

LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING MINUTES

JOHN R. HAMERCHECK, COMMISSIONER	JASON W. BOYD, ADMINISTRATOR
JOHN PLECNIK, COMMISSIONER	LEGAL COUNSEL
RICHARD J. REGOVICH, COMMISSIONER	NEWS MEDIA
JENNIFER BELL, CLERK	

(Tape 2024-1114)

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Plecnik called the Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, November 14, 2024.

ROLL CALL: Upon roll being called, Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich, and Plecnik were present.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Commissioner Plecnik asked if anyone in the audience wished to address the Board. Commissioner Plecnik introduced Lake County Buildings & Grounds Superintendent, Mr. Mark Iafelice. Mr. Iafelice congratulated Mr. Raymond Halstead and Ms. Lillian James on 25 years of service to the Buildings & Grounds Department, explaining that both Mr. Halstead and Ms. James started working on the same day, October 25, 1999. Mr. Halstead and Ms. James were presented with a special certificate for this achievement. Mr. Iafelice also spoke of Ms. Rebecca Clark who could not be present today, stating that she has served the County for 27 years.

Bishop Mirbel of Painesville, shared that he is thankful for being introduced to the Bible many years ago. He read Psalm 14 to the Board. Bishop Mirbel thanked Commissioner Hamercheck for inviting to him attend the Commissioners meetings and shared how this Board gives of themselves to all of the residents of Lake County.

Mr. Chris Bihary of Painesville stated that this is the season of thanks and giving and he asked for a moment of silence.

Mr. John Marra of Timberlake read the following statement: "I am here today to speak on behalf of the residents and property owners of Lake County regarding the significant burden of property taxes. We're facing a challenge that is outgrowing local resources the overwhelming cost of funding our schools through property taxes. I'd like to propose a solution that could bring immediate and substantial relief to every property owner whether residential or business; a state takeover of school funding. Currently, over 60% of property tax revenue in Lake County goes to our schools. This heavy reliance on local property taxes not only places an undue financial burden on our residents, especially seniors and those on fixed incomes, but also makes our businesses less competitive. Transitioning school funding to the state would result in an immediate reduction of property taxes by more than 50% for every property owner. Additionally, many of our schools are on the verge of bankruptcy, highlighting the urgent need for systemic change. Federal government aid could serve as a critical support mechanism to stabilize these districts during this transition. This issue isn't just a Lake County problem, it's a statewide crisis. Communities across Ohio grappling with similar challenges, as a reliance on local property taxes for school funding creates inequities, financial stress and inefficiencies that impact all Ohio. Addressing this at the state level would provide a unified and fair solution for everyone. He outlined a few of the benefits of this shift: "1- Fairness and Equity: a state-funded system ensures that all school districts, regardless of local property wealth, receive equitable funding. This means our children's education is no longer tied to the value of our homes or businesses but instead reflects a commitment to statewide educational standards and opportunities. 2- Economic Growth: a 50% reduction in property taxes which spur economic development businesses would find Lake County more attractive leading to increased investments job creation and a broader tax base. 3- Support for Residents: for homeowners, particularly seniors living on fixed incomes this change could mean a difference between staying in their homes or being forced to sell during rising taxes. It provides relief where it is needed most, allowing families to better allocate their resources. 4- Transparency and Accountability: with State funding, the complex and often opaque process of property reappraisals would no longer disproportionately affect residents. The state's education funding would come from more uniform sources providing a clear oversight and accountability. 5- Long-Term Stability for Schools: state-level funding for federal aid and federal aid would create a more predictable and sustainable financial environment for schools, reducing the risk of sudden budget shortfalls and enabling long-term planning. 6- Enhanced Education Outcomes: with equitable consistent funding, schools can invest and better resources, hire additional qualified teachers and provide innovative programs that improve student performance and prepare them for the future. 7- Improved Community Relations: by relieving the tax burden on property owners, the relationship between the schools and communities they serve would be strengthened, fostering greater trust and collaboration. This isn't an untested idea. States like Texas have explored more centralized approaches to school funding reducing their reliance on property taxes and instead drawing from broader revenue sources such as sales taxes."

