



*LaPorte County Auditor
Joie Winski
555 Michigan Avenue, Suite 205
LaPorte, IN 46350-3490*

**MEETING MINUTES
LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 28, 2013**

The Special Meeting of the La Porte County Council was called to order on Monday, January 28, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room of the La Porte County Government Complex.

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL.

The Meeting was Called to Order by President Yagelski who began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilman Cunningham. Auditor Joie Winski proceeded with the Roll Call. Council Members present included: Councilwoman Lois Sosinski, Councilmen Rich Mrozinski, Matt Bernacchi, Mark Yagelski, Earl Cunningham, and Jeff Santana. Absent: Councilman Terry Garner (excused). A quorum was present for the Meeting to proceed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA.

A Motion was made by Councilman Mrozinski and seconded by Councilman Bernacchi to approve the Agenda. Motion carries 6-0.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS.

Mike Schultz – Assessor's Office

Mike Schultz, County Assessor gave a quick update and reminder to Council Members and taxpayers. Mike wanted to remind taxpayers that your *10 pay 11* tax bill is due July 14, 2013 and not February 14, 2013. This extended date is on the back of the tax bill and since July 14, 2013 is on a Sunday, the actual due date is Monday, July 15, 2013.

Assessor's Office is still working on appeals and once the appeal is finished a new tax bill will be generated. All offices are working together.

LIAISON REPORTS.

Councilwoman Sosinski met with the supporters of the Friends of the Barn on January 16, 2013. They have put together a preliminary mailer of names that were gathered at the County Fair and will be asking for donations from supporters. The Meetings are open to anyone and Councilwoman Sosinski will advise Council Members when the next meeting will be. The Friends of the Barn are moving forward, and she believes one of the next things to be worked on will be the windows.

Councilman Santana contacted all five of the Boards/Committees he is a liaison to. EMS will not be meeting until March. Because Councilman Santana is a Council Liaison appointee for EMS he will relinquish his EMS position through the Commissioners. Fran Tibbot will be putting together an Alliance

Board, and is looking for a name that has knowledge of the County to serve on that Board. Any recommendations can be sent directly to her.

Councilman Santana spoke with Jerry Cooley of the Maintenance Department. He will be approaching the Council in regards to carpet and maintenance repair issues in the near future.

Councilman Santana will also be attending the next Drainage Board Meeting.

Councilman Mrozinski congratulated GLEDC and Burt Cook on their hard work for the American Licorice project. Councilman Mrozinski is proud to be a member of Economic Development Organization.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Mr. Jay Fuller, 10 Jamestown Drive, Michigan City, IN. Mr. Fuller states he is the Business Manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 531 and also President of the La Porte/Stark Building Trades. He stands before the Council representing 14 different building trade crafts. Mr. Fuller thanks everyone here for what they have done for economic development in La Porte County, especially the La Porte County Commissioners for their vision of economic development. Mr. Fuller has been a resident of the County for 60 years and is proud in what he witnessed on a local level for the County. Mr. Fuller feels that what disturbs people are things that are not accomplished due to political gridlock. La Porte County is a special place and economic development is important. Mr. Fuller reiterates the importance of economic development for the building trades and getting people back to work. He sees the differences here in the County, but feels that everyone in this room has their heart in the right place for the citizens of La Porte County to work together and get people back to work.

Mr. Craig Dwight, 1412 Jonathan Court, La Porte, Indiana. Mr. Dwight is CEO of Horizon Bank and has worked in La Porte County for over 30 years. He appreciates being selected to be part of the Advisory Committee for the economic development and this will be a collaborative effort. The County has the glue that keeps the cities and towns together. The City Economic Development Commissions are busy by themselves and adding a County Economic Development Department will add another piece to the pie. Mr. Dwight supports this and looks forward to a favorable response from the Council.

