

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING April 28,2026, 11 am - 1:12 pm

Excellent attendance! 44 people on line, including ABC57 News. All 3 commissioners and legal counsel present. All items approved unanimously. The Portage Manor Public hearing and Approval of selling it was put to the end of the meeting. Other items of business took until 11:23, when the Portage Manor hearing started. There will be additional opportunities for the public to weigh in; next public meeting will be May 26th. RFPs for separate parts of the Portage Manor property, which will also have public input allowed.

A. FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: Opening and Reading of Bids/Letters of Interest on: none.

B. REPORTS AND REQUESTS FROM:

COMMISSIONERS:

a) Approval of the Accounts Payable Docket

b) Public Hearing for Disposition of Real Estate (Portage Manor): IIIII IIIII IIIII

Derek Dieter: The maps for RFPs may change to area A, B, etc.

Tom R?: Preserve Portage Manor for future use. Lots of layers of culture and history.

Steve Francis: Speaking as a taxpayer and economist: We want the land preserved.

Gary Harrington: naturist, the glacial ravine at Portage Manor is impressive. There is nothing like it locally.

Ryan Creager (sp?): I urge you to consider the beauty of the land and building.

Robert Hedrick: More recreational activities, please. Don't sell it for development.

Brett Banasewicz, #1 world BMX Biker, who stayed at Portage Manor after a traumatic brain injury.

Portage Manor is not just a place to me; it gave me purpose. The property isn't empty or unused. Slow down the process: there are things that will be forever lost if this is not done right.

Roosevelt Stewart: pastor and former candidate for office. Undermining progress without memory is hollow. Turning Portage into a commercial place would say that our local history is disposable. Let it be a public nature sanctuary.

Jonathan Sporleder (sp?): preserve green space. Keep it as a park instead of selling it for private development.

Dr. Brian Collier: Preserve the lands at Portage Manor. About 1/4 of our audience is students; please preserve the land for their future. Green spaces reduce allergens and violence.

Heidi Bell and grandson: I have traveled many places. People feel most comfortable in natural environments. Keep Portage Manor as a nature preserve.

John Hamilton: Gave history that 20 million acres of forest is now only 2 million acres total; we imperil our own species when we decimate life with development that kills other species.

Desiree Elsee (sp?) Where else can we go to find relief from our urban environment? Preserve Portage Manor.

Dan Caruso: Talked about process: What is it that you don't want me to hear, with executive sessions, nondisclosure agreements, and RFPs. Thomas More (the Catholic school org) plans to send in an RFP.

Steve ?: STMA is a Catholic School Representing Thomas More. Our plan involves turning the building into a school. We would be honored to be the next stewards of this property. We want to have only a small portion of the property, with the rest being preservation. Ours is the only option that would open the building and land to the public.

Oliver Davis: View land as community, not a commodity.

Michael Creager, junior at St. Thomas More. This is about bettering the community as a whole.

William Eby: employed by St. Thomas More. A correct educational space is important.

Christian ?: As you are developing your RFPs, take into account nonprofit corporations as well as for-profits.

Jeffrey Pochanowski: In support of the St. Thomas More Academy plan. It preserves the green space and would be open to the public. Overdevelopment is a serious risk.

Jonathan Bulles: I drive by this property daily; Portage Manor property is unique. We need to keep the green space.

Sharif Farias: law professor: do not rule out sale to a nonprofit, which will profit us. Selling to a for-profit corporation is a zero-sum proposition.

Jason Critchlow: There is no rush to do this. Preserve this area: it is one of the things that make us really great. We need to know what is contained in the requests for proposals. We have a housing supply problem: a nonprofit cooperative housing could be considered. Put limits on what can be done on the property.

Jessica Appleman: sophomore at STMA. We want to have a unified campus. We would renovate in a way that would honor the history of the building. We would add a sports complex for the community as a whole.

Christina Sheer: Your plan splits up the property, which is a mistake. The school could be a partner, but you could also have cooperative housing. You're missing a holistic opportunity here. Be creative; this will take time.

Senior at STMA: audio cut out. This is not a selfish community, but is focusing on helping each other grow.

Debra Durall: I like large green spaces: it is therapeutic for me.

David Schenk: STMA teacher: For-profit would bring in a LOT of money as a one-time venture, but would lose long-term. You would retain direct power over what happens long-term. Turn the rest of the property into a nature preserve.

