

BOC meeting 3/31/2026, 11 am

14 present on line. All 3 commissioners present with legal counsel. All items approved unanimously **EXCEPT 16-26 was unanimously VETOED** after 8 public comments against and all 3 BOC expressing against 16-26. 12:29 ADJOURNED.

AGENDA:

A. FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: Opening and Reading of Bids/Letters of Interest on:

B. REPORTS AND REQUESTS FROM:

COMMISSIONERS:

a) Approval of the Accounts Payable Docket

b) Approval of Bills Passed by County Council: Ordinances

13-26: budget-neutral part-time ND students in the SJC Prosecutor's High Tech Crime Unit

14-26: Interfund transfers for IT, Auditor, Humane Society, Road paving, etc. that have exceeded budgeted amounts.

15-26: A one-time \$1200 stipend for SJC Employees who qualify for it. Hazen: This is a good move!

16-26: Passed CC by 5-4 vote along party lines, this property tax deferral program allow property owners to defer between \$100-\$500 of county taxes owed, but pay the taxes within 180 days of due date.

Michael Castellon: My job is to ensure fairness. Many of our senior citizens get 2nd mortgages to pay off medical debt and would not be eligible for this program. There's more we can do as a county. Do not approve 16-26.

Mary Beth Wisniewski: This bill is concerning in that taxpayers will misunderstand the program. The 16-26 loan requires a lien on their properties. Without integrated software, the department of finance will be strained by this additional accounting. We are still looking for a vendor and will need 1 new staff member with additional salary and benefits. Do not approve 16-26.

Saya Salinski, SJC employee in the Treasurer's Office: This bill is not a meaningful relief for taxpayers, as it just delays property tax payments. Do not approve.

Patricia Henry, former SJC employee in the Assessor's office: To implement this program with so many unanswered questions about implementation! This is not equitable or fair. Send this back to the drawing board. Do not approve 16-26.

Candace Brown: Recorder: This is a lien and not a credit, and would have to be recorded (which requires another fee). 16-26 would make some homeowners ineligible for other programs, or second mortgages. Do not approve 16-26.

Kathy Grogeritch (sp?), SJC employee: 16-26 DOES allow a mortgage, but does require payment of the tax bill. There are no other counties in the state that allow this type of program. Our office is very busy already. 16-26 is crunched around March 1st, but we don't start tax calculations until March 1st! Do not approve 16-26.

Bryan Tanner CC President: 16-26 does not reduce property taxes, requires a filing fee. This program would restrict owner access to equity. This would lead to fragmented records on properties. These are vulnerable residents. This program would require new administrative costs. Do not approve 16-26.

Matthew Clayton: A tax deferral program is not tax relief. There are too many questions. This is not equitable and is not meaningful relief for seniors or others. Do not approve 16-26.

BOC Morton: reiterated some of the CC remarks that 16-26 would be difficult for taxpayers and costly to administrate (\$25,000 of new software per Castellon, for example). This is false affordability, and is a debt.

BOC Hazen: most upsetting for me is that nobody sponsoring this bill talked with employees who would be affected.

BOC Baxmeyer: 16-26 is not tax relief but is a debt that would need to be paid and would be a burden.

c) Approval of St Joseph County Humane Society Animal Control & Shelter Services Contract: \$914,647 for 2026

Jenny Brown: Thank you for taking the time and due diligence to take up this contract. We will take up this contract in a few months regarding renewal for 2027.

d) Approval of Rental Contract with **VFW for Resource Fair June 6, 2026, from 10 am-2 pm** brats and burgers, \$1500 requested.

Desmond Upchurch: This would be the inaugural fair for all SJC veterans to better understand their benefits and to introduce the new VSO Veteran Service Officer. Whatever is not used of the \$1500 will be returned to the county.

Morton: Make sure this is well advertised and that advertising is directed toward our younger veterans who may be able to upgrade their less than honorable discharges.

Baxmeyer: We will make sure this announcement goes out on SJC sites.

e) Employee of the Month Oct 2025 Wendy Bakkus (sp?)

