

**Solid Waste District of La Porte County
District Board Meeting
Special Meeting**

**October 10, 2025
10:00 a.m.**

APPROVED

Call to Order

Director Clay Turner

Pledge

Roll Call District Board

Councilman Przybylinski
Commissioner Haney
Mayor Dermody
Commissioner Holifield
Commissioner Gramarossa

Absent

Councilman Mollenhauer
Mayor Nelson Deutch

Others Present

Clay Turner, Executive Director
Robin Havens, Office Manager/HR
Douglas Biege, Attorney
Rob Sabie – LaPorte County EMA Director

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. Turner informed the Board of Indiana Code IC-13-20-9-2 which states no vegetative matter can be placed in a landfill. Mr. Turner then went over a timeline in the packet, beginning in June 2018, the blueprints were approved for the compost site facility as the district had to abruptly leave it's Westville site due to a new prison facility being built. He further stated in July of 2019, after the building construction, the district received a certificate of occupancy and in August of 2020 the Commissioners deeded the property to the district. Mr. Turner went on to say in February 2022 the district started clearing the site up on the hill where the fire occurred and in February 2024 the Board allowed the district to purchase a new trommel so the district could start clearing more yard waste to create compost. Mr. Turner then went through the timeline of events leading up to the large fire at the compost site, which was also included in the packet. In that timeline, Mr. Turner noted that the property insurance would cover the cost of fighting the fire. Commissioner Gramarossa noted that on October 3rd she arrived at the site and spoke with Andy Snyder, who indicated the fire was picking up again and the department would need to put more water on it. Mr. Turner pointed out the most recent IDEM inspection, included in the packet, explaining the site is inspected annually, and there were no issues or violations. Commissioner Holifield pointed out that a long pile of vegetative waste was noted in the inspection, a mixture of logs, grass, mulch and brush, which indicates the staff is not keeping things separated on the site. Mr. Turner stated that is the storage pile but Commissioner Holifield stated that is where the fire started. Mr. Turner said he believes it was a lightning strike that caused the fire in the pile. Mayor Dermody asked what the total cost of the fire has been thus far. Commissioner Holifield stated he did not have a total figure but the County Highway was currently at a cost of \$10,000, GE Marshall is around \$28,000, plus the remediation for the duct work at the two county facilities north of the property. Commissioner Holifield also stated the insurance said the cost of cleaning the duct work of those facilities would not be covered. And he further stated was not happy that the email read a Board member ordered the facilities to be cleaned. Mayor Dermody indicated that he assumed the cost of the clean-up would be included in the insurance but it sounds like it's not. Mr. Turner stated the district would turn anything in but at this time the adjuster is saying only the cost of fighting the fire would be covered. Commissioner Holifield pointed out the problem was that the pile was too large to begin with. Mr. Turner stated the pile was accumulated over 3 years because it was more than the site could handle due to only practicing cold composting. Mr. Turner also stated the district has been giving away mulch for 2 years but it's just not moving off the site. Mayor Dermody asked if there was a cap on drop off, should the district notice they have more than they can take in. Mr. Turner said this was a wake up call and going forward the district will try to limit the drop off. Commissioner Holifield recommended wood cutting to Mr. Turner and he said he had no problem with that as long as a waiver is signed. Councilman Przybylinski asked if the root cause of the fire was the excess of wood. Commissioner Holifield stated he believes it was an excess of everything piled together. Commissioner Holifield further stated the staff on the site needs to be outside all the time, separating the green waste and doing their jobs. The Board then

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asked if EMA Director, Rob Sabie, could give more information regarding the situation with the fire. Director Sabie stated he could contact the National Weather Service to see if there were any lightning strikes in the area on the morning of the fire. He further stated with a pile of that size, it could have been smoldering for a while, perhaps a couple of weeks, starting out small and eventually when it gets air, it takes off. Director Sabie further stated it takes time, temperature and pressure for spontaneous combustion and with that big of a pile you have all three. Mayor Dermody suggested bringing in a professional to take a look at the site and discuss how it could be maintained going forward. Commissioner Haney asked Mr. Turner if he'd come up with a new policy and procedure for the compost site. Mr. Turner stated he could come up with new policies and procedures but it could cause a rate increase. Commissioner Holifield stated increase the rates if needed. Commissioner Haney stated the 3' wide and 3' tall stumps really shouldn't be accepted any longer. Mr. Turner indicated that a lot of those stumps are coming from the municipalities. After Board discussion, it was agreed that fees should be charged accordingly, especially for larger stumps going forward and the staff would need to vigilantly available to review and charge for these items. Mayor Dermody asked if there is equipment to purchase to help process the larger logs being received. Mr. Turner stated yes, we would need a tub grinder to get rid of that stuff, however; they are expensive. Councilman Przybylinski suggested instead of purchasing a tub grinder, once the site is cleaned up, possibly renting a tub grinder. Commissioner Holifield also recommended getting pricing from Homer Tree Service out of Illinois, to grind and clear the site. Mr. Turner stated for two years the district has been trying to give away mulch but it's not moving off the site. Commissioner Holifield then stated there's a reason why they're not taking it. After Board discussion, **Mayor Dermody made a motion to get quotes from the companies provided by Commissioner Holifield to have the logs and materials ground up and hauled away. Commissioner Holifield seconded the motion. Voice vote taken. All in favor. Motion approved.**

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.