

**PORTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH, 2023
10:00 A.M.**

(The entire meeting is available to watch on the Porter County website.)

The Regular meeting of the Porter County Board of Commissioners convened at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 7th, 2023 in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Administration Center.

Those present were: Commissioners Laura Blaney, Barb Regnitz, Jim Biggs and County Attorney Scott McClure; Executive Administrative Asst. Melanie Massey and Recording Secretary Kathy Merle.

Call to Order/Pledge

CONSENT AGENDA

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Approval of Payroll – February 3rd, 2023.

Approval of Claims – January 26th and February 2nd, 2023.

Approval of Minutes for January 10th and January 23rd, 2023.

Weights and Measures Monthly Report – December 16th, 2022 – January 15th, 2023 – Filed.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE – SCOT MACDONALD, DIRECTOR

ARTISTIC SERVICES AGREEMENT

Lucky Stiff – Michael Glorioso \$300.00

Mr. MacDonald, Michael has signed on to be our set designer for the show. This is his contract for that.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the Artistic Services Agreement, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Citizen Appointment to the Plan Commission Board – 1 Appointment (*Democrat affiliation residing in unincorporated Porter County.*)

Com. Blaney, moved to appoint Pam Fish, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

Citizen Appointment to the Stormwater Advisory Board - 1 Appointment (*Residing in unincorporated Porter County.*)

Com. Regnitz, moved to nominate Andy Vasquez.

Com. Blaney, moved to nominate Bob Durance.

Com. Regnitz, moved to nominate Andy Vasquez, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

Com. Biggs, Primarily because Andy is a local business owner down around the Kouts area and a farmer. I just think that his appointment would be valuable sitting on the Stormwater Advisory Board.

Honoring the following E-911 Dispatchers that handled multiple threats of violence at 3 of the High Schools in Porter County.

- **Sandra Gallegos**
- **Cari Postma**
- **Amber Bradford**
- **Jessica Sandifer**
- **Samantha Jostes**
- **Lori Maddack**
- **Debby Gunn - Executive Director**
- **Christina Valpatic - Training Coordinator**

Ms. Gunn, Thank you for this opportunity to recognize the 911 Center. Often I imagine we're familiar with 9-1-1 debacles when we see those in the media and on the news. This is an opportunity to show what exactly the 911 department has done and is capable of doing. On January 26th at 9:13 a.m. we received first notification that there was a bomb threat and a possible act of assailant at Portage High School. Following that over the course of the next two hours we were also notified of a similar threat from Valparaiso High School and Wheeler High School. Those of you that are familiar with Public Safety jurisdictions in Porter County that's our three police frequencies Portage Sheriff's Department and Valparaiso Police Department. We had six dispatchers working in the room that day of whom all are sitting here with us today fortunately and during that time I'd like to just give a little window into that hour and a half, two hour period for the dispatchers. They dispatched 45 officers to those incidents. That's not including Detective Bureau. They dispatched 10 total fire departments. Those are just the number of fire departments, not the number of apparatus. Countless as you can imagine. In just under a two hour time frame answered 113 calls. So that is remarkable. In addition to communicating with responders they're still receiving phone calls of people that aren't related to the incident. Many of them can tell you stories of that day, of just other regular calls that came in and they were able to deal with those people during their crisis. The responders responding to these separate crises together and maintain composure. All of that the communication side of this one thing that a lot of people aren't don't realize about the 911 Center is I've mentioned it multiple times the technical aspect. So in addition to the communicating with callers communicating with responders they're dealing with software and the technical side of things. It is nothing short of remarkable. I am honored that you have recognized our Center and you recognize the effort put forth by the dispatchers that are here. Thank you. We're all just very grateful.

Com. Biggs, I mean they just like anybody else whether you work in the middle or whatever you do I mean they come in and do a job every day as expected, but those kind of events and moments don't happen very often. It is a wonder when you consider that you're handling a total of more than 100 calls in a very rapid fire and not drop the ball. You know especially when we consider how many different responding agencies were involved in that. The outcome was great. You know kudos to the City of Valparaiso and to all of the Public Safety agencies. Everybody did their job and that is what you hope for when something like that happens. That nobody trips and nobody tripped. Very proud of all of the dispatchers. With that the Board of Commissioners would like to identify each one of them with a certificate of appreciation from Porter County Government. I'm going to hand this to you.

Ms. Gunn, I would like to take this opportunity to spotlight Sandra Gallegos. She actually was the call taker for both times the suspect called in. Ironically she took both of those calls and handled them phenomenally well. Sandra Gallegos, Cari Postma, Amber Bradford, Jessica Sandifer, Samantha Jostes, Lori Maddack, Christina Valpatic - Training Coordinator.

Com. Blaney, And Debby Gunn.

Com. Biggs, I just want you to know only professionals would pull that off and thank you for being the professionals that you are.

COMMISSIONERS

NIPSCO – Denise Conlin – Discussion.

Com. Biggs, Sitting in front of us are Denise Conlin and Rick Kolinski are both from NIPSCO. We've asked them to come in front of us today and explain a little bit about why

rates have gone up. Also, power outages and what your team has been doing to try to make those less and less each passing year. I may have a questions about solar farms as well.

Ms. Conlin, On behalf of NIPSCO Rick and I are happy to be here. Thank you Com. Regnitz for reaching out and asking us to come. In regards to bills that are currently going on, rates, etc. we have had definitely a bit of an increase in gas costs over this winter due to our commodity costs quite frankly. Just like we're seeing at the pumps. I guess that flows from us to our customers. It does just that. It direct flows. We don't do any up charges or anything of that nature but the cost of the gas is a lot higher this year over past years. Again, just like kind of at the pumps. We also want to make sure that our residents, our community is well aware of the energy assistance programs we have available. The first one is the LIHEAP funding that is our federal refunded program. For the State of Indiana \$94 million has been awarded and we encourage our customers if they are in need to either contact us which is 1-800-464 NIPSCO, dial 211 where they have operators available to assist them and actually the application process. It started back in early November through May 1st. Once they apply and if they are approved they also may be eligible for what we call the NIPSCO care discount and that could be up to a 26% discount on your monthly bill. In addition we have hardship programs, we have the Township Trustee programs, and we have two new piloted programs that NIPSCO only in the State of Indiana offer and its Serve and Silver. Serve which is geared towards our veterans and it's a \$400 one-time benefit. They have to have service in their name, have served. They could be active and their bill needs to be passed due. By passed due that doesn't mean a disconnectedness it means just past due. For our Silver, which is our senior citizens 60 years and over. Bill in their name. Could be eligible for a one-time again \$400 benefit. No disconnect notice, just past due. Those are some things we have going on we really encourage folks to reach out to us call our 800 number dial 211 nipsco.com Energy Assistance. We can help out. Like I said a myriad of opportunities.

Com. Biggs, Does that help have to be repaid?

Ms. Conlin, This does not. This is given to them as a benefit and never repaid. Also, some of these programs are not even the poverty levels have risen to help. Maybe in between a senior citizen that's questionable you know. Unfixed incomes helping out a little bit and also for the Silver Serve. Somebody could qualify for both programs and receive an \$800 benefit. Last year our average benefit from the government was about \$450. Right now it's about \$517. So it's increased this year alone. We really encourage customers to try to take advantage and get a hold of us. There's a lot of times there's money left on the table and we don't want to have that happen you know take advantages as much as possible. I have information to leave should you want it. My card as well.

