December 16, 2025

The Board of Public Works and Safety met in regular session in the Council Chambers on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 9:00 A.M.

Present: Mayor Dermody, Mark Kosior, Jessica Romine – Arrived Late
Absent:

Zach Kanney 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 December 2, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve the minutes as presented; motion seconded by Mayor Dermody and unanimously carried.

Public Comment
None

Claims Approval
Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented a Medical Shared Savings Payroll in the amount of $1,614.75. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun noted this a result of an employee utilizing the contracted shared savings program with Hendrick's in Indianapolis. This saved the city approximately $35,000, in addition to this shared cost savings paid directly to the employee.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Medical Shared Savings Payroll
Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Medical Shared Savings Payroll as presented; motion seconded by Mayor Dermody and unanimously carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented payroll from December 5, 2025 in the amount of $545,068.93

Motion/Vote – Approval of December 5, 2025 Payroll
Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve the December 5, 2025 payroll as presented; motion seconded by Mayor Dermody and unanimously carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Civil City Claims in the amount of $752,087.08.

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.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Sewage Claims in the amount of $795,444.26.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Sewage Claims
Mr. Kosier made a motion to approve the Sewage Claims as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Water Claims in the amount of $307,301.62.

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.

Mr. Kosior noted that claims are reviewed in advance, as they are emailed prior to meetings for individual review. He emphasized that questions are often raised with the Mayor or Clerk-Treasurer as needed, and that the review process is thorough rather than a formality or "rubber-stamping."

Permission to Pay Claims from 2025 Budget through December 31, 2025
Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented a request for permission to continue to pay claims from the 2025 budget through December 31.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Permission to Pay Claims from 2025 Budget through December 31, 2025
Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Permission to Pay Claims from 2025 Budget Through December 31, 2025 as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Citizen Refund Request
Utility Billing Office Manager Eman Fokianos presented Citizen Refund Request. Mr. Fokianos stated that the owner of four parcels, 240, 242, 244 Pine Lake and 311 Willow, raised concerns about being billed for utilities after the homes were demolished around 2020. Water meters had been removed between 2018 and 2019, but suspended billing continued due to no record of demolition. Mr. Fokianos emphasized the owner paid the bills on time through last week and has now questioned the charges. Mr. Fokianos recommended issuing a credit for one year of improperly billed services, totaling approximately $1,004 for garbage, $103.32 for public fire, $24 for street maintenance, and $1.81 for stormwater. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun noted that prior to implementation of OpenGov, departmental activity was not easily visible or transparent across departments. OpenGov has been in place for approximately three years, and issues now being addressed predate its use. With OpenGov, property and departmental activity is now accessible without relying on individuals to report issues, which should help prevent similar situations in the future.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Citizen Refund Request
Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Citizen Refund Request as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Department Head Reports

Water: Water Superintendent Tim Werner reminded the public that winter temperatures have arrived. Mr. Werner encouraged residents to protect water pipes from freezing, seal drafts near exterior and interior walls, and disconnect hose bibs. While conditions do not yet require running water, early preparation was emphasized to help prevent frozen pipes and potential property damage.

Code: Director of Code Jeff Batchelor reminded residents that property owners are responsible for clearing snow from their sidewalks; it is not the city's responsibility. Enforcement is underway, including issuing citations for noncompliance. In addition, Mr. Batchelor provided an update regarding work on letters and numbers for leaf pick-up. Mr. Batchelor noted that stop signs and barricades at Fox and Kingsbury were scheduled to be installed that day. Additionally, seniors who have difficulty shoveling sidewalks were encouraged to contact the city to be connected with individuals offering assistance at no cost.

LEAP: Bert Cook, Executive Director of the La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership, provided an update on the proposed LAR development at the former Briar Leaf Golf Course. The Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals reviewed zoning change and variance requests related to a potential 296-unit subdivision. The Plan Commission unanimously recommended approval of a zoning change from R1B to R1D. Mr. Cook stated the City Council held the first reading of the ordinance at its meeting last week and may vote on the change at the January 5 meeting. It was noted that nearby residents have actively participated in discussions over the past several months, and that LAR has made adjustments to its site plans to better align with surrounding neighborhoods.

