



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, April 1, 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 Ben Ruiz. A moment of silence was observed for Camille Duke, an employee at Juvenile Service Center who recently passed away.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 3/20/2026 - \$1,567,228.89. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,643,963.34. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

Public Comment

President Steve Holifield, 'Public Comment is very important and we respect the rights of individuals views including criticism of Government Officials. The Board will enforce reasonable rules of decorum to ensure the orderly conduct of the meeting. Speakers must address the Board and refrain from conduct that disrupts or interferes with proceedings. Comments involving threats, intimidation, or actual disruption are not permitted. Any speaker who disrupts the meeting may be asked to yield the podium. If individuals wish to raise specific concerns about County personnel, those matters can also be addressed with the appropriate office outside of this meeting.'

Gautama Logwood, 104 W. Greenlawn Drive, La Porte, perfect example of a Democratic candidate and two sitting Republican Commissioners working together, in reference to the first reading of Ordinance for item 11 'd.' Thank you for listening to the community.

Bob Pollock, 100 Lakeshore Drive, Apt. 102, Michigan City, did not realize this year for the Commissioners' Tax Sale bidding was only done online and through Zoom, he spoke to a knowledgeable nice lady in the Auditor's office and was told it is very complicated. He has used Zoom before and does not believe it is too complicated. The cut-off time for signing up to bid was on Monday with the sale on Wednesday. No complaints with the Auditor's office, treated very nice by staff but he gave 3 suggestions: If there is no bid on a parcel, interested parties should be allowed to bid; if a bid is made but the bidder does not come in within the required time to pay for it then again, interested parties should be allowed to offer a bid and lastly, there are parcels in the name of the Board of Commissioners, allow interested parties to bid on those as well, especially those who have adjacent parcels. This has been done in the past, thank you and those are my thoughts to get parcels back on the tax rolls.

Rick Kentaft, 324 Bach St., Pole Town, La Porte, distributed documents to Commissioners. Inquired as to whether or not the County has a taxpayer relief program for residents with pass due delinquent taxes in the County. **President Holifield**, not that he's aware of. **Rick Kentaft**, a program that just eliminates delinquent taxes? **Attorney DiMartino**, this is Public Comment, there will not be a response from the Commissioners.

ORIGINAL

Rick Kentaft was curious because there was a delinquent tax since 2015 for a current County candidate, Jody Slabaugh, that were removed on the 13th of February of this year, no payments made, no plan set-up, just removed or recalled. Jody Slabaugh says he is open and transparent about everything. He then stated in the private sector, if an Executive employee is terminated, often times they are offered a severance package, if the County terminates a Department Head, is it legal for a Government Entity to give that person a six-month severance package and full benefits? **Attorney Guy DiMartino** reminded Rick this was Public Comment and not question/answer. **Rick Kentaft** asked if he could email Attorney DiMartino his request. There seems to be a lot of nefarious activity taking place in the elections this year, we have a lot of 'carpet baggers' running for election, addresses popping up out of nowhere, people that have never voted in La Porte County are currently running for election, this should be brought to the forefront, local and state law enforcement doesn't want to do anything about it so he will reach out to federal agencies to investigate people suddenly popping up with addresses that they have not lived at for any extended amount of time, thank you.

Louie Spear, 6434 S. 3rd Line Road, Kingsbury, gave a large oversized map to the Commissioners then distributed information to each Board member. Looking back in time to the Shurz Ditch when issues could have been solved, in 2019 there was a 54-inch backup while installing 60-inch tile drain down Boyd Blvd. City of La Porte was discharging about 3,810,000 gallons of water per day on the north end of the Shurz Ditch. We are being flooded from the south from the dewatering of the drainage project. The Drainage Board voted unanimously to have their attorney draw up an injunction against the City to stop work on that project until it was shaken out. Attorney Shaw Friedman took it on his own to stop the Drainage Board from doing it's job, he had no authority to do it and there are still problems today. For 70 years the Spears have been screwed out there on that farm by the City, the Drainage Board has done nothing and he put everyone on notice that this will end up in court, he was advised by an attorney to let Council and Commissioners know, this could have been resolved in 2019 if the City had been taken to task. Now with a couple of AI discharging water, dumping in to the legal drains of Shurz and Travis Ditches. How and why they cannot stop the City from annexing that land, the drainage laws can stop that, if the City has not done its' job legally in the drains for the last 110 years, you can take them to court and stop them, can't stop the water but you can resolve the issues, a Judge can order the City not to put any more water in the County ditches until they fix everything they screwed up. Thank you.

