



CITY OF LA PORTE

801 Michigan Ave.
La Porte, IN 46350
219-362-0151

Council Appointment:

Ben Anderson
Mar. 2025-Feb. 2028

Police Vote Appointment:

Mike Kellems
Mar. 2023-Dec. 2026

Mayoral Appointment:

Brian Chalik
Mar. 2024-Feb. 2027

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CITY OF LA PORTE – POLICE MERIT COMMISSION

August 11, 2026 | 8:00 a.m. | Police Station

1. Call to Order

President Brian Chalik called the regular meeting of the La Porte City Police Merit Commission to order. Secretary Michael Kellems along with Chief Matt Drangmeister, Assistant Chief Chae Uhlemann, Administrative Assistant Tricia Metts, Councilman Roger Galloway, Captain Favia, Corporal Lippelt, Specialist River, Specialist Lopez, and Specialist Walls were all in attendance.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

4. Approval of July 1 and 7, 2026, Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve July 1 and July 7, 2026, meeting minutes. The motion was seconded. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried.

5. Correspondence/Expenses

N/A

6. Public Comment

N/A

7. Chief's Comment

Chief Drangmeister reported that Officer Anderson reviewed the training video and decided that he did not wish to continue as a police officer. Officer Anderson is being hired back at the jail.

Chief Drangmeister reported that the hiring proposal has been posted. The Chief and Assistant Chief are working on revisions to the physical agility testing standards.

The Chief discussed updating the department's past-performance evaluations. The current evaluations were described as antiquated and in need of revision so that they are more current, applicable, and less suggestive. Joe Blake has spearheaded work on the proposed revisions. The Chief expects to present a proposal at the next Merit Commission meeting.

The proposed revisions would provide additional recognition for proactive work and extracurricular activity. Officers performing only the basic duties of responding to calls would receive a base score, while proactive activities such as ordinance enforcement, traffic stops, community policing, and city overtime details could provide additional points, up to the proposed maximum.

The Chief also discussed a proposed change to the submission deadlines for past performance evaluations. Patrol officers and corporals would submit evaluations by the 15th following the six-month evaluation period, while sergeants would submit evaluations by the 20th. The purpose would be to allow review of the sergeants' grading practices and identify discrepancies between evaluations and an officer's productivity or performance.

8. Old Business

The Commission continued discussion regarding the promotional process, including recognition of prior law-enforcement experience for lateral officers, departmental longevity, past-performance evaluations, testing, and the possible addition of an interview component. Commission members and department personnel discussed the advantages and concerns associated with recognizing experience earned at another law-enforcement agency. It was noted that outside experience can benefit the department, while departmental longevity also reflects commitment, knowledge of department procedures, and familiarity with personnel and operations. The Commission discussed whether an interview by a panel of captains, potentially in conjunction with the Merit Commission, could better evaluate leadership ability, readiness for promotion, experience, decision-making, and knowledge. Members expressed that any interview process should be objective, use standardized questions, and focus on job-based or scenario-based situations. The current promotional time requirements were stated as two years for corporal, five years for sergeants, and nine years for captain. Members discussed whether minimum time within the La Porte Police Department should remain part of the requirements while allowing prior experience to be considered in another component of the promotional process. The Commission discussed the promotional criteria permitted by Indiana law, including past performance, longevity, testing, and interviews, and discussed the possibility of using those factors in different combinations and with different weight. The Commission agreed that any change to the promotional system should be carefully considered and made incrementally. Members were encouraged to submit specific written proposals describing how lateral experience, longevity, interviews, testing, and past performance should be considered. The Commission discussed bringing the issue before the FOP for additional input. Mike was asked to attend the next FOP meeting on September 14, 2026, to discuss the ideas raised at the Merit Commission meeting and seek possible solutions. Members agreed that the goal should be to develop a process that is fair to both long-term department employees and lateral officers while serving the best interests of the department. The Commission also discussed the upcoming promotional school. The tentative schedule includes instruction on SOPs, legal topics, evidence, supervision and leadership, paperwork and SWAT procedures, disciplinary actions, child offenses, domestic-violence procedures, workers' compensation, and the collective bargaining agreement. The promotional test was moved from November 11 to November 16, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, due to Veterans Day. It was

also discussed that resources such as shelters, Meals on Wheels, and other community resources could be included in the promotional school. The possibility of adding instruction from Child Protective Services or juvenile probation was discussed, subject to available time.

9. New Business

The Commission discussed applicants from the previous physical agility testing process. It was noted that some applicants passed portions of the test but did not meet the physical standards, including an applicant who failed the vertical jump. The Chief requested permission to invite qualified applicants from the prior process to participate in the next hiring process. The Commission indicated that applicants from the prior process who were unsuccessful should be permitted to reapply.

10. Applicants

Applicants were discussed as outlined above. The department will continue with the hiring process and invite eligible prior applicants to reapply.

11. Closing Comments

Members reiterated that the promotional-system discussion is a significant issue that will require additional consideration and will not be resolved immediately. The Commission encouraged continued discussion and written proposals before making any changes. The Merit Commission encouraged additional participation and input.

12. Adjournment – 9:01 am

The meeting was adjourned by the motion made by Mr. Kellems and seconded by Mr. Chalik. Unanimously carried. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 15th, 2026, at 8 am

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Kellems", written over a faint, larger "KELLEMS" watermark.

Michael Kellems
Secretary
La Porte City Police Merit Commission

Minutes and agendas from previous Police Merit Commission meetings are available online at www.cityoflaporte.com. Those seeking to participate in the public comment section of the meeting must first fill out a form with their name, address and discussion topic. Speakers will be given a reasonable length of time (as determined by the Board Chair) to make their comment and/or express an opinion. All comments must be in the form of statements, as this is not a question-and-answer session. Personal attacks will not be tolerated and may result in exclusion from future public comment opportunities.