

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
VALPARAISO, INDIANA
September 8, 2025**

Minutes are not verbatim. To Hear Full Comments, Please refer to the – Watch City Meetings Section of the City of Valparaiso’s Website (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)

The Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, met on Monday, September 8, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall. Mayor Costas called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Present were Councilmembers Reed, Cotton, Domer, Pupillo (Video), Anderson, Hunt, and Kapitan.

MINUTES

MOTION: Councilmember Kapitan moved to adopt the August 25, 2025 minutes. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

RESOLUTION NO. 11, 2025

**A RESOLUTION OF THE VALPARAISO COMON COUNCIL TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT SCHOOL
RESOURCE OFFICER COVERAGE AND SCHOOL SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS**

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Resolution No. 11, 2025 be read and considered for adoption. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Cook read Resolution No. 11, 2025.

Councilmember Pupillo – This Resolution began in 2022 when law enforcement personnel recommended staffing five SROs in the Valparaiso Community Schools. Today they have gone from three to four SROs. This Resolution shows the community’s strong commitment to public safety especially in protecting our schools. He thinks this calls for SROs in every school and investments in critical security upgrades. By acting on the guidance of our law enforcement professionals and going above and beyond, this Council will uphold its dedication to public safety and ensure a safe learning environment.

Councilmember Cotton – He thinks this is a noble pursuit but he is averse to jump the process that is in place. The Superintendent and Police Chief work under the MOU. There is supposed to be some meeting of the minds as it relates to adding SROs. It is his understanding the meetings have not yielded this conclusion. He also understands these conclusions are data driven. Where is the data? Were we given data to justify the incremental additional expense will ensure the safety. Why should we not trust the process? He has heard that in their bodies some would feel safer. He also has heard that there is not the data that justifies it. He feels the data should be collected.

Councilmember Hunt - She appreciates the Resolution. She did not get a response to her suggested amendments. As a parent and advocate for gun violence prevention, she is not sure what data Councilmember Cotton is looking for to justify the recommendation of our law enforcement both City and County. For her if that is the recommendation that is being made, it is a worthy question as to why it hasn’t happened. If there is a disparity between the schools and law enforcement, then a meeting should be the first step.

Councilmember Reed – She is an educator in a school system where they have an SRO in every building. She finds their presence reassuring. The relationships the SROs build within the school community are very valuable and very vital. She is not sure what the concerns are. She has not heard from any other Councilmembers. She supports it but would like to hear some of the other conversations.

Councilmember Cotton – He is not averse to having an additional resource officer either. There are a variety of safety concerns that they deal with including the fiscal aspects of it. He does not want his body to guide his responsibility to making the best process driven evidence based decision. The data was brought up in a conversation where it was said the data is not there. He thinks it would be prudent to know what the recommendation is based on.

Councilmember Reed – Technology needs change. A resource officer is a person there not only protecting but also building relationships. That is extremely valuable.

Councilmember Cotton - He did not say technology is better. There are competing ways to fortify ultimately the safety of our students.

Councilmember Kapitan – What conversations did Councilmember Pupillo have with the schools and what came out of that? She thinks they know the conversation with VPD. She is curious what Councilmember Pupillo's conversations were like and what got him to the point of creating a resolution backed by Council asking this City body to act in such a way.

Councilmember Pupillo – The conversation has been ongoing since 2022. We have gone from three to four and going four to five has been gummed up. This is an issue that should transcend the bureaucratic red tape. We really need to find a solution. To say there is no data is an argument that is hard to take in. We know data exists. Schools are harder to break into that have SROs and they create relationships with students. Having an SRO at every school is a lofty goal. But it is a worthwhile one. There is a school corporation in Indiana that has an SRO at every school. Unfortunately it is because they have had an incident. We need to be proactive and not reactive on this issue.

Councilmember Kapitan – There were conversations about four to five SROs which is an easier reach. The Resolution does not outline a timeline. Right now we are deep in budget season. How can we ensure we do get an extra SRO? Does that come from the school budget or VPD budget?

Mayor Costas – Everyone wants the schools to be safe. That is one of the highest priorities of the VPD. The parochial schools have issues also. The issue is what is the best use of resources. We are doing training. We are connecting with the cameras at all of the school systems and parochial schools. He does not know if they can make the assumption that having an SRO in every school is the right answer. If so, that is a significant contribution of resources. Be assured the police, sheriff and emergency personnel are doing everything they can in preparing our schools. The best money is spent on precautionary measures.

