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**MEETING MINUTES
LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING
Thursday, August 20th, 2026**

The Public Hearing held by the LaPorte County Council to be held on Thursday, August 20th, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. CT in the Assembly Room of the LaPorte County Government Complex, 809 State Street, LaPorte, IN 46350.

CALL TO ORDER – President Koronka called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - President Koronka asked those present to stand for the Pledge.

ROLL CALL - Auditor Michael Rosenbaum

ROLL CALL - Auditor Michael Rosenbaum called the roll.

	Heath	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenhauer	Pressel	Yagelski	Total
Present	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
Absent							X	1

PUBLIC HEARING – ESTABLISHING A COUNTY MOTOR VEHICLE EXCISE SURTAX AND COUNTY WHEEL TAX

President Koronka - Welcomed the public to the public hearing regarding establishing a county motor vehicle excise tax and wheel tax. In the 2025 General Assembly session, they have both a property tax reduction that reduced revenue to all county entities and other governmental entities. Then there was also another bill that was passed that redefines what's called Community Crossings, which allows two methods of road funding. a matching grant or a lane mile distribution. You can provide a proposal for a matching grant, which would be funded by the funds within the purview of the county council, and then that amount would be matched by the state. And that does not require a wheel tax. For the direct lane mile distribution amount, to be eligible for that, the county or the cities have to enact a wheel tax. So, at this time, I'm going to open the public hearing: establishing a county motor vehicle excise surtax and county wheel tax, and start with open comment.

Public Comment:

Jody Slabaugh, 222 West 9th, Michigan City. Good evening. I understand I had to write this out. I'm sorry. I understand the council is considering a wheel tax. Roads cost more to maintain. Avenues aren't keeping pace or revenues aren't keeping pace. And La Porte County needs more resources. I understand that. But

I believe that we're focusing too much on what we can take from the local taxpayers and residents in this county and not enough on what our legislators should be bringing back from Indianapolis. Community Crossings was created 10 years ago. La Porte County receives regularly about \$1 million a year. But that million dollars doesn't buy today what it bought 10 years ago. Instead of adequately increasing local road funding, the local assembly passed HEA 1461 last year and created additional funding incentives for communities that adopt the wheel tax and vehicle excise surtax. And that's what you just explained. That's backwards. And we've been down this road before. In 2022, when Laporte County was debating the local income tax increase for public safety, it was local Democrats who urged that raising taxes on working families should be the last resort. They called on Indianapolis to return more of our tax dollars to the local government. That was in 2022. And they were right. This shouldn't be a Republican versus Democrat issue. Because now we're considering a wheel tax, and this council is also considering it 0.2 percent EMS local income tax. Probably be brought up in about another month, I guess. At some point, we have to stop creating or stop treating taxpayers as the solution to every government funding problem in Laporte County. Before asking a family with three vehicles for another 75 bucks, we need to start. Asking and taking additional money from their paychecks with another lit tax. We need to exhaust all the other alternatives. Our state representatives and senators should be fighting for a larger share of the money Laporte County taxpayers are already sending to Indianapolis. Let's demand better funding from the state. Let's examine our own funding. I mean, you guys have already done that, you've been doing that. But and if there's still a shortfall, let's have an honest conversation about what additional revenue is actually necessary. Another local tax should be the last option, not the first. Our taxpayers are already sending enough money to Indianapolis. It's time for our representatives to start bringing it back home. Thank you. Thank you.

