

The Town Council of the Town of Burns Harbor, Porter County, Indiana met in its regularly scheduled session on Thursday, September 24, 2026, in the Town Hall and streamed electronically with Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Council President Toni Biancardi at 6:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited.

Roll Call: Councilwoman Roseann Bozak ----- Present
 Councilwoman Lisa Draves ----- Present
 Councilman Jennifer McHargue-----Present
 Councilman John (Jack) McGraw -----Absent
 Councilwoman Toni Biancardi --- Present

A quorum was attained.

Additional Officials Present: Attorney Clay Patton was present via Zoom. Susan Hartman of Erassist, Keith Arthur and Hill Johnson of Debristech, Eli Chaser and Bill McClennan of SDR, were also present.

New Business

Debris Cleanup

Councilwoman Biancardi stated that our primary reason for meeting tonight is to discuss the debris cleanup in town from the storm on August 11th. I am going to give everyone a rundown of what I have been doing since the storm and some options that we have. Obviously, the departments have been cleaning up and doing very well with that, but now we have this major debris that needs to go. Prior to the governor announcing the state contracts, Ryan, our fire chief, was kind enough to attend a FEMA meeting on our behalf, and also saw some contractors in town and engaged with those people, and they came and met with us. So, we have talked with the trio of Mapco- who does monitoring, RPF- who does. Debris clean up, and then Del Sol- who would assist with the FEMA reimbursement. We met with them. One option is we pay 100% upfront of the entire cost of cleanup. Then we file with FEMA and get the reimbursement. My understanding is that, if we were to go with a different contractor, the state does not offer us their 75 of the 25 of the remainder. Susan Hartman of ER Assist said that if you go with if you decide not to participate in the state program and you hire your own debris removal and debris monitoring company, the Fed share and the State share is the same. Biancardi noted that and said that the difference will be the upfront cost for the remainder. Option one is we go out and contract on our own. We have met with a group that have explained what they provide, and this very similar to what we will see here. Option two is based on the governor's contract declaration that the state will offer a contract, and it covers 75% FEMA, and they cover 75 of the remaining 25, which leaves us with 6.25%. If you look at the paper that I have here, this is from the Department of Homeland Security that explains that, if the state takes on a debris mission, the state is responsible for the full cost up front. The state then files for FEMA reimbursement and invoices the jurisdiction for their local cost share, which would be 6.25%. The groups that provide the services through the state, are: ER Assist, so we've got Susan and Debris Tech, who does the monitoring, and then SDR, who would do the debris removal. When I spoke with Larry at Homeland Security, and Ariana, who is extremely helpful today, they said in order to for the state to take on a mission, the municipality would need to agree to proceed, so we would need to make a motion of that nature. Once that happens, SDR would create a scope of work, which then Larry at Department of Homeland Security would sign off on, and then you all would begin your work.

Councilwoman Draves asked what their scope of work would be. Eli Chaser stated that the scope of work would include everything from collecting, hauling. reduction, and hauling out the debris- anything that was generated by the derecho. We will come to remove the hazardous limbs, hangers, collect that debris, take it to a PDMS site, manage it, assess it, and then haul it out to final disposal. Hartman stated that would be from right of ways. In terms of debris removal from waterways, private property debris removal, those are two kinds of areas of debris removal that are still being worked out. Councilwoman Bozak

asked where the debris ends up. McClennan responded Duneland Materials, which is a big, compost, mulch site. Have sand there, and quite a few things that they sell out of there. But they're also bringing in for the whole region on the grindings, and they are permitted to bring that in. They make compost and mulch out of those materials.

Draves noted that "right of ways" was mentioned. I've had some people ask me about tree easements, specifically between Corlin's and Trail Creek. Biancardi asked that if a tree was in an easement that was not in the right of way, the companies would not pick it up. McClennan responded that would come under PPO, and that private property debris removal is different. Hartman stated you probably got an email from the state asking you questions about debris and waterway and debris on private property. If you didn't, I'll send it to you. They were asking for feedback on to what degree do you have debris on private property, because they are trying to pursue some options. It would be important to give them your feedback. Biancardi said yes, and we do not have any waterways that are in our jurisdiction. Councilwoman McHargue asked if the companies present were option 1. Biancardi replied, no, they are option 2. This is the state contract. McClennan said that the state compensates our companies when we are done, and ultimately the state bills FEMA. Biancardi said then FEMA invoices us for the 6.25%. McClennan stated keep in mind all the work you've done with the DPW, the Department of Public Works, all that goes against that 6.25%. Biancardi said thank you for mentioning that. Those items could count as "in kind". It could reduce what we would owe. Hartman clarified that it is not quite "in kind". If you have debris removal by "force account", meaning your own people, your own equipment, and you applied and were accepted into the FEMA public assistance program. Biancardi replied that we have. So that you know you would submit a project to seek reimbursement for those costs. Now and then you could you know that goes back into your coffers and you use that as you see fit. Biancardi said that would pay for part of the 6.25%. Hartman continued, also if you had a significant amount of volunteer activity donated product, if you had water donated to you, and you were distributing it to your citizens, that kind of a thing. If you had churches handing out meals, then you could create what's called a "donated resources project" using guidelines the state provides. You could monetize those donated resources, and that creates credit against your 6.25%. If you use that against that 6.25 instead of using your force account reimbursement, your force account reimbursement can go back into your fund. Hartman noted that anything like that would have to be very documented.