Mr. Kolinski, Can I say a couple things? I think the key is if someone's having challenges with their bills winter is a time where you're using a lot more gas. We're heating our homes, we're cooking. Your bills seem to go up a little bit. The first thing we want to do is make sure somebody reaches out to our 1-800 number, goes online and doesn't wait to need support or help because we have a lot of programs as Denise stated. And I want to talk a little bit more about the commodity. Denise did a nice job of explaining the fact that natural gas is very similar to gas like a commodity we see at the pumps right you see the price go up and down. For the last 10 years we're lucky enough as a company that we have strategically positioned ourselves to really be the lowest cost Natural Gas provider in the State. Now gas as a commodity has gone up and what that is is a pass-through cost so NIPSCO makes no extra dollars on that. We get per therm that you use, we get a pass-through cost per therm. Now let's just say this isn't just for the knowledge of everybody here. If a therm is a hundred dollars which it's not I just want to make it simple and that cost goes up to \$120 we don't make any more money than that on that particular therm that we pass through. That cost goes right to the actual consumer. The good news is we're seeing already the last two months that natural gas is starting to come down. We're seeing that already and the challenge is everything pricing is in the rears by a quarter by about a three month period. Over the last two months we've seen those prices stabilize. I think customers have some good news in the future here where gas prices will go down a little bit as well. Very important I think to point that out, but the key is if somebody needs some support reach out to us. We're in the business of providing safe reliable energy to our customers. We don't want to ever you know cut that service off to our customers. We've got ways that we can work with them and we'll do that.

Ms. Conlin, And in addition for the first time ever we have what they call Credit Agreements or Payment Plans. We have opened up our Payment Plans to all customers at the 12-month level. We've never done that in the years. I've been with NIPSCO realizing that there are those challenges. And another great program we offer is a Budget Plan where you pay the same amount every year and every year it balances up and the amount changes

based on your usage. So budget plan kind of knowing what you're going to owe every month but not always you know possible for those in need. So like Rick said reach out to us. So you've had some questions about solar right.

Com. Biggs, Well before that I wanted you speak a little bit about power outages you know during a storm. I mean they're not they're not just happening arbitrarily there's typically on the heels of a storm. What are you all doing to try to make those as least as possible?

Mr. Kolinski, Really good question. So obviously reliability is key to providing customers a service they deserve. Storms typically can challenge our infrastructure there's no question. To answer your question to two things that I probably point out is over the last six years we've spent over \$2 billion upgrading our infrastructure. That's you know transmission lines, substations, new substations. If you think of a couple years ago we put in a new substation right downtown off of 30 as you're coming into I think a lot of people probably saw as that was taking place. Our infrastructure is no different than roads and bridges right. You put it in in the 1950's or 60's there's a time where it has its useful life and we need to make sure that we get in there. We upgrade our infrastructure so we're seeing a lot of upgrades, poles, wires and circuits that I think are helping with dependability but also over the last five years we've spent millions and millions of dollars more than we had in previous years on tree maintenance. As far as our forestry we're really using a lot of contractors. We're using drones, we're using different ways of making sure that we're identifying challenging areas. Over 50% of our outages especially with storms are tree related issues and it's a balance right because you want to appropriately cut down trees because they're very important to the environment. Sometimes you want to cut down trees in front of someone's house and they don't want you to do that and that's understandable. So we try to do our best to work with them but that has really I think helped us. If there are challenging areas that you guys are aware of that your constituents come to you and let you know that you've seen some issues let us know. Let Denise know. We'll audit that circuit, we'll find out what we can do. Please let us know.

Ms. Conlin, And in addition for those that are environmentally stewards, of fans of that we our tree department they also out and do talks about types of trees to plant under wires and things of that nature. I've attended a couple of them and they're very very interesting.

Com. Biggs, The solar question County government has been approached by a company about putting in a solar farm in the Malden area.

Ms. Conlin, NextEra.

Com. Biggs, I believe its 2200 acres or so.

Ms. Conlin, Yes 250 megawatts maybe?

Com. Biggs, Yes. I was wondering and I and my understanding is and you could explain quickly what the relationship is that NIPSCO or REMC would have with the Solar Company as far as buying that energy back.

Mr. Kolinski, I do not believe that we have any relationship with that particular development that is being proposed. We do have some of our own solar farms that we are building out in kind of our Southern territory. You know we obviously support renewable energy. We are going toward where we are moving our generation portfolio from a coal generation portfolio to a more renewable portfolio. The positive there is to two things I look at it and I'll think about it I'll tell you my perspective from a utility and then also potentially as you guys is leading the renewable energy transition I think is a good one. There's no question we've made that decision to do that. Obviously there's a lot of talk about the environment and becoming carbon neutral and so forth. That is a great goal of that, however we feel that by investing in renewable assets that it will stabilize price cases for our customers in the future. And the reason being is when you have your bill and we produce most of our electricity currently by coal. Coal is a commodity as well. There is a price into your bill. There is a fuel cost every month that you pay for coal. Again, it is a pass-through cost. We don't make any money on it. We also have an old coal fired facilities that are 50 years old. A lot of maintenance. A lot of people there to take care of them. Sun, wind, there is no cost. There is no fuel. It's free still hopefully forever. I think we all know that but the bottom line is once we get a good amount of renewables online you're going to see prices that will stabilize because it will take less manpower to run something like that. There is no fuel cost. It is positive for us from an ability to provide our customer service. I will tell you an interesting story that I think you might like. Our coal fired plant, the Shaffer plant in Wheatfield. Is roughly about 40% of their assessed value within the county? Big challenge. We're going to close that down. That's

a big gap for them but what we did is we worked with them to put in a solar farm. One of the larger solar farms that will be in the country. The assessed value essentially balanced out because of that. Yes it is a lot of acreage that it is taking up. There are some pros and cons. I think there are people who are for it. There are people who are against it but it could be a very good opportunity for assessed value and tax revenue for a local government or a County government. I think that's one positive that you have to look at but again I realize that there's pros and cons to that and those are just some general thoughts. Any questions I'll be happy to answer them.

Com. Biggs, You currently do not have any relationship with NextEra?

Mr. Kolinski, We do have not on the particular project that they're proposing in Porter County. We do not have a purchase power agreement meaning if they own and operated. There are some as a matter of fact with NextEra but not at that particular site. We do have what's called a purchase power agreement where they build it, they maintain it. They're going to produce power. We've committed for a period of time to purchase power from them to provide service to our customers but at this particular project we do not have any agreement. They have the ability to do that as there are many independent generators of power that actually go back and they sell into the market essentially the grid through (Inaudible) or other independent system managers and so that's what they do in a situation like that.

Com. Biggs, When those farms are available but they are locally. In this case the rate payers in here in Porter County will we see some kind of decrease in our rate by going into an agreement with them to purchase their energy?

Mr. Kolinski, We do not have a purchase power agreement. Our rates would have to be similar across the board. We could never offer a particular county or subgroup a different rate than another. All of our rates have to get approved through the IURC.

Com. Regnitz, I did have a question because you've already had some public meetings about that proposed 18% increase over the cost of alternative energy in other counties not Porter County. I'm just wondering if you could comment on that. We just did a little estimate of how that would impact county government. It would be close to \$213,000.00 based on last year's energy bills. If you could just address that how you are asking counties to cover the cost of these sorts of enterprises in other counties.

