

**PORTER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>, 2022  
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, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 in the Commissioners' Chambers of the Administration Center.

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

Com. Good, Good Morning this is the Porter County Board of Commissioners' meeting Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

**Call to Order/Pledge**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**Approval of Payroll – August 5<sup>th</sup> and August 19<sup>th</sup> and September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.**

**Approval of Claims – August 5<sup>th</sup>, August 18<sup>th</sup>, August 25<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.**

**Approval of Minutes for August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.**

**Weights and Measures Monthly Reports May 16<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>, June 16<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup> and July 16<sup>th</sup> to August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.**

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

**MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE – SCOT MACDONALD, DIRECTOR**

**ARTISTIC SERVICES AGREEMENT**

**VENUE RENTAL AGREEMENT**

- 1. Silverleaf Booking.**
- 2. Porter County LGBTQ Outreach.**

Com. Good, moved to approve the Venue Rental Agreements, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**COMMISSIONERS**

**SHERIFF'S DEPT. – MAJOR GARY GEAR**

**Lestinsky Auctioneers, LLC – A Contract for Sale of Personal Property at a Public Auction pertaining to vehicles, bicycles and miscellaneous items.**

Major Gear, The Sheriff's Dept., Facilities, Juvenile Detention Center, Animal Shelter and Porter County 911 just submitted vehicles. That is all they have this year.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Lestinsky Auctioneers Contract, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

Com. Good, When is the sale?

Major Gear, October 7<sup>th</sup>.

**E911 – DEBBY GUNN, DIRECTOR**

**A request to Transfer Funds – Fund #1222 - Acct. #1110 Salaries in the amount of \$50,000.00 to Acct. #1130 Overtime. To augment overtime budget shortage due to recent full time employment loss.**

Ms. Gunn, Over the past year we have had 17 employees leave. We have had to rely much more than we would have like to on our overtime. In addition to that, we have also been very proactive in preparing for P1. So we offered overtime as well. That is the reason behind our request for transfer.

Com. Good, We have had problems with overtime out there for more than the last year and a half. We have had a problem with overtime out there for quite some time and that always seems to be the juggernaut we are in here. I know where we're at today I don't think there's a way around this but it's obviously something that needs to be dealt with and figure out a way to try to limit the amount of overtime that we spend there. That is through proper staffing. I think that is something that we really need to engage in and get moving on again. Just my comments.

Com. Biggs, What is your office hearing to the primary reason people are leaving.

Ms. Gunn, We are finding that the 911 Center is actually a very good training facility for other dispatch center in the private sector such as the railroad and NIPSCO.

Com. Blaney, The mill.

Ms. Gunn, In the past 6 months that is where our employees have left. I understand we can't compete with their salaries in the private sector but when you can leave a job and make \$40,000.00 more I can understand why people are leaving. That is why we've lost a considerable number of our dispatchers. We've lost to the railroad alone in the past I venture to say 2 to 2 ½ years we've lost three fully trained dispatchers to the railroad. We've just recently lost one to NIPSCO and we've also lost a few to the mill.

Com. Biggs, We can't continue down that road. That is not sustainable. We're going to have to do something internally to make it more attractive to stay.

Ms. Gunn, I agree.

Com. Biggs, What that is exactly I'm not sure but it sounds to me that we are going to have to look at wages and make those adjustment somehow, some way.

Com. Biggs, moved to Transfer Funds, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Com. Blaney, Have we made any movements to recruit more people because if we know they are going to be leaving it seems like we should get more in training.

Ms. Gunn, You are absolutely right and I agree with you. We've been fortunate enough to actually higher four people from Lake County within the past couple of months. Since the beginning of July actually. One went through training at an expedited pace because of her experience which I think has benefited us. We've been able to augment our shortages with people of experience. Regarding the training aspect our training turnaround is about six months now. Realistically when you consider every perspective involved here, every aspect involved here we're looking at cost of inaction. I would like to second Com. Biggs' idea of making this a more appealing place to work regarding wages. We really need to dive into because with our training being six months long and fortunately being able to pick up some of these people with experience we've been able to cut some of that time down. Now we're looking into the amount of trainers that we actually have in the Center as well. That is another aspect that is difficult. We are looking at ways to incentivize our CTO's. The CTO in my opinion has the most difficult position on the floor barring the responsibility level that the supervisors have. CTO's are tasked with 12 hours literally tethered to another person in the room. With paltry stipends in my opinion where it's very difficult to keep a CTO in the position. That is another aspect that we've tossed around and presented ideas. I'm kind of brainstorming with my team regarding how we can make this more appealing for trainers. Realistically if we have all of our trainers with trainees which we do now. Our hands are tied bringing new people on anyway. These are all challenges we are facing that aren't new to the Center. We're working through them.

