



**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 15, 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 Rodney McCormick.

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

Considered the agenda. **President Holifield** added Consider Pool Car Policy. **President Holifield** added Consider fob access for Clerk Heather Stevens for two doors in the La Porte Courthouse during Election cycle, south and west doors. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Considered approval of the April 1, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Gramarossa** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Haney** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** read the Claims with Payroll ending 4/3/2026 - \$1,533,666.41. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** read the Operating Expense Claims - \$1,390,384.06. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Gramarossa** seconded. **Motion carried 3-0.**

**Public Comment**

**Eric Beal**, 307 W. 13<sup>th</sup> Street, La Porte, voiced his concerns on the Data Center plans for City of La Porte. Yesterday a newsletter from Microsoft was put in mailboxes announcing the Data Center on Boyd Boulevard which is two miles from his house. Data Center will put a strain on families in Indiana, electric and water bills will skyrocket, environmental damage long-term will not offset the short-term positivity of hiring a few people to build the facility with a skeleton crew to man it and a few security guards. He's a tradesman, a nerd that loves tech, he's all for it but the hyperscale Data Centers of this size will have a long-term effect that is not good. The daily use of water will not be sustainable, even if it's one that can recycle the water. The waste will have to go somewhere and what, we'll put it right back in the Travis Ditch? It feels irresponsible to him, if you talk to communities that have these it is a blight, it doesn't do any good for them. There should be more input from the community, clearer and more transparent with everyone, not blindsides us. 'Most of my neighbors are like, we're getting a Data Center? Those things are bad news since - what are you talking about? We saw these flyers in our freaking mailboxes the day before yesterday talking about Microsoft is going to be here next week to let you know how great this is for the community. Well, of course a snake oil salesman is going to tell you the snake oil is fantastic, that's their job, they're under no obligation whatsoever to be honest with you.' He feels this would be long-term damage to the community, more of a bane than a boon. Feels blindsided, disrespectful as all get out. He went to Mayor Dermody but was told it was all misinformation, feels like the mayor can ride off into the sunset with a consultant job with these people and leave us here in the quagmire. We should be able to vote on it instead of 'here you go guys.' Thank you.

**Rodney McCormick**, 617 Union Street, Michigan City, a lot of us feel like that in Michigan City, the Mayor here and the Michigan City Mayor have the same philosophy, misinformation, but what is not misinformation is in 2027 vote them out. All of those who support Data Centers in your district, your city, ward, vote them out of office, that's what we need to do. They'll hear our voice when they're no longer in office. On another note, there's been a lot of stuff transpiring ever since he was indicted on some federal charges and he was really surprised at a few people that did not have his back, did not support him or reach out to him. He has supported the Commission that is sitting here today as well as other Republicans. Really this is mostly because of what has been on social media, he can deal with it but he remembers when Mr. Haney was accused of being an Oath Keeper, a bigot, a racist, all kinds of names yet he stood right here with Commissioner Haney, outside of the meetings he supported Mr. Haney. He did not receive one phone call from him or Mr. Stevens, the allegations made about him being racist, the incident that happened in Otis or wherever it was, he stood right with Mr. Stevens as well, supported him yet when he looked on social media he saw 'thumbs up' and 'like' what others were

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saying that was so negative. When he pledges allegiance to our flag, he believes in due process and he is confident that he will win his case. If you support someone, you're their friend, come hell or high water you still stand with them. Thinks enough people in the County knows who he is, it's amazing how things happen when you speak out against political parties or individuals then all of a sudden three years later here comes an indictment. Wish you (Commissioner Haney) would have supported me like I supported you. Our County deserves better, it's okay to 'like' what people put on social media but at the same time, when you know someone and you 'like' some nonsense, that kind of takes away from who you really are, what you say you really are to him, with that being said he hopes everybody gets out and votes. Heard voter turnout has not been that great. He thinks all three Commissioners are doing a good job, he does not like hearing all the lies, he does not like the back-and-forth nonsense that goes on, he wishes it would stop but this happens every election, every election has consequences and everybody will jump on the bandwagon. Memes are created, people make up nonsense, disrespecting women has to stop. Thank you for allowing me the time to speak.

**Gautama Logwood**, 104 W. Greenlawn Drive, La Porte, we're not at a city meeting anymore and I guess I could use my real address instead of my mother-in-law's on Monday since we changed the rules. He echoed the same sentiment from Monday night's meeting which sounded like a collective bargaining issue with unions. The support that was there acted as if there was some question whether or not this project was moving forward, we're two years downstream on this, we all got to the party late because of an NDA. Does not believe there's a way to stop the Data Center build on the south side of La Porte, in Pleasant (Township), Monday was a forgone conclusion. We are in a stage where we need to worry about fair distribution of taxation, he echoed an MOU, Memorandum of Cooperation, is a 'pinky swear.' It is a gentleman's agreement with a man who is not a gentleman, he has at no time showed any gentleman - any forthcoming towards county, body, towards anybody, his own citizens are here saying they were left in the dark. We cannot trust the City to do the right thing, we need to set precedent on these super voluntary annexations, BZA loophole annexations. 'The County won't give me what I want, I'm going to cry to the City and then get a favorable review with the annexation.' It's a loophole, and we need to treat that loophole with a TIF district before we lose possession of that property to the City. In this particular instance with 1,400 acres, it would fix budgetary issues, perhaps prevent a LIT tax increase next year which is one of the best-case scenarios for the citizens of this County and it sets a precedent in case he (Mayor Dermody) wants to do another one in another location. It's time to TIF, no one here is a 'Dermody whisperer,' no one here is going to get the respect that they haven't gotten so far from the city. This will not change unless you have leverage and that comes in the form of TIFing that farmland. Thank you.

