

Town Council Regular Meeting SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

The Town Council of the Town of Burns Harbor, Porter County, Indiana, met in its regularly scheduled session on **Wednesday, September 9, 2026**, in the Town Hall and streamed electronically with YouTube. The meeting was called to order by Council President Toni Biancardi at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was recited.

Roll Call:

Councilwoman Roseann Bozak Present
Councilwoman Lisa Draves Present
Councilwoman Jennifer McHargue Present
Councilman John (Jack) McGraw..... Present
Councilwoman Toni Biancardi Present

A quorum was attained.

Additional Officials Present: Clerk Gina Bondi, Attorney Clay Patton Engineer Shem Khalil.

Approval of Minutes

Bozak made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 12, 2026 and August 18, 2026. Draves seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi- Aye. Motion passed.

CONSIDERATION OF CLAIMS, PURCHASE ORDERS, AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

- **Approval of Pay Claims with 3 or More Signatures**

Bozak made a motion to approve the claims with three or more signatures including invoice #33880 from Brainstorm Computers for a backup battery in the amount of \$193.00. Draves seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

- **Purchase Orders**

- o PO 3387 \$39,781, Ladder 22 Repairs, Fire Department from LIT Miscellaneous
- o PO 3416 \$4421.50, Tires, Fire Department from LIT Miscellaneous
- o PO 3417 \$8,000, Light Bar, Fire Department from LIT Miscellaneous

Bozak made a motion to approve POs 3387, 3416, and 3417. McHargue seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

- o PO 3435 \$2251.51 for Testing, Fire Department Miscellaneous Services

McHargue made a motion to approve PO 3435. Bozak seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

- **Financial Reports (Fund Report, Appropriation Report, and Revenue Report) – No comments or questions**

Flags: United States, Indiana, POW

McHargue moved to approve the police clerk to purchase and keep two of each flag on hand. Bozak seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi- Aye. Motion passed.

REPORTS

Clerk Treasurer

- **Clerk-Treasurer Appointment**
 - o Biancardi was appoint ex-officio Clerk Treasurer under IC 36-5-6-9 on August 18, 2026.
 - o Oath and bond have been filed at the County and communicated the change to DLGF and SBOA.
 - o The town employs a full-time Deputy Clerk and two part-time clerks for the day-to-day operations.
 - o The town has a contract with Bakertilly for financial services and a contract with Flex Local Government Consulting to assist the office.

SBOA Review of 2024 and 2025

State Board of Accounts sent an email that they will be reviewing the years 2024/2025.

Employee Contact Information

The office will be sending a form and asking all employees to update their contact information.

Vendor List / W9

- The office is removing vendors that have not been used in the last year.
- All new vendors must have a W9 on file.

Town Council

Staff Anniversary's

- o Michael Gucciardo, Public Works, 4 years
- o Jill Sherrill, Secretary Plan, BZA, RDC and part-time clerk, 3 years
- o Gina Bondi, Sanitary Clerk, 1 year

Redevelopment Commission

Bozak reported RDC received notice it was awarded \$50,000 grant from Cleveland Cliffs for the Marquette Greenway Trail. The grant was filed by the Burns Harbor Park Foundation and will act as the pass-through for the money.

Storm Debris Cleanup

The Town is actively working on storm debris cleanup, but the volume of debris, equipment limitations, utility hazards, and staffing constraints mean cleanup will take time. Residents should continue reporting concerns, while the Town works to secure additional equipment and outside assistance and provides updates through its website and social media.

- Residents are making frequent calls to Town Hall and the Building Department asking when branches, trees, and other storm debris will be removed.
- The Public Works Department is continuing cleanup, but the Town recognizes that the process will take time because of the large volume of debris and the department's limited staffing.
- The Town's rented grapple truck is scheduled to be returned after September 12. Large debris collected with the truck has been staged in Westport.
- The Town is considering quotes for a larger commercial chipper to process brush piles and make the debris easier to manage.
- Some debris cannot yet be collected because of:
 - o Downed or low utility lines
 - o Trees containing utility lines
 - o Debris that is too large for the equipment
 - o Debris located outside the easement or requiring equipment to drive onto private property
- Residents may need to cut oversized material into smaller pieces so it can be handled by the chipper or other equipment.