Mr. Brian Massie of Rainbow Drive in Painesville, continued to read the remainder of Mr. Marra's statement: " This isn't an untested idea. States like Texas have explored more centralized approaches to in school funding reducing their reliance on property taxes and instead drawing from a broader revenue source such as sales taxes or state income taxes by shifting this responsibility. Ohio could not only lower property taxes but also modernize its approach to funding public education. I urge you, as our Commissioners, to advocate for this change at the state level. Lake County residents are hardworking and they deserve a fairer system that reduces their tax burden while ensuring our schools are adequately funded. It's time to prioritize the well-being of our communities and recognize that the current system is unsustainable. Thank you for your time and for your services to our county. I hope that you join me in championing this critical reform for the benefit of all Lake County residents and businesses." Mr. Massie offered a big shout out to Mayor Marra for his statement. He added that when one thinks about what is happening at the federal level, with President-Elect Trump saying that he will defund the Federal Department of Education, that means that there's going to be a new day dawning for public education in the United States. And when you look at what is happening in Lake County, he is rooting for Dr. Ahuja and the entire new board at Lakeland Community College, adding that they have a tremendous task ahead of them. He explained that they've got 4,400 students and

believe by 2027 they may raise it to 4,800 which, compared to the heyday of 10,000 students, is just not practical. He then spoke of Auburn Career Center's costs to maintain their facility and asked that someone take a look at the possibility of joining Auburn Career Center with Lakeland Community College. He stated that the amount of money that the taxpayers are paying on property taxes for this education is just unreal and people need to think outside the box for public education.

RESOLUTIONS:

1.RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING CHANGE ORDER NO. 2 FOR THE LAK-MIDDLE RIDGE ROAD (CR 22) RESURFACING PROJECT WITH RONYAK PAVING, INC. IN THE AMOUNT OF \$11,200.00, FEDERAL AID NO. FAN E240101, PID NO. 119690 AND LCE PROJECT NO. 2023-012(20241114\E01)(E-3)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

2.RESOLUTION APPROVING PLANS, SPECIFICATIONS AND ESTIMATES OF COST IN THE AMOUNT OF \$550,000.00 FOR FIFTH STREET SANITARY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE VILLAGE OF FAIRPORT HARBOR(20241114\U01)(UT-9)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, and Plecnik "ABSTAIN:" Commissioner Regovich "NAYS": None.

3.RESOLUTION ACCEPTING A THREE-YEAR MAINTENANCE BOND IN THE AMOUNT OF \$9,010.23 FOR WATERLINES FOR WEST PINES SUBDIVISION JOB NO. 23-39 IN THE CITY OF WILLOUGHBY HILLS (20241114\U02)(UT-12)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

4.RESOLUTION TRANSFERRING APPROPRIATIONS IN LAKE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF UTILITIES WATER AND SOLID WASTE FUNDS FOR ADDITIONAL 2024 EXPENSES(20241114\U03)(UT-2)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

5.RESOLUTION APPROVING LAKE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES VOUCHERS DATE OF WARRANT NOVEMBER 22, 2024 IN THE AMOUNT OF \$594,295.92(20241114\JFS01)(JFS-14)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck. The foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

6.RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE BOARD OF LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TO ISSUE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING SERVICES FOR THE LAKE COUNTY PLAN CALLED "LAKE COUNTY, OHIO: VISION 2050" SIMILAR TO A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (Proposal Opening: December 4, 2024) (20241114\C01)(C-107)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck. Commissioner Plecnik stated that during his report, County Administrator, Mr. Boyd will speak more about the upcoming master plan for Lake County. He explained that it is very important that, for the first time in more than fifty years, the County has an updated master plan that will reflect economic development, lakefront development, and the growth of our community. He also stated that all 23 municipalities will be heard from. The foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

7. RESOLUTION APPROVING PAYMENT OF BILLS AS LISTED ON THE COMMISSIONERS' APPROVAL JOURNAL IN THE AMOUNT OF \$1,729,256.40 (20241114\BC01)(C-4)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

