

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS LAPORTE COUNTY

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*Barbara Huston
President*

*Mike Bohacek
Vice President*

*Ken Layton
Member*

LAPORTE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, June 16, 2009

The LaPorte County Board of Commissioners met in a regular meeting on Tuesday, June 16, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. in the LaPorte County Complex Meeting Room #3.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mrs. Huston, President, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Nancy Hawkins led the Pledge of Allegiance

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Layton, I would like to add item B under Correspondence, letter from Eugene B. Gross.

Mr. Braje, we have not heard from the hospital's attorney, so we need to remove Item B under Old Business.

Mr. Bohacek made a motion to approve as amended, seconded by Mr. Layton, motion carried by voice vote 3-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Layton made a motion to approve the minutes of June 2, 2009, as presented, seconded by Mr. Bohacek, motion carried by voice vote 3-0.

WEEKLY REPORTS

The Commissioners reviewed and sign the weekly reports during the meeting.

CLAIMS

Payroll Ending June 26, 2009, Mr. Bohacek made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Mr. Layton, motion carried by roll call vote 3-0.

Regular Claims—\$ 1,065,490.62, Mr. Layton made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Bohacek, motion carried by roll call vote 3-0.

Miscellaneous Claims—\$14,763,301.55, Mr. Layton, a bit of explanation on the amount of that. Of the \$14,000,000, \$5,000,000 is paying back the emergency reserve that we borrowed money to operate on and the \$9,000,000 is a new loan for the county to operate on out of the emergency reserve fund. Mr. Layton made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Bohacek, motion carried by roll call vote 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Charles Morgan, 6252 W. 400 N. LaPorte, I am here to complain. I live right at 630 W. and 400 N.

You are replacing the bridge about 1500 feet west of me on 400. The reason I am here, is the county made a detour and all the traffic comes to 630 and goes to 450. I called the County Engineer, Mr. Jeff Wright, he came out and agreed with me that it was the wrong place to put it but the state mandated it. Road 630 is very small, two cars can barely pass. Let me tell you some of the things I have seen, a semi with a low boy tore down the sign and tore down the neighbors corner post. We have had screeching tires and almost collisions. When you turn from 400 N. onto 630, you go about 250 feet and there is Skyline Drive. It goes into a little subdivision and is a cul-de-sac. There is tons of cars that turn in there because there is no "dead end" sign there. This is a dangerous and terrible situation.

Mrs. Huston, Jeff do you have a better plan for this?

Mr. Wright, the road is narrow and visibility at the intersection is low. It is a state standard detour, which is the nearest available point to get around construction. We could add more signage and put up a "dead end" or "no outlet" sign at Skyline Drive. The one advantage 600 would have over 630 is there is two, 4 way intersections. This will be closed up until November.

Mr. Layton, would we be in any violation by moving the detour from 630 to 600?

Mr. Wright, I don't think so as long as you re-signed it.

Mr. Bohacek, what is the best way to go in your opinion?

Mr. Wright, I think they are about equal.

Mr. Layton, I know the area Mr. Morgan is talking about and 630 West is very narrow and only about ½ mile long. Not to go against what our engineer says, but for the protection of the people, if we put up a no through traffic sign at 400 N. and 600 W. and diverted them up to 450 there would only be one turn. This is just my recommendation.

Mr. Wright, as long as we are ok with the standards, we will move the detour signs and put up a sign at Skyline Drive.

Mrs. Huston, all in favor of this motion? Motion carried by voice vote 3-0.

Ms. Cynthia Crump from the United States Bureau of Census. I am here to ask if LaPorte County would consider forming a complete count committee? The purpose of the complete count committee is to provide awareness to the residents of LaPorte County of the importance of the residents completing their census questionnaire when it comes out next spring. It is a national program for the census. Every city, town and county government all over the country is being asked to form this committee. The complete count committee would allow the county to structure, to operate, run the census, and allow myself to be a resource to the committee and obtain printed materials and promotional items for the census. The area of LaPorte County from the last census had been determined as an area in which LaPorte, Michigan City, and Michiana Shores, had a less than 50% return rate. From that fact alone, I would assume LaPorte County was under counted. Because the census count is by self reporting of the residents and you are getting less than a 50% return rate, you are missing opportunities. Your population count determines the funding your community deserves and ensures your interests are represented by a voice in Congress. Government officials understand the importance of a population count and what it means to your county, however, the average resident has no idea what that means. This is the reason for the complete count committee to help promote the fact that it is important and why it is important. Hopefully the efforts of the committee would enhance the return rate. Should you decide to form the committee, that you name a liaison and myself to the committee and to entertain putting together a proclamation stating that you have a committee formed to help inform residents of the importance of the census. It could be an informal proclamation or passed as a resolution. I can refer you to Census.gov web site for more information. The message is simple, everyone should be counted. There may be a possibility that there would be economic stimulus money available to help promote this message. I hope you will consider putting a committee together and I would ask for a follow up.

