



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 18, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. County Complex Room 3

President Steve Holifield called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Gautama Logwood.

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** motioned to add under **Old Business: Discussion on Travel Requests and New Business: Discussion of an ordinance for unmarked contractor vehicles in the County.** **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered approval of the March 4, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 3/6/2026 - \$1,526,028.19. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$1,644,178.13. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Public Comment

Dean White, 3066 N. Highway 35, La Porte, located near a dangerous curve on the highway. He distributed four (4) color photos of Highway 35, going south near the toll road overpass and going passed his house. On Friday the 13th another fatality happened in this location. Speed limit is 55+ miles per hour. From Sherwood Forest Paintball, going south on Highway 35 downhill to a curve, there were two yellow warning arrow signs, he's addressed INDOT and this Commission over a year ago for public safety and urgency, he urged the Commission to educate the statistics and influence INDOT better then he can. This curve has caused dozens of injuries and deaths over the years. Friday the 13th was another fatality, a mother and three children were injured. They crashed into a new gravel driveway under construction by Pavey Excavating, a stone embankment that caused the vehicle to go airborne. If you look at the pictures, the driveway appears - the first picture is the straightaway that goes underneath the toll road southbound, when you get to the beginning of the curve, there is a warning arrow, there is a heavily wooded area, there were two yellow arrow signs and one was where the driveway is being constructed. It appears that there is a straight - the gentleman that had the fatality just went straight in to the woods. Over the years I've suggested a guard rail with perhaps deflectors for headlights, this would have deflected many past accidents, multiple accidents, there is still debris in the woods from these accidents. The guard rail would deflect the momentum from the heavily wooded area to save lives. Total disregard of statistics for public safety, INDOT should be noticed. The one yellow warning sign at the beginning of the new driveway on - of the curve, was the direct center on impact and it's still laying on the ground. He called the Sheriff's Department asking them to call INDOT because he doesn't seem to get much done with them and the Sheriff's Department told him it was not their job. It's quite a shame and hopes the Commissioners can get the State Highway to address this issue. Ambulance and Police are involved, it's right next to where he lives. **President Holifield** spoke to INDOT but he isn't sure what they will do. **Commissioner Haney** will reach out to his contact at INDOT, possibly get more signs up, there is a big process for guard rails but at least get the signs up, that should be something they can do easily or get the process started.

Gary Metcalf, 4205 N. 325 W., La Porte, he's been listening to Drainage Board meetings, repeatedly, seems like La Porte Mayor Tom Dermody is advocating for Microsoft. There was a gentleman there handing out stuff that really wasn't what Mayor Dermody and Commissioner Gramarossa were talking about, he felt Commissioner Gramarossa should listen, take notes but not coach. When Tom arrived, he coached them and changed what they were there for...that bothered him that both were advocating and the guy there

ORIGINAL

didn't sound like he really knew what he was there for until Tom got there, out of that meeting were a few more concerns, one being sounded like the Mayor already planned on connecting to that ditch. I looked at the plans, I read what they were saying about having a retention ponds, which is great, but then Connie made another comment about 'well, it's just water, it's going to be coming down even if the building is not there.' That's the difference between knowing what percolation means and how the water gets into the water table not through the ditch. Another concern is after the retention ponds, they have metering which was good to restrict the flow but then to put it out into the ground, not into the ditch without any further metering or being of any control. Tom doesn't seem to want to share with anybody about anything or any money with the County but yet he wants to circumvent your authority and the Drainage Board's authority to make sure to protect our waterways in the County. By listening to it more than once, granted when I first thought about it, I sent emails saying remove her from the Board but I'd like to amend that to explain to her that she's supposed to be on the Board (Drainage) listening and taking notes not coaching the petitioners. I also thought it would be a good idea for the County to look at the companies that were mentioned, not by name but supposedly there were 11 or 12 companies, we know Walmart drains directly into that headwaters, I assume Renault across the street, maybe Aerometals, there has to be something that the County can do in oversight to make sure the ditches do not get contaminated because once it goes into that ditch and gets contaminated it goes all through the State basically, we should be able to force the City to tie it back into their own wastewater/stormwater system since they seem to be the ones pushing hard for that area versus a highly controlled regulated area. Mayor Tom also made statements about water being trucked in over the County roads, who's going to maintain those roads after all the trucks break down the County roads? That's another concern for County citizens as taxpayers. Mayor Tom stated he approached two Commissioners, you (Commissioner Holifield) being one and one other one but said they didn't want to work with the City, didn't want to work with Microsoft. He'll leave it in Steve's hands, not sure if Joe knew about it or not, there's only three of you so there's got to be a second, we know that NDAs were forced on the City, so far you've said there are no NDAs with the County and that is great because once you sign an NDA, you no longer work for the County, you no longer work for the tax payers.