Mr. Kolinski, Just as anything and I hate to point to this but I think we all know that we are seeing inflation and a lot of things the prices go up. I think the idea is behind the rate case or the rate request is to help with the investment. The investment up front with solar and wind that we're going through right now is taking a lot of capital and the idea is our rates don't typically go down. Once we get our capital in play and we're starting to see generation from our renewable assets rates will stabilize. Two things I want to point out. One is when we use wind and solar we create what is called a renewable energy credit. Those can be monetized. For instance we have not brought on solar yet online but we have brought on some wind and we're going to actually refund customers and you'll see in your and there will be an announcement probably in about a month or two about the amount of money. We are going to refund customer tens of millions of dollars because of the renewable energy credits that we will create by using these programs. So yes it is a capital outlay up front but I think the idea is the investment then will pay for itself over years. It will stabilize our rates.

Ms. Conlin, Not to mention that increases in steps. It is not an all at once increase. It is a three different step process.

Com. Biggs, As we move through this change from what I'm hearing this may not be the last increase. You have capital assets that have to be purchased because there is this change order. I totally understand that but I mean the flip side of that is going to be years before the rate payers actually benefit from that.

Ms. Conlin, No I met the increase was a step over three years. The step process.

Mr. Kolinski, To your point Commissioner it will be a gradual ability for the rate payer to see the benefit of that as well. It will take time. We can't bring in all the renewable assets say by 2024. Our plan is to move forward through probably 2028/2029 and have all of our assets in play.

Com. Biggs, You may or may not know the energy or electricity that you're providing this County. Is that coming from the Westville plant?

Mr. Kolinski, It is really hard to ever determine exactly where it comes from because it truly is governed by an independent operator that allows us. There are times where we will even idle some of our coal plants because we can truly go to the grid MISO who we are a member of and purchase off the grid at a lower rate to feed our customers. It is hard to say. For instance we had some wind agreements for wind assets that were in the middle of the country. I'm not sure if it's Montana or Idaho but we had agreements with them. There is no way to really determine exactly where the electricity is coming from.

Com. Biggs, The reason I ask is if this transition that is inevitable I think one of the benefits of this particular county is that it still holds on to a rural flavor. Eating up thousands of acres for either wind or solar when we deal with the mills to the north and you see other industries that pop up here and there is losing that attractive part of us that identity. That is what I hope that we are able to hold on to. That is why to be honest with you I'm not a big fan of solar for that reason. It eats up a lot of land whereas the plant you have to the south of us I can guarantee you is sitting on 2000 acres.

Mr. Kolinski, It is a balance and I understand that and there are some counties that are not in favor of it. As a utility I think we think that is the best way in the future to provide customers good dependable safe energy. I understand.

Com. Biggs, Thank you very much. You've done a great job answering our questions.

CCMG Funding.

Mr. Polarek, Good morning. I believe this is going to be the transfer from the loan from bridge into CCMG to cover the remaining balance of 2022 CCMG roads.

Com. Biggs, The Community Crossing Grant is the grant that we apply for each year. We have been awarded I believe was a \$1 million.

Mr. Polarek, We receive a \$ million match from the State.

Com. Biggs, We have to match that and currently we don't have a \$1 million laying there just to grab and throw at that match. The Commissioners are going to approach the County Council to borrow from the bridge fund. Scott can you jump in here at any time.

Atty. McClure, I would be a temporary loan to go ahead and appropriate the required balance into the CCMG Fund so you can close out the 2022 CCMG Project. Then we've applied for the 2023 CCMG Grant. If we receive that then we will be looking for whatever the match would be. If we got the full match it would be another \$1 million. We can deal with that with the Council for the summer and budget time.

Mr. Polarek, Usually it's about April when we hear back from the State as far as awarding of the grant.

Com. Biggs, Is there any need for any kind of motion here.

Atty. McClure, I don't believe so. I believe we've already caused the appropriate paperwork or things to be turned into the Council office to be appropriately advertised for their meeting to take action.

Ordinance Creating a NON-Reverting Fund # 8165 for Receipt of Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservancy District (VLACD) Blackhawk Beach Grant – 1st Reading.

Atty. McClure, Blackhawk Beach or the Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservancy District. I believe that is why Mr. Hollenbeck is present today. This was the OCRA Grant is that correct Counselor?

Atty. Hollenbeck, First of all thank you on behalf of the Conservancy District. This is a good example of collaboration and coordination and the Commissioners stepped forward to be the sponsoring agency along with the Conservancy District to implement an application. And you were successful in getting an award. That money will be spent in the Blackhawk Beach area north. The north side of Flint Lake. I euphemistically call these things tank trails. I don't even call them roads but it is going to get a lot of water off of the roads and down where it belongs in Flint Lake. Improving storm water management is a critically important quality of life matter. This is part of the process where the Auditor's office helps us in terms of being the

conduit through which the grant money passes and to do that we have to have a dedicated fund for the State Board of Account purposes where this grant money goes in and comes out. That is what we're trying to accomplish. Karen we thank you and your department for accommodating this as well.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

Com. Biggs, Is there anyone wishing to speak against this Ordinance? Second call, anyone wishing to speak against this Ordinance? Third and final call, anyone wishing to speak against this Ordinance? Anyone wishing to speak in favor of this Ordinance?

Mr. Breitingner, My name is Walt Breitingner. I live on the corner of Park and Academy in downtown Valpo. I don't live in that exact community but I visit it quite often. Several times a month. Those folks really need the help of having their storm water managed better. It's not just for that community and those people but it is for all of our lakes that there is a lot of storm water that erodes. A lot of the beaches and the banks and the areas around there and that mud or silt goes right into Flint Lake. I see multiple reasons why this should be supported. Thank you.

Com. Biggs, Second call, anyone wishing to speak in favor of this Ordinance? Third and final call, anyone wishing to speak in favor of this Ordinance?

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Ordinance Creating a NON-Reverting Fund # 8165 for Receipt of Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservancy District (VLACD) Blackhawk Beach Grant on 1st Reading, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

Resolution Promoting American Patriotism in Porter County.

Com. Biggs, We have been asked by a local resident, also a business owner if we would support a resolution identifying or acknowledging patriotism here in our county. They also donated two large flags to hang in our buildings of our choice which we will also do.

**PORTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RESOLUTION PROMOTING AMERICAN PATRIOTISM
IN PORTER COUNTY**

WHEREAS, the Porter County Board of Commissioners values American patriotism; and

WHEREAS, the American Flag is a Symbol of our Freedom, our Constitution, and the Recognized Goodness of our Country; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Porter County Board of Commissioners encourages our Citizens, our Community Institutions, and our Businesses to explore ways that promote the treasured values of Patriotism and respect for the American Flag.
Passed and adopted this day 7th of February, 2023.

/s/Jim Biggs, Commissioner
/s/Barb Regnitz, Commissioner
/s/Laura Blaney, Commissioner
/s/Attest: Karen Martin, Auditor

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the Resolution Promoting American Patriotism in Porter County, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

A&Z Engineering, LLC Consultant Agreement for Needs Assessment for Porter County Highway Garage.