CDP: Community Development and Planning Director Craig Phillips reported that a public hearing at the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The hearing will address the Advantics Lakepoint project, which proposes 42 workforce housing units consisting of a mix of single-family cottages and townhomes. The project has received state tax credits in partnership with Advantics, and the hearing represents a required step to advance the project across the three proposed sites. Mr. Phillips encouraged the public to attend.

Park: Parks and Rec Superintendent Mark Schreiber reported that the Downtown Ice Rink at State and Monroe is open, with strong attendance reported. Upcoming promotions include Free Skate Friday, Buy One Get One Skate Sunday, and extended open hours during Christmas break. Mr. Schreiber encouraged everyone to register in advance through the Parks and Recreation website. Additionally, Mr. Schreiber reported the Christmas Wizards concert, a family-friendly tribute to Trans-Siberian Orchestra featuring classic rock elements, is scheduled for Friday evening. Mr. Schreiber noted that tickets are still available with balcony seats available at $15 for adults and $10 for children ages 13 and under, and floor seating starting at $20 per person. Mr. Schreiber encouraged everyone to purchase tickets in advance and support what has become a popular holiday tradition at the Civic Auditorium.

Mayor Dermody recognized Mr. Mark Schreiber for his exceptional efforts in re-engaging Ed and Karen Bowers after an initial lodge investment proposal did not move forward. Mayor Dermody noted that through Mr. Schreiber's leadership, and in collaboration with attorney Dave Serugo, who represented the Bowers, an alternative investment opportunity was successfully developed. This investment aligns with the Bowers' values and provides funding for long-term improvements to the Civic Auditorium. Mayor Dermody expressed his appreciation to Ed and Karen Bowers for their continued support, and he emphasized that this outcome was made possible through Mr. Shchreiber's dedicated work and leadership.

Mr. Schreiber recognized the Park Foundation for its significant contribution and support, with special acknowledgment of Dale Park's efforts in coordination with Attorney Serugo. Mr. Schreiber described this as a team effort, with particular credit given to Ed and Karen Bowers for their passion and commitment to supporting the city of La Porte. The Bowers family were highlighted for their dedication, including attending the announcement during the Pops concert before leaving for Florida. An initial lead gift of $500,000 was announced, intended as the first of multiple contributions to support the Civic Center. These funds are expected to assist with future operations, construction, maintenance, and the overall care of the nearly 100-year-old facility. Mr. Schreiber encouraged the community to contribute, emphasizing the Civic Center's long-standing value to La Porte and the importance of collective support.

Tabled: 11-18-2025-Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity Letter

Motion/Vote – Remove from the Table: Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity Letter
Ms. Romine made a motion to remove from the table Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity letter; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity Letter
City Attorney Nick Otis presented Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity Letter. Attorney Otis addressed ongoing issues related to sewer capacity and development at the north end of 39 North. It was noted that prior agreements existed between Shady Grove and 39 North before the city acquired the 39 North assets. Attorney Ambers, attorney for the property owner of the mobile home park, expressed concerns that the promised sewer capacity had not been delivered, creating challenges for Shady Grove's property owner, who has invested over $300,000 in the sewer system for a mobile home park and owns adjacent property with potential commercial development. Attorney Ambers emphasized the urgency of approving 33 gallons per minute to enable the client to proceed with the state permitting process for the mobile home park, noting that delays had already resulted in the loss of one potential buyer. Wastewater Superintendent Jerry Jackson stated that improvements made to the Springville lift station increased flow and allowed the city to provide the requested 33 gallons per minute, which is sufficient for current homes but does not meet the client's desired expansion capacity. Mr. Jackson also addressed longer-term solutions, including potential "pigging" of the force main to increase capacity and ongoing coordination with developers and the state to support future development in the area. It was confirmed that all mobile homes in the park must connect to the sewer system, and infrastructure work by the client

had already extended sewer service into the park. Mayor Dermody recommended a motion be made to approve the current flow allocation of 33 gallons per minute, contingent upon serving all existing mobile homes, while continuing to explore solutions to meet future development needs. Water Director Tim Werner made it clear to the board that this was one of several contracts that were not presented to the city of La Porte during the process of the takeover of the infrastructure and therefore the city was unaware.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity Letter
Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Shady Grove Mobile Park Sewer Capacity Letter as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