Com. Biggs, Could you repeat again how many dispatchers we lost in whatever time period you quoted.

Ms. Gunn, A year and a half it is 17 now.

Com. Biggs, That is not bleeding. That's a bleed out.

**A request to lease (7) Concept Seating 24/7 Chairs from Shelby Products for 3-years in the amount of \$9,878.40.**

Ms. Gunn, We are leasing chairs now. The last time we purchased chairs was in 2017. The chairs that we have actually have a list of problems with them. We found as I explored a leasing option that these chairs are the same chairs that we actually purchased but the warranties ran out on these chairs. The leasing option provides entirely new chairs once a year. In the meantime, if there is any malfunctioning of the chairs we get replacement parts, which we have been given a demonstration on how easy the replacement parts can be done ourselves. If there is a malfunction of the chair that we are unable to handle, they will be in four to five days at no charge with a brand new chair for us.

Com. Biggs, These are not office chairs they are dispatching chairs. Everyone understands we never shut down. Someone is sitting in those chairs 24/7 365 days a year for the most part.

Ms. Young, If this lease is approved they will buy back our current chairs of which we have eight. They will give us \$100.00, which will be \$800.00 credit towards this lease contract.

Ms. Gunn, The company provided us with the new quote showing the \$800.00 credit.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the contract with Shelby Products for 3 years, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**AUDITOR VICKI URBANIK**

**Center Township ARPA Agreement.**

Ms. Urbanik, As you recall the Commissioner approved a plan and the Council appropriated up to \$500,000.00 for the different township trustees. This written agreement spells out the terms and conditions of the Center Township ARPA allocation, which is being proposed in a variety of different areas. One is assistance to households in the form of poor relief help. As well, as gas cards, grocery vouchers and V-line tokens. Some of the funding is also designated for two years towards their social workers pay. Another allocation is for non-profits with which they have a partnership. Another portion is reserved for premium pay for three of their workers. So with your approval this will be another written agreement and there will be more.

Com. Biggs, Vicki this allocation is outside of the ARP funds that the Council has been holding for the better part of a month.

Ms. Urbanik, Yes. I like to think of our ARPA plan in three phases and this was the first phase that has gone through the entire process.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Center Township ARPA Agreement, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**A Resolution Supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans.**

Ms. Urbanik, I bring this item to your attention as a member of the National Association of Counties Human Services and Education Committee. There is a resolution before you that calls for designating Porter County as a participant in Operation Green Light. This is a national initiative by NACO that is intended to show support for our veterans and to call attention to the plight that many veterans have in accessing public services for which they are eligible. Participants in Operation Green Light will commit to shining green lights on their buildings during the week of November 7<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup> as a sign of support for our veterans. In our County, we would have at least two buildings participating. The County Administration Center, this building as well as our County Building that is a living Memorial to Veterans the Memorial Opera House. If you approve this resolution, we would then reach out to offices urging them to decorate their offices in green lights during that week. We would also have some other outreach materials

planned. The green lights are a symbolic gesture but overall they show that veterans are seen, appreciated and supported. I respectfully request your approval of this resolution. Then I will report to NACO that we are an official Green Light County.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Resolution supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**CLERK JESSICA BAILEY**

**A Memorandum of Agreement – Indiana Legal Help Kiosk Project.**

Com. Good, Scott have you looked over this agreement?

Atty. McClure, I have. It is an MOU. We are a pilot program. The Indiana Legal Help Kiosk is to provide a resource for Hoosiers looking for housing related legal help. Basically, the kiosks will be at the Clerk's offices and they will allow to have an interface into not only My Case, that is where the court records are held but other applications that will be available on the actual kiosk itself to help with housing related issues as well. This agreement just allows it to be within the buildings of the County.

Com. Biggs, Did they say what buildings they would be placed in?