Chris Cleveland, 5899 East 1000 North in La Porte County. Thank you, members of the council, for hearing me today. I want to say I am enormously pleased, enormously pleased that I am not you today. And the reason is you've got a really tough job. Right? We're looking at whatever it is, a six or seven million dollar budget hole, and you've got to fill it somehow, as Mr. Rosenbaum so vividly told me a few moments ago. And that anytime you start to raise taxes or you propose it in such a way, you've got to expect that us peasants are going to show up with our pitchforks and our torches. And I couldn't get mine through the metal detector, but I can assure you that I certainly would be here in looking at this tax. My purpose here is to report to you, what I have heard in talking to La Porte County voters, because as you know, I've been knocking on some doors lately and for my own candidacy. And as I knock on these doors, what people are telling me over and over and over again is that they don't like it when people have all their hands in their pockets. Too many people have their hands in their pockets. They are very, very concerned about the cost of utilities. I go to some very, very modest homes who say that it's \$200, \$300, \$400 to heat the home in the wintertime. And often these people are on fixed incomes. It really hurts. Their colas do not match what they have to pay. They are talking about groceries quite a lot. They are talking about property taxes in certain jurisdictions like Trail Creek, where they're going up and up and up. Up. And they are talking about health care costs. And I've heard some absolutely horrendous stories about co-pays and things that are not covered and surprise hospital bills. You have heard nationally that the number one issue right now is affordability. Well, I'm hearing it too on the street and in very, very concrete and specific terms. So, the resolution before you today is to put a \$25 tax. On every vehicle in the county, adjusted for what kind of thing. Well, I think you should think of it this way. There are about 110,000 people in the county, and there are slightly more vehicles than that in the county, when you include motorcycles and trucks. So, this \$25 tax isn't on vehicles. You could think of it as a tax on every man, woman, and child in the county. Is this something you genuinely want to impose? I would suggest this is not the right way to do it because a wheel tax, which virtually everyone pays, this isn't a county where you can get by without a car. There are very few places in the county where you can live

like that. But a wheel tax of this nature is inherently regressive because it's the same for everybody, including these very modest houses that I've been knocking on and the big mansions and the HOAs that I've been knocking on as well. It is the same dollar amount, but it is not the same amount of pain that the people who are paying this tax are going to have to absorb. So, this isn't the answer. It simply does not fall equally upon the people in the county. And so, I'm going to make a request of each of you tonight, and that is to consider amending the motion. To either reduce the tax to the statutory minimum, and I'll talk about that in a minute, or eliminate it in entirety. And I understand, as Mr. Rosenbaum has pointed out, that we need revenue and that you do forego some of that revenue from the state if you don't actually pass a wheel tax. Well, I'll leave it to those of you who are budget wizards to figure out whether that works or not. But if you're going to tax, don't do it this way and try to tax less. And I think ultimately the solution is better state laws for the state to give you some stability in your revenue sources instead of these enormously complex laws like SEA one, which was not well drafted. And if I'm lucky, I'll get a chance to work on that a little later in the season. But please heed what I have heard, and I'm sure what you have heard from the people of La Porte County. This is not the way to go. This is not the best tax. Thank you. Thank you.

Molly King. I live at 8252 East 525 South Walkerton address, but I am in La Porte County, very, very bottom, bottom corner. Um, went to Laporte High School, anyways. Point of it. Um, so clearly, I'm gonna go on the pathos part of this argument, kind of like what he was just uh discussing. Um, most of us outside of city boundaries do own multiple vehicles. Clearly, you guys would probably know that. Um, for me personally, I have a 25-year-old car and a second car for winter because we live in the rust belt, so the cars kind of break down. So, I go between one car and then I go to the other. And then I go back to the other when the other one breaks down. So, it keeps going back and forth. And I know I personally, as well as my parents, do the exact same thing. So, we have multiple cars, and I know multiple people pass that. Like I'm in the very bottom corner. I know another person over still in this county has that issue and they travel all the way to Porter County for their work. I traveled to St. Joe County this past. Week, I put 220 miles on my car because I drive 22 miles to South Bend and then 22 miles back for work just for work. That wasn't including any other else. Point of it. I drive a lot. A lot of other people outside of city limits, drive a lot. So, our cars break down a lot. So, we have multiple cars. And given the fact that we lack public transportation outside of city limits, obviously, and no one's going to pay \$50 for an Uber, I don't have any other options. So, as he was saying, it would really hit a lot of people outside of their financial jurisdiction to be able to pay an additional, for me, 50, my parents, I don't even know right now, just to be able to afford this tax that you guys are proposing. And a personal conversation, I would assume, is possibly your father, Jimmy Prestle. I had a personal conversation with him about three years ago, and he asked me, what do you say to me and my friend. What do you guys think is very important as new voters? And I said the conditions of the road. I never said, hey, can you put, can you give us more taxes to put towards the roads? I never explicitly stated that, nor did I explicitly state, hey, can we? Move around the numbers, maybe figure out what would be a better idea? But he went the first route, and then they implemented House Bill 1461 to put toll booths on interstate highways and the point of it. Let's think a little bit. Let's think about the people who this will affect. Thank you.