New Business:
Letter of Resignation: Assistant Chief Burke
Chief Snyder presented Letter of Resignation: Assistant Chief Burke. Chief Snyder informed the Board that he recently received a letter of resignation from Assistant Chief Kelly Burke, submitted approximately one month ago. Chief Snyder noted that Chief Burke was appointed to the Assistant Chief role six years ago, at the beginning of Mayor Dermody's administration. During his tenure, he consistently met and exceeded the high expectations established for the position. Chief Snyder expressed appreciation for his outstanding leadership and service. Chief Snyder stated Assistant Chief Burke will not be leaving the department but rather he will continue serving the department in the capacity of Battalion Chief, which is his merited rank. Chief Snyder emphasized that the department is grateful he will remain part of the team. Throughout his time as Assistant Chief, Chief Burke played a significant role in advancing the department in several key areas. He was instrumental in the development and build-out of the department's training facility and led important technological improvements, including modernizing the department's scheduling system, which had previously been significantly outdated. His contributions have had a lasting positive impact on departmental operations and infrastructure. Chief Snyder expressed regret in bringing forward the resignation but acknowledged and respected Chief Burke's decision.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Letter of Resignation: Assistant Chief Burke
Mss. Romine made a motion to accept Letter of Resignation: Assistant Chief Burke as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Announcement: New Assistant Fire Chief Selection
Chief Snyder clarified that the position of Assistant Chief is a mayoral appointment. Following Assistant Chief Kelly Burke's decision to step back from the role, the Mayor met with members of all three department shifts to communicate that he was open to selecting a replacement from within the department. He also outlined that the selection would be conducted through a formal interview process. Chief Snyder noted that an interview process was organized, and several highly qualified internal candidates applied for the position. A committee was formed to conduct interviews, during which candidates were thoroughly evaluated. While all candidates performed exceptionally well, one candidate distinguished himself above the rest.

With the Mayor's authorization, it was announced that Captain Zach Kanney has been selected to serve as the next Assistant Fire Chief, effective January 2, coinciding with Chief Burke's transition from the role. Chief Snyder noted that Captain Kanney currently serves as a Captain within the department. His qualifications include membership on the department's dive team, service on the pension board, prior experience as Training Chief, and national certification as an arson investigator. Chief Snyder expressed confidence that he brings a strong professional résumé, energy, and capability to the position. The department looks forward to supporting his transition into the role and developing him for future leadership responsibilities.

Mayor Dermody congratulated Captain Kanney and invited him to the podium to speak. Captain Kanney thanked everyone involved in the selection process and expressed his excitement to begin his new role. In addition, Captain Kanney introduced his family in attendance and declared his intention to provide the best for the department, the city, and the citizens they protect.

Amended 2026 Holiday Schedule

Executive Assistant Annette Loeffler presented Amended 2026 Holiday Schedule. Ms. Loeffler noted this was an oversight in the previously approved schedule and acknowledged that she inadvertently failed to include two election dates during the last approval process. Ms. Loeffler explained that, because the elections were neither presidential nor city elections, they were unintentionally overlooked. Ms. Loeffler requested that the Board amend the schedule to include the following dates:

- May 5 – Primary Election Day (Tuesday)
- November 3 – General Election Day (Tuesday)

Ms. Loeffler noted that both dates are associated with midterm and county elections and are recognized as state holidays. The addition of these dates will also impact the Board of Works meeting schedule. Ms. Loeffler stated she provided this information in advance of formal consideration to ensure the Board was aware of the Board of Works scheduling implications.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Amended 2026 Holiday Schedule

Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Amended 2026 Holiday Schedule as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Amended 2026 BOW Meeting Schedule

Executive Assistant Annette Loeffler presented Amended 2026 BOW Meeting Schedule. Ms. Loeffler further requested an amendment to the Board's meeting schedule to accommodate the previously discussed election dates of May 5 and November 3. Ms. Loeffler explained that during those weeks, the City Council will continue to meet as scheduled on Monday evening, there will be no meetings held on Tuesday due to Election Day, and the Board of Works meeting will instead be held on Wednesday morning following each election date. This adjustment is intended to account for Election Day activities and the recognition of those dates as state holidays.

