



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, August 5, 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 observed for former employee Bonnie Quigley who passed away.

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 add three (3) items; HVAC agreement for La Porte Courthouse; Road use agreement for Wabash Valley Power Association and Alcohol Beverage Commission replacement appointment. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered approval of the July 15, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 7/24/2026 - \$1,544,450.50. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$2,195,756.90. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve operating claims. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

President Steve Holifield reminded the public to state your name, address and no nasty comments, remarks or disparaging remarks towards any employee or other public, thank you.

Public Comment

Nancy Morgan, 2422 S. Taylor Road, Mill Creek, Lincoln Township Trustee, several phone calls to her regarding poisonous hemlock in Lincoln Township, she contacted the Health Department, they referred her to the County Highway Department, her understanding is Highway cannot do anything about it, it's too expensive. DNR won't do anything because of the lake run-off or whatever they put on it. It's very evasive, there's a lot of it out there and Lincoln Township is too small to do anything about it. **President Holifield**, considers it Hogwart, begs to differ that Purdue doesn't know much about agriculture of anything, noxious weeds are a township issue. **Nancy Morgan**, our little township can't afford to spray. **President Holifield**, our County can't either. **Nancy Morgan**, what would your suggestion be to some how control it? **Attorney DiMartino**, typically we don't do that in Public Comment. **President Holifield** told Nancy Morgan to contact him after the meeting.

Department Head Comments

John Matwyshyn, Surveyor, here about the Ordinance with the Drainage Board, the fees, believes it is being rushed. First time the Drainage Board saw the document was (3) three minutes prior to the meeting, they were told they did not need to read the whole document by the County Attorney - **Attorney DiMartino**, whoa, by the County Attorney? **John Matwyshyn**, by the Board (Drainage) Attorney Brad Adamsky, my apologies, as he was going through the Ordinance, he noticed the County Surveyor is mentioned very prominently throughout the entire 6-page document, a total of 17 times, he wanted a chance to go over the document. He was told the County Surveyor's part would be minimal, a matter of record keeping, is just one of the 17 mentions in the Ordinance. The vote was taken 7 minutes into the meeting, that's four (4) minutes after they were delivered the document. The President of the Drainage Board mentions that the motion is to approve the fee schedule, there's a whole lot more in here than a fee schedule. Point your attention to paragraph nine (9) on page six (6) on my copy says, 'All Ordinances, I'll paraphrase, all Ordinances of the La Porte County Surveyor's office in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed.' Thank you.

ORIGINAL

Matt Reardon, Office of Economic Development, reported the continuing progress in Kingsbury Industrial Park, specifically related to a BESS project, Battery Storage Project, there was a meeting with the company, the project conforms with the current zoning. Don't be confused with the upcoming zoning change being proposed, focusing industrial projects from farmland into the M2 zoning, this project is allowed to move forward under the watchful eye of the Building Department, the Drainage Board, MS4 and the office of Planning and Development. This Battery project is approximately \$350,000,000; there's specific code in the State statute that govern this and the local jurisdiction's role is to manage the site. The Commission may remember a previously proposed project that is out by Stillwell, zoned agriculture and required different actions to go through, change in zoning. In this specific project, this potential investor was asked to contact specific Fire Departments in the area, consistent with State statute, and met with the County Planner, Building Commissioner and MS4 Coordinator. Discussion was expectations of the project and why this is important to Economic Development. It is directing projects into Kingsbury Industrial Park, a three-mile wide, five-mile long Industrial Zone M2. Tax impact and benefit to the County is significant, current tax revenue generated from the property in that area is about \$7,400.00, a conservative estimate based on an assessed value of \$140,000,000 is approximately \$2,000,000 so we're moving from \$7,400.00 to \$2,000,000. **President Holifield**, this is a project that just came forward, it's great to see something go out there, it's an industrial zone and there's no houses out there in that area, people may think farmland is being lost but the only reason it is farmed is because the guy that bought it in the 1960's, his son-in-law farmed and that's why it was farmed again, the only reason it's been farmed, this is not a real loss of farmland. **Matt Reardon**, no, it's inside an Industrial Park. We will continue the work to focus on those types of investments into Kingsbury. Plans are returning to this body in September with amendments and approvals to the zoning ordinance that will direct and affect that specific example. **President Holifield**, had questions, hopes he's getting them right; this new planning development out there does not violate our JZO, this is just an addition to the JZO and specifies KOP only, correct? **Matt Reardon**, to be clear, any specific requests that the Redevelopment Commission is doing now to the zoning ordinance, is there cannot be a conflict with the zoning ordinance, the idea is to be specific to this area and this area alone, this came up at the Plan Commission, 'What about our zones through it?' **Attorney DiMartino**, and only M2, not the other zoning categories, only M2. **Matt Reardon**, when it was brought up at the Plan Commission about our Data Ordinance, no, this is the evolution of that, you created an ordinance that protects and directs interested investment in County-wide options, say those investments looking to go on farm fields that are not zoned M1 or M2. Go through the change zoning, through the BZA, this is the evolution of that, you set the standard focusing on the industrial park in M2, saying how to build certain things our way with specifications so we're looking forward to coming back in September with good recommendations. **Commissioner Haney**, appreciates the diligence in putting these types of industries into the Brownfield areas as opposed to ag land or on - we've seen 'Brownfields not Cornfields' and being able to take land that a lot of that land in the Industrial Park and it's important to understand there's a vast distinction between the Industrial Park and Kingsbury Wildlife, these are two vastly different areas in one shape or form, a Brownfield or Superfund Site. There is a small group of homes that live in the western end of the Industrial Park and when you look at that, the PUD we're developing, any of this stuff would fall into this classification in that list. Between those homes and the M2 heavy industrial area where these possible sightings could go, there is a waste management trash dump transfer site there, a major chemical processing company there, and a Superfund site as well is there, all of that would be the buffer before you would even get to anything that's being - **Matt Reardon**, one recommendation we got from our discussion with the Plan Commissioner and leadership was to create a larger buffer between any R1B and this, so when we come back through the Plan Commission, there'll be a suggestion to have a 500 foot buffer that mirrors your ordinance, just to be sure, and while its proximity to M2 is real and while there's two houses that are built in M2 is real, it was important to create a buffer, we'd have to go through the process to get it ratified but it makes good sense to do it that way, direct companies into the industrial park specifically, capitalize on that revenue, and utilize that for the entirety of the County, specifically in and around that area. **President Holifield**, remembers the Fisher-Calo explosion back in '78, his family was evacuated, been trying to do something with that property now for 60+ years, it's about time we help business to come there instead of impeding business to come there and invest in our County because if anyone follows SEA 1, we're going to be short funds in the near future and we need more revenue coming to this County, they provide jobs, too. **Matt Reardon**, this is a mathematical discussion, not a political or emotional one, there's only so many dollars available based on fixed tax rates, tax caps and levy limitations. Your choices are limited created by circumstance in the General Assembly. You could get big projects, utilize that revenue to offset what you need locally, you could raise income tax, or you could raise a wheel tax - that's a little different, I agree that sources and uses but the income tax side of this equation is a very real reality that if you can't embrace or find large revenue streams, it will impact, and it's not just this county, it's all the cities and towns and townships within the entirety of the State of Indiana. **Commissioner Joe Haney** thanked Matt Reardon for his diligence, he spoke to other community leaders at a recent NIRPC meeting, sharing ideas.

Rob Sabie, EMA, Council no longer wants to fund emergency sirens and requested a plan to phase them out. Requests a Joint Workshop between the Commissioners and Council, Commissioners own the emergency sirens. Earlier this year went before the Council requesting additional appropriations for siren repairs, received \$50,000 and most of that has been used already, a study was done about three (3) years ago by a company hired to list all sirens and conditions. At that time 14 sirens were listed as needing complete replacement, and others needed repairs. Some of these sirens are 50-60 years old, there are only 8-10 sirens with available parts while all others are obsolete for parts, they're just not made anymore. A few sirens have been down for a while, looking for parts to fix them. They are outdoor warning systems however citizens do rely on them. The Council did appropriate \$2,000 to purchase weather radios and \$2,000 for advertising or getting the word out. Repair work will continue as long as he has the money and parts. **President Holifield** will work on coordinating a Joint Workshop between Commissioners and Council. **Rob Sabie**, cost may be around \$2,000,000.00 or more to replace what we have, updating them all. Computer system was updated a few years ago,

ORIGINAL

that helped however it does no good to put money into anything that's not going to last very long. Either the sirens get replaced or they're turned off. **Attorney DiMartino** suggested checking with other counties to see what they have done. **Rob Sabie** has done that already, some counties can afford to repair the sirens, others cannot and there are counties that the Fire Departments take care of the sirens. Grants have been used in some counties as well for the sirens but that is usually for the original purchase of them, not to maintain them. Batteries cost about \$600-\$700 per siren, it is not cheap to maintain. **Commissioner Haney**, communities are struggling with this throughout the nation, one county spent about \$8,000,000.00 to revamp their sirens while other counties have eliminated their sirens and using weather radios. Encouraged citizens to go to our website and sign up for RAVE alerts that come through your cell phones. **Rob Sabie**, in Lincoln Township there are areas that may not have cell service. Weather radios are good, they alert for everything, not just tornado warnings. The radios can be set to flash or vibrate to notify the residents. Indiana has set a record this year, as far as tornadoes, with 78 confirmed tornadoes that have touched down, last year was about 32 or 36 for a record, Illinois has possibly 170 confirmed tornadoes on the ground, not funnel clouds. Thank you.

Mike Rosenbaum, Auditor, Council is holding a Public Hearing on August 20th to establish an excise tax and a wheel tax, they are not looking for the maximum amounts, they're looking for small amounts, they are looking into a few grants, either one or the other. Two communities have already put in a wheel tax, Michigan City and La Porte, this will not be a doubling of tax but for the rest of the county residents. August 20, 2026, 5:30 p.m. in this room will be the first reading, second reading will be at the Council's meeting on August 24th then a vote. Both meetings will be published in the newspaper. Thank you.

Commissioner Joe Haney, housekeeping item for the layout of our offices, County Commissioners' offices, Suite 202 of the Hiler Building, the offices shall be as follows: The Commission Executive Assistant office space shall be the main space upon entering the suite, Commission District 1 office shall be the office located at the Northeast corner suite, Commission District office 2 shall be the office located in the Southwest corner of the suite and Commission District 3 shall be the office located in the Northwest corner of the suite. The necessary adjustments or movements shall be completed by the start of business on August 10th, 2026 and should any items need to be moved to complete process of these assignments, the facilities and information technology departments are hereby directed to complete the movement and transfer of items on August 10th, 2026 starting at 0800 hours. **President Holifield**, you want to make these permanent office assignments by district? **Commissioner Haney**, yes, I think that's the most straightforward. **President Holifield**, okay, does not have a problem with that end of it but the movement end of it, we need to be sure IT and facilities can get that done by Monday. **Attorney DiMartino**, Monday is a little too tight, they've got a lot of stuff going on right now, how about the 17th? **Commissioner Haney**, start of business on the 17th, that was my motion. **President Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Requests

Considered 60-sick days pay out to Rebecca Popplewell, a 49 ½ year employee in the Sheriff's Department. **Sheriff Ron Heeg**, very lucky to have dedicated employees, this is the 3rd employee that he's requested approval for unused sick days, all with over 40 years of service. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Old Business

Considered HVAC contract with D. A. Dodd. **Angie Davis**, Director of Facilities, requested motion of support to approach the Council with HVAC maintenance contract recommendation of D. A. Dodd. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

New Business

Considered Peterson Consulting Services contract. **Auditor Mike Rosenbaum**, this is for capital asset listing and this is necessary for our audit. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered Drainage Board recommendation for an Ordinance establishing procedures & fees for permits for access to regulated drains within La Porte County. **Attorney DiMartino**, adjustments were made, County Surveyor brought up some issues, like number 6 (six), don't think he is reviewing this legally, on page six (6) it talks about ordinance practices and procedures of La Porte County Surveyor's office and La Porte County Drainage Board and all ordinances conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed. This ordinance is for a permit fee structure, we don't have one, nothing would conflict. This paragraph is actually saying if there was one, say from 1846 or something we cannot find from 1972, that this supersedes that only as to the issues in this, which is the procedure and fees for permits for access to be regulated drains. As it relates to the Drainage Board, the Surveyor has certain requirements under the Drainage Board statutes but one of them is not setting the fees for permits, he does not see a conflict. Recommended a motion to read by title only as to the First Reading, send it back to the Drainage Board for their next meeting then back to us for Second Reading. **Attorney DiMartino** offered to attend the next Drainage Board meeting if needed with the Surveyor. **President Holifield** gave background to this Ordinance. There was work being done by a utility company, fiber optics, they obtained a permit from the City of La Porte for work being done in the County, no idea why, the fiber optic company crossed a drain, no fault of the Plan Commission or the Building Department because they were working with the numbers they had, this map did not show there was buried main tile line there, the line was severed, they were not supposed to go more than 40 inches deep and they hit a 9-foot deep line which we had to do an emergency repair on it, it has been repaired and in the proper authorities' hands right now.

This will help in the future to show what all is out there prior to work being done, this will help improve the fee structure and keep track of work. **Commissioner Haney**, section 7 (seven) says, 'nothing herein shall be construed to repeal any prior practice, ordinance or procedure of the La Porte County Drainage Board or the La Porte County Surveyor's office concerning the issues set out herein.' That's an important note to make here, **Commissioner Haney motioned to read by title only. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0. Attorney DiMartino**, 'Ordinance 2026-5, an Ordinance establishing procedures and fees for permits for access to regulated drains within La Porte County.'

Considered Wabash Valley Power Association, **Mike Yacullo**, Engineer, late notice from the power company, they intend to place a substation at the southeast corner of 1200 South and County Road 375 West, the building itself is a 38,000 lb. load that will be hauled in as early as Tuesday of next week, this MOU will give us the ability to go after any damages that may be caused on the roadway. We'll go out to video the road conditions prior to the haul on Tuesday to document any damages that may occur. Next spring they're looking to replace poles and lines along 1200 South between 600 West and 375 West, a length of 300 West from 1200 South to Volk Road, possibly Frost Law locations so may be revision to this MOU based on activities next year. **President Holifield** spoke to Highway Superintendent Charity Glaser, Wabash Valley reached out to follow the rules, this MOU mirrors one used for NIPSCO in which \$600,000 was paid to the County for damages. We do take care of our roads. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered appointment to the Alcohol Beverage Board replacing former member Rodney McCormick. **Commissioner Haney motioned to appoint Ron Schafer. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

President Holifield, last week he received a call from his mother's Life Alert bracelet, thanked all those that helped on the call: 911 Director Matt Deckard, 911 Assistant Director Nikki Nixon, Training Supervisor Amanda Dorris, and Trainee Mary Conder, when he arrived at his mother's house in Lincoln Township, Nancy Morgan was there, Jennifer Fearnor and Danny Fowler as First Responders, then Paramedics John Schick and Beth Montague. Thank you to all, you don't realize the job they do until you need their services.

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 10:46 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

8-17-2026

ATTEST:

Auditor

LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

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