8.RESOLUTION APPROVING PURCHASE ORDERS AS LISTED ON THE COMMISSIONERS' PURCHASE ORDER APPROVAL JOURNAL IN THE AMOUNT OF \$539,650.40(20241114\BC02)(C-17)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

9.RESOLUTION INCREASING APPROPRIATIONS FOR VARIOUS GENERAL AND NON-GENERAL FUND ACCOUNTS (20241114\BC03)(C-111)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

10. RESOLUTION TRANSFERRING CASH AND APPROPRIATIONS WITHIN VARIOUS GENERAL AND NON-GENERAL FUND ACCOUNTS(20241114\BC04)(C-111)

On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the foregoing resolution was adopted with the vote follows: "AYES": Commissioners Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

UTILITIES –none.

JOB AND FAMILY SERVICES – Ms. Suzanne Casar, Director of Job and Family Services, stated that she wanted to provide a public service announcement to those individuals who are eligible for food assistance benefits. She explained that the State has made local Job and Family Services aware that criminals have been targeting Ohio SNAP EBT and Cash Assistance clients by placing skimming devices on store card readers which captures the card and pin numbers without individuals knowing it. She stated that all clients should download The Connect EBT app on their

phones which will then allow them to receive transaction alerts, lock their cards and check their card statements for any unusual transactions.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR – Mr. Boyd explained that, under the direction of David Radachy and the Planning and Community Development Department, a request for proposals has been issued for a Countywide Comprehensive Strategic Plan. This will be the first Countywide Comprehensive Strategic Plan since 1965. He stressed that it's important to note that this strategy will be respective of the 23 communities and their existing zoning and planning. The strategy is to begin to consolidate and collaborate on their growth initiatives. This comprehensive plan will also focus on continued redevelopment of the county and will be a more diverse document. He stated that in the 1960's, the lakefront was viewed as the back door to the County but in this vision, the lakefront is the front door of Lake County and is more recreational and economic development focused rather than industrial. This will most likely be a one-year process but he will update the Board when proposals come in on December the 4th. Once Mr. Radachy has created a review team, interviews will begin and hopefully there will be a proposed contract before the Board around Christmas.

CLERK – Commissioners Clerk, Ms. Jennifer Bell, stated that the next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 10:00 am.

LEGAL – none.

OLD BUSINESS: Commissioner Regovich addressed Mr. Marra and Mr. Massie stating that the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) Conference is coming up in the beginning of December and that he will be attending. He noted that they are on a committee that will pick about four or five items deemed important to support statewide. He stated that he feels this County Commissioners committee would get behind the issue of ever-increasing property taxes. He stated that he will bring their (Mr. Marra and Mr. Massie) ideas to the table and hopefully encourage State leaders to take a look at it.

Mr. Boyd wanted to mention next Friday, November 22nd at 11:00 am will be the groundbreaking for the Lake County Sheriff's Office project and it will take place directly across the street from the current facility. There will also be a Courthouse Committee Meeting on Thursday, November 21st at 9:00 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner Plecnik stated that he shares Mayor Marra's concerns about the acceleration of property tax values and ultimately property tax increases that residents will have to start paying next year and how it is important that our state legislature act in their lame duck session this December to make sure there is a solution for taxpayers. He stated that increasing property values without a sale are simply unfair for residents and taxpayers. He believes there's a very simple solution; either freeze the property value or like Florida, cap it. He hopes that the legislature will take a look at Florida very carefully and consider a full freeze or at least a cap. Commissioner Plecnik stated that he received a call from the County Commissioners Association of Ohio asking him to lobby the State Representatives and Senators for a pay raise. He said he will not be doing that.

Commissioner Regovich wished the Mentor, Kirtland, Lake Catholic and Perry High School football teams' good luck as they head to their championship games.

ADJOURN: On a motion by Commissioner Regovich, seconded by Commissioner Hamercheck, the Board adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m. with the vote as follows: "AYES": Commissioners: Hamercheck, Regovich and Plecnik "NAYS": None.

Minutes approved this twelfth day of December, 2024.

BOARD OF LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JOHN PLECNIK, PRESIDENT

JOHN R. HAMERCHECK, COMMISSIONER

RICHARD J. REGOVICH, COMMISSIONER

JENNIFER BELL, CLERK