

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

**November 6, 2025
10:00 a.m.**

APPROVED

Call to Order

Director Clay Turner

Pledge

Roll Call District Board

Commissioner Haney
Mayor Dermody
Commissioner Holifield
Commissioner Gramarossa

Absent

Councilman Mollenhauer
Councilman Przybylinski
Mayor Nelson Deutch

Others Present

Clay Turner, Executive Director
Robin Havens, Office Manager/HR
Douglas Biege, Attorney
Bob Garrelts
Matt Piotrowski – MP Lawncare
James Irwin

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Resident, Bob Garrelts, stated he is a resident of the county and regularly uses the Compost Site. Mr. Garrelts states he doesn't burn and he always takes everything to the compost pile (site). He further states when he was younger he did some problem solving 101 Root Cause Analysis and he understands that they might be 2 causes for the fire at the compost site, one being an act of God, and the other being spontaneous combustion. Mr. Garrelts further stated should it be spontaneous combustion we need to know what could have made that happen, what was done to make that happen. Mr. Garrelts further states that Mr. Turner would say that is only the second time a fire has happened, but he feels that it's two, too many. Mr. Garrelts states he has seen an employee take grass, leaves, big lumber to the north side of the site to dump it and compact it and in problem solving 101 the question needs to be asked, should you be doing that? He further states that he has seen Mr. Turner think outside the box, allowing residents to come onsite and cut firewood to haul away for personal use and he feels that more outside of the box thinking should be done, possibly reducing pricing and so on. He further states he has been to the site and is watching the staff move some of the piles from the fire up onto the hill and it's still hot and that he is not an advocate of terminating employees, however; he feels that someone has to be held accountable for the fire.

Resident, Matt Piotrowski, of MP Lawncare, states that as a resident and a lawncare company, he is very dependent on the site and would like an update on the site and wants to know when landscapers/lawncare companies can begin using the site again for the fall. Commissioner Haney stated this information will be asked of the Director, during the Director's report. Mayor Dermody thanked Matt for all the hard work and help during the fire at the site, noting that he was there day and night.

COMPOST SITE UPDATE

Mr. Turner explained there is an update memo in the packet to review all the things that have been done at the site since the fire. He further noted that November 15th will be the last Saturday the site will be open on Saturdays for the season. Mr. Turner feels this will help to reduce some of the green waste coming in. The second item is that the district has opened the site for cutting firewood, although there have only been 5 waivers signed. Commissioner Holifield stated he believes there's little response due to the firewood being dirty and people don't want to continuously change their chains. Mr. Turner stated there is also clean wood available to cut from the current pile. Commissioner Holifield asked if things are now being kept separated at the site to which Director Turner responded they are. Mr. Turner also explained one gentleman that signed a waiver came out to cut some wood but noticed the district sells firewood that is already split so he bought two loads and

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didn't come back. Commissioner Holifield stated \$75.00 is cheap for a truckload of firewood. Mr. Turner moved on to the next item, explaining that all municipalities will be receiving a letter regarding free mulch and compost. He further explained he would like to provide free compost/mulch to be picked up by their street departments to allow residents to pick it up at their facilities as well. Commissioner Holifield mentioned the landscapers he has spoken to don't want the quality of the free mulch offered so he suggested speaking with the contractors to see what quality they're looking for and then utilizing different screens on the equipment when grinding the product. Mr. Garrelts asked why the site was closing on Saturdays on November 15th because several residents are still cleaning their yards and they work Monday through Friday, with their only days off being Saturday and Sunday. Mr. Turner stated due to the weather the site has always closed on Saturdays in mid-November. He further stated having one worker at the site on Saturday and one worker on Monday is a liability and he doesn't want to increase fees to the residents of the county to pay overtime and or hire more staff. Mayor Dermody suggested maybe one Saturday a month having the site open and making it a big deal, having both of the site staff work and take off on Monday. Mr. Turner said it would all depend on the weather to determine the success of that. Commissioner Holifield asked if there was a count of people coming to the site daily. Mr. Turner said on average there are between 50-60 cars coming each day, depending on weather conditions. Commissioner Holifield voiced concerns that the green waste needs to be separated instead of pushing everything up onto the hill. Mr. Turner stated that the site staff is aware of that now and they are and will continue to separate everything going forward. Commissioner Holifield stated that he feels that it's lack of supervision in making sure the staff is keeping all green waste separated. Mr. Turner turned the floor over to Educator, Sacha Gee-Burns. Ms. Gee-Burns stated that of the 67 Districts in Indiana, only 12 have compost sites which the districts maintain. She further states, of the rest of them, the cities within their counties provide sites for drop off as well. Ms. Gee-Burns also states the majority of the sites only accept grass and leaves; they do not take brush. Mayor Dermody voiced concern about private contractors taking trees down and not hauling everything away, leaving the limbs and the brush, and the street department must load it and haul it to the compost site. Mr. Turner stated that he's looking to prevent all contractors from dropping off at the site and allowing residents and municipalities only. Commissioner Holifield feels from a business standpoint that's a bad idea because it's revenue for the district. He further stated the rates should be raised and the contractors will have to pass the fees to the homeowner if they choose to. Commissioner Holifield also stated it would be good to investigate a firewood processor to split the wood without as much manpower. Commissioner Holifield also stated a new company is going in at the KOP which is a biomass/converted natural gas company, that is interested in taking in some of the green waste as well. Mr. Turner then moved forward with his list of contacts to reach out to for assistance, as he stated Commissioner Holifield asked him to do. He further informed the Board, Representative Pressel and Congressman Mrvan's offices both reached out for more information, but he is still waiting to hear if there is any grant funding to assist with the fire clean-up. Mr. Turner also stated the cost of cleaning up the site is going to be quite a bit but the cost of fighting the fire should be covered by insurance. Commissioner Holifield stated the County had to have two buildings air ducts cleaned due to the fire, but the insurance company doesn't want to cover it. Mr. Turner stated that was the initial statement from the adjustor, but the invoices have not been submitted yet and if it is denied it should be handled legally. Mayor Dermody asked what it would cost to get the site cleaned up in its entirety. Commissioner Holifield stated the only person that submitted a bid was Homer, for \$96,000.00. Mayor Dermody asked if that was for total site clean-up. Mr. Turner stated no that it would just be to clean the top of the hill which is on the north side of the building. Mr. Turner further stated that it was only to grind the material, it would be another \$37,500.00 to haul the material away. Mr. Turner went through the new rules and regulations of the Compost Site and employee policies for maintaining the site. Commissioner Gramarossa asked if it was possible to do a controlled burn to get rid of the items that were partially burnt during the fire. Commissioner Holifield and Director Turner both stated they do not believe it will reignite. After Board discussion, **Commissioner Gramarossa made a motion to request bids to get the entire site cleaned up and bring back ideas for financing. Mayor Dermody seconded the motion. Voice vote taken. All in favor. Motion approved.**

NEXUS

Commissioner Holifield stated that he has met with the Nexus company and they are not up and running yet but they are interested in taking the yard waste, even picking it up or having it dropped off at their facility. He further added they are also interested in tire recycling in the future and would like to discuss that with the District as well.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.