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- Town staff emphasized that they will not handle trees or debris involving utility wires until the utility company confirms that it is safe.
- The Town is working with Porter County EMA, FEMA, and the Department of Homeland Security to explore additional assistance for the larger cleanup effort.
- The Town is also trying to establish better communication with Frontier and NIPSCO regarding remaining wires, transformers, and storm-related utility equipment.
- Residents are encouraged to continue calling with questions or specific locations. Staff are tracking requests and will follow up where possible.
- The Town plans to provide residents with general updates through social media and the Town website, including the overall cleanup plan and next steps.
- Officials discussed providing daily street-by-street updates but noted that the schedule can change, so they preferred communicating the overall plan rather than promising specific daily pickup locations.
- The Town acknowledged that residents are frustrated and running out of places to put debris, but emphasized that Public Works is continuing to work through the piles as quickly as possible.
- A resident also asked whether local businesses might provide financial assistance or donations for cleanup; no such assistance had been reported at the time of the discussion.
- The plan is to continue debris collection, process brush with available/rented equipment, pursue additional equipment and outside assistance, communicate updates to residents, and adjust the plan as conditions change.

M.U.S.T. - County Council

Biancardi attended the August County Council meeting. A MUST representative was appointed and meetings will begin next month. This is necessary because the State will cease collecting Local Income Tax in 2029 and it will fall on the County to enact the tax for our town to continue to receive the money, approximately \$250,000 a year to assist with operating expenses due to tax caps and the impact of SEA 1.

Animal Control Contract

Draves and McHargue reported they have not had recent communication in regard to the animal control contract. They did submit a public records request for records for five years, from all the animal control calls in Burns Harbor to try to substantiate where that came from. They previously met with Attorney Scott McClure to discuss the contract.

The Town's contract has been \$2000 for Animal Control. The new contract is for \$10,000 per year. The estimated cost per animal is \$1,000, and animal control said we had 10 last year, so that's what the contract amount is based on. The town paid the extension through the end of 2026 at \$800.

Shared Ethics

Neil Stout encouraged everyone to mark our calendars for the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission Annual Summit on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, with registration and breakfast beginning at 8 o'clock. This year the keynote speaker is going to be Judge Elizabeth F. Tavitias.

Building Department

Building Commissioner Lawson reported:

- The work that needs to be done to the Ford Maverick is covered under the powertrain warranty.
- Part-time clerk Adrienne Vukas has accepted a new job and the department will need to advertise for a clerk. Lawson will send a job posting to Biancardi and she will assist posting it to the website, social media, and Indeed.
- 280 Melton Road is applying for State review of the building
- 1219 Stanley is not remodeling to make the existing single family home a multi-family home.
- NIPSCO Communications Tower – The BZA requested engineer review of the plans for its public hearing.

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McGraw moved to direct the town engineer to review the NIPSCO Communication Tower plans for the BZA meeting. Motion seconded by Draves. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

Public Works

Public Works Superintendent Downey was absent. A report was given by liaison Councilwoman McHargue.

- Three quotes were provided to rent an 18 inch chipper for one month to assist with continued clean up from the storm.

McHargue moved to rent a chipper from Sunbelt Rentals for \$7,535 from LIT Miscellaneous Services. Motion seconded by Draves. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

Police Department

Chief McHargue reported there were no significant updates other than ongoing storm-related activities throughout the month.

New Vehicle

An update was provided regarding the previously ordered police vehicle, which was originally expected to be built in October but is now anticipated to be available approximately one month earlier. Discussion was held regarding the trade-in of the Town's 2019 gray Ford truck toward the purchase of the new police vehicle. The truck is currently fully outfitted and in service, and the necessary equipment will need to be removed prior to the trade-in. Based on current vehicle values, it was estimated that the truck should have a trade-in value of at least \$8,000. The preference is to trade in the vehicle rather than pursue a private sale, which could take several months and require the Town to continue carrying insurance on the vehicle. It was proposed that the trade-in be authorized provided the Town receives a minimum trade-in value of \$8,000. The purchase order for the new police vehicle has already been approved, and the trade-in value would reduce the Town's final cost for the new vehicle.

Bozak moved to allow the police chief to trade in the vehicle as long as it is no less than \$8,000 toward the new vehicle. Motion seconded by Draves. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Abstain, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

Trail Markers

Discussion was held regarding the installation of trail markers along the Marquette Greenway for safety and identification purposes. The markers will help individuals identify that they are within the Town of Burns Harbor and provide a more specific location in the event of an emergency or if someone becomes lost or injured. It was agreed that markers will be installed at one-tenth-mile intervals and that the same spacing and style will continue along the remainder of the trail as installation progresses. The markers will be reflective to ensure visibility at night. The previously approved funding amount will be used for the project. Chief McHargue will oversee the installation.