Gautama Logwood, 104 W. Greenlawn Drive, La Porte, we've covered this on the phone, he did a press release regarding the surveyors on what appears to be the Microsoft property and beyond, he knows the County has taken a 'hands-off' approach with this and not try to inhibit business but doesn't think we've seen quite so many bad actors out there where we are blatantly covering logos on the side of the vans and trucks, he watched one of the County deputies provide emergency services because the guy was trying to survey in the middle of two lanes on the southbound side of Highway 35, was playing frogger out there and luckily a deputy came along and had to turn his lights on and let him get his shot. This stuff needs to be done above board, even if it means permitting processes down even anytime they're in the County right-of-way, it would make it easier for the folks out there to call up and find out what's going on, which right now we can't, it seems kind of trifling to have to do that so much but it's becoming excessive and plus I guess our...we've been kept in the dark on what's going on out there because of these NDAs. I guess when you say the wrong thing, you're fear-mongering, that's apparently from the Mayor of La Porte, it would be helpful if there were more transparency and accountability on what's going on out there, thinks everyone would agree with that, possibly push forward an ordinance of some kind regarding that permit process. Thank you.

Department Head Comments

Matt Reardon, OCED, congratulations! You've won a Bronze medal from CSX Railroad, saying that tongue-in-cheek but there were 21 sites recognized, out of 1,110 served by CSX Railroad, in their latest program and only 6% are designated as select sites. This was not done by accident because at one point in time, all Commissioners have served on the Redevelopment Commission and worked with JBC and Lindborgs to facilitate investment from them and facilitate investment from CSX, County Council participated in fronting funds that is being repaid back now with cash flow as the agreement with the switcher in play. Congratulations on that, this has to do with cash flow to the County and operations at Kingsbury Industrial Park. Coming soon is the other part, not sure what version of this that CN has but we're going to try and up it to Gold medal maybe with CN Railroad. The site constraints lead to categories it was really the investment by the private sector coupled with the funding over the years by the County to do that so again, congratulations, there will be a plaque issued. On March 13th there was a legal notice of real estate for private redevelopment for a property in Kingsbury Industrial Park, if any information is needed, please reach out to me at 219-741-9511. The property is 6957 3rd Line Road in Kingsbury Industrial Park, assessor number 46-15-04-40.014-000-066, 14.46 acres, it has a total building footprint of 46,458 square feet. A minimum bid requirement of \$399,500, the prospective purchaser would need to submit a minimum of 5% in a sealed bid on or before April 22 by 2:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' office, either Matt or Diane in the Commissioners' office will receive them and they will be file stamped. There are requirements for reuse of this property. There is also a 911 tower on the backside of the property that the purchaser would have to relocate to the satisfaction of the Emergency Management or leave it on the property and provide/perfect access to it. The Redevelopment Commission reserves the right to accept or reject all bids, regardless of the amount of offer. There's no mandate that if the minimum bid is received or achieved that you would have to receive it depending on the reuse and there are requirements that the Redevelopment Commission can place on this, any interested parties may want to take a look at the Phase I which is available, this was advertised in the newspaper and will be on two different national real estate websites, LoopNet and Crexi, where real estate buyers/sellers go for information.

Travel Ordinance discussion. **President Holifield**, we started this last year, is there any more information needed? **Attorney Guy DiMartino** gave the Commission a simple policy last year. If a department budgeted for the travel, it will be approved; if it is required, it will be approved; if it is State mandated by the SBOA, it will be approved. Otherwise, it is up to the Commission.

ORIGINAL

Requests

Considered Dependent (agenda error listed as Department) Verification Review, **Monique Thomas**, HR. **Commissioner Haney**, this was one of the first things he did when he came on board in 2021 and was appointed to the Insurance Committee, this is just double checking that Dependents being claimed on health insurance are legitimate Dependents that qualify for insurance, it helps us streamline our costs. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Old Business

Considered ROW clarification for 1500 South, Charity Glaser, Highway Superintendent. Charity Glaser and Andrew Simmermeyer are currently attending Road School. **President Holifield**, most properties go to the center of the road, this one runs into a curve or at an angle so part of it starts in the center then the other end is offset as it nears the curve or angle. Clarification is needed as to the width of our easement for utility location. The poles would be on the South side of 1500 because if they are put in on the North side, trees would have to be removed. No objections from the farm field on the South side of 1500. **Attorney DiMartino**, this is accepting the survey done by Hendricks. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.** **Attorney DiMartino** stressed that this approval will need to be put somewhere so in 20 years it will still be in effect. Possibly record it, verify with Highway how it will be kept on record.

