you all and I think NIPSCO is about to release the studies publicly that they did, the site studies, you all have those Sargent and Lundy studies paid for by shareholders and certainly not by rate payers at this time. **President Holifield**, we've got 16 State Representatives that signed a request for the IURC to do an investigation into NIPSCO's sudden spike in bills. March 24th between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. EST, in the meeting room of the IURC which is in the PNC building at Capital and Market Street, across from the State House, a hearing will be held if anyone with time on their hands, that's a good place to start, and I want to mention that after talking with several people that are still involved with NIPSCO, they are in the midst of their contract negotiations, it's not looking pretty, I know back during the strike in 1980, it was not pretty for the workers

and the consumers had to put up with a lot of down time, a rate increase and everything back then, so I hope they can negotiate and get a good contract. **Attorney Friedman**, you're absolutely right, the County partnered with the Steelworkers in that Service Center Case, the Steelworkers were some of our best witnesses, Barry Norvell, Dick Essig, Mike Sandy, and others, as you say we wish the Steelworkers well as they negotiate, there is some conflict on overtime issues, and no one wants to see a situation where there aren't sufficient NIPSCO Steelworkers out there, after hours, able to do repair work. Hopefully it will all come together well at this point. **President Holifield**, the local for the Labors is 12775 and a lot of people are not aware that the office and clerical staff are also involved with the Steelworkers and they are Union number 13796, it doesn't just happen to the outside workers but the ladies and gentlemen inside too. **Attorney Friedman**, you've got the physical union, clerical union and I should say 13796, great allies for the County as well, you remember Deb Burkholz and other officers in that union have been great allies for the County. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded** then noted while we're winding down and saving on some legal fees here, the Citizens Action Coalition is still going to continue the fight without the La Porte County taxpayers having to financially chip in so looking forward to them moving forward as well. **Motion carried 3-0.**

New Business

Commissioner Haney hourly/flat rate for Attorneys working for La Porte County. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, there's been a lot of talk about the attorney bills and it was suggested that every time employees received a raise, no matter the percentage, the attorneys would get the same amount, last year the employees were given a 3% raise and some of the attorneys went ahead and billed us with a 3% increase. Another issue is one attorney is getting a flat rate for billing and I do have a problem with that because typically, and this has always been expected of all of our attorneys, we get an itemized bill showing us what the attorney is working on, they are vendors, not County employees, and as a vendor should be submitting an itemized bill telling us what different issues they have been working on and as Commissioners, it is our responsibility to be sure we are paying for a service that we're actually receiving so I'll pass it on. **Commissioner Haney**, Commissioner Gramarossa is correct, we've had some, well, the rate we reimburse the attorneys for has been significantly obviously lower than the private market, attorneys that work for good government services like this are doing this as part of giving back to the community at discounted rates, normally attorneys rates in this area go for \$275 to \$350, depending on the attorney, type of work they're doing, stuff like that, here in La Porte County anyway, when you get into St. Joe or Lake County, you'll see rates that can be higher. One of the things that can be difficult from time to time is when you have low rates, it can be difficult to attract good talent or even if you still want to give back, we're talking about hundreds and hundreds of hours a year, it starts getting difficult so right now our current rate for attorneys is \$175 an hour, it's been \$150 an hour until about two years ago, it's been \$150 an hour the last roughly 25 years, well below the market value. I don't expect and you know, I don't think attorneys working for the County expect to be paid you know, what the prevailing rate is out in the private sector but at the same time there has to be a certain amount, they still have staff, overhead, different things, their paralegals and office staff that they have to deal with and of course, those costs go up over the time period so I don't think a 3% increase...the current rates sat flat for two years, from \$175 I don't think a 3% increase, going up to \$182.50 I think, something like that, yeah, I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing so **I'll make a motion to increase it 3%. Commissioner Gramarossa**, for discussion, I think instead of going with a 3% and I know that's only a \$5.00 an hour increase, I would rather see every couple of years we raise it by \$25.00, I mean, when you're looking at what and I don't want to give the wrong impression that I want to give a huge increase again, but again, you've said it where it's difficult to attract attorneys at the fees that we're paying and I understand that 3% is much lower but then when we're getting into where we're going to give the employees a raise, a vendor's pay should not be wedged against what we're paying our employees and I believe what we state here, we're going to give a \$25.00 an hour raise, and we stipulate that this is going to be for a 2-year or a 5-year increment rather than you know, next year the Council can't give raises so they come back and it's going to vary on the percentages, you're going to have attorneys upset because it's not going to be a sufficient raise, we should get a set amount and figure that out, and propose it, just my opinion. **President Holifield**, as I've discussed, I've known a few attorneys in La Porte County and we're paying less than half of their rate and I think what's going to happen eventually is, I've talked to a couple of other lawyers who refuse to do any County work because of that, one of these days in January when we do our reorganization, there's not going to be a lawyer sitting over there at the table so we need to look at that and seriously consider what we're paying as a rate and make it worth their while to become the attorney because there's a lot more hours involved than people think when you look at the bills they itemize, in the first two months in January and February, Mr. DiMartino actually lowered his rate to us because he said there was not much work as he thought so that does not include his \$75,000 flat rate for the year does not include litigation so I think we're getting a bargain with the lawyers right now and I said one of these days we're not going to have no one here, when they can do the same amount of work for \$450.00 an hour, I really question why they're here, that's my opinion and it's whatever the Board recommends. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, we didn't approve the \$75,000 contract here in a meeting, I suggest we get that approved and we add itemized billing. **President Holifield**, I think we do get itemized billing, what's the pleasure of the Board? **Commissioner Haney**, I made a motion for a 3% raise for now and I think that's something to consider at the beginning of next year, at least I would think so to see about moving forward for next year, but at least for this year it seems like, you know, especially with the crunch that we have with SEA 1 and sometimes how some of our attorneys' fees can be as different suits and things come up, just with the financial crunch we're under, I think 3% is going to satisfy folks for now it seems like. **President Holifield** asked for a seconded. **Commissioner Gramarossa** would not second a 3% raise. **President Holifield stepped down and seconded. Motion carried 2-1. Commissioner Gramarossa - Nay.**

