

**March 4, 2025**

The Board of Public Works and Safety met in regular session in the Council Chambers on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 9:00 A.M.

**Present:** Mayor Dermody, Jessica Romine, Mark Kosior

**Absent:**

Charles Gurney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of Minutes**

Each member received an advance copy of the minutes. Mayor Dermody asked if there were any additions or corrections.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**Public Comment**

None

**Claims Approval**

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Payroll from February 28, 2025 in the amount of \$557,859.51.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of February 28, 2025 Payroll**

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve the February 28, 2025 payroll as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Water Claims in the amount of \$25,757.37.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Water Claims**

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Water Claims as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Sewage Claims in the amount of \$50,159.39.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Sewage Claims**

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve the Sewage Claims as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Civil City Claims in the amount of \$717,941.52.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Civil City Claims**

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve the Civil City Claims as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

**Department Head Reports**

**Wastewater:** Wastewater Director Jerry Jackson reported we have received a lot of rain and so far, they have not received a lot of phone calls because of this. Mayor Dermody noted a drain backup that he had seen on Indiana Ave and reminded homeowners to clear the drains outside their homes if they see they are blocked by debris. Mr. Jackson recognized the area and stated INDOT will be correcting this issue with the redesign including lots of storm drains in this area.

**Code:** Mayor Dermody questioned Code Director Jeff Batchelor when he anticipates the dumpster program to begin again. Mr. Batchelor stated it is dependent on the snow, however, if the snow stops it could be as soon as the end of March.

**Fire:** Chief Snyder reported the previously approved contract with Magna Grip to replace the exhaust system is currently being executed and should wrap up next week.

**Park:** Parks and Rec Superintendent Mark Schreiber reminded the public on March 15<sup>th</sup> the Fall Spring Run will take place at Soldier's Memorial Park. This is a trail run that will take place on the mountain bike trails. Mr. Schreiber stated they are not requesting any closure of the road but do want to make everyone and the police aware that the volunteers do stop traffic when runners need to cross the street. Mr. Schreiber stated it isn't a huge concern as traffic is typically light during the morning. In addition, Mr. Schreiber reported the Artemis Pyle Band will be at the Civic Auditorium Friday night with the opening band, The Remedy. The doors open at six and the band begins at seven.

**Street:** Street Superintendent Mike Frazee reported they have started street sweeping and will be out patching again when the rain subsides.

**New Business:****Request for Use: Cruise Night June 7, 2025**

Executive Assistant Annette Loeffler presented Request for Use: Cruise Night June 7, 2025. Ms. Loeffler stated the actual request for use is to close side streets and then they will request from the State of Indiana to close the route on Lincolnway from Linden Street to the Fairgrounds. Ms. Loeffler reported she does have copies of their paperwork for their request for use with the state and copies of their bonds and insurance. This event will take place a week earlier than normal due to a conflict at the fairgrounds.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Request for Use: Cruise Night June 7, 2025**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Request for Use: Cruise Night June 7, 2025 as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**Permission to Purchase a K9**

Police Chief Dick Buell presented Permission to Purchase a K9. Chief Buell stated K9 Handler Rico Simpson will be retiring his dog, Jimmy. This is Officer Simpson's K9 as he brought him to the department with him. The request is to replace Jimmy with a new K9 and to have Officer Simpson be the handler for the new K9. The purchase of a new K9 also includes sending both the K9 and handler for training at Vohne Liche Kennels. This is a six-week course and there are sufficient funds available in the K9 fund to pay for this. Mayor Dermody recognized the public that came together and donated to make this possible.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Permission to Purchase a K9**

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Permission to Purchase a K9 as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

**Electric Vehicle Grant**

Wastewater Director Jerry Jackson presented Electric Vehicle Grant. Mr. Jackson stated the department received a grant in the amount of \$80,000 from NIRPC to purchase two electric trucks and one electric utility vehicle. The grant is 50%. Mr. Jackson stated because of the solar field, the trucks would essentially cost nothing to fuel. Mr. Jackson stated the grant was written with the intent of purchasing Ford Lightnings as he believes they would be a great fit and have low maintenance costs. Mr. Jackson is requesting permission to get quotes for vehicles and will then verify with NIRPC that there will be no issue getting the grant money before making the purchase because of the uncertainty of what is happening in the Federal Government at this time. Mayor Dermody questioned if we would be responsible for paying anything if the Federal Government backs out. Mr. Jackson stated we would have to pay for the vehicles up front and would be paid back through the grant so we would be taking a risk. Because of this risk, he would make sure that the grant will still be funded before making any purchase. Mayor Dermody requested clarification that NIRPC would have to commit their funds before we make any purchases. Mr. Jackson confirmed he would request confirmation of the funds before moving forward with any purchase requests.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Electric Vehicle Grant**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Electric Vehicle Grant as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**Truesdell Pay App #7**

City Engineer Nick Minich presented Truesdell Pay App #7 in the amount of \$479,537.69. Mr. Minich stated there will be one more pay application and one more change order for this project. Ms. Romine questioned what percent completion the project is at. Mr. Minich stated the project is at 100% completion, however there are still some items they are verifying we are not overpaying on, now that the weather is getting nicer. Mr. Minich stated with this payment he is dropping the retainage from 10% to 5%.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Truesdell pay App #7**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Truesdell Pay App #7 as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**Recommend LPA – Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401594 HSIP Sign Replace**

City Engineer Nick Minich presented Recommend LPA – Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401594 HSIP Sign Replace. Mr. Minich stated this contract is with USI Consultants as they were the highest scoring consultants. Mr. Minich stated they were able to negotiate a contract in the amount of \$168,700. The contract amount is in line with the anticipated cost, and this will be paid for with an 80/20 grant with the potential to leverage for a 90/10 grant.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401594 HSIP Sign Replace**