Biancardi said in terms of the scope of work, I met with these guys over at Westport, and we had identified as a town- all the trees here on Westport. Did you have a chance to drive down to the park? McClennan replied yes, we did go down there, but we would not grind there. Biancardi said we have all these over here at Westport, and we have got two spots at the park- one that is piled, and the other is probably just trees that are still laying there. Because it's on town property, you'll pick it up. McClennan said that it's an area that we call it a "satellite area". That satellite area is going to be brought over to your major area. for grinding. Biancardi said the other thing that we had talked about is making two passes through town for the rights of way. McClennan said the first pass is leaners, hangers, and debris in the right way. Then the last pass is what someone might bring back out, and we would notify them that this is the last chance to take it out. Draves and Biancardi said that they could give out fliers about the date to their neighbors and put it on our digital sign. McClennan continued that the second pass would be after the homeowners have had time to put their additional brush out, and that will be our second pass. Then Debris Tech will sign off on it and say that road is complete. Johnson said, you'll say here's the date. You'll put a date out- probably two weeks in advance or so. Once the debris is out, that is our last time we're coming around. Once that date happens, we'll do a final pass, and we'll ride with them or behind them. Once they say the street's clean, and we'll mark it off on a GIS map and turn the street green- showing that all the debris removed. If there's pile there that we that you want picked up, we will take a picture of it and drop a pin on the map for the drivers to pick up. Once they say that's complete, we ride it again and turn the road green. Once the road's green, we don't go back down it unless you ask, but, other than that, we're done with the road. McClennan said that all of the documentation that was just discussed we be able to go to Council, because you will have a little area that you can go to. Biancardi told Council, yes, we will have a dashboard that we can view. She asked that, after making passes, it will all be staged at Westport, but are you not going to grind it until you have done the last pass, or will you work on it as you go. McClennan said that it