Atty. McClure, The two Courthouses.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Indiana Legal Help Kiosk Project, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Com. Blaney, I applaud her for her efforts. The Clerk's office is not allowed to provide legal advice to clients who are needing help. It's a big problem so this is a good way to start trying to address it.

**ITS DEPARTMENT - LEE CHILDRESS, DIRECTOR**

**A request to cancel the approval of the lease with Adams Remco for Savin Copiers from the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting due to lack of copier inventory and replace the order with Toshiba Copiers. This new contract will also include a new copier for Voters. The original contract was for 63 payments at \$1,563.61 each. The new lease contract is for 63 payments at \$1,463.80 each.**

Mr. Childress, This past February you signed a lease agreement for 11 copy machines by Savin. Savin with COVID problems and everything else hasn't been able to deliver. This contract before you is a new lease agreement, which cancels out the old one. We added an additional copy machine because we had on break and was not repairable. This agreement is \$100.00 less. They tell be the copiers will be in place by the end of the month.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve Adams Remco for Toshiba copiers, which will cancel the previous contract for Savin copiers, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**A request to Transfer Funds – Fund #1000 – Acct. #4540 Other Equipment in the amount of \$18,000.00 to Acct. #3610 Maintenance Agreement. To cover maintenance agreement from Information & Records Associates for Docuware maintenance agreement.**

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Transfer of Funds, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**EXPO CENTER – LORI DALY, DIRECTOR**

**A request to approve a Performance Agreement with Night Moves.**

Ms. Daly, We decided to take a break from our garage sale this fall because it was losing it's luster. We had an open Saturday so we booked a Bob Seger tribute. We are going to have a little concert.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Night Moves Performance Agreement, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**A request to approve a contract with FE Moran to complete the 3-year internals and perform the 5 year.**

Ms. Daly, Part of the three year internal on the sprinkler system was done before the Fair. This is to finish that up and then follow it up with a five year. Within the next month, they will finish the three year and then go into the five year in January.

Com. Good, Are they looking at the things that need to be required? There are different things for a five year.

Ms. Daly, Yes, the five year is a lot more extensive. That is why they are putting it off until January when they have a little more downtime.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the FE Moran contract, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

***FACILITIES DEPT. – DANIEL SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR***

**Steindler Signs – A Quote for Signage at the Portage Township Trustee in the amount of \$19,181.30.**

**Steindler Signs – A Quote for Signage at the North County Annex in the amount of \$19,606.30.**

Mr. Sullivan, As you know that complex is shared the Portage Township. Right now, it basically displays that it is a County building but there is a lot services that are Portage Township as well. This will add significant upgrades to that way of finding building numbers because the two buildings don't have numbers on them. I believe you have both proposals in front of you. The one that we're paying for as well as the one that Portage Township has. We are basically splitting the cost of it.

Com. Biggs, Are they putting up a new sign or just changing the one that we already have?

Mr. Sullivan, Yes, all of the above. The existing one will be updated to make it look like the rest and bring all of the buildings together. There is wayfinding signage up there but it wasn't done professionally. This will bring it all together.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Steindler Signs contract the bills will be split with the Portage Township Trustee, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

***HIGHWAY DEPT. – JIM POLAREK, SUPERVISOR***

**A request to Transfer Funds – Fund #1176 – Acct. #1111 Hourly in the amount of \$25,000.00 to Acct. #1130 Overtime. Needed in anticipation of winter snowplowing.**

Mr. Polarek, We're running a little low on overtime budget due to two big snowstorms we had this past winter. Hopefully we won't have to use this in December but just in case it is there. We have plenty of money in our hourly due to the lack of staffing throughout the year.

Com. Blaney, Are we ready to go for snow plowing?

Mr. Polarek, We're ready. We've got salt domes full of salt. I hope we don't use it.

Com. Blaney, It's a sad thing to plan for right now. It is hard to plan for it right now.

Com. Biggs, Is there anything else that is draining that hourly account?