Motion/Vote – Approval Amended 2026 BOW Meeting Schedule
Ms. Romine made motion to approve Amended 2026 BOW Meeting Schedule as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Four (4) Leases for Code/Engineering
Clerk-Treasurer Parthun presented Four (4) Leases for Code/Engineering. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun noted that the Board previously approved the 2026 citywide lease schedule with Enterprise in September. Included in that approval were four vehicle leases intended to replace current leased vehicles and ensure continuity of fleet availability. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun noted that, following the Board's prior approval, she has already executed the lease agreements in order to proceed with securing the vehicles and transitioning from the existing leases. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun clarified that the four vehicles consist of three assigned to the Code Department and one assigned to the Engineering Department. The vehicles are Nissan Kicks models, selected as a lower-cost option that still provides all-wheel drive capability. Clerk-Treasurer Parthun noted that the purpose of this statement was to formally document the specific vehicles included under the previously approved lease schedule.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Four (4) Leases for Code/Engineering
Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Four (4) Leases for Code/Engineering as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

Karner Blue Consulting General Services
Director of Community Development and Planning Craig Phillips presented Karner Blue Consulting General Services. Mr. Phillips stated this is a general services contract with Karner Blue Consulting for the 2026 calendar year. He explained that this agreement would serve as a renewal of the existing 2025 contract. Mr. Phillips noted that Tina Rogers of Karner Blue Consulting has provided extensive grant-related services to the City and has been instrumental in assisting with the application for and securing of multiple grants. These include READI grants as well as an EDA grant associated with the Boyd Boulevard stormwater project. Mr. Phillips stated that two READI grants have been awarded, though details of the second award are not yet ready for public discussion, in addition to the EDA grant. Ongoing work continues in connection with these funding awards. Mr. Phillips emphasized that Ms. Rogers has been highly effective and has functioned almost as an extension of City staff in managing grant documentation, compliance requirements, and submissions. Mr. Phillips confirmed that sufficient funds are available within his department's 2026 budget to cover the associated professional services fees. Mr. Phillips requested initial approval of the 2026 contract, including authorization of an initial $5,000 expenditure, to allow work to proceed early in the year. He indicated that additional documentation must be submitted in the near term to satisfy requirements related to the READI grants, and timely approval would ensure there is no interruption in progress.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Karner Blue Consulting General Services
Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Karner Blue Consulting General Services as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Revised Quotes for Vestibule Heat

City Engineer Nick Minich presented Revised Quotes for Vestibule Heat. Mr. Minich reported that quotes were solicited for an emergency repair to the vestibule heating unit located near the Engineering entrance, an area connected to the building's boiler system. He explained that the repair was necessary to address safety concerns, particularly due to pedestrian traffic on the adjacent stairways and the impact of cold weather conditions. Due to the urgency of the situation, the repair was authorized and executed promptly. Mr. Minich noted total cost exceeded his signing authority but fell within the Clerk-Treasurer's authorization limit; therefore, Clerk-Treasurer Parthun executed the agreement. Although the approval is being presented retroactively, Mr. Minich emphasized that the circumstances constituted an emergency requiring immediate action. Mayor Dermody expressed appreciation for the prompt handling of the matter to ensure safety and maintain building operations.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Revised Quotes for Vestibule Heat

Mr. Kosior made a motion to approve Revised Quotes for Vestibule Heat as presented; motion seconded by Ms. Romine and unanimously carried.

Review for Soldier's Memorial Well Field Phase 2 Bid

City Attorney Nick Otis requested Howard Jones with Nies Engineering to speak on this item. Mr. Jones explained that Phase Two consists of approximately 5,000 feet of 18-inch raw water main that will connect the Soldiers Memorial wells, currently being installed, to the water treatment plant. The project area includes portions of Central Avenue, Hawthorne, and Lake Street. He noted that the work is expected to be complex, particularly along Lake Street, where space constraints and existing utilities will require careful coordination. Bids were received from four contractors: New Tech Corp., H&G Underground, Grimmer Construction, and HRP Construction. New Tech Corp. was the apparent low bidder. However, Mr. Jones stated that it is the engineer's recommendation that New Tech Corp.'s bid be dismissed. The project specifications require bidders to demonstrate sufficient experience in similar underground water main construction. The experience submitted by New Tech Corp. was primarily related to concrete work and did not adequately demonstrate the specialized underground utility experience necessary for this project. Mr. Jones explained that given the complexity of the installation and prior contractor concerns—evidenced by the need to rebid the project after initial bids came in significantly higher—the engineering team believes proven expertise is critical. Mayor Dermody expressed reluctance in recommending dismissal, particularly as encouraging new contractors is valued, it was concluded that proceeding with a contractor lacking demonstrated relevant experience would pose undue risk. Mr. Jones noted the next lowest bidder, H&G Underground, submitted a bid in the amount of $2,159,879 and change, which is approximately $300,000 below the engineer's estimate. Mr. Jones stated their recommendation is to reject the apparent low bid and award the contract to H&G Underground.