This is fairly new for me coming up and speaking with you. My name is Tom James. I live at 1051 East U.S. Highway 6 and 35. It's a hamlet address, but it is Laporte County, about a mile south of Kingsford Heights, Indiana, the Crossroads of America. A lot of tires drive across our roads. And what you're asking us to do is to kick in a tax to pay for all those tires that are going from Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, Crossroads of America. They're coming right through here, they're coming right through 80-90. Is that where our taxes are going to go, or is it going to go on Michigan? Lincoln Way. Is that where the taxes are going to go? We don't know. The problem with taxes, as far as I can tell, is they tend to be in

perpetuity. And they hit everyone forever until we need another tax. We already pay tax after tax after tax, property, tax, income, tax, sales, tax. If you must do this, and I'm not saying, I'm not as smart as all you guys sitting up there, okay? I don't pretend to be. What I'm saying is, if you must, introduce it at the lowest possible rate that you can. Put a sunset clause on it so that we can get a chance for the population that you represent to look at it and see what the progress has been from what we've been paying. I looked over the brochure that you had. I'm not a professional farmer, but I didn't see any exceptions for farming vehicles. So, if there's a guy that's got a combine and a tractor and he's got to go on the road, he's going to pay for every vehicle. I didn't see that in your list. I'm asking you to be cautious with the taxes. The people that you're representing are sitting here telling you, we understand, but there's got to be a better way of doing this instead of just going, oh, another tax, another tax, another tax, another tax. At the extreme least, please put a sunset clause there. Thank you for your time.

Rich Buzalski, 2561 West Joliet Road, (LaPorte). Let me start out with this. I went to Monticello a few weeks ago, stayed three nights in a KOA. They're a lake town just like Laporte is. Just the tax for camping was \$45 on a less than \$200 bill. What are we doing with our tourists coming in here? They come, they build the fanciest houses in the world. They drive a car with an Illinois or a Chesterton or a Knox or South Bend license plate. They don't pay one single dime. You are turning every citizen of LaPorte County into a victim. Find another way. I counted 15 cars from Rural King. To the courthouse and around the corner, that were either out of state or out of county. And lastly, stop all of this tax money going to Michigan. We're going broke. They're getting rich, half a mile over the line. I've said my peace. Thank you.

Good evening. My name is Mark Guzek. I live at 1102 West 450 North, Laporte, right by 8090 Interchange. I'd like to give you guys a different perspective on this whole thing. I want to give you a little background into it. I've recently, about a year ago, I retired from NPSCO over 45 years. And the last job I had was at the LNG plant out on 700 East, Rolling Prairie. Okay. I worked out there probably a little over 10 years. Years. And in that 10-years, there is, I should say, there is the pavement. If you get on 700 and you start heading south off of 20, you get to where NIPSCO property starts. Like I said, I've been working out there over 10 years before I retired. Now, that strip of pavement, I'm here to tell you, is bulletproof. And I walked part of it and I could not find a crack. I could not find a pothole. I could not find anything. The edges of the asphalt were intact. Now, maybe you're looking, you know, I don't know how these contracts are dealt out. Out but uh I used to uh in my I worked in another department and uh and when I worked in uh gas out of South Bend and I used to have to go into Rieth Riley now I talked to some of the people in the lab there over the years and uh they have different formulas for all this asphalt. And what y'all should be looking at is to see if you're all getting your money, if we're getting our money's worth. Because that strip of pavement that I described to you, you can drive out there after this meeting and look at it. It's bulletproof. There's nothing. And then as soon as the property ends where the NIPSCO property line ends, it's all patches, it's all nasty, the sides, the shoulders are crumbling. Now, I look at that and something ain't right here. Something ain't right with that. And I've thought about this even when I was still working. You know, why is this pavement so indestructible? Why is that? County, our tax dollars paid for it. I think. You know, I don't know if the company struck a deal with Rieth Riley. I don't know, or whoever paved it. So I'm just letting you know that you're looking for money, hundreds of thousands of dollars. And, you know, if I was. In their position, if I was a paver, that's a monopoly. That's like money from heaven. Because everybody, let's just say you put a formula out there that was substandard and only held up a few years. Well, that's going to keep my guys working. It's going to keep money coming in. So why, you know? Why give us, why give the people of La Porte County anything decent? Just give us the bare minimum, the slop, and, you know, they'll pay, they'll cough up for next time. So, I just want to leave you with that. So, that's it.