Mr. Polarek, It does not take long to chew into overtime. The more windstorms you get the more trees come down the more guys get called out.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Transfer of Funds, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**A request to purchase a Lowboy Semi Tractor from M&K Truck Centers in the amount of \$160,564.30.**

Mr. Polarek, The Lowboy tractor we have now is just approaching 20 years old. It has half a million miles on it. It was down this spring for about a month and we had to have contractors move our excavator around from job to job. When we chip seal, this is the piece of equipment that moves all of our rollers around.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the purchase of the Lowboy Semi Tractor from M&K Truck Centers, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**A request to purchase a Bucket Truck from Altec Industries in the amount of \$193,334.00.**

Mr. Polarek, The current bucket truck is 17 years old and it has to be certified annually. The last couple of years it has been touch and go as far as being certified because it has to be nonconductive and there is much rust on it. It has been at the certified repair facility for about two months. The hydraulic hoses are on back order. If we order it now it will be 12 to 24 months.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the purchase of the Bucket Truck from Altec Industries, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**A request to trade in (5) trucks and lease (5) 2022 F350 trucks w/Plows from Enterprise in the amount of \$67,650.24 annually.**

Mr. Polarek, We started a few years ago using pickup trucks in subdivisions for plowing snow. That really helped us out a lot. We are looking to add 5 more 4-door F350's. They will also be used to haul crews around from job to job. We will be able to use the dump trucks that we're replacing with these smaller trucks as a trade-in towards the Lowboy Semi Tractor. At the rate the used truck market is right now it hopefully will cover the whole cost of that truck.

Com. Biggs, How long do we have to wait for these?

Mr. Polarek, Ford is opening up their order bank the beginning of October. Enterprise is estimated spring to early summer.

Com. Good, How many of the big dump trucks do we have? About 50?

Mr. Polarek, With our spares and our chip trucks it is about 50.

Com. Good, We are still going to keep some of our bigger trucks....

Mr. Polarek, We are going to redo the snowplow route. There bigger trucks can concentrate on the main routes and then the smaller trucks can get into the subdivisions quicker.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Enterprise contract for (5) 2022 F350 Trucks w/Plows, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

***DEVELOPMENT & STORM WATER MNGMNT. – BOB THOMPSON, DIRECTOR***

**A Performance Agreement between Duneland School Corporation and Porter County.**

Mr. Novotney, Essentially what we've done here is required a performance agreement from Duneland School Corp on their Liberty Intermediate School building Renovations and building additions. This covers the cost of all the site improvements specifically the Stormwater Management improvements that are required by our ordinances with the agreement being that they will complete that site work concurrently or following the building Renovations and building additions. So following the same sort of tract as a residential subdivision. We require all those site improvements to be built before the houses can be built for example. This sort of follows that same logic and that it's giving the school corporation flexibility to get the project done in accordance with their tight timeline and it's just giving us the County the guarantee that we need to see that they're going to get all that site work done eventually.

Com. Biggs, This is obviously something you negotiated with the school.

Mr. Novotney, Yes and Atty. McClure I know worked with legal counsel from the school corporation on final terms of the agreement. I believe the agreement is in good order.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Performance Agreement between Duneland School Corporation & Porter County, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**Duneland School Corp. Zoning Map Amendment – RR, Rural Residential District to IN, Institutional District -1<sup>st</sup> Reading.**

Mr. Thompson, Duneland School Corporation is adding a small parcel of land. It is on the side of their Liberty Elementary School on 900 North. They are right at 50 West. The purpose of this land parcel is for additional parking and also some drive access and school buses going in and out of the site. It is zoned Rural Residential right now and to be able to make these improvements on it they need to have the zoning district changed to IN Institutional.

Com. Good, Just for clarification purposes it is not Industrial. It is Institutional, which means schools. That is the only classification it can be is schools only.

**PUBLIC HEARING OPENED**

Com. Good, Is there anyone wishing to speak against this rezone? Second, call anyone wishing to speak against this rezone? Third and final call anyone wishing to speak against this rezone. First, call anyone wishing to come forward and speak in favor of this rezone? Second, call anyone wishing to speak in favor of this rezone? Third and final call anyone wishing to speak in favor of this rezone.

**PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED**

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Rezone on 1<sup>st</sup> Reading, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

Com. Good, Second reading will be at the next Commissioners' meeting.

**Lochmueller Group – An Agreement for Design Services for Bridge 56.**

Com. Good, Where is Bridge 56 Bob?

Mr. Thompson, Bridge 56 is on 1050 South. It is between Baums Bridge Rd. and 50 East. This is the bridge we had to close immediately. It had failed to carry a load. We saw a deflection happen on it by a small delivery truck so we had to close it immediately and it is still closed. This is for the replacement of the structure. I should say to design services for the replacement of the structure. We are hoping if all goes well with design structure to be in construction by this time next year.