Ms. Michelle Thompson, 2113 Woodlawn Drive, Michigan City, IN. Ms. Thompson feels she may be one of the horses the cart got in front of and echoes Mr. Fuller and Mr. Dwight's sentiments. Ms. Thompson commends Councilman Mrozinski's work on economic development accomplishments, but feels the County will get more done with this Economic Development Office. This will be a springboard to more things.

Mr. John Knoll, 3033 North Char Mar Hills Dr., La Porte, IN. Mr. Knoll is the President of the 39 North Conservancy District. In the last 12 years the District has gone from \$8,000,000 of assessed value to \$42,000,000. Part of that is housing and condos at the golf course and several businesses have built out there, one of which has just doubled in size. The Conservancy District has been in existence for 12 years, and only once has La Porte or Michigan City Economic Development contacted them in regards to building. If we can increase our assessed value amount 5 times, why are we not being looked at? Perhaps the cities of Michigan City and La Porte look at their own City's economic development first. The Conservancy District has done it on their own; no one has offered them any help. That is why the District is in support of the County Economic Commission, so we will have as much voice as the rest of the people.

Mr. John Pappas, 3545 W. Village Road, Door Village, IN. Mr. Pappas tells the Council he owns a small business in downtown La Porte and has lived in La Porte County most his life. Mr. Pappas is a strong believer in economic development and knows that working together you can get more done. Mr. Pappas has children who will probably have to look elsewhere for jobs and would like them to stay and work here; however the County needs help. Mr. Pappas sees a lot of development in Porter and St. Joseph counties and supports another organization that will look outside of the box in development economic abilities for La Porte County.

President Yagelski hearing or seeing no other Public Comment closes Public Comment.

2013 LINE ITEMS/REQUESTS.

Recorder.

Councilwoman Sosinski would like to make a Motion to reinstate all the line items in the Recorder's Budget back to the 2012 numbers for the 2013 Budget. President Yagelski calls for a second on the Motion. The Motion dies for lack of second.

President Yagelski would like the Council to at least look at a compromise around \$120,000 or so, leaving the Recorder and Chief Deputy out of it as they are Administrative.

Councilwoman Sosinski spoke with Attorney Biege a week or so ago and thought the Recorder has control of those funds, regardless of the Council's vote. Councilwoman Sosinski acknowledges the urgency of this as payroll accounts may be in the red. Councilwoman Sosinski questions Attorney Biege in regards if the Recorder has direction of that account?

Attorney Biege states the Council can chose to reinstate line items and make the appropriations from the General Fund and then the Recorder will have to make a choice if she will make up the difference from the Perpetuation Fund which she has discretion.

In the spirit of compromise, Councilman Cunningham makes a Motion to reinstate \$62,700 into the Recorder's Budget. President Yagelski calls for a second on the Motion. Hearing or seeing none, the Motion dies.

The Recorder's Budget stays the same.

Economic Development.

President Yagelski states if the vote is delayed for another meeting we could not take this money out of the General Fund, it would have to come out of Riverboat Funds and would like to use the Riverboat money for the tax situation.

Councilman Mrozinski states that Mr. Reardon would bring a project to the Council or Commission, explain the project, type, cost, tax abatement necessity, and amount of jobs to be created. The Council would review the project, okay it, and then he would present us with a bill. This procedure worked well and Councilman Mrozinski hoped Mr. Reardon would have been in attendance tonight.

Councilman Mrozinski likes Mr. Reardon as he brought the Council some very good projects. However his office is in Lake County, his wife is a State Representative in Lake and Porter County. What type of motivation does Mr. Reardon have to bring projects to La Porte when he lives and works in another county?

The Council does not know who the Advisory Committee is and no one on this Council is included. Councilman Mrozinski would like more information and meet the committee instead of making a decision this evening. A Motion was made by Councilman Mrozinski to table this to discuss in further detail. The Motion is seconded by Councilman Bernacchi.