depends on the volume. If I know that I have enough grind there for two weeks, and our last pass isn't for 10 days, I might start grinding there. It really depends upon how much the volume is there, and obviously the room that we have available. Biancardi asked once you grind it, does that go directly into one of your transport trucks and offsite. Bill McClennan replied I won't stop the grinder. When we start grinding, you grind, and it's going to sit on the ground. We will reload it out and bring it to final disposal. He said we don't work by the hour. Everything we do is by the hour, or by the hangar, or by the tree that's standing. So, it's to our advantage to get the job quickly. We're the only contractor in this whole game that only works by the yard. Everybody else works by the hour. McHargue asked, you don't need our street department to help you grind and do whatever- just your team, and you also hire locals, correct? Hill Johnson and Keith Arthur agreed. Hartman said, in terms of using your own people, if you have a street sweeper, a lot of times cities will want to run those with their own people. Arthur said before we would start work, we would have a 360-camera car ride through the whole town to pre-document all your roads and all the trees before we start work. It gives you an idea of how much volume is out there. Biancardi said, when we were out on site, you said you could only give us a guesstimate; and one of the conversations we had was that you will scope the work; but there's the possibility that you may have to go back to the state and ask for more. Eli replied, yes. Biancardi said I don't know to what extent is the municipality involved in the scope of work. Eli replied you can be as involved as much as possible. During your debris tech questionnaire, put as much information as you can in those notes to suggest we think there's X amount of debris somewhere. We would take that into account, along with all the other line items that's in the contract, and give you the best guess that we could possibly do. There is no mechanism out there to figure out how many hazardous limbs and trees that you have in your jurisdiction, and we put numbers on. We've already ran into that, and we will continue to run into it. And what we'll do, we monitor that, and we say, all right, guys, this is where we're at. We need we need to increase this, and most of the times it's all right. We understand, so we increase it by an X amount that we think is another estimate. You're involved in the whole process of what that looks like, and the state ultimately signs off. Hartman said that dashboard will help you see a day-to-day report of where you might be in terms of your assistance. So, you've got information to help make informed decisions around that scope of work. Biancardi said I wouldn't want to have the best guest for everything that we're looking at to come in, and then it doubles. Because I hope that what we've scoped just generally here, you can go out and get a good sense, and that it's not like we're all of a sudden going to find another pile somewhere. That I guess if I had to say I was uncomfortable with anything; it's the best guess and the coming back and saying we need more. Eli said the best thing that we can do to combat that is good communication, and you guys monitoring the dashboard and looking at the daily reports, and doing the due diligence as well as us at the study. This is what you're tracking, and we have a conversation. If you have to go back to committee and say, hey, Eli's thinking there's an additional 2000 liters out there. You know, that's a you know, it's another what 20 something. Who knows? You know, what do you think? Do we do it? Do we not do it? So, to answer your question, the best way to combat that concern is just open communication with myself and the debris task force. Biancardi asked if the team would tell the Town what they might want to pick up on the second pass. McClennan replied if you tell us, listen, we have a specific area that really needs to be addressed behind this pile, next to the neighbor, all those broken-off trees and hangars. You know, you utilize that park, and you want that liability gone, so you would tell us to get it cleaned up and gone. Biancardi asked to what extent can we ask you to do those kinds of things? Is there something that we might say, that would be great to clean that up, but it wouldn't fall under the storm for FEMA. McClennan replied that's why we have our checks and balances with the pre-check. They're ones where that tree died 30 years ago, and it's really not because of the storm. Now, if it tipped over and went in the right way, then yes, it's time to get it cleaned up. A standing dead tree that's standing dead didn't happen four or five weeks ago. Happened 10 years ago. Arthur said we're here to take care of the storm damage stuff. McClennan continued, we have what we call a daily burn rate. In other words, how much money we spent per day, and that can be disclosed to you also, so you have a good idea of how much is coming out of the bank account, right? Okay, and Eli handles those burnouts. Biancardi asked when you do the initial scope of work, that will have your first estimate of dollars. The team replied yes. She continued, because we have this financial stake in this, once you do the scope, where do we come in to say we're comfortable with that or we're not comfortable with that, because what he explained to me is that we're

going to say yes to proceed, which is then going to mobilize you all to do that scope of work, but let's just say your scope of work came back and it was like a lot, and we say, no. When you come back with the scope and the guesstimate, are we brought back in to say this is what it is? Eli replied that the Town can opt put at any time, but then whatever is remaining would still have to be taken care of in a different way. There's no there's no formal commitment to it per se of saying we don't like this number- we're already locked in, so that's not the case. Now could we have a discussion to say we don't like the number that you provided. Okay, we can talk about well, what needs to be done to that area, and we start defining that a little bit more. This is where we need to be, and we work it that way- it's just communication. Biancardi asked Council and attorney Patton if they had any other questions. They did not.

Eli said that if we do move forward, a lot of people ask about turn around- how fast can this take place. So just to give you that kind of a rundown of the process is once we get you the scope of work, we review it, and communicate over it, we'll send that up to the state for approval. State will sign it or not, however they feel about it. And if it is approved, we'll have a conversation. We will put you in contact with Bill, and he will come down here and initiate a kickoff meeting with you. That would include anybody in the area that wants to come- just informing the community of some messaging that should go out from that day. Usually, we will certify trucks in that day and operate the funnel, or the day after that. So once that happens, you could be looking at getting a mission assignment, for lack of better terms, within a couple of days, and equipment out on the roads and work happening very quickly. You're not looking at a several week process. The turnaround time is very quick right now, and we've got equipment in the area. Debris tech is very well staffed here in the area, so we would be looking at a very quick operational time period. Then, as we progress, we have a conversation saying that we are about to be done with the second pass, and we're going to be closing out. Biancardi noted that we have a homeowner who is right next to the all the trees, and we would obviously like to clean that up, because it is a concern to them. From the day that you mobilize to when everything has been chipped- do you have a best guesstimate? Eli replied anywhere from 3-4 weeks. Biancardi asked when you start, is it possible to start chipping some of the debris that's near his home? McClennan replied that we will basically do whatever the Town wants us to do first. We'll try to manage whatever you guys want. There is a power line there, so I will try to get that opened up quickly.