New Business

Considered First Reading on amending Council Ordinance 1992-1 for Innkeepers' Tax Collection/Enforcement. **Laura Nirenberg**, Attorney for Convention & Visitors' Bureau, **Brett Binversie**, Hospitality & Lodging Director for the CVB, the original Council's Ordinance 1992-1 is not being amended, we're referencing it because it all stems from there, the purpose is to give a breakdown to the Treasurer's office of the process. Complete transparency to show where the information is coming from, introduced Kelly Wozniak from the Treasurer's office. **President Holifield**, this is to provide teeth for the Treasurer's office to collect Innkeepers Tax that is past due. **Laura Nirenberg**, they have a statutory duty to grab this money, hold it then give it to the beneficiary. There has not been a process that really streamlines it for them, that makes it difficult for them. **Attorney DiMartino**, that's the issue we came up against when looking at the original ordinance, though the statute says you have to have policy and guidance, we didn't have that policy or written guidance, no you have to do step A, step B, because you'll be levying or getting a tax warrant so now we'll have a procedure that can be followed by the Treasurer's office. We can now get the monies that are owed or past due, some of them are quite large amounts, up to \$50,000 or more. **Brett Binversie**, at the end of 2025 we had 12 properties throughout the County that were behind a total of 26 months of remittance, that does not include two major properties in addition that are about 18- 24 months. Treasurer's office will look over the process and bring up any questions they may have prior to the second/final reading. **Attorney Guy DiMartino** read the title for the record, 'Ordinance 2026-1, an Ordinance setting forth the collection and enforcement mechanism for the La Porte County Innkeeper's Tax.' **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered discussion for Letter of Support on Phase 2 of the Public Sewer Project for Hudson Lake. **Ken Jones**, Jones Petrie Rafinski out of South Bend, appreciate the partnership with the Commission. **Attorney DiMartino**, explain the process for clarification and having the municipalities support is necessary with the Indiana Financing Authority. **Ken Jones**, there will be more than one resource for this project to overcome the cost, that could include our USDA State Revolving Loan Fund and one thing that they started to do was for us to show support from the residents and elected officials in the County where the project is taking place. It does help with the scoring that is done by USDA and SRF, very beneficial. **Commissioner Haney** motioned for discussion, would it be fair to say if we don't do this the project will still move forward but we would be expressing our support that we want as much grant, federal and/or state money to come to this project to offset the cost or burden to the local users/residents. **Ken Jones**, your opinion and supports helps. **President Holifield**, these sewers will go a long way in the communities to improve them and clean them up. **Attorney DiMartino** questioned if the new language added to the support letter is agreed upon by Ken Jones. **Ken Jones**, yes, it is appropriate. **Commissioner Joe Haney** read the additional language for the support letter into the record: "While we strongly support moving this project forward, the Commission wishes to make clear that it cannot support a financing structure that places the burden of project costs - including hook-up fees and ongoing sewer expenses - on the backs of landowners within the affected phase. We respectfully urge that sufficient grant funding be identified and secured to meaningfully reduce direct costs to residents. Not every property owner in this community has the financial means to absorb these expenses, and the long-term success and fairness of this project depends on ensuring that the cost responsibility is appropriately and broadly distributed." **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered discussion for an ordinance on contractors working in our County must display company name on sides of vehicles. **President Holifield**, residents have seen contractors in their areas with names of companies covered up on vehicles as well as clothing apparel, when asked what are they doing or who are they with, the residents have been told 'not to worry about it, we're here to do work.' Citizens of our County deserve the right to know who's in front of their house and what they're doing, especially when you may be at work. He proposed an ordinance to require contractors who may be surveying or working in areas to have their names displayed. **Commissioner Haney** motioned for discussion, agrees with President Holifield for the vehicles, at least not allowing names purposely covered up. **Attorney DiMartino**, would that impact First Amendment principles on somebody who removes that information? He will research it. **Commissioner Haney** has received multiple calls from residents and by time he drives out there, the vehicles are gone. He has seen photos of what appears to be painters' blue masking tape used or plain white magnets over the