Good evening. Mark Parkman, 4052 South 1100 West, Westville, Indiana. Coming as a small business owner and also president of the Port County Farm Bureau, I'd like to a couple things that are kind of important to us. The wheel tax right now, the way the ordinance is Read is just spread across the board. If you own a trailer, you get tax. If you own a truck, you get taxed. I'm wondering if there's a way to... Do something based on how much it gets used. Okay, there's a lot of people that have trailers that maybe use it only a few times a year. Maybe a reduced rate for something that doesn't get run every day. This tax is going to hit a lot of the smaller businesses a little bit harder. I myself have a lot of machinery to do a lot of work, but don't have a lot of employees. We don't run it every day. We don't run the trucks every day. Farm communities the same way. A farmer might have a lowboy to move his excavator and might move it four times a year. He doesn't use it every day. So, I'd like for you to keep that in mind. I understand you got to come up with the money somewhere. And so that's a tough situation. If you have to do this, I'd ask you for three things to keep in mind. And I don't know what can be done legally. I don't know how it can be written. But number one, to keep the lowest rate possible. Number two, to possibly have a break for senior citizens, somebody that's on a fixed income already. And number three, possibly low income, if there could be a reduced rate for people with low income so that it doesn't hurt their pocketbook as bad either. Biggest thing, keep it as cheap as possible. You guys know the numbers. I don't. I know the battle you're fighting. It's an uphill battle. But just wanted to bring those couple things to your attention to put some thought into it. Thank you. Thank you.

Hi, Patty James, 1051 East U.S. Highway 6 and 35, Hamlet. Yes, it's La Porte County. Back when the casinos came in, we were told La Porte County is get a bunch of this money. Casinos coming in, it's going to help La Porte County. We're also being told that same thing about data centers. I won't even go there right now. We were told when toll road was leased that the counties that were among like adjacent to the toll road or to the toll roads were going to get some of that money. I was just informed that the city actually has a wheel tax. And I look at Laporte City streets. And they're as bad, if not worse, than the county roads. Now, you guys are asking us to pay a wheel tax. And I realize you guys don't have anything to do with city streets, but I pay property taxes on my farm. I pay excise tax on my car. I pay income tax on any money that I earn. And then I pay sales tax when I spend the money that I earned after you guys taxed it. There's only so much that the people of this county can do. We had we were promised these resources were going to help us. We're being told now the data centers are going help us. Honestly, I'm worried about my wells going dry with the data centers. I have a very small farm. It's been in my family for three generations. Hopefully, it'll go more. But at this point, who knows? There's been changes in our county that have upset me tremendously. And I've been coming to different meetings to find out more, to learn more. And by the time I get here, the decisions have already been made. I pray that's not the case. I pray that you guys listen to the people of your county. We're already under so much stress. Because everything has skyrocketed in this county, including our taxes. And we're getting less and less and less for it. Please consider your constituents because we can't afford much more and be able to live here. Thank you.

Harold Parker, 2602 East State Road 4, La Porte. Where are we get the young people from if we keep taxing them before they even get here? Every kid's got to have a car. Every kid's got to have a car. We've got to think about what we're doing here. We got enough revenue. We just don't know how to keep it and spend it correctly. It's gone. Every revenue that has been collected in this county is gone. And now, what, we're six million under wraps, a short? It's gone. And like the lady said before, we've always promised this money from all the little attractions we've been bringing, boats when the Now, my dad was alive when we put the toll road in. We went through our farm. So, I know about that one, and that's gone. And where's the revenue for that? The state grabbed it. You know that. And so, I urge you to go at minimum amounts for this tax just so you can get the state match. I understand that. And I also, as a farmer, I got 20 trailers, maybe two semis, but I'm gonna have, every time I hook up, it's gonna be an \$80 hookup, but I still got \$40 sitting in the weeds waiting for the next season. Very seasonal work. Grain chairs in the fall, dump trailers in the spring, fertilizer trailer in spring. So, I would think that we could do something for that. And we are taxing the people that we're trying to serve, and that really hurts. You guys know that. I'm not telling you that. It hurts to tax the people you are serving, especially when we got so many people coming into this county, trying to take what they can out. So, thank you for your time. Good luck. Thank you.

