



Minutes

MERRILLVILLE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BOARD

TUESDAY, MARCH 3rd, 2026, at 3:30 PM

Merrillville Stormwater Resource Center, 7404 Broadway, Merrillville, IN

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

President L.J. “Bud” Crist called the March 3rd, 2026, Stormwater Management Board (SWMB) meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Crist led the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Members in attendance were, President Bud Crist and Vice President Jim Kendig, and Secretary Barbara Ghoston, three board members are present, a quorum was established. The staff member present were Executive Director Matt Lake and Secretary Adra Breclaw-Csanyi.

COMMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Comments: Stormwater received the new Jet Vac today March 3rd, 2026. Executive Director Matt Lake commented that there will be a training session on Thursday.

MINUTES

Stormwater Management Board Minutes (SWMB) from February 3rd, 2026, approved. President Crist entertained a motion for approval, Secretary Ghoston entered a motion to approve the minutes from the SWMB meeting on February 3rd, 2026, and motion seconded by Vice President Kendig. There were no questions. A voice vote was taken, and the motion unanimously passed with a 3/0 vote.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE REGISTERS APPROVAL

Included in the agenda packet were copies of the Accounts Payable Register from February 10th, 2026, and February 24th, 2026. President Crist entertained a motion for approval Vice President Kendig entered a motion to accept the Accounts Payable Registers from February 10th, 2026, and February 24th, 2026, seconded by Secretary Ghoston. No questions asked. A voice vote was taken, and the motion unanimously passed with a 3/0 vote.

OLD BUSINESS - (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

Bud Crist – None

Matt Lake – Executive Director Matt Lake read invoices for approval for the following projects/contracts listed below:

Christopher B. Burke Engineering, LLC Hickory Ridge Flood Control Improvement Phase 3. Professional services from January 1st, 2026, to January 31st, 2026, in the amount due this invoice for \$3,560.00 (**VOICE VOTE**) – *Notation, prior ARP Appropriation*). President Crist entertained a motion for approval, Secretary Ghoston motioned and it was seconded by Vice President Kendig. There was no discussion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion unanimously passed with a 3/0 vote. Executive Director Lake said we are working off our utility fees and have received the last of the Little Cal reimbursement, we are at the tail end of this.

STATUS /Updates: Matt Lake

- Hendricks Drainage Analysis – Executive Director Lake said we have a representative here from VS engineering. Matt looked at the plans and did not have any future concerns or issues and thinks we are at the point of easement procurement and will start to look for getting some bid documents together moving this toward a viable project early this year. Matt opened the floor for Tim Hollandsworth to add in terms of details. Tim said they have been in contact with the Utilities, so they are fully aware of this project so once we get moving hopefully that utility coordination is a smooth process. There are some minor relocations needed.
- Hickory Ridge Flood Control Project – Hickory Ridge, – Executive Director Matt Lake said he met with Dyer Construction they are installing the final portion of the pond outlet with emergency overflow structure, we are modifying the outlet so that we do not have to deal with the existing gas line that again utility conflicts seem to be the challenge on projects. We are at the tail end, the generator is installed, tested and fully functional, the pump that was installed and tested it did not meet the standard and is being rebuilt by the manufacturer, once serviced, it will be reinstalled and then we will retest with the subcontractors and get it online. In the meantime, the entire drainage system works by gravity. It has significantly more storage/flood protection even without the pump station in service. This was proven during the last significant rain event showing to be capable and operational as designed. The Hickory Ridge owners need to upgrade the castings on the parking lot inlets and inspect/replace old CMP pipes in the parking areas. We did reach out and provide that recommendation to them.
- 97th and Grand Boulevard Drainage Improvements (DLZ) – We are at the point of scheduling bidding out this project. Frank Stewart is here from DLZ to add comments. Frank noted they are trying to meet the deadlines for the permits. He said they have one utility that they are trying to establish the right owner that is critical for the culvert, it is a communication line. So far, they are coming back saying it's not ours." Matt is all going as planned and we will be opening bids during our May board meeting. The construction costs of this project are half covered by Little Calumet River Basin Commission.
- Stormwater Master Plan – Executive Director Lake said we are still working with Christopher Burke Engineering on the rest of details to finalize it. There will be some healthy projects there that we will need to look at, some involving the railroads, which is always an endeavor.