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Lochmueller Group Agreement, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**A Performance Agreement between Lakeshore Development, LLC pertaining to Magnolia Meadows, Phase 3.**

Mr. Novotney, Olthoff Homes aka Lakeshore Development, LLC has reached substantial completion on their public and common improvements serving Phase 3 of the Magnolia Meadows Subdivision, which is on County Rd. 550 North just east of Tower Road or County Rd. 250 West. At this point, they are seeking secondary plat approval, which will allow them to proceed with obtaining building permits for houses in that third phase. This performance agreement covers some minor remaining improvements and maintenance as they dive into that building permit phase. We are recommending approval of this performance agreement this morning.

Com. Biggs, moved to approve the Lakeshore Development, LLC Performance Agreement pertaining to Magnolia Meadows, Phase 3, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**Acceptance of the United Consulting Small Structure Report.**

Mr. Thompson, This started when Matt Gavelik was with the Highway Engineering section. Matt approached Mike and I about doing a small structure inventory report and to basically define what a small structure is. A structure that would have an eight-foot span up to twenty. Anything that is twenty or great is already in our current bridge inventory. We agreed on that. We had a work order with United Consulting. I dropped off the completed report at your office. There were 33 structures that they went out and inspected. To let you know there were five of them that they told us we need to get on immediately. One of them we think we are going to be able to do with our own bridge crews and do some maintenance to keep it going. There are four structures that

we are going to request design services on. We already have the invitation to bid for those services.

Com. Good, Are these pre-cast?

Mr. Thompson, Two of them are pipes. One is up on Brummitt Rd. and it has about twelve foot of cover on top of it. The pipe is rusting out and it is also buckling where it is starting to come down in the middle. We are trying to get to that one immediately. There are three pipes on 150 South just west of 100 West. Two of those pipes are totally rusted out on the bottom. Another one is up on Meridian Rd. just north of U.S. 6 by the Timberland Subdivision. That one we knew we were probably going to have to get to. It is about a fifteen wide foot span that is in poor shape. We are going to have to jump on that one. The last one is on 750 West in North Union Township. It has an abutment wall that is leaning. It is just in bad shape. Out of the four structures that we will be going out for design services, we are pretty confident that three of these, once they get through the hydraulics and the design of them are going to turn into full bridges. They will be spanning greater than twenty feet.

Com. Biggs, Why do you think that is going to be the case?

Mr. Thompson, Damon Run for example is just recently within the 2017 DNR Study is now a floodplain. It is just widening out. We know upstream they already had to put in a nineteen-foot span structure. In the area, we are pretty confident that it is going to be greater than twenty. The one on 150 South when you have a series of culverts together when you look at the span they can become considered a bridge structure. We do have a few of those within our bridge inventory currently. It all depends on the separation between the culverts. United called me up and said we measure on one side it is a bridge. We measure on the other side it's not a bridge. What do you want to classify this is. Call it a small structure right now and then that one we are going to be confident it is going to turn into a bridge.

Mr. Novotney, That one in particular has a significant drainage area as well as the current culvert configuration. Bob mentioned the culverts are in a deteriorated state and they are in need of replacement anyway but they constantly catch debris and cause roadway over topping. That existing opening clearly isn't very adequate to convey one the water but then also everything else that is carried in the water. The debris that you know comes downstream. I'm in agreement with that one. That one looks certainly, like it'll need a significantly larger single opening.

Com. Good, Do you have any idea of what the average age of those five structures are 30 or 40 years. Just trying to get a beat on it.

Mr. Novotney, That one on Meridian has got to be about 50...more than 50 years old.

Mr. Thompson, They used items from railroads on that. Our consultant wasn't able to do a load rating.

Com. Biggs, Weren't we experiencing some kind of pavement failure right there?

Mr. Novotney, Not at the stream crossing in particular but there were some (Inaudible) issues actually related to utility construction just south of there.

Com. Good, Bad news, bad news.

Mr. Novotney, Well the good news is the other 29 or so are not in immediate replacement.

Com. Good, We're getting them off of our list. It seems like we take off 10 and we add 3.