Mayor Dermody questioned where the low bidder firm is from. Mr. Jones stated they are local to Michigan City. Mr. Jones encouraged them to bid for futures projects that better reflect

the skill set they present. Water Director Tim Werner stated that the line coming in from the Lake Street Plant will be in close proximity to the 1.3 million gallon clear well out front and it does make them nervous for whomever is doing the work. Mr. Kosior questioned whether New Tech Corp had any other relevant experience. Mr. Jones responded by stating they have done other work of various types but nothing underground and this project will be a directional bore and that is a tough activity to get right.

Attorney Otis addressed the Board to clarify the statutory framework governing the award of public works contracts. He explained that contracts must be awarded to the lowest responsible and responsive bidder. If the Board determines not to award the contract to the lowest bidder, the reasons for that decision must be clearly identified and entered into the record. Attorney Otis outlined the distinction between a "responsive" bidder and a "responsible" bidder. In determining responsiveness, the Board may consider whether the bid conforms in all material respects to the project specifications, complies with the invitation to bid and instructions to bidders, and adheres to all applicable statutes, ordinances, resolutions, and rules related to the contract award. In determining responsibility, the Board may evaluate factors including the bidder's ability and capacity to perform the work, as well as the bidder's integrity, character, reputation, competence, and relevant experience. Attorney Otis noted that, based on the information presented by the project engineer and staff, the concern with the apparent low bidder is not related to integrity or character, but rather to demonstrated capacity and relevant experience in performing complex underground water main construction. The evidence provided did not sufficiently establish that the bidder possesses the necessary background to complete a project of this scope and technical complexity. Attorney Otis emphasized that the project involves critical infrastructure associated with a new wellfield, which is of significant importance to the community. Given the nature of the work, the Board must ensure the project is completed properly by a contractor with proven experience in similar installations.

Motion/Vote – Approval of Review for Soldier's Memorial Well Field Phase 2 Bid
Ms. Romine made a motion to approve Review for Soldier's Memorial Well Field Phase 2 Bid as presented; motion seconded by Mr. Kosior and unanimously carried.

Unfinished Business
Public Comment:
Jeff Plant, via Facebook Live, regarded housing availability in the county by stating there are 2400 home available for sale. Mayor Dermody clarified that while previous statements suggested 2,400–2,500 homes were available, the accurate figure is approximately 300–400 homes countywide, which he indicated is a more realistic assessment. In addition, Mr. Plant also offered commentary on annexation practices, expressing critical opinions about the administration's approach and decision-making, including a remark regarding Mayor Tom's knowledge of contracts related to annexation. Mayor Dermody acknowledged Mr. Plant's comments and concluded the public comment segment by wishing him a Merry Christmas.

Other Business:
Mayor Dermody noted that next Friday is the Mayor's Ring-Off for the Salvation Army. Mayor Dermody encouraged everyone between the hours of 9 AM and 5 PM to donate to the Salvation Army next Friday. Mayor Dermody note he is grateful to be serving on the Salvation Army board and highlighted the organization's ongoing efforts to support local children through its backpack program. The program provides food for children to take home on Fridays, with over 750 backpacks distributed. Mayor Dermody noted that funding for the program is becoming increasingly limited, not only for the current holiday season but also for the next school year. He emphasized that the Salvation Army requires financial support to sustain both holiday assistance for families and the ongoing backpack program. At present, the program had approximately $15,000 remaining, sufficient for just over a month of operation. Mayor Dermody encouraged community members to contribute generously to ensure the program can continue supporting local children. Mayor Dermody offered a personal drop-off point at City Hall for donations and suggested a "drive-by" contribution option. Mayor Dermody wished everyone a Merry Christmas and happy holidays.

Next regularly scheduled meeting: Tuesday January 6, 2026 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: January 6, 2026