Com. Biggs, I guess over the last year or so there has been discussion about the condition of our Center District Highway Garage on Rte. 2 that was built in I believe 1960. Little has been done with that property since that time. From what I can see it is the worst property that we have in need of some attention. Some major attention. So I reached out to A&Z Engineering. A consulting group out of Ft. Wayne and they brought in some help. They toured

the property with Jim Polarek the Highway Director. Some good news came out of that in the sense that was always my fear that we would have to move that property. I only sits on I believe 7 acres. Jim Polarek stated to me that 12 to 14 would be the best scenario to be sitting on for a highway garage of that size. They came in and looked at it and thought they could fit whatever we needed on that footprint which is huge because I have no idea what property may be available in that general area. It has to be some place here in Center District and what the price tag would be for that. So that is good news. Scott have you seen the copy of their proposal?

Atty. McClure, I have. It has the appropriate scope of work. I believe the compensation is \$37,950.00. It has a pretty tight timeline. It looks like we will be getting a final study submission by May 9th, 2023. The design phase would begin in June. It meets all of the legal requirements.

Com. Biggs, Another value point to this garage is that we retire the bond that we originally took out to build the jail that we are currently occupying. That bond I believe is retired in January of next year, Karen?

Ms. Martin, Yes.

Com. Biggs, We have to be locked and loaded with a new project or we lose that tax rate. So it is important. That is another reason that I was hoping that we wouldn't need another piece of property to purchase because that could have taken months to do. We're wanting to move pretty quickly on this and have everything in order so we can just plug in these new projects into that bond rate or that tax rate. We are looking at that project and we are also looking at the County Jail, which has major interior renovations needing to be done with that. Including if the money is there to identify our deficiencies in a half a dozen beds for inmates that have severe mental health issues in such a way that we can keep our staff there safe as possible. As long as they are under our liability.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve A&Z Engineering for the County Highway Garage renovations, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Com. Blaney, Do we have anybody here?

Com. Biggs, We have their business development person. (Inaudible) Barone.

Com. Blaney, We just usually have them come up.

Commissioner's Letter of Support for the Grand Gardner Hotel.

Com. Regnitz, Rick Urschel has approached us about supporting their project and renovating the recently departed Boys and Girls Club facility, which is an 1899 Gardner School building. They are going to be building a boutique hotel and they have asked if we will support their request for favorable consideration for redevelopment tax credits.

Com. Biggs, Scott have you looked over that letter?

Atty. McClure, Yes.

Com. Biggs, And are you good with it?

Atty. McClure, I am.

Com. Regnitz, moved to Support the Grand Gardner Hotel, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

AUDITOR KAREN MARTIN

The Visiting Nurse Association ARPA Agreement.

Ms. Martin, I submitted the agreement to the Commissioners with reference to the amount that the Porter County Council approved \$450,000.00 in appropriations for the VNA Hospice of Northwest Indiana. As of this submission we are only outstanding six other townships and one other non-profit.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Visiting Nurse Association ARPA Agreement, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

EXPO – LORI DALY, DIRECTOR

Fair Board Project Update with David Bagnall and Lori Daly.

Standard Fee Waiver Schedule for Porter County Internal Departments/Agencies.

Ms. Daly, What we have here is a standard fee waiver schedule that I worked with Barb on. Several County departments' requests space at the Expo and the grounds to do training and a variety of different events. This is kind of a blanket approval so I don't have to keep bugging you.

Com. Blaney, We do need to approve the fee waiver schedule.

Com. Biggs, We have been asked by some of the non-profits.

Com. Regnitz, No this is internal.

Atty. McClure, Specifically Sheriff's, Highway, Elections, Stormwater, Judges, MS4, Soil and Water, Health Department and I believe the final request is that if the Expo has expenditures for one of these departments that the direct cost of that expenditure would be reimbursed by the department but the rent be waived.

Ms. Daly, Correct. Any equipment that the County owns as well but any money that the Expo puts out of their budget would be reimbursed at normal rates by that department.

Com. Blaney, For the public these are our departments that need to hold events at the Expo Center and so it does cost...you know there's a usual cost but we'd like to waive that for our own departments. Especially when they are reaching out into the community and holding events that benefit everyone. It doesn't make sense.

Ms. Daly, We want the Highway to have their training.

Com. Regnitz, And the other thing is they don't just have cart blanche where they can come in and have anything. We have a very specific list of events that we are pre-approving so that Lori doesn't have to keep coming to us but should they come should the Sheriff come up with a completely different request that would still have to come before us for approval.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the Standard Fee Waiver Schedule, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Mr. Bagnall, The reason I'm here is just to give you a little update of what's happening out at the fairgrounds with the Porter County AG Society. As most people know we're just a tenant there but part of our agreement is that we maintain the buildings and infuse money into projects out there to keep it as beautiful as we can. So this year we have several projects that are going on with some ARPA funds we're going to replace the entire fence along 49 and Division which we've started working on. They're going to deliver the fence on Friday and we plan on hitting the ground running around next week getting the fence installed. It's going to be very attractive its black vinyl so it'll be emanate the 2023 look.

Com. Biggs, What's up there now is anything but attractive.

Mr. Bagnall, It has been there for 35 years. It's served its purpose. Then we're also replacing the woven wire fence which goes from Gate One all the way to the east end of the property with a chain link fence, which that's what we could afford and it served its purpose for 35 years as well. The high voltage program on the electric out there though it's in serious need of some updates we accepted a bid and they're collecting materials to start that process as soon as we can get going. Also, on the generator for the Expo Center that's on the horizon here and we hope to get that done within the next year. In addition to that we plan on improving the campground. The sewer system out there is a little troubled with the electric and we're going to totally revamp that and improve the sewer line and add electric to it. The washer actually at the swine barn, we're going to improve the hard line to Gate Five for internet. We're going to plan on putting some new LED parking lot lights. We have a several

year plan to do that. At one point in time have all of them replaced. Water line valves during the winter, the winter is hard on them sometimes and we're going to improve and replace several water line valves and we're going to paint the inside of the 4-H building. And the swine barn has a little foundation problem that we're going to have some experts look at. The building is cracking, the concrete and we're not really comfortable with that. I did print off a list of capital projects that we've done since 1985 and after this year we've spent about \$4 million to improve and keep the grounds running. So in addition to that I just wanted to touch base on something that's very dear to my heart and that's the fair. This year we just announced a new fellow that's really doing well. His name's Jelly Roll and I just want to share it. Might not mean a lot. He's had a troubled past in his youth. He spent a lot of time in prison and he just recently played the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville and he donated \$250,000.00 from that show to the prison where he was an inmate for the troubled youth to put in Council and things like that so they can learn recording. He says that during his time there he did have some ability to learn some things but he's really reaching out to the troubled youth and helping to make a difference. He is a phenomenal guy. Our reach for him has been phenomenal. Yesterday we announced it and the reach for him on the social media was over a half a million people with 85,000 post engagement. On our website we had 1800 comments and 5700 shares which is larger than any show we've done. We've had 14 sellouts in my tenure there which is amazing. I manage the ticketing side of it as well and we get people coming from far far away. We sell tickets in Arizona, California and Texas and everywhere in between. So I'm happy to say that the 150,000 people that we draw to Porter County Fair we have a large impact on the community and with the financial impact. With hotels, food and gas all those things. So we're proud to be part of that community and we're excited about doing this thing in the community that is one of the larger draws that the community has. You know in one of my jobs I get to book acts across this side of the Mississippi and it's amazing how many people have heard of the Porter County Fair. It's just we're really proud to be part of it and proud to represent them here. One person I forgot to mention is Mike Curless is our vice president. He's in the room today. He came along to make sure I do my job and Lori has been a great ambassador with us at the fair. If there's anything that you see that you need please pass it on to Lori. She has great communication with us and we work well together.