Department Head Comments

Matt Deckard, E-911 Director, April 12-18, 2026, will be National Telecommunicators Week, celebrated nationally recognizing all 911 Dispatchers for their hard work, we will be doing that here in our County, honoring all our great employees and staff. Invited all three Commissioners to stop by and observe the work in the 911 center. Thank you for all your support.

Mike Rosenbaum, Auditor, **Animal Shelter** needs to replace their commercial washer/dryer set, they have funds but not the full amount, **requested permission for Director Brooke Kegebein to approach the Council for additional appropriation.**

Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded, added not to exceed \$18,500 which was discussed at the recent Animal Shelter Advisory Board meeting. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Auditor Rosenbaum** explained how his office processes invoices through the remote claims system. Accounts Payable clerk reviews the submitted claims, Auditor Rosenbaum reviews about 20% of them as well and recently they noticed sales tax charged on NIPSCO bills. This has been corrected with NIPSCO refunding one year's worth of sales tax. Another item verified is a description of what is being paid, just one of the internal controls that is done by his staff. Thank you.

Brian Beach, Assistant EMS Director, on March 19th EMS crews responded to a call at Camp ToPeNeBee on Holmesville Road of a man with his leg stuck under a fallen tree that went about two feet down into the ground. The man could not move his leg and called 911. External agencies assisted EMS on this call, La Porte County Highway Department did an excellent job of arriving on scene and securing the tree that fell. Great relationship with all County Departments over the last several years. EMS recognized County Highway employees Daryl Lambert, James Jones, Bob Tanksley, Todd Hill, and Joe Moquin with all receiving certificates of appreciation. **President Holifield** remembered in 1978 when EMS had to wait on the Highway Department to plow snow for them to go out on calls.

Requests

Considered travel to Benton Harbor, Michigan, April 23rd, **Sean Fagan**, Prosecutor. Regional one-day conference 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., information has been provided to the Commissioners. Mileage will be the only reimbursement. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council for overtime pay, **Brian Beach** for Eric Fenstermaker, rough start for this year so far, FMLA, Workers' Comp, Sick days plus a few Paramedic positions are open have all contributed to the department needing additional appropriation in the Overtime account with about \$200,000. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered 2026 EMS Week Proclamation, **Brian Beach** for Eric Fenstermaker. May 17-23, 2026 will be recognized as Emergency Services Week. Monday, April 18th, possibly at 10:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m., there will be an awards ceremony held in the training room within the EMS office. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

ORIGINAL

Old Business

Considered Second Reading for Ordinance 2026-1 for Innkeepers Tax Collection and Enforcement. **Laura Nirenberg**, Attorney for Convention & Visitors' Bureau, La Porte County Treasurer **Dan Barenie** and **Brett Binversie**, Hospitality & Lodging Director for CVB, a few slight changes were made to the Ordinance since our last meeting; under section 2 E a sentence was removed; in section 3 the 20 days was extended to 30 days due to the USPS and lastly with the trust tax there's a penalty that can be triggered for failure to pay the trust tax if holding for a benefactor, we codified a 60-day period - 'any individual with a duty to remit these trust taxes who knowingly fails to do so within 60 days following the filing of a tax warrant may be held personally liable and subject to the criminal referral.' **Attorney Guy DiMartino** has reviewed and approved final reading. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the amendments. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Commissioner Haney** motioned to read Ordinance 2026-1 by title only. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** **Attorney DiMartino**, 'An Ordinance setting forth the collection and enforcement mechanism for the La Porte County Innkeepers Tax, Ordinance 2026-1.' **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve Ordinance 2026-1. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Travel Form as policy for County Employees. **President Holifield**, discussions have taken place on employees and elected officials traveling for training, some assume they can go anywhere whenever they want, it's getting to be expensive. The current form was drafted to answer questions prior to going. **Commissioner Haney** added whether the training is specific to the duties of the office requesting the travel. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

