



La Porte County
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Member

La Porte County Commissioners' Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 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. A moment of silence was conducted for a young man, 13-year-old Keegan Roberts, who lost his life two weeks ago in Lake Michigan, Michigan City.

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

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered approval of the June 17, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 6/26/2026 - \$1,601,002.36. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$3,128,545.04. **Auditor Rosenbaum**, includes paving and Inn Keepers tax paid out. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

President Steve Holifield, for Public Comment state your name, address, stay less than three minutes allowed for Public Comments, no derogatory comments or anything else against anybody in the County, in the room or anything, thank you.

Public Comment

Nicole Thode, 609 Michigan Ave, La Porte, approached the podium with her dog to address the 'poopy gate' that she has been informed of about her dog going to the bathroom on the La Porte Courthouse lawn. She does pick up after her dog, every single time, because she saw it stated that she was not. Nicole cannot walk very far, that's why she chooses the courthouse lawn because it's right across the street for her. She lives in an apartment with no yard and does not know of any other place to take her dog besides the County courthouse lawn, she wanted to address it. Asked if the Commission had any questions for her. **President Steve Holifield**, not during Public Comment but she can speak to him after the meeting. **Nicole Thode**, okay, thank you.

Department Head Comments

Dan Barenie, Treasurer, bid out the printing of the tax bills at the beginning of the year, saved \$4,500 from last year. Cost to mail out tax bills was \$45,871.12 for this year. Been watching the Michigan City office, it has been busier, the last five days of tax collections for the two tellers at the counter took in over \$4,000,000.00, 1,657 parcels were paid for at that counter. Parking spaces in the Michigan City Courthouse lot were blocked off specifically for tax payers, people appreciated it. Reported his offices took in \$102,726,536.38 for the May collections. He's been investing the money a lot quicker because he can invest it until we have to turn it over to the Auditor. In May, \$404,424.76, in just interest, hope it helps. One reason he is here today is there's a problem with the credit card company, card readers are not working, when someone pays with a credit card, staff has to manually enter the information and that slows us down, allows us to make mistakes. Problems with our e-checks also, e-checks make up about 70% of our online payments because it's cheaper than the 2 ½ % interest. In the last two weeks we had \$140,000 returned to us because the accounts were not checked, the credit card company is not even making sure the account number is valid, it creates a problem because they print a customer receipt saying it's paid, two weeks later it comes back to us, they debit it out of our account saying this customer's account is not valid so we have to go in, back out the payment, notify the customer that it didn't go through yet they have a receipt showing it was paid, the credit card company is not checking it so you fat fingered your account or you didn't have enough money, we don't know that, we sent our credit card company a letter 30 days ago asking to be let out of our contract, they actually closed us out

ORIGINAL

yesterday so we have no credit card company right now. Gave County Attorney DiMartino a new company contract for review, they are partnered with Low so they are integrated with our software, he'd like approval so we can get a credit card company for tax payments. **Attorney DiMartino** noticed it is a 3-year term, cannot get out of the contract without cause, otherwise it looks good. **Commissioner Haney**, this company has enough experience with other counties? **Dan Barenie**, yes, in Indiana they are working with Low, our financial system. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve the contract for hosting and maintenance of the online payment portal solution known as **MuniciPay with AutoAgent**. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Monique Thomas, HR, Food trucks, thanked everyone for participating when the Food Trucks were here a few weeks ago. One truck was unable to make the event, they serve breakfast and would like to participate, requested permission to allow Travelin' Tom's Coffee Truck to setup in La Porte on July 7th and in Michigan City July 8th. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Heather Stevens, Clerk, thank you for getting some type of air into that courthouse because wow, they were sweating over there, while it's not perfect, we appreciate it because now we have units, we can turn them on/off and it's not 90 degrees in there, thank you and then the other thing, starting today, if you are more than 90 days past due, we have a company PayCourt, they are a collections agency, will run reports today and they will go after that money. She has seen and heard comments on Facebook, she's been jumped a couple of times on there, this is a money grab, no, no, no, no, no, 'I want to make this crystal clear, you were in La Porte County and you chose to commit a crime, you tied up our courts, you've used our time, you've used our resources, you're going to pay for that, this is nothing new, this is just enforcement.' **President Holifield**, these would be like the fines the court issues? **Clerk Stevens**, yeah, but it's very specific as to what I can go after, but I am going after it, so - **President Holifield**, we should, there's not going to be an extra fee? **Clerk Stevens**, not on our end. **President Holifield**, most collection agencies take a third so all right.