logos, state or federal DOT numbers on these vehicles and purposefully obscuring them. **President Holifield** received a call that vehicles were in an area, names covered up and boring holes in the road on 250 South, Building Commission was notified, there were no permits issued to do that type of work on our roads, Highway Department said there was no permit from her office to do that work either. An Inspector went out to inquire, they would not say who they were or what they were doing. **Attorney DiMartino**, why wasn't law enforcement called for destruction to our property? **President Holifield** does not know, this comes down to transparency we're not receiving from the next level of government below us in the cities. **Attorney DiMartino**, what are you envisioning? A fine? What type of enforcement mechanism would be used? We could put on paper that you cannot do that but what - **President Holifield**, when the Building Commission's Inspectors go out and say Frontier is marking the roads from Hawk, they have to go to the Building Department and get permits or tell them what they're doing and be registered in the County to do that work. If they don't get a permit then issue a fine to them. **Commissioner Haney**, it's multifaceted, he spoke to the Sheriff about companies obscuring their names or logos on vehicles however their license plates are visible, the Sheriff's office can use that tool. Best case scenario from the Sheriff's Department for enforcement of covering up company name or logo falls under federal highway DOT; our Sheriff's Department does not have deputies trained for federal DOT commercial enforcement in that area. Someone from the motor carrier division would have to come out and intercept these folks that are doing that so he would like to see if a company purposefully obscures their name or logo while working in our County, there would be some sort of fine mechanism we could issue. Believes we're within our rights to do that, could be enforceable by the Sheriff or Building Commission. He's hearing these companies are going out, walking adjacent properties that are not participating and when asked what they are doing, they refuse to answer, show i.d. yet they're on private property. Surveyors have some ability to 'trespass' on neighboring properties while doing survey work. At least a name badge or identify why you're on private property. Does not think it violates First Amendment rights when a business is engaging in commercial activity being able to hide themselves. There's a lot of folks who have this thing, it's coming to a head and we need to do something about it. **Attorney Guy DiMartino**, the last time he picked a jury, everybody owned a shotgun in La Porte County on the jury. **President Holifield**, shocked the community did not enforce it themselves out there. **Attorney DiMartino**, not saying they need self-help. **Commissioner Haney**, we don't want to see that but in today's day and age there could be a single mom out there and some guy is roaming around with tools on your property, he's not identifying himself, they get startled.

President Holifield, it's come to our attention recently the City is doing some things that may be legal but he finds it shocking, the newest annexation agreement was put to test Monday night and boom, surveyors are already out there and we're being told at public meetings at the City that we are not watching what the City's doing at all, we should be watching them, if I want to do that I'll buy a ticket to the Harlem Globetrotters, a group run by a bunch of former high school and college jocks. We've been doing our best to develop without destroying people's lives, we want to place these projects where they belong without hindering the people that live up there. People moved to the County because they believe in the constitution, the guiding principles, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, they do not pursue happiness in an industrial park. That's one thing we do there, we do not go by the principles of divide and conquer, making neighbor hate neighbor in neighborhoods, that is not right. This is something that was done during the annexation process in Europe during the 1930's and I want the people to know we're keeping an eye on Mr. Dermody; we're doing everything we can to develop and bring tax revenue in this County. Does not believe in the way it is being done, we do not have spot zoning which Mr. Dermody is pushing on us, when you have multiple industrial developments all over to benefit his City. We're watching it very closely. **Commissioner Haney** has expressed concerns here too and there was a local radio program today with both Mayor Dermody and Commissioner Haney going back and forth from two separate events. He's disheartened by the direction the City has taken and he'd like to see a better partnership, he heard the same comments that one Commissioner didn't want to talk and another one - we, as a body, picked our Economic Development Director to speak with the City as well to find common ground. For people's edification out there, from the County's perspective there's a voluntary annexation, they get annexed into the City, there's very little, pretty much nothing, we can do about that to stop it. At least be good partners, good neighbors, right? He's learned over time here as Commissioner there are some folks who want to work together to make good things happen, one being the 421 TIF up there, we brought water and sewer from Michigan City, a was a win-win for both the County and Michigan City. As you can tell, he's quite frustrated and would really like to see some good progress, protect our residents and the County as much as we can. **President Holifield**, there was a meeting between the City and County, the City wanted more and Commissioner Holifield reminded him the County gave him \$500,000 last year but he still wants more.

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 6:52 p.m. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

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

DATE 4-1-2026

[Signature]

ATTEST: _____
Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL