



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
Monday, August 17, 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.

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

Considered approval of the August 5, 2026 minutes. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered the agenda. **Commissioner Holifield** removed 11 'a' Consider contract for Construction Inspection per Bluestem Solar Farm, LLC - Phases I, II, and III Roadway Agreement. Preferred to 'Table' until next meeting, received a 3rd contract yesterday and it needs to be reviewed by Highway Department and Engineer. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Claims with Payroll ending 8/7/2026 - \$1,614,951.98. **Commissioner Haney** motioned to approve payroll. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Auditor Mike Rosenbaum read the Operating Expense Claims - \$727,021.94. **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 limited to three (3) minutes, thank you.

Public Comment

Louie Spear, 6434 S. 3rd Line Road, La Porte, spoke due to lack of action by the County Commissioners and the Drainage Board. 'Request for a Writ of Mandamus against the La Porte County Drainage Board by the County Commissioners.' ***Attached

Department Head Comments

Rob Sabie, Emergency Management, introduced Dennis Smith, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Services, in our County due to the recent Derecho storm August 11th. SBDR will have 4 to 5 crews that will be staying with a Baptist Church on Monroe Street, La Porte, they will remove trees debris from yards, roofs, at no cost, place it all on the curbline to be hauled for recycling. They require only a list and map of places to go that needs help for cleanup. **Dennis Smith**, main purpose is bringing help, hope, and healing to our residents. They prefer to manage the volunteers for two reasons: safety, especially when cutting the large trees using chain saws, and tracking hours for the County's reimbursement to turn in. **Rob Sabie**, the State opened the 2-1-1 line to report issues. Go to our County webpage to report damages, be sure to report your power outage to your provider. Structure damage needs to be reported. Emergencies, dial 9-1-1. If you're using a generator, keep them 25 feet from your house, fire departments have been running CO, Carbon Monoxide, calls only to find generators next to a house. Luckily the homes have carbon monoxide detectors to alert residents, the City of La Porte had a call with three people unconscious because there was a generator running in the home. It is very dangerous but can be avoided. He believes all County roads are open, some with only one lane but passable. Department of Corrections have crews out clearing trees from the roads, a few roads are still closed with wire lines in the trees that need to be removed, waiting for the power companies to check the lines prior to tree removal. Calls have come in from the hospitals for people using oxygen, without power their machines are not working so residents are going to the hospitals to use their oxygen and they're running low or ran out. We have an oxygen trailer that can fill oxygen bottles, it is located at La Porte Fire Station 3 on Daytona Street behind Al's, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. We still have gallon jugs of bottled water, if anyone needs water. Salvation Army has been providing food to those in need. Food Trucks have opened and providing food. We are transitioning from 'response' to 'recovery.'

ORIGINAL

The Indiana National Guard were here, their mission was to assist NIPSCO with opening our roads, not to clear fallen trees and debris on private property. FEMA plans on doing aerial surveys in Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties to assess damage. A Declaration of Emergency has been declared with possibly \$5,000,000 to use for recovery, not reimbursing residents for food that was thrown out but that may be possible later, the State has combined our storm damages with the flooding currently going on in Indianapolis, Anderson and other places. Indiana will probably end up being declared a disaster. FEMA is **not** out knocking on doors, scammers are out saying they're with FEMA then charging for cleanup. Two teams will be out tomorrow driving through our County to see the damage then upload the information to the State. Our Facebook page has a lot of information on it, things are always changing and at times, fast. Unless there are certain items approved by the Commissioners, you just can't go out, do work then submit an invoice for reimbursement to the County. Nothing is guaranteed yet to be reimbursed by the State or FEMA. It's been a hectic week but we're getting through it, thank you. Power companies ran out of poles, County and State ran out of 'Road Closed' signs. There was a fatal accident at Highway 39/ Highway 30, signal lights were out due to no power, one semi rear-ended another semi at the four-way stop.

Jeremy Sobecki, Parks Superintendent, thank you to the Highway Department for their help after the storm. Tuesday left Red Mill and Bluhm Park hit the hardest then Luhr Park would be after them, there was no way out on Holmesville Road leaving Red Mill Park so staff had to clear the way, not just for themselves but for other vehicles as well, it took about four hours to get to Highway 421 which was devastated at the intersection of 100 North/Holmesville Road and US Highway 421. Power lines and tress were down, traffic backed up all the way to Michigan City, we were able to help get all the people out of that area and some sort of traffic moving. A big tree had fallen on the Environmental Education Center at Red Mill Park, punctured a roof corner of the building, the two-story deck was badly damaged, turned it in to our insurance company. Photos were taken, tree removed and a tarp is temporarily on the roof to prevent any more damage inside the building. The generator at Red Mill has been running for almost a week straight now, our power did come back on for 12 hours until another tree fell on the power line hanging over the road and took our power out again. We are the only ones affected in that area for the 2nd power outage, the road was closed and it may be a while before Red Mill Park is opened, we've had to cancel the rentals, usually three days a week, we cannot open under the current conditions, we're losing revenue there until crews come out to remove the hanging branch on the power lines. Have not assessed every single trail we have at our parks, we did close the Mountain Bike Trails at both Red Mill and Bluhm Parks, Bluhm still has no power, Luhr Park had power back on yesterday but there was an issue with water and sewer that we're dealing with today. Bluhm Park was hit the worst, many, many trails are closed due to trees and debris down. There are a few trails open but requesting the public **not** to cross any caution tape, please. The main areas of shelters are fine, we have renters using them, a few trails are open but for safety he asked the public to be smart, adhere to the posted signs. Luhr Park, the dog park is closed due to hanging trees above, there are still trees falling in some places, Red Mill was all clear then on Saturday with no storm a tree fell across the road at the south gate and another one fall on the power line at the north gate. We have some of the most wooded areas in our County at our Parks and we got hit hard. We will need bucket trucks and professionals to come in at some time to help with the hanging trees, areas we cannot put our staff in. It may take months to clean everything up from this storm, we have 6-8 miles of Mountain Bike Trails, backwoods trails, we're not going to get to those right away with a staff of four (4) maintenance guys. The entire staff was out assessing trails when they were out of power, closing off ones that were blocked, without closing the parks completely, we're hoping the signs and caution tape will keep people out of the areas until they are safe.

President Holifield for Angie Davis, update on the La Porte Courthouse. First and second floors are operating as they should with the exception of LADS. The next step there is replacing the PCB in the unit above the ceiling, possibly making airflow improvements between the supply and return duct, the concern is we may be getting some short cycling of the air between the supply and return which could be contributing to the problems we've been seeing in that area. On the third floor, the current hurdle is a recurring CH150 fault on the outdoor slave unit, when this fault occurs it shuts down the entire third floor system. The fault is related to liquid refrigerant returning to the compressors when it shouldn't be returning as a gas. Normally the refrigerant should absorb enough heat through the indoor coils to boil back into a gas before returning to the outdoor unit. If liquid makes it back to the compressors, the system shuts down to protect them from damage. One possible cause is a valve on one or more of the indoor units sticking, losing its position or not when it's supposed to, this can allow refrigerant to continue flowing through an indoor coil even when the fan isn't running, without airflow across the coil, there may not be enough heat available to boil the refrigerant back to gas, which can result in liquid refrigerant eventually making it's way back to the outdoor unit. In between replacing the thermistors, pumps and addressing the other individual unit issues on the third floor, she has been monitoring coil temperatures on the indoor units. Based on the temperature settings and whether each unit is calling for cooling, the coil temperatures can help identify units that may still have refrigerant flowing through them when they shouldn't, the goal is to narrow down which indoor unit or units may have a refrigerant flow valve issue that is contributing to the CH150 fault rather than replacing valves or components without knowing which unit is causing the problem. That is as per Facilities Director Angie Davis on the La Porte Courthouse.

Commissioner Joe Haney, followed up on EMA and the Parks Department comments, very important to follow and obey the Road Closed and Detour signs, there may be signage that was moved or blown by the winds we had, he has seen folks driving around the signs or over the wires on the ground, some may still be live as more grids come online, they could get re-energized, without anybody knowing so respect those detour signs. Gave a 'shout-out' to all departments, all emergency services, the linemen who are out there. Our Sheriff's deputies out on the roads, the ones in the jail, our EMA Director was up here, County Highway Department has been working absolutely overtime. There has been frustration out there about the roads staying closed longer like Johnson Road, until the

power utility companies actually cleared those lines, we couldn't do it. Highway had the road opened an hour after NIPSCO finally gave the all clear. Our E-911, they're kind of sequestered over there, nobody really sees them, at the height of the storm they were dealing with over 150 calls an hour at their peak. That is a massive number of calls to deal with in one hour for our dispatchers. Our Facilities Department were hard at work immediately after the storm that day, and after, getting things together. All of our departments, our EMS were out there helping, the amount of EMS calls they were getting, breathing problems, anyway, he could not be more proud of our employees, our staff, folks putting in tireless effort here to keep things going, thank you to them and thank you to the community for pulling together, the overwhelming response from everybody has been understanding, realizing this is something we've not dealt with - doesn't know of anyone that remembers any kind of recent memory, going back 50-60 years, this kind of widespread damage and destruction and if you're in an area that didn't get hit quite as hard, used La Crosse as an example, they have certainly suffered their fair share but when you look at just south of them in Knox or north of them in Hanna, and Union Mills especially, how badly they were hit, almost baseball-size hail, and occasionally in these little pockets in La Porte County where they got hit but keep in mind and understand that the rest of your neighbors and most of the community, the vast majority of this community got absolutely devastated. If your small area didn't get too much damage, be happy, be thankful, and just be understanding that your neighbors are suffering and obviously like Porter and Lake counties, there are 100,000 people still without power, including the community hospital in Munster, so keep that in mind, there is a lot coming together and the community pulling together is amazing, thank you.

Requests

None

Old Business

Considered 2nd reading for Drainage Board Recommendation for an Ordinance establishing procedures & fees for permits for access to regulated drains within La Porte County. **Attorney DiMartino**, first reading for this ordinance was at our last meeting, amendments were made, it was sent back to the Drainage Board for their August 11th meeting, voted unanimously to adopt.

Commissioner Joe Haney motioned to read by title only. Commissioner Steve Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Attorney DiMartino, Ordinance 2026-6, an Ordinance establishing procedure and fees for permits for access to regulated drains within La Porte County. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded**, this hopefully will get cash into the Drainage Board's facility so we don't have another issue like the utilities went through on an unmarked drain, we can't have that. **Motion carried 2-0. ***Ordinance 2026-5**

Considered 2nd reading for a Joint Commission & Council Ordinance establishing publishing requirements for Ordinances and Resolutions. **Attorney DiMartino** questioned if the Council had any changes after their first reading. **Auditor Rosenbaum**, no, just with the 15-day change that the Commissioners made. **Commissioner Haney motioned to read by title only. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.** **Attorney DiMartino**, a Joint Ordinance establishing publishing requirements for Ordinances and Resolutions. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded**, these are available online if people would take the time to look on our website. **Motion carried 2-0. ***Ordinance 2026-6**

New Business

Considered plat for Leeway IN Properties. **Tony Hendricks**, for Attorney David Ambers, Hendricks and Associates, 309 W. Johnson Road, La Porte, this plat has been through the Plan Commission, through rezoning and re-platting of these lots from commercial to residential, these lots will be greater in size than any lots out there - Chamieres Pres Du Lac, Unit One, Lots C-1, C-2, C-3 and C-4, the old Cutty's Campground, presently served with sewer and water by the City of La Porte. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

Considered Resolutions for updated ADA and Title VI Plan. **Mitch Bishop**, County Planner, about two months ago he received recommendation to hire the Antero Group, they started the process of our ADA Transition Plan, Title VI, to keep us in compliance so we can apply for future federal funding. They completed their draft, there are four (4) documents that require signature from the Commission President: the ADA Self-Evaluation Transition Plan; Exhibit One (1) Non-Discrimination Statement Policy; Exhibit two (2) is a Resolution Designating the Title VI Coordinator and the fourth one is a Commitment Letter for the ADA Implementation Plan, commitments that we promise we will get done in the upcoming two (2) years. The ADA Plan gets updated every three (3) years, the Title VI Plan gets updated every year annually and we get certified every year. This is due the middle of September and the Plan is about 150 pages. **Commissioner Haney motioned to read the Resolution by title only. Commissioner Holifield seconded.**

Motion carried 2-0. Attorney DiMartino, A Resolution designating the Title VI Coordinator - Resolution 2026-5

Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0. *Resolution 2026-5**

Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the Non-Discrimination Statement Policy. Commissioner Holifield seconded.

Motion carried 2-0. Commissioner Haney motioned to approve the ADA Self-Evaluation Transition Plan. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.

Considered approval for settlement with Jennfier Banks. **Commissioner Haney motioned to approve. Commissioner Holifield seconded. Motion carried 2-0.**

ORIGINAL

President Holifield, Tuesday, August 11th, he was at a meeting in Indianapolis, started receiving phone calls about 11:00 a.m. about the storm approaching our County. As he was leaving the meeting he received a text from a St. Joseph County Commissioner and the Elkhart County Commissioner that had been at his table, the storm was moving fast, taking about 20 minutes to get to the next County as it traveled through Northwest Indiana. He was kept informed, at one time employees were going to the lowest level or center of the buildings they were in, kudos to our entire staff and Department Heads for an awesome job done when the derecho storm came through La Porte County. Thank you.

Commissioner Haney motioned to adjourn at 6:51 p.m. **Commissioner Holifield** seconded. Motion carried 2-0.



EXAMINED AND APPROVED BY THE
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
COUNTY OF LA PORTE, INDIANA
DATE 9-2-2026
[Signature]
[Signature]
ATTEST: [Signature]
Auditor
LA PORTE COUNTY, INDIANA

ORIGINAL

REQUEST FOR A WRIT OF MANDAMUS AGAINST THE LAPORTE COUNTY DRAINAGE BOARD BY THE
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Louis R Spear. 8/17/26
6434 S. Thirdline Rd.
Laporte, In. 46350

Commissioners;

The August 11, 2026 Drainage Board meeting was a debacle of anger , intimidation, and lawless behavior by the Chairman , Jeff Minsner and various members of the board including Connie Gammarosa who appointed him.

From the beginning of the meeting when I approached the board to distribute appellate case laws that are applicable to the issues regarding the DNR's blockage of the legal drain , Rodman Ditch, that damages farmland of others upstream . The chairman opened this issue for discussions and all proper Robert's procedures to proceed with this issue. At a later time this same issue was brought up about the May 29th Special Called Meeting regarding the flooding of the Schurz. Why did he singularly tell the Cities Jerry Jackson to remove the boards in the city weir on Boyd Blvd. that flows " unassessed "stormwater directly into the Schurz System causing the flooding that I am contesting.

Other issues that are contrary to any common sense and Statutory standards are as follows ;

Whereas A -

All Statutory Regulations are spelled out in Title 36. Article 9 . Chapter 27 of the IC Codes . The refusal and failure of the County Drainage Board and the Drainage Board Attorney Brad Adamski to protect the interests of all "Assessed As Benefited " landowners from flooding caused by the City of La Porte . These inactions are compelling that the County Attorney Guy S DiMartino and the County Commissioners involve themselves in removing the members incapable of following the drainage codes and the DB Attorney that refuses to advise and stop these illegal actions and inactions by the Board . A board that defies the Statutes are removable in that they are in contempt.

The County Attorney and the Drainage Board are to be advised that the Schurz and Travis ditches (circa 1916) are under the jurisdiction of the Board and that private interests "Microsoft" are not legally allowed to interfere nor influence ,with money , any decisions regarding the Schurz . By what Statute and Authority does Connie Gammarosa and Minster hold these private meetings , discussions and make illegal decisions ? By what authority does Microsoft enter into the equation of "Assessed As Benefited ?" Answer This Question, Brad and Guy.

Conclusion ;

ORIGINAL

In that this fully recorded, Schurz flooding ,situation commenced over 68 years ago I respectfully request that the County Commissioners and the County Attorney ask not ; Why did the Spears not file suit to stop this flooding of "Prior Converted " Spear farmland , earlier ? The question that needs to be answered is " WHY DID THIS TRAVESTY HAPPEN , WHO CAUSED THIS FLOODING ,AND WHO ULTIMATELY PAYS THE DAMAGES ??

ORIGINAL