Mike Rosenbaum, Auditor, in order to continue receiving funds from the State, Governor Braun had temporary gas tax holiday, meaning its funding the gas taxes used for our roads and highways, since we've had a holiday there would have been a shortage for the rest of the year had they not taken some additional action. Yesterday the State Finance Committee under the Governor's direction, and working with the Controllers' office, have agreed to find ways to fund it, announced late yesterday starting July 1, they are going to start paying out or informing everybody how much will be paid out, it's only a portion of what we get for LRS and what we get for MVH, it's not losing any funds but the reason why this is a special announcement is they're locked into a budget like we are, they can't just appropriate additional funds that they may have, they have to take the money from that budget and move it from somewhere else so that is a big-time event in the state. All municipalities/local government agencies are very grateful for that action, thank you.

Reed Smith, Assistant Facilities Director, brief update on the HVAC issues at the La Porte Courthouse, all floors are up and running, there were major issues with some of the high-dollar components, looking to stock those components for future issues that go on with the systems so we don't have a lot of downtime. There are a few minor issues on the 3rd floor with the condensate pumps, we will get them fixed as soon as possible, get the system up and running to the fullest extent. Some rooms, especially in hotter weeks like this, still have issues keeping up and if it's okay with you, we'd like to keep those supplemental a/c units in there, much less load than when we didn't have fully functional systems in there so he doesn't think there will be too many issues with tripping breakers but to provide additional relief. **President Holifield**, have you informed the staff over there to be careful where they plug in because there was an issue the other day. **Reed Smith**, we're looking to replace that system, it is reaching end-of-life and we'd like to get a new system in there, more suited for the La Porte Courthouse, we need a design engineering company to design a system that would be functional to that courthouse, then from there bid out that system that was designed to different companies to complete the work. We're still in the planning process of that, and as soon as possible we will try to get that bid out, the design aspect of it, we will have a working plan in place. **President Holifield**, and a dollar amount so we know where we're at. He's looking for requests or permission to send out RFPs. **Attorney DiMartino**, you're going to rescind the one you did last meeting that never went out? **President Holifield**, correct. **Attorney DiMartino**, do you have any idea of timing or do you need to come back to get it published? **Reed Smith**, I'd like to come back in order to get it published, we don't really know what's - **President Holifield**, you have to get the scope first, it's going to be a big project. **Attorney DiMartino**, no action today then is needed. **President Holifield**, come back on the 15th, thank you. **Commissioner Haney**, appreciate the update, at our workshop one of the things mentioned was not just design build but possibly doing a 'b-o-t,' build, operate, transfer, initially that idea was shot down, but he looked into that, multiple mechanical systems throughout the state and historic courthouses have been done using a b-o-t, not saying that's the best way to go but just want to put it out there that whether it's a design build, owner's rep or not, b-o-t or some combination of those because design build would fall under b-t anyway, that's a subset, ultimately you've got one guy who's responsible for all of it, all the way through so they can't be pointing fingers at others, there would be one guy to hold responsible from start to finish. This is complicated looking into a b-o-t and there's a number of large companies throughout the state that do it, also opens up some financing options for us, with build, operate, transfer they can self-finance a lot of that from the start, looking at how we do budgets between the energy savings, from going with a more energy efficient system plus the amount that we're already spending per year, as far as repairs, upgrades, things like that that we're trying to do to keep the system up, we could look at say spending about \$650,000 a year on all of it, you could take that \$650,000, put it towards \$8 million worth of financing through a b-o-t per year so then we can hold on to some of that cash, not put it out there so as we move forward, it's important to keep that as a component there, pick a large responsible firm that has done multiple historic courthouses throughout the state, appreciate your diligence on that. **President Holifield** sent emails to other County

Commissioners in the State to find out what are they doing with their historic courthouses. **Commissioner Haney**, thank you to Facilities staff for helping to get the courthouse and lawn ready for the 250th year celebration, flags, bunting, and more even when the storms came through last week, and now we have the heat wave. The Fair is coming up, your office does all of it with an 8-man team, you're doing a ton of work. Huge thank you to you all.