**Gary Metcalf**, 4205 N. 325 W., La Porte, unmasked so the Commission could hear him. Listened to Monday's meeting (at La Porte City Hall) and was disappointed with the circus show, the way it happened, we all saw buses pull in, undocumented Local 150, who knows what Local they were actually from or if they were or were not even union members. Stated 'I feel as a county tax payer, no seated, voted on public official should be able to sign an NDA at all, period. We voted you in to work for the county, not for individuals, and when you sign an NDA, you actually start working for *them* and less for the people that put you in office and people remember that come election time, that's all I have tonight.'

#### Department Head Comments

**Darlene Hale**, IT Director, reported that the copier maintenance agreement is coming up for renewal, Council has requested a workshop prior to their next meeting, we have two vendors bidding on the maintenance, two different proposals, the workshop will allow questions and she would like the Commissioners to be there as well, maybe 5:15 p.m. on the 27<sup>th</sup>. This is a maintenance contract that we renew each year, prices have been going up, we've renegotiated and some prices have come down, there could be hiccups but wanted you all to be aware. Commissioners sign the contracts. Council has questions on funding. Councilman Mark Yagelski is her liaison on the Council. **President Holifield** has spoken with both Councilmen Adam Koronka and Mark Yagelski.

**Sean Fagan**, Prosecutor, announced few events in the county. We are in the final development of a Mental Health Court, that should be online around June/July. Looking forward to having this as a new opportunity to get resources to defendants and other community members, this will be a great thing. Recently attended the Child Abuse Vigil held at La Porte City Hall for abused children, DCS, Geminis, Family Advocates and other organizations were present. April is Child Abuse Awareness month. Friday at PNW/PNC, Family Advocates will have a breakfast, guest speakers, if you have the opportunity to go, please do. Tickets are \$10 and it is for a good cause. It is also Sexual Assault Awareness month, this is a terrible scourge within our community and we are in the final processes of getting our SART, Sexual Assault Response Team, protocols done and finalized. Thank you.

**Considered** permission for Clerk Heather Stevens and Deputy Kari Barenie fob access to the West and South doors in the La Porte Courthouse from now through the Primary Election on May 5<sup>th</sup>, will be reviewed later. **President Holifield**, make sure Mike Raymer is involved. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

#### Requests

**Considered** travel for Drug Court Team to Nashville, Tennessee for annual All Rise training, July 20-23, 2026. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Considered** travel to Rock Island, Illinois, May 18-20 for Fidlal Educational Symposium, **Ela Bilderback**, Recorder. Annual training, learn new things and one of the new things coming our way is AI and how it can be used in her office. Sometimes the things change and come out quicker than we would probably like because technology is just crazy but it's a great opportunity to stay on top of it. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Gramarossa seconded for discussion. President Steve Holifield**, Fidlal is one of our vendors? Is this a state mandated course or credit hours? **Ela Bilderback**, we do get credit hours. It is not State called. **Commissioner Gramarossa** questioned Attorney Guy DiMartino if a Symposium considered training? **Attorney DiMartino**, if they get credit hours than yes, it can be through a Symposium. No additional funds are needed. **Motion carried 3-0.**

### Old Business

None

### New Business

**Considered** 5 Revolutionary War Veterans for Spring Bridge Naming, Bruce Johnson, Bridge Naming Committee. **Commissioner Gramarossa motioned to approve the names of the Veterans. Commissioner Haney seconded. Motion carried 3-0.**

**Thomas Burch: February 25, 1756 – August 3, 1837 Union Mills Cemetery - Bridge # 73.** Thomas Burch was born in Pawling, Dutchess County, in the Colony of New York to Robert Increase and Mary Gifford Burch. In 1776, Thomas Burch served three months in the New York Troops under Captain Peter Martin and Colonel McCracke. From April 1, 1776 to January 1, 1778, he was a private in Captain John Vamee's company in Colonel Hay's regiment of the New York Line under General Schulyer. During his work with the New York Line, Thomas was sent to General Schuyler's sawmill on Fish Creek to provide lumber for the forces. From September to November 1778, he was stationed at Half Moon Point where his unit transported "liquors, provisions, and baggage" to the troops at Albany. Thomas Burch was married to Susannah Talbot, and they had 4 sons, Rodney, Zebulon, Ira, and Erastus. In 1833, members of the Burch family arrived in La Porte County, Indiana. In 1835, Thomas and his brother Admiral Burch purchased several sections of land in Noble Township a mile east of Union Mills. On April 4, 1836, Thomas and Admiral Burch voted in the first Noble township election. Thomas Burch died August 3, 1871 and is buried at an unknown site. However, the Duneland Chapter, Indiana Society, of the Sons of the American Revolution placed a cenotaph in his honor by the U.S. flagpole in Union Mills Cemetery.