Vern Schafer, 18954 South 875 West, La Crosse. I've been listening to all this. I'm hearing a lot of complaints, but no solutions really. I'm trying to figure out, in my mind, how much revenue we lost when the state did this legislation that took it away from us. Okay. And obviously, you've looked at those numbers and you've come up with a plan here to raise revenue. Equal amount that we lost. Is that the way you're working on this? I'm just asking. I agree with my other farm friends that, yeah, we have vehicles and we don't want more taxes, but I also know if you got a problem, if you have a budget and you don't have enough income, you got to get it somewhere. So, is this a fair tax? A wheel tax is probably a user tax, but it's not necessarily fair if we have a lot of trailers and things that we don't use that often, they're not on the road all the time. I understand that also. But how much revenue have we lost? And how much are we trying to replace it with? And that's, have you done the calculations on what you think you can raise with a wheel tax? And if so, I don't know how you come up with those numbers and who collects it. Is that collected at the motor vehicle department? So, the point is that. When they collect that money, do we get it or does it vanish? So those are things that I'm concerned about. And again, I don't know how many wheels there are in this county that are traveling on roads. I hope that off-road vehicles aren't being considered in this. But if you're going to have a budget, you have to know how much you lost and how much you're trying to gain and try to keep that as fair as you can. I understand it's a problem. And I know have a lot of work to cut out for you to get this budget done. So, obviously, this is one solution that probably is not real popular, but it's probably as fair as you can get it. And I agree with that. But I also know that nobody wants more taxes. I don't. And if you have to shift it to property taxes, that's not going to help us either because we're going to play at it in one way or the other. But we can't, we can't. Exist without revenue. Our county government has to ... we don't like potholes. We like nice roads. A lot of

nice things, but we got to pay for them. And somehow, we've got to come up with the money. I understand that. So just try to make it as fair as you can. And that's my opinion. Thank you.

Landon Galvis, 3301 Oakdale Avenue, LaPorte, Indiana. I've been paying the wheel tax for at least 10 years and it has done nothing. I drive 22 miles a week and I pay \$98 to drive a 98 pickup truck. How is that even possible? It went from \$35 to \$98 to drive an old truck. I still have to spend \$40 a year to buy grass killer to kill the grass in the street. I still have to go out there and sweep it at least three times a year and get rid of it in the trash can. I think that you guys should possibly look into a dispensary so we can make money or allow four-wheelers and snowmobiles to get plated so we can bring in more money that way. The wheel tax is not the way to go. There's nothing that it helps. But that's all I got thanks.

I wasn't gonna talk but uh well you're not mandatory to do that but name is Joan I live at 123 any street anywhere United States. Okay. And I want to say just a couple things and I'll sit down. I agree with everything they're saying about the money because I've been taxed on everything. My old trailer, my old car, and because the property value in my house that's falling down around me has gone up. So, my taxes went up. And then my insurance went up because my taxes went up. The water's gone up. Up six times, five times. I can't remember in 10 years. I don't remember. I just know every time we get money, even the last wheel tax, it disappears. It goes through leap. Nobody knows where it's at because nobody is following and we are not allowed to ask or we're made fun of Okay, I've been called a fuddy old woman who doesn't know what the hell she's talking about. I don't give a shit no more. Excuse my language. I'm tired. I'm old. I remember 60. Years ago, when they put in Highway 12 and 20. Okay. They put in the toll road before that. That guy said they ran it through his farm. The toll road was only supposed to have taxes on it until it was paid off. We still got toll roads. You see what I'm saying? And does anybody remember that? I'm just saying, you guys should remember that or look it up. I don't want to pay no more taxes. I am almost 70. I'm old, I'm tired, and I'm starting to get mean. You know, get me a couple pairs of glasses, a couple more pairs, and I'll be. I'm just saying, I just, I don't care about what I say anymore to people. I'm just tired. You know, I pray for everybody, but you know, I also know when people, when things aren't going too well, people need to investigate where all the money's going. And like that other guy said, why aren't our streets good if we're already paid for it to begin with? And with the money for the roads to begin with, remember, three times we had the money to fix all the roads, it went through leaf, and all of a sudden, we don't have it because nobody knows where it's at. Just like with the ambulance stuff, they lost all their money. You guys know this. We don't forget. You know, we're like that elephant. You kick it once it's going to remember forever. And we're just old and mean. I can't afford it. I can't even afford to buy groceries. I can go buy eggs and a half gallon of milk, and then I go to the food pantry. I'm broke. I have no money. My neighbor's been taking care of