Councilman Bernacchi believes the efforts are positive but wishes the Council was more involved. Perhaps leaving the current alliance in place for 6 months or a year to brainstorm together would be a good idea. He does not have a problem supporting this Committee, but strongly feels that the Mayor of Michigan City and La Porte, heads of Economic Development, and two (2) members of the County Council be included.

Councilman Santana has some of the same reservations as Councilman Mrozinski in light of the fact that monies would have to come from Riverboat and not the General Fund. Although Councilman Santana applauds the Commissioners for bringing economic development to the forefront, he would have appreciated it if, in the spirit of working together, the Commissioners would have included the Council from the onset.

Councilman Cunningham questions if the Advisory Committee has seen the proposal in front of the Council tonight?

Dr. Kora says no they have not.

Councilman Cunningham states it appears that you are saving \$40,000. Would that money be shifted for legal fees?

Dr. Kora states that money was removed to work without consultants and use their existing staff. There are financial constraints and Economic Development will run on a tight budget. The Advisory Committee will be there to advise on specific ideas, not how to operate. The fact that the Advisory Committee did not see this budget is not a reason why we should not be doing this.

Councilman Cunningham explains the request is for \$180,000. \$75,000 is for full consulting services with SEH Economic Development with Advisor Matt Reardon, \$20,000 with Karl Cender for tax incentives, strategies, etc. \$40,000 for website design and \$45,000 for travel, advertising and promotional fund.

Dr. Kora would like reassure Councilman Bernacchi they are open to adding more members to the Advisory Committee and will be happy to make that happen.

Councilwoman Sosinski states the Commissioners are moving forward and applauds them for hitting the ground running. Councilwoman Sosinski also thanks the Advisory Committee for serving and donating their time. They are a diverse group and she is impressed with the caliber of people and what they bring to the table.

President Yagelski reminds the Council the monies coming out of the riverboat are not being reimbursed. Because assessed values are dropping the County's tax dollars are not what they were five or six years ago.

Councilman Mrozinski states the General Fund is \$28,000,000 in the red, do we want to add another \$180,000 to that?. This is just taking money in case a project comes in, instead of investing in a project.

Councilman Mrozinski is still not sure what the County is getting for that money that is why he made and stands on his Motion.

President Yagelski asks Auditor Winski for the roll call on the Motion to Table. Councilmen Mrozinski, Cunningham and Bernacchi yes (3), Councilwoman Sosinski, Councilmen Santana and Yagelski no (3). The Motion ends in a tie.

Councilwoman Sosinski makes a Motion to approve the \$180,000 for Economic Development which was seconded by Councilman Santana. President Yagelski asks Auditor Winski to take the roll call for the vote. Councilwoman Sosinski, Councilmen Santana and Yagelski yes (3), Councilmen Bernacchi, Mrozinski and Cunningham, no (3). The Motion ends in a tie.

Councilman Cunningham would like to offer a compromise of \$135,000 this is a cut of 25% and states we are not agreeing to pay Mr. Reardon, and are paying only as the projects come forward. Councilman Cunningham states that ultimately we are going to pay for something. A Motion was made by Councilman Cunningham and seconded by Councilman Santana to approve \$135,000 for Economic Development.

Councilman Cunningham states if they are doing a good job they can come back in six or nine months and ask for additional monies. Hopefully we will see if this has been positive and worthwhile.

Councilman Bernacchi questions Dr. Kora again. With three Commissioners in attendance, will the Michigan City and La Porte Mayors, heads of Economic Development and two (2) members of the County Council be included on the Advisory Committee? Councilman Bernacchi states he will be on board if they will part of the Advisory Committee. The Council wants to be kept in the loop.

Dr. Kora tells Councilman Bernacchi they want to expand the group and hears the Council loud and clear and will sit down and talk. No one will be excluded and make this effective.

Councilman Bernacchi states that is not the answer he wanted to hear.

Councilman Mrozinski again points out the cart before the horse. The Commission wants the funding first and then the board makeup later. Nothing is making sense that is why things need to be talked about. The County still has MCEDC and GLEDC and they are moving for La Porte County.