Requests

Considered 60 sick days pay for Sheriff's Garage retiring employee Bob Parks. **Al Ott**, Chief Deputy Sheriff, stated Bob Parks has worked for the County Sheriff's garage for 43 + years. These are big shoes to fill however several employees are retiring but we're a good team, we'll be fine. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered permission to approach the Council to spend funds. **Charity Glaser**, Highway Superintendent, wishes to purchase two new tandem dump trucks from budgeted money, the chassis from this year and the outfitting from next year's budget totaling \$636,844 over two years. Need approval this year because the new emissions are coming out next year, there's going to be new engines with an average of \$16,000 more per vehicle. Don't want a first-generation engine so the kinks are worked out, if we can get on a program where we can get two trucks every two years, chassis one year, outfit the next, it will keep our fleet up-to-date instead of going for eight (8) trucks at a time. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.** **President Holifield** asked for a Johnson Road repairs update. **Charity Glaser**, we are on a rolling closure right now, one section is done for berming but waiting on locates for the next section, tree work is being done, she is aware of the inconvenience to the public but it is the safety of her staff to use the rolling closure. Should be finishing up next week on Thursday then paving starts on the 20th, the milling, we're on schedule. **President Holifield** thanked her department for their great work.

Old Business

Considered RFPs for La Porte Courthouse HVAC/Plumbing. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum** opened sealed bids from two vendors: Arctic Engineering and D. A. Dodd. **Attorney DiMartino**, they're for four buildings, La Porte Circuit Courthouse, County Complex-Jail, Hiler Building and Superior Courthouse in Michigan City. Asked if a performance bond or certificate of insurance was in the bid request. **Reed**, no, it was not. Bids were handed to Reed Smith; he will return to our next meeting with a recommendation. **Commissioner Haney motioned to show bids were accepted/timely received. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

New Business

Considered ordinance amending Chapter 94 authorizing comprehensive community cat management, TNR and SNR, **Commissioner Joe Haney** for Brooke Kegebein, Animal Shelter Director, this is supplemental to the existing ordinance, brings our current ordinance in line with the best practices that are done by various cat rescues here in La Porte County. Feral cats are trapped, spayed or neutered, receive vaccines and then are returned where they were found, this helps manage the cat population out in the wild by the males/females not reproducing and neutering the males helps calm their temperament, less territorial, and is a humane way of dealing with the cat population that every single community throughout the entire nation deals with and brings our current ordinance in line with best practices. This will not interfere with the amazing work with our community cat associations, it gives our Animal Shelter a mechanism for any cats that are brought in, currently as part of the spay/neuter process they surgically remove a portion of the top of the ear to identify that the cat has been sterilized, not capable of reproducing. Right now, there is no real mechanism in our current ordinance to return the cats and this creates a real juggling process at the shelter, this is better as opposed to the unfortunate alternative, which everyone knows the Animal Shelter does its best to be as 'no kill' as possible, this brings everything in line with the current ordinance. A unanimous recommendation from the Animal Shelter Advisory Board as well. **Commissioner Haney motioned to suspend the rules to approve on first reading today. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.** **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve by Title only. Commissioner Holifield seconded for discussion**, as a farm, some people tend to think it's a cat shelter, lots of farms that is, if there is an issue then can we call the Animal Shelter, they come to trap the cats because at times he's had up to 30-40 cats roaming his barns, they are fed but it does get expensive. **Commissioner Haney**, it would give us a mechanism to either do it from the shelter or one of the community cat rescues. **President Holifield**, the cats will be returned to the area they were trapped? Will they still have their claws? **Commissioner Haney**, yes and they will *not* be declawed. It's just sterilization, surgical ear tip so they're marked, generally the cats do not go in the trap a second time, learned their lesson first time around, but if they do, you know immediately by viewing the ear tip that it's already taken care of, and returning them to the place they were trapped helps create - to prevent a vacuum, nature pours a vacuum, right, if all the cats are removed from an area then you get an influx of even greater number of cats, there's tons of studies to back this up, keeping the sterilized cats there flat lines the population and over time it starts to decrease, obviously once the cats expand their life, you'll get more cats that come in. Best way to manage the cat populations throughout the nation. **Motion carried 2-0. Attorney Guy DiMartino, Ordinance 2026-3, An Ordinance amending Chapter 94 of the La Porte County Code of Ordinances to authorize comprehensive community cat management, trap-neuter-return, and shelter-neuter-return. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0. ***Rules suspended, pass on first/second reading. ***Ordinance 2026-3**