Mrs. Huston, I met with Ms. Crump yesterday. I think the important message here is that everyone will be getting a ten question questionnaire in the mail that should be filled out and sent back. It will effect LaPorte County in regard to grants and etc. in the future per capita.

Mr. Keith Neff, I was recently fired from the LaPorte County Highway Department. I have a police report where Bob Young was involved in a motor vehicle accident.

Mrs. Huston, Mr. Neff, I believe that is a personnel matter and should not be brought before the Board of Commissioners during public comment.

Mr. Neff, I was hoping Mr. Young would be here so he could answer any questions you may have. I came to you a couple of different times about this matter. All I was wondering is how I could be terminated for bringing something like this to your attention and then someone can actually be over the legal limit and drive a vehicle, be involved in an accident with a county vehicle, and still be able to work here. I was hoping I could get an answer. I was also wondering why, when I came to you regarding some thefts.....

Mrs. Huston, I told you that is being investigated.

Mr. Earl Cunningham, I have a question or two. Have you approved a contract or entered into a contract for any amount of money for legal counsel for the Assessor against the Auditor?

Mr. Braje, there has been a request initially for representation for the Assessor because she feels the county attorney's office is in conflict. I informed her in correspondence that I was unaware of any conflict or pending legal action that required representation. We received correspondence yesterday that she had engaged an attorney and is requesting that the county pay for the cost of the attorney.

Mr. Cunningham, will any of you be at our Council meeting to answer questions?

Mr. Layton, I am on your agenda.

DEPARTMENT HEAD COMMENTS

Mrs. Jane Bernard, Director of LaPorte County Animal Shelter, I am bringing you an update on your request from Westville to provide animal control services. In talking with all the municipalities, LaCrosse, Wanatah, and Kingsford Heights, they were excited about the idea but the problem is money. There is no money. We have helped them out. If we are going to do this, I think we are going to need additional man power. My question is, do we go forward with an ordinance with the county attorney with an amount and what our services would be that we are going to offer to these municipalities?

Mr. Bohacek, yes, I will ask you to do that.

Mr. Layton, I am not against having Mrs. Bernard follow what Mr. Bohacek has said. I do have a problem with additional funding costs to these communities. We currently have contracts with LaCrosse and Wanatah for law enforcement. They pay LaPorte County a dollar a year for law enforcement control. I don't care where they live; they are still citizens of LaPorte County. I don't have a problem going ahead with a resolution or contract, if you will, similar to the law enforcement contract. I have a problem with the funding issue of charging citizens for services that we provide anyway.

Mrs. Bernard, if the calls come in to us and we are in charge, I think we will see an increase in the number of animals to be picked up.

Mr. Braje, probably what should be done is there should be a budget prepared relative to the increase in services for both man power and equipment, at least for initial consideration of the commissioners. The commissioners can then determine what it will cost and how much you will need to charge or not charge. You will probably want to, first, put together a projected budget.

Mrs. Bernard, the shelter is very lucky as we have people that want to come and volunteer at our organization. I was approached in the fall by an eagle scout and for his project he had chosen the animal shelter. He wanted to know what our "wish list" would be. We gave him several suggestions. Never in a million years did we believe he would complete everything on our "wish list. He increased our storage with shelving, put in a bench area in an adoption room, put in a fenced in area behind the

shelter, planted trees, and put in a beautiful picnic table and bench. We were overwhelmed with the amount of work and funding that he went out and raised. Justin Knoll, a great individual and young man, we are very proud of him and what he did for us at the shelter.

Mr. Knoll, I didn't expect to be recognized for this. The reason why I chose the project was because I have been with animals my whole life. I wanted to do a project that benefited animals. I set about getting donations, wrote letters to family, friends, Veterinarians, and stores. It was actually a lot of work and I didn't expect to get recognized for it. It is an honor to be in front of you today to talk about my project and I thank you for it.

Mr. Layton, we think that you have honored us. Thank you so very much for what you have done.