IPG:

a) Approval of Agreement with Lawson-Fisher Associates for Engineering Services for As Needed Projects, up to \$100,000.

b) Approval of Agreement with DLZ Indiana for Engineering Services for Alexander Drive Reconstruction Project, up to \$143,600. No additional funding is required, the bond we have will cover the cost. Businesses on Alexander Dr. will not be affected.

c) Approval of Consent Agenda: Annual 9/11 March to the 9/11 Memorial 2026 from St. Pat's County Park to just north of the 31 Bypass.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ADVISORY BOARD:

a) Approval of Grant Application Request to Department of Corrections for Community Corrections and Adult Probation Departments for Employee Salaries

Jesse Carlton: requesting a signed approval letter today, as the grant application is due tomorrow. This will help cover salaries for staff. We are not confident of getting our full request, as there is less money for the DOC to grant.

Morton: "Why is there less money for community safety? I just don't get it."

ADULT PROBATION:

a) Approval of Grant Application Request of \$9,888 to Indiana Supreme Court for Adult Probation Department Problem Solving Court Division for Drug Tests

b) Approval of Grant Application Request of \$206,506 to Indiana Office of Court Services for Adult Probation Division of Pretrial Services for Employee Salaries: This will help cover employee salaries.

PROBATE/JJC:

a) Approval of Commercial Improvement Contract with Green Improvements LLC for Roof Replacement of Detention Center: cost is \$67,669. Tabled due to a warranty coverage question.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS COUNSELING BUREAU:

a) Approval of Case Management Software Subscription with CharityTracker for Data Management: Balance due to \$3,240. This would replace the current Excel program costing \$7000 yearly. No additional money is requested.

Katherine Williams (sp?): we work with divorcing folks who have children involved, and work by court orders. Our current system requires multiple workbooks for clients and is difficult to track or to do statistics. I tried several software programs for this. Charity Tracker would allow an on-line kiosk service, which would be better than hand-written in-person intakes. Charity Tracker also has robust statistical options, which would help us be innovative with services and grant applications.

DUCOMB CENTER:

a) Approval of Agreement with BI Incorporated to Provide an Equipment and Demo Service for BI SmartBAND Trial: This is a wristband tracker placed on parolees, those on home detention, and those pre-trial people who need it. This could be more cost-effective. This will be a 2-week trial.

ASSESSOR: Mike Castellon

a) Approval of Software Subscription & Service Agreement with Soka, Inc. for VALUEINDIANA Property Valuation Platform. For 50% off, SJC will get computer-assisted valuation of properties and automated comparable property analysis. Cost is \$0.50 per property, estimate 100,000 parcels of property = \$50,000/ year. Property appeals are also available.

Under current law, the assessor's office has the burden of proof to defend assessments. 90% of comparable come back in favor of the taxpayer. Our prior program was paid for with ARP funds, now ended. We have been chosen to trial this program, and only pay for what we use. This would be cost-effective, there is no renewal needed. This would give some confidence that comparable assessments are accurate.

PHYSICAL ASSETS:

a) Approval of Consent Agenda: An old sink/freezer/oven/stove combo of the DOH will be given to an employee.

C. OLD BUSINESS: None

D. NEW BUSINESS: Baxmeyer: the future of Portage Manor: we have developed a 6-step process. Phil Garrett put this together. Step 1 is appraisals of the property, now done. Step 2 is offering sale of real estate, which requires public notice of 10 days. Step 3 the CC must approve the sale of county real estate and will publish notice of their hearing. Step 4: IC 5:31 minimum bids will be published twice a week apart, with bidders. Step 5 we receive the bids, which will be open to public inspection. Step 6 is the selection of successful bidders by the BOC.

E: PUBLIC COMMENTS: (THREE MINUTE LIMIT)

Dan Caruso: I attended the INDOT hearing on the diverging diamond intersection. The hearing had comments against the diverging diamond. This intersection is overkill and will simply be an excuse for the CoC to invite yet more industry to the area. Up to April 14, there is public comment on this, and INDOT said there would be another public hearing in April.

Microsoft is not requesting an abatement, so there is no need for a TIF area. I know this is out of your BOC silo, but I request the CC do not allow any more data centers.

Derek Dieter, surveyor: Please post the timeline you specified for Portage Manor. Plans for Portage Manor have been repeatedly delayed. There is no public comment available. There was no citizen input whatsoever. I will send you the information.

Name?: I commend the BOC regarding veterans service today. As a 20-year veteran, I know how difficult it is to assimilate back into civilian life.

Baxmeyer: I attended a Roads seminar 2 weeks ago and learned about when diverging diamonds are warranted. The diverging diamond is safer than other options for New Carlisle, which is one reason INDOT favors it. There are federal funds involved, and requirements to be met. The diverging diamond checks the required boxes.

Morton: Thank you to all the speakers today against 16-26.