Com. Biggs, Laura played a key role in the fair receiving some of the ARPA funds. I've known before today of course how the money was going to be spent and I just want to say that I think that the way that you're spending is extremely responsible. You're spending it in a way where our residents are going to see the impact of that.

Ms. Daly, One of the things that we looked at when we were first talking about it is safety of the grounds. So when we talk about electric that's a big part of the safety issue in the fence.

Com. Biggs, Proud of our fair. Proud of the Expo Center and the way it's ran as well.

Mr. Bagnall, We want to do our part to make it look as best as we can.

Com. Biggs, It's working so well. We are going to take a 2 minute recess.

ITS DEPT. – LEE CHILDRESS, DIRECTOR

NITCO – Phone Presentation.

Mr. Childress, Tom is here to present telephones.

Mr. Carroll, Good morning everyone. Tom Carroll from NITCO. Just here to walk you through your new phone system that is already being installed as a matter of fact. We have installed the phones in the IT Dept. NITCO has been in the phone business since 1939 so it has been a long time. NITCO actually stands for Northwestern Indiana Telephone Company. Our legacy telephone service is very well known around Porter County. We've been installing a significant number of new phone systems. Legacy Phone Systems the on-site on premise PBX's are wearing out very very quickly. Most of them are operated through Centrex lines or POTS lines POTS lines standing for Plano Telephone Service. Pretty much those systems are starting to go away. They're all based now on networking and internet or voice over IP services. The new phone system that we're installing for all of the county departments is a HPBX or hosted phone System. NITCO has a META switch which is a state-of-the-art telephone switch which is located in our corporate headquarters in Hebron. All of the phone systems all travel through and are hosted there. You have no on-site, on premise phone system. All you have on site are the desktop phones themselves or the cordless phones or the conference phones but

everything is operated maintained by NITCO at our corporate headquarters. The contract that the county signed which was signed I believe two months ago allows for NITCO to install all of the phones. They are leased to the county on a monthly cost and Nico maintains those phones. The amount of maintenance that the IT Department would have to do going forward is very limited. We do give the individual departments access through a web portal to be able to go in and take a look at the phones and see if there are any changes they want to make. If they want to do some call forwarding if they want to make changes to features they can do that. That's available to all the department heads through Lee and his team at the IT Department to make those adjustments as needed. We're the backup, if they need us to make any major changes if for some reason a phone fails we just come up and replace it at no additional charge. The system works very well. NITCO's had this specific system of polycom phone system in our own corporate headquarters for the last 11 years and we love it. The amount of features that are available including call forwarding, do not disturb, voicemail are all involved and are all part of that. As a matter of fact I was talking with Barb earlier today about how she wants her phone set up in her office and Jim could have his separately but each department can set their phone systems up a little bit differently. Have their own auto attendance, have their own speed dialing systems and setup. So it's a pretty nice system and it's very affordable. This also means that the county has no upfront costs. NITCO will be spending somewhere around \$150,000 to purchase all the phones and then get them installed. That cost is not an upfront cost that the county has to spend. We're looking forward to it. I think your departments are looking forward to it because your current phone system as you know has failed on a number of occasions. We don't ever want to see that happen again.

Com. Biggs, I mean before bringing you on with the with the contract a couple of months ago that was all done in-house and for those of you that may be wondering we have nearly 800 phones in County government that have to be maintained. As you know with the department that he has that size with everything else that they have to do that's just a huge undertaking. You can imagine how many calls that you would receive on a daily basis my phone's not working, from guys like me.

Mr. Childress, It's not only calls it's the equipment. It's expensive to replace and you need to do it on a like a five-year plan which we haven't done for a while which what got us into this problem in the first place. We're not trained telephony people. The Commissioners made a good choice I believe.

Com. Biggs, And the other thing that I think a real positive with all this this program or project is that NITCO is local. They employ our local residents and that's always a plus. What do you need from us?

Mr. Childress, This is merely a presentation.

Mr. Carroll, Thank you very much and we look forward to do more business with you. Appreciate it.

Request for an Additional Appropriation Fund #1000 Account #31200 Consultants in the amount of \$15,000.00.

Mr. Childress, That is correct. I started off this budget with zero this year. I already have invoices coming in.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the request for Additional Appropriation in the amount of \$15,000.00, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

FACILITIES – DANIEL SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR

ABM Building Solutions – A Memorandum of Understanding for Preliminary Assessments.

Mr. Sullivan, ABM has approached us to do a free of charge preliminary assessment to see where there are opportunities for energy savings that could actually fund projects down the road that would not only upgrade those energy using systems but other systems as well. I've asked Eric Dustin to give a quick presentation on that.

Mr. Dustin, Thank you everyone for this time and opportunity. Generally what we do in the memorandum of understanding with ABM is we come in and bring in certified engineers to a number of buildings and we are going to explore the entire infrastructure. It could be energy, operations and maintenance. There are three buckets we are looking at for these potential

savings. Energy could be light. If there are old CFL's versus LED lighting. Even some of the LED that could have been potentially replaced 15 years ago. There's some pretty significant efficiency opportunities for newer technologies with LED lighting as well. Even water conservation. Turning lights on and off the control system. There's some significant potentially significant savings there as well. Maintenance and operations we look at you know those schedules too and try and identify the hours the time spent into that or if there's equipment. So we actually go through and do a full assessment of all the equipment fundamental to the buildings operation. HVAC included in that as well. Then we grade that and so we give an idea of what is the life expectancy on that and what is also what's really important the capital volatility. We'll provide the county with that as we move forward through this process. Has it passed its expected life already and it's limping along or does it have another five years or ten years. And then what is the projected cost of that equipment in today's dollars versus what it will be in five and ten years potentially. With all of that we are able to oftentimes pay for all of that project through savings or oftentimes based off of the county's objectives, needs and desires. We can use those savings to fund other critical infrastructure needs. That is kind of it in a nutshell. This memorandum of understanding really identifies those buildings that we come in and look at first pass. Maybe identify four or five critical or aging ones. I've heard you mention a few already like the prison for example. Maybe we go after those rather than I believe the approximately 20 buildings throughout the county. A few unique things about what we do is first there is no upfront cost for this memorandum this preliminary assessment. Also, when we are further along in the process and we propose a potential project our work is guaranteed. We use the guaranteed energy savings contract legislation for the State of Indiana. Ultimately, if we don't deliver the savings that we guarantee we are writing a check for you. It is truly guaranteed. We also guarantee the price. So with that there is no change orders. Oftentimes there is that bid in spec or the scope seems to change throughout the process. We guarantee that there are no change orders throughout this as well.

Com. Biggs, How do you get compensated?

Mr. Dustin, A lot of the ways we act as a general contractor. We are a publicly traded company. We do have a markup. When we go through this if we were to move forward with a project we are really a single source accountability. We manage everything like a general contractor. We can use local labor to do the actual work. We have a branch office in Indianapolis as well. There is a markup and it is generally 7 to 9% is what we're making.

Com. Biggs, How does that compare to when you do it in house a traditional approach?

Mr. Dustin, A traditional approach I think oftentimes when you go bid inspect and it's low bid. I actually came from that world before I joined ABM. A lot of people will come in very low up front and then they make their money on change orders. It's really variable throughout the process. Margins up front might be say 10%. Then when there's change orders you know I've seen many companies easily at 25% for example.