Fire Department

The Fire Department will participate in the September 11th service at Hawthorne Park with other emergency service agencies. The department's ladder truck will be used to assist with displaying the American flag during the service.

Appreciation was expressed for the firefighters' commitment to the Town of Burns Harbor and surrounding communities, particularly during the recent storms, which placed significant demands on department resources. During the past month, the Fire Department responded to approximately 85 emergency calls, representing a monthly record for the department.

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Quotes were provided for inspections of four vehicles: Squad 33, Unit 3370, Rescue 30, and Engine 11 at Interstate Power Systems, the same company that inspected and doing maintenance on Ladder 22. The total for all four quotes is \$4,960.

Bozak moved to approve the inspections with Interstate Power Systems for those vehicles paid from LIT Miscellaneous Services. Motion seconded by McHargue. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

Park Department

Park Board President Kyla Tumblin thanked the Public Works Department along with the town for all their help with the trees clean up.

- The beach is now closed.
- The park is currently renting out the Arts and Crafts building and the shelter.
- Shelters on the east side of the park are not being rented out due to safety reasons.
- The Fall Fest and Trunk or Treat is slated for October 17th at 5:30. If anybody would like to participate in the Trunk or Treat, contact Kim at the park.

Correspondence

- IDEM Beemsterboer Slag Corp
- IDEM Great Lakes Stevedoring
- IDEM Jet Corr Pratt Paper

New Business

1. Public Hearing – 2027 Budget

Biancardi opened the public hearing.

Biancardi reported that the proposed 2027 Budget is a balanced budget.

No comments in opposition.

No comments in favor.

Biancardi closed the public hearing.

The budget will be on the October meeting agenda for adoption.

2. First Reading Ordinance 330-2026 Rezoning Atherton

The Plan Commission held a public hearing for the rezoning of Mr. Atherton's property. The ordinance amends the zoning map to reflect the change. The Plan Commission forwarded a favorable recommendation to the Town Council.

Bozak moved to adopt Ordinance 330-3026 on first reading. McGraw seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

Bozak moved to suspend the rules. McGraw seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

McHargue moved to adopt Ordinance 330-3026 on second reading. McGraw seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

The Clerk-Treasurer's office will publish the ordinance as required by Indiana Code.

3. Resolution 2026-13: GM & Building Transfer

Drave moved to adopt Resolution 2026-13: GM & Building Transfer. McGraw seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

4. Resolution 2026-14: Additional Appropriation (2215 EMS Fund)

Tabled until next month.

5. Mosquito Fogging Quotes

Councilwoman Draves reported that, after contacting nine companies, only one company was able to provide a quote for the requested mosquito spraying service. The service would involve a truck traveling through Town streets and applying a mist approximately 30 feet from the vehicle. Spraying would occur around dawn or dusk and could be conducted during light rain. Residents and pets would be required to remain indoors for approximately 30 minutes following application. The product is EPA-approved and described as non-toxic to people and pets. The treatment may last up to three weeks, although the company could not guarantee the duration due to the size of the area being treated. The Town encompasses approximately 6.8 square miles, with approximately 3.1 square miles consisting of the Cleveland-Cliffs property, leaving approximately 3.7 square miles to be considered for treatment. The preliminary quote was based on approximately 3.7 to 4 square miles, with specific areas to be identified using a map. The company is located in Lamont, Illinois, and indicated that there are very few companies with the equipment and capability to provide this type of service. The quote received was \$34,000. Additional details regarding the truck's route and whether each street would require one or multiple passes remained to be clarified.

No action taken.

6. Fire Services Contract Amendment

Discussion was held regarding an amendment to the Fire Services Contract to comply with House Bill 1048. The amendment would remove the provisions for clothing and mileage allowances from the existing contract. The allowances would continue to be provided to firefighters but would instead be paid directly by the Town through a 1099 at the end of the year. The current allowance is up to \$250 for clothing and \$250 for mileage per firefighter, with a maximum of 30 firefighters, resulting in a \$15,000 reduction to the Fire Services Contract. The funds would remain within the Fire Department budget and be distributed by the Town. An editable copy of the existing contract will be provided so that the necessary amendments can be prepared and presented to the Fire Department for completion prior to the December payments.