Nancy Hawkins, LaPorte County Treasurer, I am here to talk to you today about outsourcing and printing of our tax bills by a company called Pro Forma. They are an Ohio based company. Their main printing facility is in Buffalo, New York. They have proposed to print, collate, and mail for \$.30 or less each tax set plus postage. A tax set includes two pages of tax billing information and an envelope. With the new postage rate, their cost is running about \$.30 per envelope. In addition to processing the tax bills, they work directly with the postal service to verify addresses, add the 4-digit postal code to the original zip code and bar coding, all of which adds up to additional postal discounts. I did a comparison and it came up to about \$.58 ½ per tax set. The proposal that we have received from them is for \$.60 a tax set. The cost is comparable for outsourcing them. This is a quicker process.

Mr. Bohacek, one of the real advantages of this is that if a taxpayer has multiple parcels, they will get one envelope with all of the documents in that envelope.

Mrs. Hawkins, if we do tax bills here, we need to look into buying our own "folder".

Mr. Bohacek, I am going to ask Attorney Braje to look over the proposed service agreement. If it looks good, I make a motion to allow our President, Mrs. Huston, to sign for the Board of Commissioners once funding is approved from the County Council. Motion seconded by Mr. Layton, and carried by voice vote 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

Employee Resignation Letter

Mr. Bohacek made a motion to approve the letter of resignation, seconded by Mr. Layton, motion carried by voice vote 3-0.

Letter from Eugene B. Gross

Mr. Layton, on May 25, 2009, the Veteran' Service Officer, Mr. Wantuch, and myself went to LaCrosse for the Memorial Day Services. We presented 69 LaPorte County Patriotic Service Medals to individuals, the oldest being Mr. Stoller, 94 years old. It was a beautiful presentation put on by the LaCrosse Lions Club. Mr. Craig Aigner was the precipitator of it. We just received a letter from Mr. Eugene B. Gross from Arizona. He is a veteran from LaPorte County. He was unable to attend the presentation ceremony but his mother did in his stead. He presented us with a letter of humility and thanks. I think this should be a permanent record of our board.

Mrs. Huston, I think you should read the third paragraph, it is beautiful.

Mr. Layton, "I especially thank those of you for allowing my Mother, Geneva Gross, to accept this medal. The look on my Mother's face when she presented the medal to me is one I will remember to the end of my days. She presented the medal to me with the same dignity and words as used by you at Ver-Mar Park on May 25, 2009."

Mr. Layton, I think we should make everyone aware that there is going to be another medal presentation in the County Complex at 9:00 a.m. on July 11, 2009. It is a nice ceremony and all are invited to see.

REQUESTS

Keith Harris/ T.E.A. Party

Mr. Harris, 523 Tremont Street, Michigan City. I submitted a letter to you through Mr. Layton. This is a request to hold a T.E.A. party. T.E.A. stands for "taxed enough already". It is basically our constitutional right to hold a civil protest against government spending and excessive taxation. This request came to you from me personally, as a citizen, and not in my capacity of Republican County Chair. I expect this to be a non partisan event where everyone is welcome to speak and participate. We picked a couple Saturdays in July, July 11th and July 18th. We expect it to be a three hour process from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Bohacek, by allowing an organized function on county property, do we assume any liability?

Mr. Braje, no.

Mr. Bohacek made a motion to accept and do it on July 18, 2009, seconded by Mr. Layton, motion carried by voice vote 3-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Jeffery Wright, LaPorte County Highway Superintendent/Rolling Prairie L.U.S.T.
Site (Tabled)

Mr. Bohacek made a motion to take off the table, seconded by Mr. Layton, motion carried by voice Vote 3-0.

Mr. Layton, at the last meeting I asked that this be tabled until I researched the funds that this request is coming out of. During that research, all of the previous funds have been taken out of the Riverboat Fund.

Mrs. Huston, this has been a long, on going process. Do we see any light at the end of this tunnel?

Mr. Wright, I understand that the monitoring has been going on for a number of years. I spent about an hour with the project manager from Hass & Assoc. The short plan would be to get a revised document to you in August for your approval and sent on to the state to try and get this refunding plan started.

Mr. Bohacek made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Layton, motion carried by voice vote 3-0.

Attorney Craig Braje/LaPorte County Juvenile Services Medical/Dental Services
Agreement (Tabled)

Mr. Braje, please leave on the table.

NEW BUSINESS

None

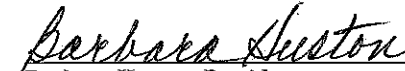
COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

None

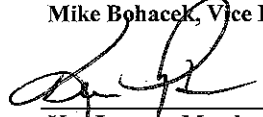
ADJOURN

Mrs. Huston, President, adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

LAPORTE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


Barbara Huston, President


Mike Bohacek, Vice President


Ker Layton, Member

ATTEST: 
Craig Hinchman, LaPorte County Auditor