

PORTER TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES NOVEMBER 25, 2025

The Town Council of the Town of Porter, Indiana met in a regularly scheduled session on Tuesday, November 25, 2025 at the Porter Town Hall, 303 Franklin Street, Porter, Indiana. The meeting was called to order by Town Council President Laura Madigan at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call

Laura Madigan, President Present
William “Bill” Lopez, Vice President..... Present
James Burge Present
Don Craft Present
Kelly Karriman Present

A quorum was attained. Clerk-Treasurer Corinne Peffers was also present.

Additional Officials Present

Fire Chief Jay Craig, Police Chief Dan Dickey, Public Works Superintendent Jamie Spanier, Director of Development/Building Commissioner Michael Barry, Park Director Brian Bugajski and Attorney Christopher L. Willoughby.

Approval of Minutes

Council Member Karriman moved to approve the Minutes of November 12, 2025. Council Member Burge seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Consideration of Claims and Sewer Adjustments

Council Vice President Lopez moved to approve the claims and sewer adjustments as presented. Council Member Karriman seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Petitions & Comments from the Floor

None.

Reports

Clerk-Treasurer Report

Clerk-Treasurer Peffers reported Town received its 1782 Notice confirming approval of the 2026 budget, and the maximum levy was received. There was a discrepancy with the reestablished Cumulative Capital Development (CCD) fund rate, which has been resolved for the year 2026.

An additional appropriation for the Fire Donation Fund will be scheduled due to publication deadline delays caused by the Thanksgiving holiday advertising schedule. The public hearing is planned for December 23, 2025. A second appropriation may also be added to address Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant funding needs for 2026.

The Dune Acres Fire Protection Agreement has been approved by Dune Acres and forwarded for signatures and filing.

Clerk-Treasurer Peffers noted that the Town of Chesterton held a public hearing and approved an increase in its sewer rates. Because Porter pays Chesterton for wastewater treatment services, this

increase will result in higher operating costs for the Town. Clerk-Treasurer Peffers advised that the Town will need to review current operating and capital expenses and evaluate whether the sewer rate increase can be absorbed or must be passed on to utility customers. Council and staff briefly discussed whether Baker Tilly should update the prior sewer rate study or whether the analysis could be handled internally. No final decision was made, and further review is planned.

Attorney Report

No report.

Police Department Report

No report.

Fire Department Report

Fire Chief Jay Craig provided an update on the request for medical bags to be funded through Unrestricted Opioid Settlement Funds. Four sample bags were evaluated with equipment installed to determine durability, ease of cleaning, and functionality. Two quotes were received for the selected equipment: Bound Tree at \$7,273.70 and Penn Care, Inc. at \$5,767.23, with PennCare offering the lower price for the same items.

Council Member Craft moved to approve purchasing the medical bags and associated equipment from PennCare in the amount of \$5,767.23, paid from the Unrestricted Opioid Fund. Council Vice President Lopez seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Fire Chief Craig also requested approval for annual payment in accordance with the Porter Volunteer Firefighters, Inc. contract. The total requested amount was \$52,204.00, consisting of \$11,212.00 from the clothing allowance line item and \$40,992.00 from the volunteer firefighter pay line item.

Council Member Craft motioned to approve the Porter Volunteer Firefighters, Inc. contract payment in the amount of \$52,204.00. Council Member Karriman seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Lastly, Chief Craig announced that the Fire Station, located at 550 W. Beam Street, is again serving as a Toys for Tots donation site. New, unopened toys may be dropped off during Monday evening training sessions at 7:00 p.m., or anytime personnel are present. No open house is planned this year.

Public Works Department Report

Public Works Superintendent Jamie Spanier provided an update on seasonal leaf collection, noting that the crew had fallen slightly behind but worked Saturday to get current. Residents were reminded to rake leaves to the front of their property so the vacuum hose can reach and to avoid including sticks. The department continues to follow the scheduled pickup days and cannot accommodate individual requests for alternate dates. Leaf collection is expected to continue into the first week of December, weather permitting.

Superintendent Spanier also reported that quotes for new garage doors have started to come in and are currently higher than expected. Additional quotes are still pending before a recommendation is made. Spanier also requested permission to seek quotes for sidewalk repairs using the remaining balance in the sidewalk fund, estimated at approximately \$20,000. The intent is to address the most critical areas and encumber the funds for next year.