me. Her husband's been doing my lawn. They're doing bringing me dinners. I'm just tired. And so, you guys need to know how tired we are. Thank you.

Good afternoon. Katie Bowen, 607 Lakeside Street. I know that you're all in a tough spot here. I don't want another tax. I know the people behind me don't want another tax. And I understand that you're looking for a match. But when I run the math, it just seems that you're asking for more money than we're going to need to get the minimum amount in a match. And if that is the case, I would ask you to please only consider the minimum amount that we need in a match. You're the counsel. You're responsible for the financial decisions of the county. How many other areas of revenue are we losing? Are we collecting all of the court costs? Are we affirming our position as a creditor in bankruptcy cases? Are we reducing the amount of stamps that we're using? Are we considering a purchasing agent? To make reductions in all of the supplies and materials that are being purchased throughout the county? Do we have a purchasing agent? Where else can we go and make additional revenue so we're not looking at all these people to pay for the mismanagement of the money? If we're just going to ask for more money and we're going to mismanage it, then why ask for it? We have to be looking at what we already have and where we might not be collecting appropriately as well. So, I just ask you to look there before you impose a tax. Thank you.

Cheryl Gall, 8473 East Lakeshore Drive, Hudson Lake. I am on a fixed income way below the poverty level. And there are a lot of other people in the city of La Porte and in the county that are in the same boat as me. I have to go to the church food pantry for food because I hardly have any money that I can spend at the store because most of the income that I get goes to pay bills. And now it's even more bills. I mean, drive around, look at the houses in the city of La Porte. And out in the county, where people can't even afford to do repairs and stuff on their homes. It's sad. It's very sad. I'm not going to say anymore because I'll break down crying. Thank you.

How are y'all doing today? My name is James King. I live at 426 Lakeside Walkerton, LaPorte County. I'm just thinking back some years ago. I knew a few gentlemen 35 years ago that were on this board, and I got to be good friends with a few of them. And they were elderly men. They were ready to finish their terms. And I got talking to one of them one day. And he told me, we're paving. From highway 20 all the way to the state line of Michigan to something called Spicer Lake. Is anyone familiar with that? Good one, right? So they were going to run Tim, I guess it'd be County Line all the way to Spicer. So, I'm sitting there thinking. I so I asked him, I said, Why would you do that? Goes, Well, it's something for the public and it's a nice lake. And I said, Wait a minute Jerry, have you ever been there? And he told me, Now, this is a roughly, I'm guessing a million dollars a mile for the road at that time. It's probably two and a half right now, I'm guessing. But he goes, no, I haven't been there. And I said, you're spending, you're doing seven or eight miles of a road that you're not even aware where it's going. He said, yeah. And I said, well, you really need to take a drive out there and take a peek where it's going. I said, do me a favor. Walk out the path to Spicer Lake. And then you come back and tell me you can justify that. That well that's what he did and he came back and he was in awe the county was going to lay a road for eight miles to a swamp when I say a swamp can you agree with me there's a pathway that winds through this wet woods to a pond that is no bigger than this room is that right I'm just saying and I said you're going to spend eight million dollars for this project so my question was why aren't you doing Chicago Trail It's got all the traffic. And I kind of pushed it hard. And I'm not kidding you. They switched to Chicago Trail because three of them got in a car, drove out there to see what I was talking about. Thank God they did. And then Chicago Trail got paved. And I'm not taking credit. I'm just saying you're all in a real tough position because there's a lot going on and you're taking people's words for things or projects that are you're