New Business

Considered 2026 CCMG Bid Packet opening, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner. This is a project on Johnson Road between Highway 35 and 400 North, broken down in two segments, 35 North and all the way to Highway 20. Two bids opened by **Attorney DiMartino**. First one was Reith-Riley, total bid \$2,245,271.27. Second bid was Milestone with \$2,527,037.49. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to show both bids were timely received. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.** Bids were given to Mitch Bishop for his review.

Considered construction contract with La Porte Construction for Bridge 39, **Mitch Bishop**, Planner. **President Steve Holifield**, this Bridge has been closed for long time, it's near his neighborhood. **Mitch Bishop**, the engineering is complete, permitting has been procured. One landowner that we're still working with, NIPSCO needs to relocate a pole. We've got a contract and funding for the project. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered Addendum to General Administrative Policy Book for EMS. **Brian Beach** for **Eric Fenstermaker**, our current policy book goes hand-in-hand with our general administration book for the County, we'd like to update our policy handbook. Similar to what 911 adopted or updated for their office. This has been reviewed by **Attorney Guy DiMartino**. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered First Reading for Establishing Identification Standards for Commercial Entities engaged in land prospecting and site testing. **President Steve Holifield**, this was discussed at our previous meeting, Citizens have been complaining of surveying going on in the County with unmarked vehicles, they have a right to know who is in their neighborhood. County Attorney DiMartino drafted the Ordinance for First Reading. **Commissioner Connie Gramarossa**, who will enforce this issue and have there been any meetings pertaining to this enforcing? **Attorney DiMartino**, it was requested for him to draft an ordinance with the La Porte County Sheriff's office or the Code Compliance officer through the Building Department, an Inspector. He spoke briefly with both Sheriff Ron Heeg and Building Department Director Mike Polan. Both offices are overworked, this will not be a priority for them however if called they will go. He does not know how big of a problem this is, it may just be isolated incidents and if we're going to put an ordinance on the books, that becomes Law. Some of the ordinances we've been dealing with are from the 1990's so if this is just a short-lived problem, this might be 'overkill' for a short-lived problem. If it is agreed to move forward with this ordinance, he recommends some type of sunset provision, say only for a year or 18 months for example, it can be renewed if needed. He is concerned that this may be a reaction to recent events with Data Centers and you would be changing the law based on your reaction, not too sure of the volume of the problem, this would be his hesitation on establishing the ordinance as law, is it reactionary or something going forward that would be proactive, just think about that as we go through the ordinance process. **President Steve Holifield**, right now in his neighborhood, the Data Centers are not going to be a temporary problem, so to speak, last week there were cable contractors out in an area from Alabama, no lights, nothing on their vehicles stating who they were and they were blocking roads, lanes and he started receiving complaints. The contractors were there before sunrise. **Attorney DiMartino** asked Mike Polan to approach the podium. **Mike Polan**, Building Commissioner, contractors should be registering with his department prior to working in our County however we do get 'Slim Shaddys' who show up and start working without notifying his office. He understands the hesitancy but he would also like to see a smaller, weaker government that's not oppressive, if it becomes a point where people abuse the power then this body would have the duty to amend or rescind. We had people digging holes in our roads and they purposely covered up the insignias of the sides of the trucks, no one knew who they were or what they were doing, including his office nor the Sheriff's Department. **Commissioner Gramarossa** asked Mike Polan if he would be comfortable with a one-year period then revisit it or an ordinance put in place.