7. Keystone – Set up digital pay stubs

Discussion was held regarding implementing digital pay stubs through Keystone. Currently, payroll stubs are printed and distributed to employees in paper form. Keystone offers the ability to email pay stubs directly to employees, which would reduce paper use, staff time, and potentially payroll-related costs. The quoted cost is approximately \$600, including a \$400 one-time setup fee and an annual maintenance fee of \$230. If approved, employees would be asked to provide an email address for delivery of their digital pay stubs. The service would then be incorporated into the Town's annual Keystone billing.

Bozak moved to approve KEY-PAYROLL Additional Option: EDDA Email Direct Deposit Advice Service. McHargue seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye McHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

8. Community Crossing Matching Grant (CCMG)

Town Engineer, Shem Khalil recommended after further review that the Town should not to apply for CCMG this cycle.

There was discussion about alleys that need repair and they are not included in CCMG. Khalil recommended rating the alleys when they do the annual LPA and assign passer ratings to the streets. Public Works Superintendent Downey will work will liaison McHargue to create a plan to address alleys in need of repair.

9. Opioid Committee

Discussion was held regarding the establishment of an opioid settlement committee. The Town receives monthly opioid settlement funds, which include restricted and unrestricted funds. The restricted funds are subject to specific requirements and may be used for eligible purposes such as community education and treatment. It was noted that the Town has not yet utilized the restricted

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funds and that a local committee is needed to determine appropriate uses and develop programs that comply with the applicable requirements. The committee should include representatives from outside the Town, such as school nurses, healthcare professionals, and individuals with lived experience. It was discussed that the committee could explore programs benefiting Burns Harbor and the surrounding Duneland community, including potential partnerships with the local school system.

Council members, staff and community may provide names of potential committee members, including school nurses, healthcare professionals, and individuals with relevant lived experience. The proposed committee will be presented for establishment at the next meeting.

10. Town Hall West Wall Quotes

The Town discussed quotes for repairing the final, west wall of Town Hall, following completion of the south, east, and north walls. The preferred contractor, JB West, provided an estimate of \$10,130.14, but the quote must be updated because it is only valid for five days and the Town is considering retaining additional windows and clarifying payment terms. The contractor previously requested 50% upfront, but payment for materials would require the materials to be delivered and verified on-site before payment. Other quotes were similar, but some lacked sufficient detail, and the contractor who completed the other walls is unavailable until next year.

Building Commissioner Lawson will contact the contractors to obtain updated, comparable quotes that address the requested window configuration, scope of work, material delivery, and payment terms before the Council makes a final selection.

Old Business

None.

Good of the Order and Any Other Business

Burn Ban

Resident Gordon McCormick asked if the town is going to allow residents to burn brush and stuff? The Council will confirm if the burn ban has been lifted and if residents can burn their brush.

NIPSCO Lines in Downed Trees on W N Boo Road

Councilwoman Draves said she contacted NIPSCO about the lines that are down in the trees on W N Boo Road. NIPSCO said to reach out to 18004NIPSCO to report the lines to get them back on the list.

Plaza Property Cleanup - Materials and Equipment from Storm

There was discussion regarding leftover materials and equipment on the Plaza property from the company that had been using the parking lot. The items were expected to be temporary, with the lease agreement ending September 14 and the company expected to remove everything by that date. Since equipment and materials remained on the property, the town will monitor the situation and check with the leaseholder to determine whether the agreement was extended or when the remaining items will be removed.

Emergency Response during Storm

Resident Neil Stout said, “in the wake of the emergency, I just wanted to, for my family and for my neighbors, I know it was all hands on deck, I want to thank everybody involved in this effort, and I especially want to point out the fire department, especially the chief, who personally took care of a medical emergency for me, and he's probably instrumental in the fact that I'm still here. So, I appreciate it.”

Resident Gayle VanLoon said, “I would concur with what he just said. That was basically why I was here to thank everybody. And great neighbors, I had lots of help and needed it.”

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Adjournment

McHargue made a motion to adjourn at 8:24pm. McGraw seconded the motion. Bozak – Aye, Draves - Aye McGraw- Aye MchHargue- Aye, Biancardi-Aye. Motion passed.

There being no further business to discuss; the meeting concluded at 8:24pm.

Town Council of the Town of Burns Harbor
Approved October 14, 2026

Toni Biancardi, President

Jennifer MchHargue, Vice-President

Lisa Draves

John (Jack) McGraw

Roseann Bozak

ATTEST:

Toni Biancardi, Clerk Treasurer ex-officio