Considered Public Hearing related to the creation of an **Infrastructure Development Zone** within certain areas of La Porte County. **Matt Reardon**, OCED, La Porte County is the second largest land area in the state, lots of rural areas, not just the cities and towns that are the responsibility of the county. About 10 years ago, Indiana along with the Federal Government, embarked on a program to expand access to broadband, that was prior to Covid. We all saw how it was when no one could go anywhere, have meetings, attend meetings, connectivity was essential for commerce, medical, and educational. We have a company with a presentation that will tell you about them, what they've done for business in our county over 20 + years, they've chosen a pathway to embrace the opportunity provided by the state and Federal Government and leverage money to put in rural broadband. Would I spend my own money where I think I could get a bang for the buck? I'll probably focus on that; would I spend my money on things that may not give me a bang for the buck or how would I get that accomplished because I want to do it. That's kind of how the Bead program works, a company comes in and says 'I want a grant' and the Federal Government says, 'great, who are you serving?' 'We're going to serve people that are far away from where we're at.' 'Why would we give you money? Probably won't give you money unless you participate with us.' A company, in this instance is Surf and let's say they say, 'Great! We're going to fill out this grant request, we'll give you all of these addresses, we'll tell you what roads we will put it on.' And for that privilege, they get to match the grant amount with 51%, they get to put it in the ground, they have to spend it. What is the value of an Infrastructure Development Zone? In this instance, what the County has discussed is limiting what it could be used for, the statute speaks to other utility opportunities, this was limited to one broadband expansion, to focus on giving people access to broadband. Most people in the room have access to broadband, but if you don't have access to broadband, what does that cost you? Do you pay Starlink? How do you do it? You use your phone? This company wants to provide an option for people to access and in that they are asking for the County to participate in a way that would reduce their tax liability over time in exchange for an investment. With this particular IDZ, there are three key things, one of them is that its limited to broadband; two, that there's some tax savings associated with and while I don't want to get into 'how' or 'why,' there's a tax related matter in front of the Executive as opposed to the Financial meaning you as the Commissioners versus the Council where all other discussions occur, this is how the law is written so here we are, the company talked about an estimated savings over time, they'll address that and we also suggested being included into the ordinance that this company would remit upon approval, 15% of this projected savings over ten (10) years, which is not happening today. The other thing that was included in this was that there was going to be a limitation on this, a 10-year limitation is proposed. If you've passed an Infrastructure Development Zone, there would be no limitation, this Council has said there needs to be a limitation, the other part has to do with interface with the Building Department and there's been some suggested improvements, let's just use that term, related to construction around broadband and part of this ordinance stipulates that not only will the project limits be provided to the county Building Department but also the contractors associated with it. Those things are embedded into that; Surf is not necessarily the petitioner but they are the reason for the suggestion. Other counties, rural counties, have utilized this to partner and get broadband expanded. I'd have to guess that people that are in business, and this is still America, are trying to make profit, probably focus on places that they could make the most profit. I would argue that expanding rural broadband is probably not a 'get-rich quick' scheme but part of the overall business corporate platform feeling that there's some things they should be doing and Surf is one of the companies from La Porte that has embraced this, we appreciate it so that's the underpinnings of this request, those not familiar with the term unincorporated La Porte County means, it means everywhere but any city or town, you don't control what Michigan City or La Porte or La Crosse do, this unincorporated, rural La Porte County. **Steve Carender**, Surf Internet, part of our rural infrastructure development team, we pursue underserved and unserved in Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana, we find creative ways to get connected. Steve has been with the company for over 24 years, been part of the La Porte community since 2001, office originally on Pine Lake Avenue but have moved to State Street several years ago. We're a Broadband Company; we've built the City of La Porte and a number of other communities in La Porte County. Much of this activity that's happened in fiber development, looking at the map right there, six years ago it would have been blank, this development has happened rapidly for us, it's a result of a combination of factors. Covid, that Matt mentioned, was a wakeup call for people and made broadband more than just an amenity, made it a necessary utility. Our leadership have the foresight to strategically partner with strong financial partners allowing us to do this expansion and then the State of Indiana, which had rural broadband pro initiatives that they started up. The purplish areas, or as my daughter told me last night is periwinkle, those areas are actually funded in part by those State Broadband Programs. Proud of our Team's efforts to bring about \$5.5 million dollars in broadband grants into La Porte County for rural broadband development. On the next slide, what happens next, the Bead Program is the largest public works initiative for broadband of our generation, probably the next generation as well, this map depicts our area that we have won in Northwest Indiana and the blue lines are the routes we will be building as part of that, La Porte County is a part of a five-county super region project that we're building. Marshall and Starke Counties are on their own as sub-projects but that super region is not only for last mile broadband but as a side effect, we are helping to establish high-capacity routes that are interconnecting some of these locations. Next slide shows the impact for La Porte County specifically, we have 1,373 Bead locations, those are the lead locations that Matt was talking about that Surf provides 51% funding for the construction costs and Bead picks up the other 49%, that's not the only part of Bead because there are ineligible addresses that were not eligible for the Bead Project that were also on path. Surf identified, is committed to building and funding on its own 1,989 additional addresses in La Porte County. That takes us to 3,300 addresses that would be a part of the Bead Project impacted by this, when we take the Surf funds and the Bead funds together, it's a \$9.586 million dollar capital investment in La Porte County. When we break that down into what the impact is on a 'per location basis,' that's \$2,851 of infrastructure that's delivered to the doorstep or the property line of those 3,362 locations. The map on the right is the combined network that will result in Bead, our existing network and I invite you to consider this map, not only as a map of the network but this represents the infrastructure, permanent infrastructure, that is future proof in that fiber has that unique characteristic, it has essentially unlimited capacity for what we're using the internet for, data today and what we will be in the future.