Biancardi said that Hartman had told her that she could help the Town file other FEMA things. She asked what's the window to engage on this particular contract with you all? McClennan replied, not for us. Biancardi asked what about with the State? Eli replied that the State has not defined that yet- it is still open to everybody. We haven't had the discussions of a hard deadline for that, and there's various reasons for that, as more people were affected than we previously thought. So, at this time, no, there is no hard deadline. Biancardi said, in terms of dollars, let's say it's a million- that would be \$62,500 that we would then be responsible to pay. If we do any program other than what the state is offering, it would be a million dollars up front. McClennan said that he had finished work in the state of Georgia 16 months ago, and FEMA finally paid that state, and the state finally paid us- which was 10 million plus. Hartman also stated that, if the Town were to do this on their own, there would be a procurement process of at least a month to being able to get started. Biancardi agreed and said, similarly to when we have to get three quotes or do RFPs because of the cost of the project, we would have to do that here. She asked if that is because we're outside the window of an emergency now. Hartman replied you are. It may feel like it is still an emergency, but a lot of the communities that have been affected by the same storm have now gone from their emergency contract to their regular, competitively procured contract. Biancardi said that, while the state handles this particular contract, aside from invoicing us, for any other reimbursement that we receive from FEMA, our window closes November 14th. Hartman clarified that would just be for identifying damages. Biancardi said that, if we are wanting to move forward with this particular contract, it is my understanding that we would need a motion as a board to proceed.

Councilwoman Bozak made a motion to proceed with Option 2- the State Contract for Debris Removal. Councilwoman McHargue seconded the motion.

Draves asked if it starts when we sign the contract. Biancardi replied that we do not sign anything. We are saying yes to proceed now, they will scope the work, and they'll share that with us; but ultimately, the State says yes, and they will then engage us on a regular basis and the community as they move forward. Really, it's the State's contract. We are just saying that we want to be included.

Councilwoman Draves– Aye, Councilwoman Bozak– Aye, Councilwoman McHargue– Aye, Councilwoman Biancardi– Aye, Councilman McGraw– Absent. **Motion passed.**

Biancardi stated that I will email Larry at the Department of Homeland Security tonight and copy you all if you want me to, so we'll move on to the scope. Council thanked the companies for attending the meeting and answering questions.

Good of the Order and Any Other Business:

Purchase Order 3341

Councilwoman Biancardi stated that Fire Chief Nowacki had some hose testing that was happening today. He did not have a PO in in time. She found out that coordinating it was about the same time as the storm, so it is what it is. It's something that we have to do to maintain our equipment. We have PO 3341 in the amount of \$3,407.95 for hose testing, and this would come from LIT Miscellaneous Services.

Councilwoman Draves made a motion to approve PO 3441 in the amount of \$3,407.95 to come from LIT Miscellaneous Services. Councilwoman McHargue seconded the motion. Councilwoman McHargue– Aye, Councilwoman Draves– Aye, Councilwoman Bozak– Aye, Councilwoman Biancardi– Aye, Councilmna McGraw– Absent. **Motion passed.**

Resolution 2026-15- LIT Transfer

Biancardi said that we have money appropriated in LIT, however, we need to do a transfer from Other Equipment into Miscellaneous Services. She then read out the Resolution.

**RESOLUTION 2026-15
TOWN OF BURNS HARBOR APPROPRIATIONS TRANSFER**

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THE TOWN COUNCIL of the TOWN OF BURNS HARBOR, PORTER COUNTY, INDIANA that the following transfers of funds be made from the 2026 budget.

LIT (Local Income Tax):

\$59,000.00 from Other Equipment, 4436-001-444, into Miscellaneous Services, 4436-001-392.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 24th day of September 2026.

TOWN COUNCIL OF THE
TOWN OF BURNS HARBOR

Toni Biancardi, President

Jennifer McHargue, Vice-President

Roseann Bozak

Lisa Draves

John, "Jack", McGraw

ATTEST:

Madeline Parker
Deputy Clerk

Councilwoman Bozak made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-15. Councilwoman Draves seconded the motion. Councilwoman Bozak – Aye, Councilwoman McHargue – Aye, Councilwoman Draves – Aye, Councilwoman Biancardi – Aye, Councilman McGraw – Absent. **Motion passed.**

Councilwoman Bozak made a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman McHargue seconded the motion. Councilwoman Draves – Aye, Councilwoman McHargue – Aye, Councilwoman Bozak – Aye, Councilwoman Biancardi – Aye, Councilman McGraw – Absent. **Motion passed.**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting concluded at 6:42 p.m.

TOWN COUNCIL OF THE
TOWN OF BURNS HARBOR

Toni Biancardi, President

Jennifer McHargue Vice-President

Lisa Draves

John (Jack) McGraw

Roseann Bozak

ATTEST:

Madeline Parker
Deputy Clerk-Treasurer