Mike Polan would rather have the sunset rule used and not expanding government, if a sunset is used then our successors after us will review to decide if it continues or stop it. No harm in a sunset added. **President Holifield**, we can address it the day before the sunset and renew it. Does not think this matter will go away, he attended an INDOT meeting for the Larrison Road Project and there are a lot of contractors working over there, he spoke to a Councilman who said they all need to be registered in their county as well. He does understand the sunset rule. **Commissioner Gramarossa**, will Mike Polan need to go to the Council for additional funds for overtime to enforce this issue? **Mike Polan**, will do his best to incorporate it into the daily duties, there is no guarantee - the authorized agents listed in the draft ordinance, himself and the Sheriff, are probably two of the busiest people in the County, we can't just drop what we are doing to go out somewhere and tase whoever is doing it – **Attorney DiMartino**, no tasers. **Mike Polan**, we risk that if we respond, they may already be gone, maybe other authorized agents can enforce, he does like the idea of sunset and having a mechanism set in place to check on people to see what they are doing, especially if there are shady activities going on and yes, residents in the areas have a right to know who is out there and what they are doing. **President Holifield** recommended to callers to get a license plate number that can be ran to see who they are and what they're doing. **Attorney DiMartino** made a few suggestions, there is a fine mechanism and for transparency if you decide to pass first reading today that a Public Hearing should be set up prior to the second reading for the public to voice their concerns or opinions. Sunset will be in 12 months? **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to read by title only. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0. **Attorney DiMartino, Ordinance 2026-2, an Ordinance of the La Porte County Board of Commissioners establishing identification standards for Commercial Entities engaged in land prospecting and site testing.**

Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to adjourn at 10:51 a.m. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. Motion carried 3-0.

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

DATE 4-15-2026

[Signature]
Commissioner Gramarossa

ATTEST: _____

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL

**PROCLAMATION
TO DESIGNATE THE WEEK OF MAY 17 – 23, 2026 AS
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES WEEK**

Whereas, emergency medical service is a vital public service; and

Whereas, members of the LaPorte County Emergency Medical Service team are ready to provide lifesaving care to those in need 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and

Whereas, emergency medical care dramatically improves the survival rate and recovery rate of those who experience sudden illness or injury; and

Whereas, emergency medical service providers have traditionally served as the safety net of America's health care system; and

Whereas, the LaPorte County Emergency Medical Services team consists of emergency physicians, emergency nurses, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, firefighters, educators, administrators, and others; and

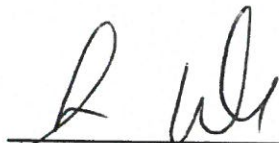
Whereas, the members of the LaPorte County Emergency Medical Services team, whether a career or volunteer, engage in thousands of hours of specialized training and continuing education to enhance their lifesaving skills; and

Whereas, LaPorte County residents benefit daily from the knowledge and skills of these highly trained individuals; and

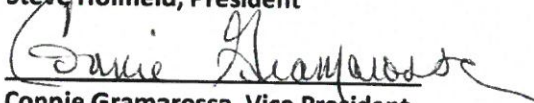
Whereas, it is appropriate to recognize the value and the accomplishments of our LaPorte County Emergency Medical Service provider by designating Emergency Medical Services Week; and

Now, therefore, the Board of Commissioners of the County of LaPorte, State of Indiana, in recognition of this event do hereby proclaim the week of May 17 – 23, 2026 as

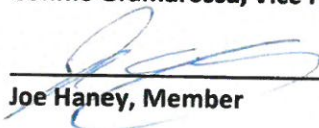
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES WEEK



Steve Holifield, President



Connie Gramarossa, Vice President



Joe Haney, Member

Attest: 

Michael Rosenbaum, Auditor

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