This type of infrastructure is absolutely necessary for La Porte County to participate in today's digital economy and especially for the digital economy in the future. The next slide, the reality is we're building in rural areas and are characterized by this limitation, it's low density and low density translates into higher cost per location and less revenue. Surf would have to charge \$700-\$800 per household for monthly service to equal the revenue that can be generated for an 'urban area.' With the Bead Program we're following our mission of connecting the unconnected and our commitment to those rural areas, but on the corporate side there is a tension there because we are also bringing on fiber assets that are a drag to our overall EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization) and profitability, we just cannot make these produce the kind of revenue and profitability that the type of network is on the top so we're compounding in La Porte County, we looked at the half mile as an example, we're multiplying that issue by 245 to get to that full network so the reason why we're pursuing and hoping you consider the tax relief because it's an overall strategy for us to make these a more financially viable project, it's integral to other strategies that we're using because we're bringing on that seven county map, it's a lot of inventory of non-productive type of assets. When we do that, we need to offset that in every single way that we can, tax release is one of those, last year we paid just shy of a quarter of a million dollars in personal property tax on our existing fiber assets. We're not asking for any modification or reduction of that obligation, we're talking about our new fiber construction as part of this Bead Program only in rural development areas, it's not a reduction of our existing tax burden, it's a reduction of that going forward on what we build in rural areas. **President Holifield**, understands that you can't run a million dollars of fiber for three (3) customers and this is for you to create broadband for the entire County, even for people in areas that are very hard to reach. **Steve Carender**, not the entire geographic County but the areas that we've won in rural La Porte County. **President Holifield**, nowadays more people are doing school on the internet and without that kids can't go to school. **Steve Carender**, this helps eliminate those trips to McDonalds parking lot to connect to the Wi-Fi. Thursday Night Football is on Amazon Prime; there are people who have lost employment or cannot get employment without the ability to work from home. The Bead Program subsidizes our construction of the network, we face that ongoing operational burden of a low revenue producing asset that we have no subsidy for and that's why we're seeking tax relief on that, thank you. **Commissioner Haney**, most of my questions have already been answered and addressed, appreciate it, thank you. *****Surf Internet Power Point Presentation attached to minutes**

President Holifield opened the Public Hearing at 10:48 a.m., state your name and address when you approach the podium. Same rules apply as Public Comment.