Charity Glaser, Highway Superintendent, returned with recommendations for paving, chip seal, crack seal, and pavement markings.
***Recommendations attached

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 10:58 a.m. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

LAPORTE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS & MEASURES
555 Michigan Avenue La Porte, IN 46350
(219)-873-4876 deuler@laporteco.in.gov

March 4, 2026

National Weights and Measures Week 2026: "We Measure What Matters"

Chair and members of the Commission,

As your local Weights and Measures Inspector, I am pleased to recognize National Weights and Measures Week, observed March 1-7, 2026. This annual observance commemorates the nation's first weights and measures law, signed by President John Adams on March 2, 1799, and underscores our enduring commitment to fairness, accuracy, and consumer protection in commerce.

This year's theme, "We Measure What Matters," powerfully illustrates how measurement is woven into the fabric of everyday life here in LaPorte County. When residents fill up with a gallon of gasoline at the pump, purchase a pound of fresh produce at the market, or buy a yard of mulch for their yard, they depend on accurate commercial devices and truthful quantity declarations to receive exactly what they pay for. That same essential trust extends to everyday purchases like packaged foods at the grocery store, medications dispensed by weight or volume at the pharmacy, and bulk materials used in construction, agriculture, farming operations, or home landscaping projects. These routine transactions—large and small—rely on the precision and reliability that Weights and Measures inspections deliver day in and day out.

Here in LaPorte County, our Weights and Measures program puts national and state standards into action through hands-on work at local businesses. We carefully inspect and test commercial scales—from large truck scales to small retail counters—and fuel dispensers to verify their accuracy. We also examine product packaging to confirm net contents match what's declared on the label, helping protect both consumers from short weight or measure and businesses from unfair competition.

National Weights and Measures Week recognizes inspectors across Indiana and the nation whose vital work builds marketplace confidence. Thank you for your support as we uphold commerce integrity in LaPorte County and live out our guiding principle: we measure what matters.

For questions, concerns, or complaints, contact the LaPorte County Weights and Measures Office at (219) 873-4876 or deuler@laporteco.in.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakota Euler
LaPorte County Inspector

EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE *Dt Euler* 3-18-2026

ATTEST: _____
Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL



LAPORTE COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

1805 W 5th Street
LaPorte, IN 46350
Telephone: (219) 362-2051

March 4, 2026

RE: LaPorte County Highway Material Bid Recommendations Class 11, 12, 13, 14

Class 11 – Bituminous Materials

Two Bidders (Emulsions Only)

Bit-Mat Products of Indiana (The Klink Group)
Asphalt Materials

We will accept both bids. Asphalt Materials will be used as our primary bidder and Bit-Mat Products of Indiana will be used as our secondary bidder.

Alternate Bid for Application of Bituminous Material:

Three Bidders

Bit-Mat Products of Indiana (Chip Seal)
Central Paving (Chip Seal)
Pavement Solutions (Chip Seal)

Chip Seal Application:

Central Paving will be used as our primary bidder and Bit-Mat Products and Pavement Solutions will be used as alternate bidders.

Class 12 – Hot Asphalt Concrete

Three Bidders

Rieth-Riley Construction
Milestone
Avalanche Snow Removal

Rieth-Riley will be used as our primary bidder and Milestone and Avalanche will be used as alternate bidders. The Commissioners did vote to have Milestone pave some roads due to the public's concerns regarding the quality of Rieth-Riley's previous work.

ORIGINAL

Class 13 – Pavement Markings

One Bidder

The Airmarking Company, Inc.

We will accept the bid.

Class 14 – Asphalt Crack Sealant

Two Bidders

Rieth-Riley Construction

Pavement Solutions

We will accept both bids Rieth-Riley will be used as our primary bidder and Pavement Solutions will be used as our secondary bidder.

ORIGINAL