Com. Biggs, You said you can come in here and look at the lighting or you could come in here and look at things such as a boiler or air conditioning HVAC systems.

Mr. Dustin, Absolutely, roofs. Another one we have we've done a lot of roofs actually. I've heard solar mentioned. I'm not familiar with that project, but we've done multiple solar projects as well. We have a specific solar division, EV charging stations. I think ABM is actually the largest provider of EV charging in in the United States.

Com. Biggs, Any of the Commissioners have any questions?

Com. Regnitz, Did you want to talk about um how you're under that you don't have to do vetting or anything like that.

Mr. Dustin, Another thing that is unique to ABM is that we can leverage GSA procurement. GSA is the federal program. It's ultimately a buying Co-op. What that is we've been pre-approved. It's almost a two-year vetting process with the federal government where we've been pre-approved and identified. Ultimately it qualifies us where you don't have to go out again to that traditional bid spec where you're comparing three people trying to get into the lowest bid. Then they come in with the change order. That's one of the ways again we're able to guarantee what we do and it streamlines the process as well. We can move it up a lot quicker.

Com. Biggs, Laura do you have any questions?

Com. Blaney, I don't have any questions.

Comm. Biggs, Here's where I'm at on it. I work for architectural engineering firm because that's my full-time job. I know a little bit about what you're doing, but as a Commissioner you know I would I'd like to do a taste test first. Instead of opening up our every building to you and every aspect of our properties. If the other two Commissioners would be willing to do it as well is to take a look at all of our lighting in all of our buildings and let us know what we have there and how we can save some money there. You just through the entire meeting you that we were talking to uh NIPSCO about our electric bills. If you're wanting to do that at no cost and come back with a report as to how we can save some money I'd be willing to take a look at that.

Mr. Dustin, Excellent and I would you consider the HVAC equipment too because that's one of the largest energy consumptions?

Com. Biggs, Sure we can look at that. Is that okay with the other two Commissioners?

Com. Blaney, The only thing I would like to add and this is no reflection on your organization but I would prefer to do the kind of contracts where we pay someone to be our agent. They're not going to make money down the line on their recommendations to us. That just doesn't sit well with me. And as far as the change orders rolling in and we just did \$30 million of capital renovations and we did not have that problem. I mean you've sat here through it too. We had a few change orders.

Com. Biggs, It wasn't a problem.

Com. Blaney, Some of them were the opposite.

Com. Biggs, The projects are watched or managed closely it doesn't get away from you.

Com. Blaney, Those are my thoughts.

Com. Biggs, I'm curious if nothing else. I totally get where Com. Blaney is coming from. She's a tough nut to sell. She should be right. I understand and I don't necessarily disagree with what she's saying but you seem like a nice young guy. I think I even met you down at the commissioner's conference.

Mr. Dustin, We did.

Com. Biggs, I think Daniel's also interested in seeing what you come up with. And it's not going to cost us anything. I guess if it's okay with the other two we'll give you a crack at our lighting and our cooling and heating and see what you come up with.

Mr. Dustin, Excellent, appreciate it.

Com. Biggs, Do we need a motion Scott?

Atty. McClure, Yes, we have to approve the MOU.

Com. Blaney, We just changed things up.

Atty. McClure, It is calling for the County to choose which project or buildings to be working on.

Com. Biggs, Why don't we do this, give out attorney some time to look at this and we have to amend it a little bit because we're not doing the whole spectrum of your services. Come back to our next meeting and I will have you on the agenda and we will take care of it then.

Mr. Dustin, Thank you.

Com. Biggs, Thanks Daniel.

3 Quotes for 157 Franklin's A/C Unit Replacement for E-911 Server Room.

- **Gatlin Plumbing and Heating - \$121,500.00**

- **D.A. Dodd - \$126,606.00**
- **Mechanical Concepts - \$126,850.00**

Mr. Sullivan, We are proposing to procure the MO bid from Gatlin Plumbing and Heating for \$121,500.00 to replace the existing air conditioning system serving the 911 Center's data server room. This will give us a better design system. A system design for the server room. That will last us a good long time. It will be fully monitored and fully backed up and redundant. It will be appropriate for providing the kind of heat temperature and humidity concerns of both summer and winter. Also whole lot less hands on work for my team. They constantly check on that because it is such a critical piece of data.

Com. Biggs, There were some problems as you know with developing condensation in those rooms that wreak havoc on the equipment that is in there.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve Gatlin Plumbing and Heating at \$121,500.00, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

HIGHWAY DEPT. – JIM POLAREK, DIRECTOR

Award Bids for 2023 Supplies.

Mr. Polarek, We opened these up at the last meeting. I sent it to your office a week or so ago. Our recommendations are:

LIMESTONE

- Whitcomb Trucking and Harry Brown

LIQUID BITUMINOUS

- All Bids

SLAG

- Beemsterboer

CALCIUM CHLORIDE

- Great Lakes Chloride

CULVERT PIPE

- All Bids

DIESEL FUEL

- Co-Alliance and Triple J-Mar

PAVEMENT STRIPING

- Air Marking

SIGNS AND POSTS

- All Bids

EQUIPMENT RENTAL

- All Bids

BRIDGE SLABS AND BEAMS

- All Bids

Com. Regnitz, moved to accept the 2023 Supply Bids for the Highway Dept., Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Request for a \$2,000.00 Stipend for the CDL Trainers.

Mr. Polarek, What we would like to do is through working with Purdue ITAP is to get our own CDL training in house. If we were to send someone out to driving school it would cost around \$4500.00 to receive a CDL license. We've all seen, heard and experienced how hard it is to get CDL drivers. This would allow us to train in house. There are two parts to the training Purdue would handle the book learning part, which could be done on line or in person through Purdue at no charge to government agencies. They would also train our CDL instructor who would then be certified through the Federal Motor Carriers to be the actual behind the wheel instructor. They would obviously be taking on the responsibility of doing that and having to get an annual stipend of \$2,000.00 so they could do that training.

Com. Biggs, Just so the public understands currently the traditional way to approach this is we want you to have the CDL when you apply. If you don't have it you can't be hired. What we're doing is taking it in house and I believe this is your idea isn't it.

Mr. Polarek, It's kind of a community idea. Like for the next request we could hire someone out of high school or trade school here at vocational and then we could train them to be a mechanic and work on getting them their CDL and so on.

Com. Biggs, I actually talked to a couple of other counties about this. They though it was a fantastic idea. They are going to start looking into it themselves to do.

Mr. Polarek, Obviously we could work with Scott to have some type of agreement signed. We would train them and they would agree to work for so many years with us.

Com. Biggs, And you have mentioned this to Mr. McClure.

Mr. Polarek, I will be. Purdue won't have this set until April. This is when Purdue will have this up and going. That is their estimated time.

Com. Biggs, This is all due to you approaching LTAP.

Mr. Polarek, No this whole conversation started last year at the Road School. When the Federal Regulations on how you get a CDL all changed. It used to be where you can train yourself. Go take a test for \$150.00 and have your CDL. Well now you have to go to an actual certified driving school. You can't train yourself anymore.

Com. Biggs, What is the price of the certified driving school?

Mr. Polarek, About \$4500.00.