Council Member Karriman moved to authorize solicitation of quotes for sidewalk repairs. Council Member Burge seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Park Department Report

Park Director Bugajski reported that the Duneland Historical Society submitted its annual request to waive rental fees for the Hawthorne Park Community Building for seven scheduled Thursday meetings in 2026. He noted that the group has been a responsible user of the facility, hosts meetings that are open to the public at no charge and typically utilizes the space from approximately 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., which aligns well with facility scheduling.

Council Vice President Lopez moved to approve waiving the rental fees for the Duneland Historical Society's 2026 meeting dates. Council Member Craft seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Building Commissioner/Director of Development Report

Building Commissioner/Director of Development Barry requested approval of two (2) contractors that have met all their requirements and paid their fees.

Council Member Burge moved to approve the two (2) contractors. Council Member Craft seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Barry noted that the two lift station projects are now substantially complete, with only minor items remaining. The next and final invoice will reflect the retainage payment, after which the project will be fully closed out. An update was also provided on the Hawthorne Park generator. The generator is a Generac unit, and we are awaiting follow-up from an electrician to determine necessary repairs. Additional information is expected within the coming days or next week.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Health Insurance Renewals

The Council reviewed 2026 health insurance renewals and Steve Brady from Heritage Advisor Group presented renewal details for medical, dental, vision, life, and GAP insurance. The Town's current medical coverage is provided through Allstate/Allied Benefits, now owned by Nationwide, though branding has not yet changed. After soliciting quotes from other carriers, Allstate/Nationwide remained the lowest-cost option. The renewal includes a 1.7% decrease in medical insurance premiums, which is highly uncommon compared to prior annual increases of 9%, 19%, and higher in previous years.

Dental, vision, and life insurance coverage remains with Nippon Life, with only small rate adjustments. The employee deductible will remain the same at \$500 individual / \$1,000 family, with no out-of-pocket expense after the deductible. Mr. Brady also recommended changing GAP insurance from Loomis to MedPair, as it is now aligned with Nationwide and is expected to improve service issues employees experienced with the prior GAP carrier.

Council Vice President Lopez moved to accept all renewal recommendations, retain existing carriers, and approve all renewal pricing—including the GAP insurance transition to MedPair. Council Member Burge seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Abonmarche Task Order 004, 2026 CCMG Plans and Specifications

Building Commissioner/Director of Development Barry presented Abonmarche Task Order 004 for 2026 Community Crossings Matching Grant Plans and Specifications in an amount not to exceed \$45,000. It was noted that the cost for this task order is lower than in previous years because the Town's Public Works Department will perform the onsite inspections for milling and paving, reducing contracted

service expenses. The project budget for 2026 has also been intentionally reduced from the usual \$800,000 total project with a \$200,000 local match, to a smaller funding level to conserve funds. Additionally, the Town will share project costs for 23rd Street with the Town of Chesterton, and Chesterton will reimburse Porter for its portion of matching funds, further reducing total Town expenses.

Council Member Karriman moved to approve Abonmarche Task Order 004 not to exceed \$45,000 (time and materials) for the 2026 Community Crossings Grant Plans and Specifications. Council Member Craft seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Ordinance No. 2025-11, An Ordinance Amending Salary Ordinance 2025-08

Ordinance No. 2025-11, Amending Salary Ordinance 2025-08 was presented for first reading. Clerk-Treasurer Peffers explained that the ordinance corrects an omission and an error in a job title.

The proposed ordinance is on file in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office.

Council Member Karriman moved to set Ordinance No. 2025-11, An Ordinance Amending Salary Ordinance 2025-08 for second reading. Council Vice President Lopez seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Ordinance No. 2025-12, An Ordinance Fixing the Compensation for Town Employees, Officers and Officials for the Year 2026

Ordinance No. 2025-12, An Ordinance Fixing the Compensation for Town Employees, Officers and Officials for the Year 2026 was presented for first reading. It was noted that the Council previously discussed raises at the previous meeting, and while a few changes have been made, it remains largely consistent with earlier discussion.

The proposed ordinance is on file in the Clerk-Treasurer's Office.