assuming are in you know, you're working toward, but not everybody knows what's actually going on with these projects. And, like, another good one I saw, like, they had all the bridges shut down in Fish Lake about, I don't know, four or five months ago. They were down for a month, every bridge from North Liberty to Laporte. So, they are routing all the traffic around. And we, my daughter, lives down on 525, and there were semi-trucks coming left and right, and that road is not made for that. So, my question was. Did you guys get a kickback from the state for them destroying the road? So, okay, maybe they did, but did anyone ever collect it? Did anyone ever go to the trouble of applying to the state to get that money for that rerouting that they seem to have done? Or is that just something everybody just might have just said, ah, somebody else is going to take care of that? All I'm getting at is try to be the best stewards with our money as you can. And I know everyone does try. I get it all. It's tough, man. But that's what everybody's looking at: just be the best stewards with our money as you can. Because I'm seeing young people move out of this county. The population is changing. A lot of people, a lot of youth moving. My daughters even questioned about moving. I'm like, don't do that yet, you know. But all I'm getting at is do the best you can, being good stewards with our money. That's all I've got to say. And thank you for everything.

This is new to me. Mike Lazzaro is 3764 South 700 East. I'm on a fixed income. I worked. The things that I have that we own took time. We got trailers, we got campers, we got trucks, but I can't afford more taxes. That's the thing. I can't. You know, my disability does not go up just because you need more money. You know, you guys paved the roads out there in Fish Lake and they're shit. I brought it up right away and stuff about the roads. And they were cracking. You took three inches off, one inch down. My roads are cracking already. Sides of the roads, middle of the roads, I got weeds growing. I should be thankful that you spent a million dollars on my road. Why should I be thankful? My road was fine before they did it. I can't afford all this. You know, my camper does not go that much on the road that I should be paying \$50 for you to charge me to go. My trailers, I use my trailer maybe twice a year if I'm lucky. To go buy it. I got a utility trailer that's a box. I got a utility trailer that's open. They're only for me to go use because I don't come to nobody else to ask, can I use your trailer? Because it's hard to use somebody else's trailer. My motorcycle only goes a couple of times a year. Why should I keep paying more and more? We have a boat. I go boating with my grandchild. I'm paying \$50 to go take him. That's not fair to everybody. I think there's another way to look at this. Thank you. Thank you.

Good evening, Council. Good evening. Timothy Stabosz, 1501 Michigan Avenue. I am not speaking as a candidate for council, although I am that. I'm speaking as the former La Porte County Auditor. I don't envy you all right now for your positions, but you are the deciders. As you know, I had a front row seat to this body and the commission as well for four years. My concern is that one of the things I saw over four years under prior councils, not this council, is at times a breach of faith in certain areas. That has improved since my time as county auditor. No big contracts spearheaded by a former president of this body are one thing we had. The public has no way of knowing we are getting the best deal in those situations. The county has had a hiring freeze since 2010, and I watched department heads come up here and have to beg to have positions added when someone leaves. My four years, positions were only re-added and without any looking at potentially cutting through attrition. Fees, fines, and non-tax revenues, the juvenile center, EMS and community corrections. We need to be looking at occupancy and collections. I'm not taking a formal position at this time on the wheel of tax where 0.20% EMS lit, but I would simply say this to you. Demonstrate to the people, as Mrs. Bowen said, demonstrate to the people and others the precise amount of the shortfall from property tax cuts and riverboat revenue declines, which are real, and make that up only and start boosting non-tax revenue. Thank you.

President Koronka closed public comment.

Ordinance 2026-08 Ordinance Establishing a County Motor Vehicle Excise Surtax and County Wheel Tax

Motion to read by title only by Mr. Kessler AND SECONDED BY Jimmy Pressel. All members present were in favor.

	Heath	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenhauer	Pressel	Yagelski	Total
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
Nay								0

Auditor Rosenbaum – read aloud the title of the ordinance – “Ordinance 2026-08 Ordinance Establishing a County Motor Vehicle Excise Surtax and County Wheel Tax”

Councilman Kiel - Let's be clear, the cities have their own wheel tax. This tax would apply to those that are in the county. These apply to only county roads. So, states, cities, (Michigan City and the City of LaPorte), would not be privy to the monies raised here. Nor would the community crossings grant monies that would be the matching or the lane mile distribution would not be subject to.