**Clark Burlingame: October 17, 1757 – January 13, 1842 Door Village Cemetery - Bridge #89.** Clark Burlingame was born October 17, 1757 in Coventry, Kent County in the Colony of Rhode Island. He is also known as Clerk. His parents were Ephraim and Julia Stetson Burlingame. Clark Burlingame was married to Patience Sopher on December 6, 1777 in Fairfield, Vermont where he served as Justice of the Peace. There they had seven children. Clark first served as a private in Captain Jonas Galusha's Company in Colonel Herrick's regiment of the Vermont Militia. They served in the Alarm of 1780 in which they marched 55 miles in 5 days. Clark was also with Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys in 1785 when they captured Fort Ticonderoga. Later, he served during the War of 1812. On September 6, 1830, at the age of 72, Clark was married to Elizabeth Aldress in Putnam, Indiana. Following her death, he came to La Porte County, Indiana in 1835 and lived with his son Abel, north of LaPorte, on the Summit where he was a farmer and a cooper. Clark Burlingame died in La Crosse, Dewey Township, La Porte County Indiana January 13, 1842. He was 85 years and 85 days old. He was buried in an unmarked grave in block 2, lot 45, grave 3 in Door Village Cemetery, LaPorte County, Indiana. On May 18, 1963, the Miriam Benedict Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a gravestone in honor of Clark Burlingame and his service in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.

**Hezekiah (Ezekial) Smith: 1760 – September 28, 1838 Door Village Cemetery - Bridge #260.** Hezekiah Smith was born in 1760 in Canoe Brook, Essex County, in the Colony of New Jersey to Obadiah Shields and Hanna Morris Smith. At an early age, Hezekiah learned to be a blacksmith. Blacksmiths were being recruited by the Continental Army's barrack masters and Deputy Quartermasters to perform maintenance and construction work. Hezekiah enlisted in the Continental Army just before his 16th birthday. For a while, he was privileged to be a servant boy to General George Washington. However, because of his blacksmith skills he was given the distinctive title of "artificer" and was assigned to ordnance and maintained the army's artillery pieces. Hezekiah Smith was at the Battle of Bunker Hill near Boston on June 17, 1775 one of the earliest battles. Although the Americans lost, they inflicted major casualties against the British which gave them a boost in morale for the cause of the revolution. He left the service on June 6, 1783 and returned to being a blacksmith. Hezekiah Smith was married to Rhoda Wyatt, and they 8 children, 3 sons and 5 daughters. In 1833, they moved to LaPorte County, Indiana. He died September 28, 1838 and was buried in Door Village Cemetery. His grave monument has his name as "Ezekial Smith".

**John Stoner: 1750 – 1836 Miller-Griffin Cemetery Kankakee Township – Bridge #605.** John Stoner enlisted in 1775 and later became Captain in the 10th Pennsylvania Regiment. These troops were raised on September 16, 1776 at Philadelphia for service with the Continental Army, in the strength of 8 companies. The 10th Pennsylvania Regiment was assigned to George Washington's main army in December 1776. The 10th regiment saw action during the Battles of Brandywine, Paoli, and Germantown in 1777, at Monmouth in 1778, and at Springfield and Bull's Ferry in 1780. The 19th Pennsylvania merged with the 1st regiment and disbanded in January 1781 at Trenton, New Jersey. John Stoner died in 1836 and is buried in Miller-Griffin Cemetery in Kankakee Township in LaPorte County, Indiana. His gravestone was placed by the Miriam Benedict Chapter of the D.A.R. in 1966.

**Henrik Van Delsem: August 12, 1757 – March 10, 1835 – Oak Grove Cem. – Bridge # 39.** Henrik Van Delsem was born in New Barbadoes Township, Bergen County, in the Colony of New Jersey on August 12, 1757 to Johannes and Geertje Kuyper Van Delsem. They had 11 children, 7 sons and 4 daughters. Henrik enlisted in the Fall of 1775 as a private under Captain William W. Gilbert with the New York Troops and served until June 1776. He reenlisted in June 1776 for 5 months as a private under Captain Hogencamp, New York Troops and then served another year as orderly sergeant under Captain Abraham Haring and Major Goetschinsm, New Jersey Troops. Henrik was taken prisoner, December 5, 1777, but escaped June 19, 1778 and reenlisted for six months in 1778 and 1779 as a private under Captain Thomas Blanch and Captain Haring of Col. Dey's regiment, New Jersey Troops. Henrik Van Delsem married Eunice Zabriske on May 10, 1787. They moved to Pleasant Township in La Porte County, Indiana with their sons Henry and Samuel and daughter Sarah and their families. Henrik died March 10, 1835 at age 78 and was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Wills Township. It is the oldest gravestone in the cemetery.