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401594 HSIP Sign Replace as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

**Recommend LPA – Consultant Agreement- Des No 2401595 HSIP Pedestrian Crossing**

City Engineer Nick Minich presented Recommend LPA – Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401595 HSIP Pedestrian Crossing. Mr. Minich stated this will be paid for partially by INDOT and partially by the City of La Porte. The contract is with United Consulting as they were the highest scoring firm confirmed by INDOT. The contract is in the amount of \$116,000. Mr. Minich stated this will be paid for with an 80/20 grant with the potential to leverage for a 90/10 grant. Mayor Dermody questioned if this would help address the issues of sidewalks, specifically in the condominium area, to help keep the children walking safe. Mr. Minich stated this will not pay for the sidewalks in the area but will help get everything set up for additional space in that area where sidewalks can be installed.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Recommend LPA – Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401595 HSIP Pedestrian Crossing**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Recommend LPA – Consultant Agreement – Des No 2401595 as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**US Forestry Grant – Cutting Bid Advertisement**

Assistant City Engineer Tucker King stated there are 277 right-of-way trees that have been classified as the most critical trees to be removed for residents. There are around 900 total trees throughout the city that do need to come down. These 277 trees are the most at risk of failing and will cause the most damage. Mayor Dermody questioned how many trees will come down with this. Mr. King stated they need 277 trees to be removed, however, they will see what the bids come back at as there is approximately \$250,000 in the budget for this work. Mr. King stated last year the city's tree crew took down 120 trees and it was found that it is more cost effective to be done by the tree crew. It costs approximately \$1,000 for the city to remove a tree themselves versus up to five times that amount for a contractor to do the work. Ms. Romine questioned if the city grinds down the stumps. Mr. King stated traditionally the city does grind the stumps themselves in late fall, however, that work is based around

snow removal. Mr. King stated the benefit to hiring a tree company is they are more efficient and can take care of multiple trees at once, whereas the city's tree crew can only take down one tree at a time. The 277 trees that need to be removed have been identified by the arborist as dangerous to the public and need to be taken care of as soon as possible. Mr. Kosior questioned what the plan was for replacement for the trees that are being removed along Indiana Avenue. Mr. King stated the arborist worked alongside INDOT to create a replacement plan: 100 trees are being removed, and 150 new trees will be planted.

#### **Motion/Approval – Approval of US Forestry Grant – Cutting Bid Advertisement**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve US Forestry Grant – Cutting Bid Advertisement as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

#### **US Forestry Grant – Spring Planting**

Assistant City Engineer Tucker King presented US Forestry Grant – Spring Planting. Mr. King stated this is a request for quotes that will go out to local nurseries for the replacement of 80 trees. A portion of the dollar cost is for cutting them down and the remainder is for replacement. Mr. King stated they are looking to get rid of 900 trees in total but with the available funding they will be replacing 450-480 of those trees. This planting cycle is part two of six. Mr. King stated once the quotes are received, they will begin contacting homeowners to let them know they will be planting trees on the right-of-way in front of their homes.

Mr. Kosior questioned if there were any complaints from residents as far as what is being removed or what trees are being planted. Mr. King stated himself and Mayor Dermody drove around and met with some citizens before the fall planting in 2024, however, he learned that they should have reached out to homeowners before planting trees because not everyone is excited about having a tree planted in front of their home. Attorney Otis emphasized that we are planting trees on the right-of-way and not on the actual homeowner's property. Mr. King agreed and said it is best to keep communication open with the homeowner, despite it not being their property, as we do not know how they utilize and enjoy their property. Mr. King stated communication with homeowners will begin once the RFQ is finalized and the bid is in.

#### **Motion/Vote – Approval of US Forestry Grant – Spring Planting**

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve US Forestry Grant – Spring Planting as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

#### **Best Small Town in the Midwest**

Communications Director Jess Spoljaric reported the City of La Porte is one of 20 cities in the running for best small town in the Midwest. Ms. Spoljaric stated this is not something the City of La Porte could have nominated themselves for; USA Today has a panelist of judges and experts that make the selection. Ms. Spoljaric stated the last time she checked; the City of La Porte is still in first place and encouraged everyone to vote once a day. The voting will continue over the next four weeks. Mr. Kosior questioned if there is anything special that comes with being number one. Ms. Spoljaric stated she does not know if there is anything special for the top place, however, the top ten cities will have an article written about them.

**Permission to Execute Purchase Documents**

City Attorney Nick Otis stated the board previously approved the purchase agreement of two vacant parcels adjacent to the fire department. This agreement is moving forward, and Attorney Otis is requesting permission for Fire Chief Andy Snyder to execute all necessary documents with Meridian Title for this purchase.

**Motion/Vote – Approval of Permission to Execute Purchase Documents**

Ms. Romine made a motion to give Fire Chief Andy Snyder the power and authority to execute all necessary documents with Meridian Title; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**Unfinished Business**

**Other Business:**

Mayor Dermody reminded everyone to keep tabs on the State House. Senate Bill one is the property tax reform bill for reduction in property taxes for Hoosiers. Mayor Dermody emphasized there is great opportunity for reform from the state’s perspective all the way down to local units, but we cannot have government as it is today and also have a reduction in property taxes. We must be open to new ways and ideas to do things. Mayor Dermody stated he will be meeting with the governor at 4:30 to further discuss what the future of the State of Indiana looks like.

Next regularly scheduled meeting: Tuesday March 18, 2025 at 9 A.M.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business, Ms. Romine made a motion to adjourn; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

**Approve:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Thomas P. Dermody, Mayor**

**Attest:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Courtney Parthun, Clerk-Treasurer**

**Approved: March 18, 2025**