Mr. Novotney, I think most importantly is the track we've gone on to figure out what we've got. What we really need to do and then make plans to take of those in priority order. We certainly appreciate the Boards support and the Council's support in getting that Bridge Fund where it needed to be.

Com. Biggs, moved to accept United Consulting Small Structure Report, Com. Blaney, second, motion carried.

**THERESA BIGGS**

**A request to hold a Rosary Rally on the Courthouse grounds at the North East corner on Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. There will be approximately 25 to 30 people in attendance.**

Com. Blaney, moved to approve the Rosary Rally, Com. Biggs, second, motion carried.

**Citizen Comments**

Ms. Miller, My name is Dawn Miller I live in Valpo. Just a couple of questions. Do we know what funding is actually going to be used for the Memorial Opera House since it has been switched from ARPA to the Foundation since it is now August? Are we going back to ARPA for the Opera House?

Com. Blaney, We don't do the funding. The County Council funds things.

Ms. Miller, Has the cost change from the \$6.8 million?

Com. Blaney, Yes.

Ms. Miller, Has it gone up or has it gone down?

Com. Blaney, It has gone up.

Ms. Miller, Do we know the number?

Com. Blaney, It is about seven now.

Com. Good, Anyone else?

Mr. Lee, Good morning. I would like to speak specifically to the need to increase artist opportunities here in Valparaiso specifically the Memorial Opera House. My name is David Lee. I own Hotshot Valpo Glass Blowing Studio here in town. Nine years ago, I opened the studio specifically as an art opportunity but more importantly for a place where folks could come and experience art that they might not otherwise have a chance to do. I also sit on the Board of the Valparaiso Creative Council here in town, which has the stated mission of doing very much the same. I've been in Valpo for over 20 years and I've watched the continued growth of the City in many different ways from expanding the parks, doing great things with our communities and small business growth. All these types of things are extremely important. My thought really is the last great growth opportunity here in town is specifically with the Arts. We need to expand the opportunities for people to experience the Arts. Not just artists but more importantly non-artists. We need places where non-artists can go to expand their Horizons within the Arts. I feel like the Arts are a very integral part of a community. I know that budgeting and funding requirements are a key issue across the board when you're talking about things like Bridges and infrastructure that we've talked about here this morning. I think that we would be remiss if we overlook the Arts as something that's very integral in the infrastructure of the community. I feel like it grows the community in and of itself. It grows the health of the community in that it expands people's minds. It opens their minds to other things outside of what is important to them specifically. We've got a great opportunity here in the preservation and the renovation of the Memorial Opera House. It's a foundational location from which we as a community can continue to build the foundation of the Arts. When you look at the great communities around the state and around the nation these thriving communities have a lot of things that are important to them but not the least of which is the Arts so I think we should really focus on that and continue to focus on that. We need to make sure that we're able to expand programming for the Youth of our community. We know that when you're talking about budgetary constraints when we look at the schools. The first things that are cut in schools are the Arts shops and those types of things. I feel it's important that we as a community continue to build opportunities for our youth outside of schools and to be able to do that within the Arts. We have an opportunity here and I think it's our responsibility as a community to continue to preserve this building that's so important to us. By the way, as a 22-year retired Veteran, first thank you for approving Operation Green Light and second this building is extremely important to me and those like me because of what it was built for. As a memorial to those that have lost their lives during the Civil War and then subsequently on throughout the rest of our nation's Wars I feel like that this investment is integral and we have to move forward with it. Thank you.

Com. Blaney, Based on a few emails I received this weekend there are a lot of people out there, some in this room that seem to have determined that I have somehow instructed the Council to hold ARPA funding until the Opera House gets passed. This is not true. They are perfectly capable of thinking on their own. Believe it or not, there are more County elected

officials that support fixing our building and doing it right than just me. Other people out of the 10 Council and Commissioners. Almost everyone as a matter of fact see the value in the Arts and of having a strong thriving community. I won't go into the myriad of ways it benefits the community. It is just an incredible benefit. It will well live beyond the \$7 million that we would need to spend on it. I just wanted to clear that up. I've tried to get it on the agenda. I would love to see this go forward and I

will continue to work for it but the Council can think for themselves. I wish I had that power. It would be built by now if I did.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
PORTER COUNTY, INDIANA

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Jeffrey J. Good

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura M. Blaney

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Jim Biggs

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Vicki Urbanik, Auditor