NEW BUSINESS - (Discussion and Roll Call Vote)

Bud Crist –

Matt Lake – 2026 maintenance/ mowing request for quotes, thirteen mowing companies were solicited. These are mowing for the residential subdivision detention ponds that we own and as we acquire more through tax sales, we get more each year. We have a hybrid approach with regards to maintenance some by us in-house and then other areas contracted out. One responsive bidder submitted a quote in the amounts listed below; no other quotes or bids were received. Josh's Landscaping submitted a quote matching their pricing from last season except for one location that they thought was more challenging than last year. Matt said he may try to send these out even earlier to see if we have more bidders/participation. Some of these properties are not that challenging.

Josh's Landscape Management..... \$25,515.00 price increase (\$1505.00) from 2025

Josh's Landscape Management was the lowest respective bidder for the Stormwater Detention Parcel Mowing in the total amount of \$25,515.00 (**VOICE VOTE**). President Crist entertained a motion for approval Vice President Kendig entered a motion for approval, and it was seconded by Secretary Barbary Ghoston. Secretary Ghoston clarified if the amount was more than last year, Executive Director Lake said it was approximately \$1,500 more. There was no discussion. A voice vote was taken, and the motion unanimously passed with a 3/0 vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Bud Crist –

Matt Lake – Mentioned that everyone received their certificate for participation from the Regional MS4 Contractors Workshop that we hosted here in Merrillville.

Matt was at the NISWAG meeting earlier today in Lake Station, there were a few different presentations that were mostly on MCM6 municipal good housekeeping, MS4 criteria, and anticipation new permit criteria coming up because they are changing the permit, it will be based more on population and we are on the upper end of that threshold so there will be higher standards that have to be met for permit compliance.

Our new Jet-Vac came in, training will be on Thursday and Mike Mahy will be with the trainer all day. We will get some photos so if anyone wants to stop by to see the truck, we can get a group photo and put it on the Town webpage through Chas. We will get it branded with our logo and/or put any messaging that we want on the side of the tank.

We are also looking at doing a demo on the RC mowers, those are the autonomous robotic mowers that we had come out a few years ago. They were impressive at the time, but Matt did not want it until they developed it a bit more. At the time we did the Marsh Master route instead. Some of the slopes we are dealing with are steep. Matt has the Park's Department involved too, they might want to get one for the Parks, so we are looking at different options.

The Tiger mower should be here within a few weeks well as the lift for the garage. We will store it on the lift, so we have enough storage in the garage.

The Town has been looking for different ways to support the General Fund. They have been talking about street sweeping lately. Matt met with Michael Griffin and Steve King with regard to that, seeing if that is a task that our utility can manage. Matt looked at some other options including outsourcing some through contractors. He reached out to Dyer Public Work Director today and he said that they contract all their street sweeping out. He also is receiving a quote from Michiana Power Sweep. Once we get all the information then we can do a cost benefit and see one versus the other. If it comes to the point where we take over this task for the town, we will have to include that in our fee study that we are going to do for our fee adjustment to cover costs. Between trying to recoup the monies from the PILOT and then taking on this task, we must recoup those costs. We need to figure out how we are going to do that through the revenue from the stormwater fee. With SB1 there will be lower property taxes which will reduce the town's general fund. We are always willing to be team players, but Matt wants to make sure that the Town does what they can and other operation are efficient to reduce costs save money. Matt has already proposed several suggestions regarding potential cost savings for the town. Contracting selected tasks has proven to be cost effective by reducing amount of staff and equipment as well as reducing liabilities. As soon as you hire full-time staff then you have the costs of benefits compared to part-time staff or seasonal staff which can save money. We are trying to have smaller leaner government operation and be efficient to minimize expenses. If the rest of the Town does the same, they will have some savings. For example, the unincorporated areas have outsourced leaf pickup managed by Lake County Solid Waste and they contract this task to a local company. Even

Waste Management has leaf pickup as part of the garbage service has an option and can be part of their contract. Assessing the cost benefit of outsourcing specific tasks vs in-house may show significant saving.