Com. Biggs, You can understand folks why we're not getting the applications in of drivers who are holding a CDL currently. They're becoming a rare commodity and the only way you get their attention to draw them to you is you keep raising your hourly rate. If we can make ourselves attractive by offering the training without out-of-pocket expense to the applicant I mean I really think that we're going to get a lot of attention for that.

Mr. Polarek, Hopefully they you know we can bring them in and train them and they stay with us for the specified amount of time and they realize it's a good place to work.

Com. Biggs, I hope they stay longer. I think that it is a fantastic program.

Com Regnitz, moved to approve the \$2000.00 Stipend for CDL Trainers, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Request for a New Full Time Mechanic's Assistant at \$41,600.00.

Mr. Polarek, That is what \$20.00 an hour comes to. We have been understaffed mechanic wise under 2 years. We're just not getting anybody to apply. This would give us the option to go to the vocational school and interview prospective employees. I already touched base with one of the instructors at vocational. Hopefully it gets approved by the Council. Maybe we can interview some students out of their diesel program. When we were fully staffed with mechanics we still had too much work to the point where our drivers right now have to do their own services on their vehicles and on their heavy equipment. This would allow this position to do those services.

Com. Biggs, Is this rate competitive?

Mr. Polarek, We are going to find out.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the Full Time Mechanic's Assistant at \$41,600.00, Com. Blaney second, motion carried.

DEVELOPMENT & STORM WATER MNGMNT. – BOB THOMPSON, DIRECTOR

United Consulting – Bridge Presentation.

Mr. SanGiorgio, Good Morning I am John SanGiorgio with United Consulting. Our firm is under contract to provide bridge inspection services for your County bridge inventory. The contract covers a two year period which began in May of 2022. The bridge inspections are required by the Federal Highway Administration every two years for any county bridge not owned by INDOT with a span length greater than 20'. These inspections keep the county in compliance with the federal standards and the county is reimbursed for 80% of the contract costs as long as you are staying in compliance, which Porter County is. This morning I am presenting the bridge inventory report based on our findings from the first phase of the inventory which was completed in May 2022. This report contains several summary reports that are useful to the County in understanding the condition of the bridges in your inventory. In addition to the summary reports each of the 132 bridges in your inventory has its own inspection report and these reports contain detailed information regarding our inspection findings. The flash drive in front of you contains a digital copy of the report in case you don't want to thumb through that large book as well as an interactive map that allows you to click on any bridge and bring up the inspection report in photo. To help you navigate this report I've prepared a summary sheet that Jen has handed out that identifies the location of the key summary reports you may be interested in. You can find a list of maintenance needs for your bridges, a summary of bridges posted with a load limit as well as the recommendations we've made for structures that should be planned for placement or rehabilitation in the near future. The back sheet of the summer report you will find statistics on how Porter County compares to statewide averages. The average age of the bridges in Porter County is approximately 54 years old compared to a statewide average of 45 years old. Porter County currently has 70 bridges that are older than 50 years depending on structure type and traffic. The anticipated service life for a bridge is typically in the range of 50 to 100 years. Many of the County's older bridges were built around the same time and are all approaching their anticipated end of life in the next 20 years or so. The priority schedules in the report shows our estimate of bridges that we recommend replacing or rehabilitating in the near future along with an estimate of costs. We work with Bob Thompson to prioritize the bridges based on structural condition, load rating, traffic and other geometrics. Out of the 19 bridges currently recommended for replacement or rehabilitation 14 of the bridges are currently already under design or construction. Many of these bridges have federal Funding also secured to aid in the construction cost due to Bob and Porter County's aggressiveness in submitting federal funding applications. Porter County has consistently been one of the top counties in Indiana in securing federal aid for their bridge projects. We recommend that the County continue to prioritize funding of the additional maintenance and repairs in the coming years in order to get the most out of your existing bridges. Porter County does have a higher number of older bridges compared to most states but has done a good job of keeping their bridges in solid condition considering their age. Also, Porter County has 9 bridges that currently posted for load. This is 6.5% of their inventory compared to 14 of a typical Indiana county. This is a testament to ongoing timely bridge maintenance from you bridge team. It has been a pleasure working with Porter County this past few years. Our goal is to be an extension of your Development and Stormwater Department and keep your bridges in good shape for the traveling public. We truly appreciate the opportunity to work on the contract and look forward to working with you over the next year.

Com. Biggs, You do a great job.

Com. Blaney, Thanks to your staff as well for keeping things up.

United Consulting – Annual Agreement Supplement No. 4.

Mr. Thompson, We do use United for these annual agreements with tasks. One could be coming up to inspect a particular bridge. This is an on call agreement.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the United Consulting Annual Agreement Supplement No. 4, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

DLZ – Small Structure Agreement. Structure PR-002, CR 150 South over Cobb Ditch and Structure UN-003, CR 750 West over Duck Creek.

Mr. Thompson, This agreement is for two small structures. This is based from the small structure report that we had recently done of 32 small structures. United did the report for us. DLZ in this case. We're asking for the approval of this agreement for these two small structures. This will be 4 that we have out now. Out of these 4 small structures we're expecting 3 of them to be up on your next update that you have with the bridges. They are going to increase in size.

We're pretty confident that they are going to reach over 20' spans. Cobb Ditch we are really confident that is going to be a bridge.

Com. Biggs, Do you have any idea of how big of a bridge?

Mr. Thompson, If you go on one side of the road it meets the 20' span to be a bridge. If you go on the other side of the road it is a little less than 20'. So they asked me how do you want to classify it. I said small structure because it is going to become a bridge.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the DLZ Small Structure Agreement, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

A Request to extend Employment due to FMLA run out.

Mr. Thompson, This is for Mike Novotney, our County Engineer. He did take a leave. He was on FMLA has run out. We are requesting that we continue Mike's employment as the County Engineer. He has already told the staff that he will be returning on February 13th.

Com. Regnitz, Are you asking for an extension for those few days between now and the 13th?

Mr. Thompson, We were told by H.R. that since ran out that we have to approach you to have the approval of being able to keep him as an employee of the County.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve Extending Employment due to FMLA run out, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

CARRIE HONEYCUTT – FAMILY & YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU

A request to use the sidewalks surrounding the Courthouse grounds for the Annual Chalk the Walk on Saturday, June 10th, 2023 from 6:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The event will include live music and free creative children's activities. There will be a tent, table and chairs. Would also like access to an outlet.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the request for Chalk the Walk, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

VALPO EVENTS – KATIE ABEL

A Request to use the Courthouse grounds on Saturday, May 6th, 2023 from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. for the 2023 Chocolate Walk. There will be tables, chairs, signs and tents with no more than 20 stations for distributing chocolate.

A Request to use the Courthouse grounds on Saturday, September 9th, 2023 for Popcorn Festival. On site will be a tent, popcorn tent with industrial popping machines, medic tent, and water station. NWI Tents will begin tent setup on Wednesday, Sept. 7 and will remove all items by Sunday, Sept. 10th. We also request the use of the judge's parking lot after close of business on Friday, September 8th for EMS/medic setup needs along with access to the roof at 157 Franklin to use the antenna.

A Request to use the Courthouse grounds on Friday, October 13th from 2:00 – 6:30 p.m. The actual event will take place between 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. to host Downtown Trick or Treat. They will be displaying signs and banners.