Dr. Kora asks Councilman Bernacchi to please repeat who he would like as part of the Advisory Committee.

Councilman Bernacchi says the Mayors of Michigan City and La Porte, the Heads of the Michigan City and La Porte Economic Development as well as two (2) County Council Members.

Dr. Kora agrees and they will make it happen and have them be part of the Advisory Committee.

President Yagelski asks Auditor Winski to call the vote for \$135,000 for the Economic Development. Councilwoman Sosinski, Councilmen Yagelski, Bernacchi, Cunningham, Santana yes (5), Councilman Mrozinski no (1). Motion carries 5-1. *See Ordinance No. 2013-004.*

Attorney Fees.

President Yagelski would like to remind all Council Members that not only are the Attorney Fees for the Commissioners paid out of this, but also the Council's Attorney fees and other board attorney fees.

Councilman Cunningham wants reaffirmation from Commissioner Milsap that these monies will not be used to pay Carol McDaniel's attorney's fees until it is voted upon by this Council.

Commissioner Milsap agrees that will be a separate issue and meeting.

Councilwoman Sosinski makes a Motion to reinstate the Attorney Fees for the 2013 Budget, based on the numbers from 2012. Councilman Santana seconds the Motion. The Motion carries 6-0. See Ordinance No. 2013-002.

Insurance/Claims.

Councilwoman Sosinski makes a Motion to reinstate the Insurance/Claims for the 2013 Budget, based on the numbers from 2012. Councilman Santana seconds the Motion. The Motion carries 6-0. See Ordinance No. 2013-003.

Judge Stalbrink Request.

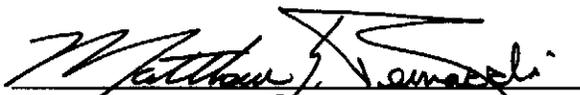
Councilman Cunningham makes a Motion to approve the Additional Appropriation for Judge Stalbrink in the amount of \$3,053.66 for vacation, sick time. Councilman Santana seconds the Motion. Motion carries 6-0. See Ordinance No. 2013-001.

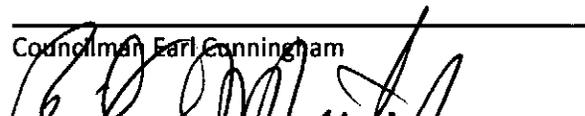
COUNCIL COMMENTS.

Councilwoman Sosinski said there was a request from Darlene Hale, IT which will be brought up at the February 25, 2013 Meeting.

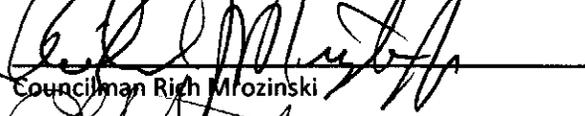
A Motion was made by Councilwoman Sosinski and seconded by Councilman Bernacchi to adjourn the Meeting. Motion passes 6-0. The Meeting adjourns at approximately 7:35 p.m.

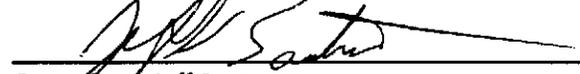
EXAMINED & APPROVED BY THE LA PORTE COUNTY COUNCIL, dated this 25th day of February, 2013.


Councilman Matt Bernacchi


Councilman Earl Cunningham

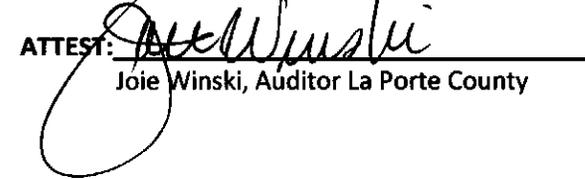

Councilman Terry Garner


Councilman Rich Mrozinski


Councilman Jeff Santana


Councilwoman Lois Sosinski


Councilman Mark Yagelski

ATTEST: 
Joie Winski, Auditor La Porte County