President Crist said street sweeping should be done by the Street Department, Attorney Meyers said some Stormwater Utilities do it, Executive Director Lake said part of the Town thinks that if your sweeping the streets that will clear from inlet casings in the ROW, but leaves especially when they are compiled in the parkway next to the street will continually get into the street and cover castings with each rain event. Street Department's task includes leaf/branch pickup anywhere in the ROW. When people are encouraged to collect leaves on the curb and after high winds/rain, guess where it goes, ends up over storm drain castings. The street sweeper picks up fine materials and is not a leaf vac!

Residents are already paying enough the way it is, there is only so much that you can do with local fees and unfortunately that's what it comes down to when you lower property taxes and then again there going to increase the income tax, when that kicks in where does this all balance out. If this is just this one task, we may be able to take it on and would have to adjust our fee. Ultimately, it will be up to our Stormwater Board. It will probably be more of a formal thing for Michael Griffin to present at one of our upcoming meetings. Matt just wanted to let everyone know regarding recent discussions.

Executive Director, Lak said that he is trying to do his homework and figure everything out. The SOP that was signed by Matt and Bruce Spires and drafted by Attorney Jim Meyer makes the most sense from an operational response to optimize available staff before during and after significant rain events. That SOP demonstrated real teamwork, and we should stay with that protocol.

Matt Lake talked to the Lake County Surveyor, his office is going to be doing Phase 1 maintenance of Kaiser Ditch, a major waterway in town. The Surveyor's office does periodic maintenance on Lake County Regulated Drains; it hasn't been done in Kaiser Ditch for over 15 years. President Christ said they should schedule the main stem of Turkey Creek as well.

President Crist asked about the MS4 Annual meeting, Executive Lake said this event is coming up in May and those board members that want to attend let Adra know. There will be a block of rooms set up, it is in Plainfield, the same setup, and a lot of educational sessions to attend. It is one night and something we attend each year with at least one or more representatives.

President Crist inquired about a generator for this building. Matt said that we looked at a Caterpillar which was massive and an overkill which was recommended to us. We then also recently looked at a Generac, the same exact one as Hickory Ridge and having the same unit, and it is half the price and with installation it was approximately \$49,000 and is natural gas, enough to power the building and the things we need, if there is a power outage which seldomly happens. We want to put it on the west side of the building, again we have to think about expansion too, even if we have one sweeper here we have to have some room unless we lease out garage space somewhere, a warehouse or something like that, we can do that for a while just like we rented out office space before building this building. Mike Mahy is going to get a few more quotes, so we can make an informed decision regarding the generator.

Secretary Ghoston asked about a neighbor's manhole in their backyard, Matt mentioned that it is probably sanitary in her backyard, but I will check the mapping. She was unaware of it. He stated that we have received several calls about sanitary backups in the homes over the last week or so from the last rain event, the insurance companies are trying to figure out what is what, so we are providing them the information about Gary Sanitary District up in that area and their issues of infiltration/inflow after heavy rains. We received one call about a cracked cover of a structure, so we looked and we don't have anything, so we go over there and its SurfNet, they are doing directional boring so they have their entry points and then they cap it off and it was cracked by a bus stop and Matt landed up getting a hold of them. In terms of locations of utilities, we have most of the

mapping for everything so if you need, we can usually identify everything. We get calls about everything, it defaults to us and we always help the public figure it out and we are happy to assist. Everything gets funneled our way, we are used to it. The sanitary system is supposed to be completely sealed but it's not and they then have infiltration and inflow from several ways including people illegally connecting their sump pumps or gutter system right into sanitary lines. This will surcharge the sanitary system quickly, then lift stations get overrun beyond capacity and GSD have to shut them down. Unfortunately, people's basements become the backup system for that sanitary effluent. That's why Matt encourages the use of a backwater/flow valve on the main sanitary line for residents to prevent basement backups.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

Attorney Jim Meyer– None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bud Crist –

President Crist – Next SWMB meeting is set for Tuesday, **April 7th, 2026**, at 3:30 pm at the Stormwater Resource Center. President Crist entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting Vice President Kendig made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Secretary Ghoston seconded.

ADJOURNMENT TIME –

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adra Breclaw-Csanyi, Staff Secretary