A Request to use the Courthouse grounds on Friday, December 1st from 2:30 – 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, December 2nd from 3 – 6 p.m. for Holly Days. There will be food vendors, carolers and a holiday craft station for kids. The majority of the activities will take place on the North West corner, North East corner and West triangle. They are also requesting the use of an electrical outlet for holiday music.

Com. Regnitz, moved to approve the request from Valpo Events to use the Courthouse grounds, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

VALPARAISO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS – JESSICA CORRAL, FLINT LAKE ART TEACHER

A request to display artwork for Spring into the Arts in the Admin. Center. The set up date will be Friday, April 21st and the art will be on display from Saturday, April 22nd through Saturday, May 20th. Take down will be on Monday, May 22nd.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the request from Valpo Community Schools to use the Admin. Center for Spring into the Arts, Com. Regnitz, second, motion carried.

Ms. Abraitis, My name is Mary Abraitis. The situation is that the administrative civil and criminal violations. The conflict is Valparaiso municipality has caused an adverse development by their Economic Development or Capital Improvement that's devoid any mitigation. It occurred without public hearing input, without measures standards, proper laws followed. Even so much as a cost-benefit review without any traffic analysis. A municipal employee pulled away the sign "no through truck regulations" saying we own the street. The Mayor continues to ignore that he's

adversely affected a particular segment of the population not consistent, not compatible with their social and economic values. The negatively affected public challenge with a 99% petition twice in a resounding no. The public has given them solid information to warranted, restored, restriction, type, location, maintenance condition and explanation of the impacts. I understand your wheel and spoke theory but Porter County to be in compliant with federal state regulations and in order to receive federal assistance and maintain eligibility there has to be a mitigation strategy. And that's what I'm saying they didn't do. They just said we're doing this and whatever.

So the goal of mitigation is to reduce future impacts and utmost is loss of life and I've gone there about safety, property damage, destruction to local and regional economies, expenditure of public and private funds and it's just without sound risk management. So we're up against this toxic situation where the Mayor is negligent in the required fidelity and fiduciary bonds leaving the City unable to absorb the liability. And I'm saying this corruption is leading to more corruption.

So there was a report given to you from a right-hand man that totally disregarded our injury, our Safety, our health. It was blazing. The Mayor gave approval to keep doing what the abuse is doing. Environmental hazards clearly states avoid routing traffic through residential areas and have trucks to direct access to the waste site because what they're doing is cutting through Yellowstone Road to Howe Street I told you this before to get to the waste site. This is unacceptable. So now I just want to say that last January 23rd, you know January 27th they applied for state monies to the taxpayers to pay for damages if the city caused because he doesn't have the insurance and to absorb the cost. And in addition on that January 27th meeting in the other section of the agenda he vaguely stated that he wanted to appropriate monies to pay for a bond. If that's his personal bond that's unacceptable too. Taxpayers don't pay for damages that you cause, well he, you know in the City. And if this is going on it's just more corruption after corruption. I just wanted to tell you that it's not just some simple little thing.

Com. Biggs, Well Mary we appreciate that. I think this is maybe the third time.

Ms. Abraitis, And I understand what you're saying. He's in the center of the wheel and you're just a spoke.

Com. Biggs, I'm not a spoke to the City of Valparaiso let's be clear on that. That is a separate unit of government governed by different laws. We do not have any authority within our means to enforce anything on their right-of-ways, any one of our ordinances on their right-of-ways. I have reached out personally to Mayor Murphy. He was very kind to turn the questions over to Mike Jabo head of their engineering department. Mike sent me a 2 page

explanation as to what was going on. It is complex but from what I read it made sense. I grant you I don't live there you do. You have to tolerate those trucks. I get that and if there was something that we could do on our end it would have been done by now. I wish you luck to try to get their attention to see your side of it.

Ms. Abraitis, In the mitigation strategies that I'm talking about today it is signed by Porter County, which includes Beverly Shores and includes Chesterton that you are over all of this. I know you just want to be the infrastructure of the bridges and the roads and all that but the very first thing is life, safety, people. That is why I'm bringing this back to you because if you want to maintain your eligibility for FEMA assistance or any of that you can't allow this local government of Valparaiso to continue in administrative negligence, civil complaints and even criminal complaints. That's what I'm proposing to you.

Com. Biggs, I appreciate that. Again, we have no authority. I almost wished that we did so we could bring this issue to a close but we don't. Thank you though.

Ms. Miller, Dawn Miller good morning Commissioners. The only reason I really kind of wanted to come up was when NIPSCO came up I have some questions. I don't know if any of you guys were able to get a copy of this. I'll give you a copy. It was from January 4th. There's a NIPSCO rate case and they kind of went into detail of the things that they are planning on doing. Give you just a brief little overview. NIPSCO's request would raise an average monthly or residential electric bill from \$107.78 to \$127.21. Under a two phase increase in September 2023 and March 2024. The bill then would rise to \$133.43 under a new tracker and they have tracker or rate adjustment mechanism that will gradually raise rates starting July 24, 2024. So what's to stop the gradual increases? How are we going to know? They were also talking about these solar farms. A friend of mine lives in Kouts and she took me on a little tour down there. I was amazed by how many of these farms that are out there. Go down Rt.10 and 300. I believe she said a city was (Inaudible). They're everywhere. She was informing me that wildlife doesn't even want to go close to these. Something that I found interesting. Do we know much these solar panels cost? Do we have any idea?

Com. Biggs, I don't know. You do know that we are having a public presentation at the Expo Center this month. We are inviting NextEra so the public can hear their plan on what they would like to do. The Commissioners really haven't heard it face to face. Primarily more than anything we want to hear from the public what they think.

Ms. Miller, Do you know how many solar panels we have in Valparaiso?

Com. Biggs, I would think we would have a few thousand. If you count public and private.

Ms. Miller, I would be speaking more private.

Com. Biggs, Well you heard NIPSCO said that they had some solar panels themselves that they have built.

Ms. Miller, Here in Valpo.

Com. Biggs, I can't say that.

Ms. Miller, I'm just curious.

Com. Biggs, I don't know if they are here in Porter County.

Ms. Miller, I know for a fact that there are a bunch here in Valparaiso. They left, NIPSCO did. In Porter County do we even have an option to go to another company for electric or gas because I mean in my opinion that's kind of like monopolizing if we don't have that option. I guess there are other towns that could choose like Michigan City. You know they have NIPSCO for one and then they have gas or whatever with another company. So I was just curios. Do we really feel that solar is important in Northwest Indiana? We don't have a lot of sunlight. I mean I would say probably within the last months we really haven't had a lot of sun.

Com. Biggs, I would think that tens of thousands of our residents had the same concerns. They have questions and that's what we're trying to get to them later this month.

Ms. Miller, I just want to say thank you for the Expo Center. All of the things that they are doing there. I think it's a great idea to upgrade that place since you know they see so many more people than some of the buildings around here that were proposed to get \$5 million. So I think that's a very good investment since I would say probably five/ten times more people go to the Expo Center than say the Memorial Opera House. So I'm glad to see that that money is getting put towards something that more than just Valparaiso would be benefiting from. Thank you.

Com. Biggs, Our next meeting is February 27th at the Expo Center. The entire meeting will be dedicated the proposal from NextEra solar at 5:30 pm. I hope to see some of you there.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PORTER COUNTY, INDIANA

Jim Biggs

Barb Regnitz

Laura M. Blaney

Attest: _____
Karen Martin, Auditor