Paige Marshall, 7495 W. 100 S., La Porte, spoke on behalf of Angela Henzman, who was unable to attend today's meeting. Paige asked if the tax exemption was a 10-year term, answer was yes. Angela Henzman supports the Infrastructure Development Zone. *****Statement attached to minutes.**

David Weiler, 5479 S. 625 W., Union Mills, attending the meeting at the request of Carlton Bishop to explain how long and how hard it has taken his household to get reliable internet, he was in a position where Surf had over-the-air with line-of-sight but that didn't work because of the trees and the cost of a tower. Lived at this address since 2005, has been turned down numerous times by Xfinity, it's a half-mile road, a dead end. Xfinity had 3-4 houses hooked up and they refused to run it another ¼ mile to pick up 11 homes with no reason why. The best he could do prior to fiber being installed was with T-Mobile and at best, he had 75% coverage at the time. When issues occurred, he would be provided temporary service or fixes for 20 years now. It has made a huge difference for both him and his wife for communication. It was always a constant battle, over-the-air television, wanted to get rid of the Dish but couldn't even do that with the new digital signals, that's intermittent as well because of the rural community location. Here to say it will be worth it in the long run especially for those areas without a choice, he's not that far from Westville, and they're still in a dead area. Has friends in the north part of the County that are struggling to get internet as well. This will be great for the community if you will support it. Still having a bit of an issue with connectivity with Surf but there is a technician coming out today, they're a great company as far as he can see, it is a good service and makes a huge difference and he speaks for those residents on his road. Thank you.

John Matwyshyn, 8352 E. Emery Road, New Carlisle, has been a Starlink user since it was in Beta when they referred to the project 'it's better than nothing,' at that time Dishes were \$550-\$595, services have always been adequate for his needs. Recently Starlink has offered a miniature version which is available through big box hardware stores for around \$250, a device with a wall port power supply or use a 12-volt battery pack, you can place it anywhere and it has to see the sky. On standby, the current charge is \$10 per month with a bit rate that covers his needs, never had anything delayed, he still has the standard Starlink and the Nano was sent to him at no additional cost because he was one of the original Beta testers, it was sent to essentially test the system, Amazon will be competing with Starlink, price to be determined. Fiber is still worth having, people with Starlink will also have fiber as backup for redundancy's sake, however, for low density areas like the map showed, they should start first with satellite communication when there's enough demand for fiber, that's when it should be brought in, not to put fiber in with a speculative nature because it's expensive to bury fiber. Cell phone companies are not sitting idly by, they will come in and provide an alternative service, it's a very dynamic market place. Does not know if there is a need to push fiber in areas that don't have demand for fiber right now, thank you.

Public Hearing closed at 10:57 a.m. **President Holifield** asked Steve Carender if they will pay the \$230,000 a year in property taxes, **Steve Carender**, yes. **President Holifield**, clarified that Surf is asking for a reduction in the \$66,000 of the *new* services. **Steve Carender**, the new construction in rural unincorporated due to the grant. Agrees to pay 15% of that savings and the County