Council Vice President Lopez moved to set Ordinance No. 2025-12, An Ordinance Fixing the Compensation for Town Employees, Officers and Officials for the Year 2026 for second reading. Council Member Karriman seconded the motion. Motion passed by all in favor vote.

Council Comments

Council Member Jim Burge stated that, as currently drafted with \$2,500 and \$5,000 pay adjustments (rather than a \$1,500 increase he previously supported), he expects to vote against the 2026 Salary Ordinance at second reading. He cited Clerk-Treasurer projections of a \$400,000–\$440,000 revenue shortfall in 2026 compared to 2025 and estimated the proposed structure would add roughly \$111,000 in additional personnel costs, effectively pushing the deficit toward \$500,000. He expressed concern about deficit spending and the likelihood that future solutions could involve a wheel tax and local income tax at both the county and town level, combined with other financial pressures on residents such as the Duneland school referendum increases and higher sewer costs from Chesterton. He stated he believes the Town must prioritize fiscal responsibility while still appreciating employees.

Council Member Burge also questioned the Police Department restructuring that helps fund the increases, specifically shifting more detective work to patrol officers rather than relying solely on a dedicated detective. Based on input from a retired chief detective, he expressed concern that patrol and detective work require different skill sets and that added investigative duties could reduce focus and thoroughness, potentially affecting outcomes for victims and defendants. He further noted that if outside agencies are brought in for major cases, there may be cost and focus implications. Using statewide and regional pay data, he stated that at the \$5,000 level a typical patrol officer salary would

be about \$73,000, which he characterized as above various Indiana averages and approaching compensation levels in larger or wealthier jurisdictions (e.g., Fishers and Indianapolis). He concluded that he would be more comfortable with a \$1,500 increase to limit the future tax burden on residents.

President Laura Madigan thanked Council Member Burge for thoroughly vetting his position and clarified for the record that the projected \$440,000 deficit already includes the proposed salary changes and is not in addition to them. She also noted that Porter County has committed to addressing its near-term shortfalls by using hospital fund reserves rather than new wheel or income taxes for at least the next two years, and that the Town of Porter cannot adjust its local income tax rate until late 2027 for 2028, so no new Town LIT could take effect next year, though she agreed his broader concerns remain valid.

In response to questions, Police Chief Dan Dickey explained that capital cases (e.g., homicides) are already led by the Porter County Detective Bureau, Major Crimes Task Force, or Indiana State Police, with Porter's detective assisting under mutual aid, and the Town does not pay those outside officers. Under the proposed structure, the Town's detective would still handle the most serious non-capital cases, while patrol officers—who already conduct extensive investigations—would continue to handle cases originating from their own calls, with guidance from the detective. He cited recent serious cases handled by patrol officers to illustrate current practice and emphasized that officers do far more than write tickets or respond to crashes.

Officer Matt Reynolds, drawing on his prior service with the Porter County Sheriff's Office, added that county patrol officers conduct significant investigative work such as fingerprints and DNA swabs, and that the county's detective bureau and equipment including advanced 3-D crime-scene scanners support the higher evidentiary expectations of the prosecutor's office—tools the Town could not easily afford on its own.

Council Member Bill Lopez stated that he shares some of Burge's concerns but noted that statewide salary averages are affected by the lower cost of living in southern Indiana, and northern communities must remain competitive. He estimated that, once baseline increases equivalent to a flat \$1,500 adjustment are netted out, the incremental additional cost of the \$2,500/\$5,000 structure is closer to \$50,000 rather than \$100,000. He said the Council attempted to find middle ground and acknowledged that adjustments could be made in future years if the new structure or police model has unintended impacts.

Adjournment

Council Vice President Lopez moved to adjourn. There being no further business on the agenda, Council President Madigan adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-2.9, this meeting was livestreamed to youtube.com/@porterindiana. A recording of the livestream will remain publicly available at youtube.com/@porterindiana for a minimum of ninety (90) days following the date of the meeting. Meeting agendas, minutes, and any memoranda may be viewed at townofporter.in.gov.

Approved this 9th day of December, 2025.

TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PORTER

/s/ Laura Madigan, President

/s/ William Lopez, Vice President

/s/ James Burge
Don Craft
/s/ Kelly Karriman

ATTEST:
/s/ Corinne M. Peffers, Clerk-Treasurer