Also, if you're currently in the city, my understanding is that that tax takes precedent over the county tax. But there is some, I see some shaking heads. So that is something that we have to discuss up here. But that is one set of questions I saw.

Mr. James had raised a concern about lots of people passing through, but locals would be the one paying for these roads. A lot of the roads that tourists and interstate commerce is traveling through the county on are funded and maintained by the state. Your interstates, your U.S. Highways. So, most of the through traffic is on those. However, the local roads, there are plenty of people from other counties that are using them. So, you absolutely are correct that some people would be using the roads, but without paying the wheel tax for them.

There was a question about tourists and visitors not paying a dime. They do pay an innkeeper's tax if they stay at our hotels in this county. However, the council doesn't have oversight over the spending of those funds. That's by the Convention and Visitors Bureau. I do kind of wish we had a little bit more of a role in how that money was spent or how the rates were set, but that's not us, unfortunately.

There were questions about whether or not the quality of pavement was as good as it should be. I think Mr. Guzek raised that question. We do usually have a construction engineer that is monitoring the pavement that is being done and checking. There's usually like coring samples that are done. I'm not intimately involved in that process, but it's a good question for our highway department to find out some more information about that.

President Koronka - And then regarding the casino money, right? What we have is the riverboat fund. Riverboat Fund is additional money brought in by at that time, now it is based on revenue by the individual casinos. That was previously changed from what was called a turnstile tax. So, the number of times that you walked out, walked in, walked out, walked in, counted a counter every time you walked in, and that led to a tax that was distributed to the state, the county, and the city of Michigan City. Now it's based entirely on how much money the casino makes. Now, that was changed probably about 10 years ago. And in addition to that, we've had. Three casinos in the area be developed, and now the

revenue at Blue Chip is presumably down due to the fact of competition. You have all the other things of online gaming and all sorts of things, or if folks don't like gambling, who knows? But as a whole, the income to the Riverboat fund is down year over year. So, and that is meant to be a capital asset fund should be. And for several years, it has been probably many years, has been used to bridge gaps where we may have had revenue gaps as a whole for basic expenses. So that is that explanation. We're looking at that should not be a reliable source of revenue in the future.

Councilman Kiel - Mr. Schafer had asked questions about how much revenue did we lose from state changes. It's a tough thing to answer because they make a lot of changes every year, all the time. It's a lot of levers being moved constantly, and it is very hard to keep track of what exactly the fiscal impact is from year to year. And sometimes they change it, change it back, change it in different ways. It's pretty wild. The other part of this, though, isn't just the loss of revenue, it's also rising prices. Some things are rising faster than inflation and are very difficult for us to contain. Employee health insurance costs, as one example. They don't just go up 3% per year. I wish everybody's probably seen their premiums, and I can't remember the percentage last year for the county, but it was 10%. Yeah. That was low. Yeah, that was probably a good year. I think the year before was more, and we're not totally sure what this year is going to be. So, those items grow faster, and it doesn't give us a lot of opportunities to try to control those costs. And there's other places in county government that are growing faster. Vendor contracts sometimes have seen faster than inflation growth. So, it's not just the loss of revenue, it's also rising prices.

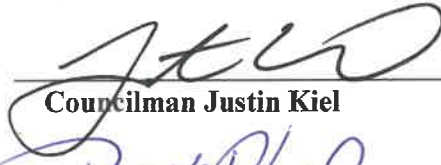
ADJOURNMENT – Motion to adjourn made by Jennifer Heath and seconded by Jimmy Pressel. All members voted in favor.

	Heath	Kessler	Kiel	Koronka	Mollenhauer	Pressel	Yagelski	Total
Aye	X	X	X	X	X	X		6
Nay								0

EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LAPORTE COUNTY COUNCIL this 28th day of September, 2026.



Councilman President Adam Koronka



Councilman Justin Kiel



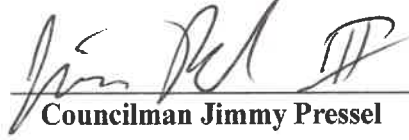
Councilwoman Jennifer Heath



Councilman Brett Kessler



Councilman Mike Mollenhauer



Councilman Jimmy Pressel



Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST:



Michael Rosenbaum, La Porte County Auditor