will get \$9,000 a year for the next 10 years. **President Holifield**, so we're not losing all of that then, correct? **Steve Carender**, no, not all of it. **Attorney DiMartino**, you say losing as if you already had it, you do not have it yet. **President Holifield**, okay, not losing, the Bead Program is Federal? **Steve Carender**, yes, administered by the State, federal dollars for all 50 states and territories. **Commissioner Joe Haney** followed up on the comments made during Public Hearing, coverage using line-of-sight or wireless stuff, T-Mobile was mentioned, as inaccurate as the FCC maps are, as far as coverage for La Porte County, look at the KZM files from State of Indiana and the Bead Grant, you see those are off but some of the coverage maps from cell phone companies, he tried to switch to T-Mobile several years ago, they had a good deal going on, said he had 5G coverage at his house in unincorporated and rural La Porte County, he got zero bars even standing outside his house, anyone visiting his house with T-Mobile had no bars either for service, the map clearly showed the 5G coverage at his house, he does not live in the rolling hills of the northern part of our County but he is in a rural area where it is flat. There is a cell tower not too far from his house. Doing research for this issue, there are thousands of homes currently not served when the map coverage says they are, the KZM files and Bead level maps are more accurate when trying to view what is happening here. Indiana is a Home Rule State, a minimum level is set as to what can be done, and set additional restrictions. IDZ starts out as basically an infinite type of abatement type situation, we negotiated, chopped it down 20 years then cut it in half to 10 years. That's progress, balancing the needs to be sure we get fiber investments in La Porte County, knows there are folks not happy with - it was the Biden administration who spearheaded a lot of the Bead Grant funding, everyone knows he's not necessarily a fan of the former President but he does not want to let his disdain for something else transfer over and be an inhibitor to doing what's right, the federal government has taken a lot of money from us, it'd be great to get some of that money back here in the ground in La Porte County. People wonder why there's been some stagnation here in the County, in our population level for decades, he's got three daughters, he wants to see them here in La Porte County, to live and have homes in La Porte County, be able to work in the high-tech industry jobs and have reliable service at home. These are the type of amenities that attract new people but also keep our family members here, not looking at some massive influx of people here but at least like to keep family members here, they grow up here, his daughters have been raised here, he'd like them to stay. The most germane thing before us here today is infrastructure and proper responsible economic development, love it or hate it, what the federal government's sending out billions across the country, as we've talked about, to expand fiber into rural areas, that money is our money, right, yours' and mine, it was taken by the feds in the form of taxes and we need to bring it back here to La Porte County, they took it, let's get some of it back, in the past five years he's successfully helped bring fiber, tens of thousands of La Porte County homes, as well as help from the Commission, Council and other members, it's not fair to the remaining homeowners to stop now, especially when we have the opportunity to bring those tax dollars back to La Porte County in the form of permanent critical infrastructure upgrades, it would truly be reckless for us to leave the millions of dollars in new infrastructure on the table, and honestly it would be a slap in the face to the thousands of residents that are still waiting for reliable high-speed internet. We've had too many politicians in La Porte County who've let our County stagnate in this area, and our residents have suffered because of that, they didn't understand the importance of bringing those tax dollars back home, they're already allocated, it's not like this money if we don't get the five million here in La Porte County, that money will get returned in the federal coffers, it's going to Illinois, going to California, it's already out there so let's bring it home to La Porte County. We can't be so shortsighted as to cut off our nose despite our face here, he ran for this office to be a voice for unincorporated areas and residents, not across, not just his district but all of La Porte County, and he won't stop fighting for them while there's still work to do especially when there's money out there that we can go grab and get here. We talked earlier about many folks reliable high-speed internet is not just a luxury, it's a necessity, right, it powers medical alert devices, insulin pumps, medical devices that communicate with the internet, they need to update in real time, information needs to be sent to the medical providers to go back for real-time reporting, there are home security cameras, the ability to work from home and the ability to home-school our children, he and his wife homeschooled their three daughters and prior to high-speed internet, which only a few years ago did we finally get fiber, we would drive to either the library or Starbucks parking lot to get our larger uploads/downloads, he'd take a jump drive with his laptop, run down, download stuff, plug it back in and take it home. Some of the best homeschooling programs, we used a good Christian homeschooling program, but it's all done pretty much online, those informational/instructional videos and stuff that we use to supplement our own teaching at home. Trying to download with only 2 meg, not 2 gigs but 2 meg, DSL service through a copper line from Frontier for years, we had Surf Wireless for a while but when the trees grew up between us and that tower out at the Summit Farm, he can't go a ¼ of a mile away and start chopping down somebody's trees so he can get line-of-sight to get internet service back. These are physical impossibilities for our residents. Some folks have said or 1-2 individuals have said, 'people moved out in the middle of nowhere, that's on them,' he moved to his house in 2014, there was no 1 gig speeds anywhere really rural, rural folks except in some of the densest populations that serve businesses, there are some folks who have lived in their homes for 20, 30, 40 years, right? Back when La Porte County first got electricity, for the folks who didn't live right inside the City limits, 'sorry, no electricity for you, you should have thought about that when you built your home.' It's not the Government's responsibility in this case to provide internet services for folks but what we have here is a responsibility to get Government out of the way, remove some of those barriers for the infrastructure to be able to let private industry come in and do what it wants, capitalism is an amazing system, it is by far the best economic system that's ever been devised by mankind, not perfect though, in some of these instances, be able to let private industry go in, take the risk, the gamble, to help get some of these people served. It really comes down to two options: option one, we can get cash in hand for the County on day one, accountability measures put in place and high-speed internet for thousands of new homes, we get \$7,000,000 in new infrastructure that's going to raise property values, making our rural areas more desirable. Option two: no money now, no money ever, no accountability and thousands of homes unserved. He's prepared here today to vote in favor of cash in hand on day one, he's going to vote for \$7,000,000 in new infrastructure, he's voting to bring \$5,000,000 of our tax dollars back home here to La Porte County, he's going to be voting for those 3,000 homes that we just talked about just as he fought