Tom St. George: Navy Veteran, father of 2 STMA students. STMA helped us decide to live here.

Katherine Godfrey: mother of STMA student: The public should be able to enjoy this area. The students will work to keep the area maintained.

Amanda Davidson-: Separate church and state. there are historic burial areas to consider as well, including a transition cemetery from 1907. Do not disturb human remains: Requesting a temporary halt of the sale.

Joe Thomas, District A: strongly in favor of transfer to STMA.

Steven Sass: ecologist: People are the backbone of this community. Don't develop the property or split it up.

Derek Dieter: thank you for listening to us. I hope you have had the property properly appraised. Baxmeyer had said the property will be given to the City of South Bend, now considering giving it to STMA. I spend a lot of time at Portage Manor. Don't use it for housing.

Joe Dolph: agricultural teacher at IV Tech . Do a study of what this property could do educationally.

Mary Countryman: In favor of the STMA proposal to keep the area unique.

Charlotte Wolfe: farm and nature educator: PM belongs to ALL the residents of the county. Agrihoods involve modest housing and adjacent open space. I was excited to hear Jason talk about co-housing. I'm glad to hear that there will be an RFP process; I would be willing to serve on a citizen's committee.

Joanie Downs-Christenko: Preserve the ecological property. The environmental space has tremendous monetary value.

Jill Cook: Science teacher at STMA. STMA and SJC would have a symbiotic relationship. We could compost and garden, introduce more native plants.

Alison Mynsberge: Any development would add traffic and decrease safety.

Sean Haas: preserve the green, don't put in housing.

Benjamin Tovar: preserve the Portage Manor natural space.

Atty Susan Foxx: juvenile attorney: I echo support for the STMA bid. My grandchildren attend STMA.

Mark Rolfes: Portage Manor has been closed for 3 years, at a cost of \$300,000 yearly. Supports the STMA plan.

Catherine Craker: biologist and native plant gardener in support of the STMA proposal.

c) Approval of Resolution R-6-C-2026 for Disposition of Real Estate (Portage Manor): Lots 1,2,3, and 7 on the Plat of Riverside Campus Minor Subdivision, 116.97 acres of Portage Manor.

d) Approval of Resolution R-4-C-2025 for Solenia Carr for her service to SJC as Human Resources Director.

SHERIFF: Steve Noonan, Executive Officer SJC Police

a) Approval of Memorandum of Understanding with City of South Bend Regarding Application for Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program

Award: Applying for \$113,580 for South Bend City and \$13,599 for SJC, total is \$127,179 for upgrade of officer equipment. A public review process (public Merit Board meeting) is required as a part of the grant process.

IPG:

a) Approval of Notice to Bidders Request for Bridge Rehabilitation Project S-215-26 for Colfax Avenue over St Joseph River. Bids will be read aloud on June 2, 2026.

b) Approval of Construction Engineering Service Agreement with Lochmueller Group for Project Des. No. 1702832 for Pierce Road Reconstruction from US31 to Juniper Road: Cost is not to exceed \$648,750.

PROBATE/JJC:

a) Approval of Contract with New Generation Landscaping & Lawn for Landscaping Services for 2026, \$21,550 already budgeted, is \$6000 less than the contractor for 2025.

b) Approval of Memorandum of Understanding with GCSCORED, Inc. for Implementation of RENEW Program Curriculum. This is a structure, neuroscience-based intervention designed to increase emotional regulation, self-awareness, rational intelligence, and trauma-informed decision-making skills in JJC youth and their support systems. The program is 6-10 weeks of 2-hour weekly sessions delivered in face-to-face or hybrid format and 3 months of post-program follow-up. Cost is \$19,950, covered by a grant received. This curriculum was already passed by County Council.

PHYSICAL ASSETS: Bree Roberts

a) Approval of 5-year Elevator Maintenance Agreement with Otis Elevator for Service at the County Jail. Cost for maintenance is \$12,552, is in the budget.

C. OLD BUSINESS:

D. NEW BUSINESS:

E: PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Andy Rutten: March 23 Community Forum regarding expansion of the railroad spur into a through railway for heavy industry use, which would be a major land-use expansion. It would increase noise, would negatively affect property values. It makes sense that the county withdraw from this expansion. Instead, put money toward overpass development.

Derek Dieter: The public is unable to speak at Redevelopment Commission meetings. Why?