for the thousands of others who have already had service through grants. Commissioner Haney motioned to suspend the rules to approve on first reading for an ordinance designating certain areas within La Porte County Infrastructure Development Zone. Commissioner Holifield seconded, then added he is not a technology person, his cell phone baffles him most days, reached out to his daughters and son, one daughter equated this to the Tennessee Valley Authority when they brought electricity to rural areas, then the telephone was added. They did it only if it was affordable for them to go and if we can help this company to stay here in our County, providing jobs, benefits citizens, it is a good start. Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve by title only. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Attorney DiMartino read into the record Ordinance 2026-4, an Ordinance of the La Porte County Commissioners designating certain areas within La Porte County an Infrastructure Development Zone(s) pursuant to Indiana Code 6-1.1-12.5-4 twice. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve Ordinance 2026-4. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0. ***Ordinance 2026-4

Considered Lawson-Fisher Associates contract for professional services for Bridge 114. Mike Yacullo, Engineer, Lawson-Fisher was selected via a qualifications-based selection process as required by INDOT, we do have federal aid on this project so we are bringing some of those federal dollars back to the County. They'll pay for 80% of the services here with Lawson-Fisher to design the reconstruction of Bridge 114. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded, this is the bridge just north of Kingsford Heights. Motion carried 2-0.

President Holifield, failed to bring this up at the beginning of the meeting, last weekend a County Highway employee was involved in a fatal motor vehicle accident, keep his family in your thoughts and prayers. Also received a notice from NIPSCO that they are updating their meter services, they are changing how their workers are attired and they say be very careful, there's a scam going around right now where people are claiming to be NIPSCO workers, coming on your property asking for private information. Make sure anybody comes on your property that you verify that they are with NIPSCO, have ID badges. Then on Saturday morning at the Hiler building during the parade, there will be a police command vehicle at the Hiler parking lot, just an FYI. Attorney DiMartino confirmed with President Holifield if the lease vehicle was returned to the company and nothing more needed to be done on our end.

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 11:13 a.m. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.



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

DATE

7-15-2026

ATTEST:

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL

IDZ Statement from
Angela Henzman, Candidate for
LaPorte County Commissioner
July 1, 2026

Good morning, Commissioners.

My name is Paige Marshall, and I am here today on behalf of Angela Henzman. Angie is unable to attend this morning's meeting, but she asked me to read this statement into the record regarding the proposed Infrastructure Development Zone for broadband service in an underserved area of LaPorte County.

Angie supports this Infrastructure Development Zone because expanding reliable broadband access is an important investment in the future of LaPorte County.

Today, internet access is not a luxury. It is essential for education, health care, small business, agriculture, remote work, public safety, and everyday communication. Too many residents in rural and underserved areas still face limited or unreliable service, which puts families, students, seniors, and businesses at a disadvantage.

This proposal, with service to be provided by Surf Internet, would help bring broadband access to approximately 1,800 LaPorte County residents. That is meaningful. It represents real households, real students trying to complete schoolwork, real residents needing access to telehealth, real workers needing dependable internet, and real local businesses trying to compete.

Angie believes county government should support responsible infrastructure improvements that directly benefit residents and strengthen our communities. Expanding broadband into underserved areas is exactly the kind of practical investment that can improve quality of life and support economic opportunity.

Angie also encourages the Commissioners to continue keeping residents informed as the project moves forward. Residents should have access to clear information about the areas included, the anticipated timeline, the services to be provided, and how this project will benefit the families and businesses it is intended to reach.

Angie supports this Infrastructure Development Zone as a positive step toward closing the broadband gap in LaPorte County. She appreciates the effort to bring reliable service to residents who need it and encourages continued transparency, accountability, and communication throughout the process.