Councilmember Domer – She thanked Councilmember Pupillo for offering this Resolution. In his introduction he said “ensure” safety. In the Resolution it says “enhance” safety. Ensuring safety is something she does not think a Resolution can guarantee. Why is it that the process of going from four to five got gummed up?

Mayor Costas – He is not sure the term gummed up is something he would agree with. It is a process of dialogue and use of resources. Sometimes it takes longer than you would like. To put an officer in a school is a significant amount of resources.

Councilmember Domer – To go from four to five and then to all schools seems extreme.

Councilmember Hunt - It seems to be another discrepancy of going from four to five and then to an officer in every school. This seems like an issue for the school board. There is an MOU between the City and law enforcement. If there is a discrepancy between what law enforcement is recommending and what the schools are hearing, that seems like a meeting to be had before the Resolution is voted on.

Councilmember Anderson – In concept this is the easiest layup in the history of ever. He understands it is not going to happen tomorrow. He would really like to see an effort to make a timeline of how we can make this happen. He would bet all parents want an SRO in their child's school. They need to move along the line of getting that going. For whatever reason it's not happening. He thinks Councilmember Pupillo is just trying to get this going.

Councilmember Kapitan – Now that it is budget season they can talk about it a little bit more. The safety of students in our community is so important. That is why it is hard to say let's table this. The Council should know all of the conversations that went on between the school and the police. Then they can have a better understanding of the next steps. She is in favor of tabling this Resolution knowing that she is in support of the intention of the Resolution.

Councilmember Pupillo – He wrote the Resolution so it would provide flexibility. It is an affirmative statement from the Council to say this is what they want to see. There is no deadline. It is just saying they will work together to make it happen. Tabling it will just kick the can down the road a little longer.

Mayor Costas – You are assuming placing an SRO in every school is the best use of the limited resources we have. It may not be. That is the issue here. They are always trying to balance the needs.

Councilmember Pupillo – There are other items mentioned in the Resolution.

Councilmember Hunt – It seems there is a recommendation from local law enforcement that is not being met by our schools. We have this MOU that says we are working together. We need to do our due diligence. We need to know and understand their position before we make a declaration.

Councilmember Cotton – We have the responsibility to make good and informed decisions based on evidence based data that is available. His inclination is to do whatever is smart and fiscally responsible.

MOTION: Councilmember Hunt moved to table Resolution No. 11, 2025. Councilmember Cotton seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed 5-2. Councilmembers Pupillo and Anderson voted No.

The Golf Lodge Inc. Formal Written Commitments

Attorney Patrick Lyp – At the last meeting there was a presentation for Golf Lodge. What is in front of the Council tonight is acceptable to the applicants in terms of timeline and hours of operation. Some flexibility was put in for start up. He recommended approval.

Attorney Clay Patton – The only thing they requested to be revised was the start of remodeling. Aftermath was in the building until this past weekend for Popcorn Festival. They will be vacating the site in the next couple of days. The Lease does not start for another week. They asked for the Written Commitments to begin October 31st.

Councilmember Cotton – How many days a week are they open?

Attorney Patrick Lyp - The base line for restaurants is five days a week. Six days is acceptable with the owners and is consistent with other restaurants in the downtown area.

Councilmember Cotton – Is that the restaurant side, the golf side, or all encompassing?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – The City is looking at six days a week .

Attorney Clay Patton - The intention is if they are open, they are open.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE the Written Commitments for Golf Lodge, Inc. passed by a 7-0 vote.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORTS

Councilmember Hunt – The School Board was presented with the proposed budget on August 28th. September 22nd will be first reading in front of the Council. The Class of 2025 will have 52% graduate with academic honors.

Councilmember Reed – RDC meets Thursday. A few weeks ago George Douglas accepted the Community Improvement Award for the Lincoln Highway Garage. The Banta Center Review Committee has authorized to move forward with the Agreement with the Welter LLC plan for the building. Leetz family has renewed their 10-year agreement for naming rights with the Activity Center. Northwest Health has decided not to renew their naming rights with the amphitheater. An Interlocal Agreement was approved with the Parks and Center Township. Trustee Jesse Harper has been paying \$85,000 as an annual contribution. The new Agreement has a contribution of \$150,000 with an additional \$100,000 being put aside for the transition of the Banta Senior Center. Residents of Center Township will now pay the registration fee rates for events and programming that are the same for City residents. Center Township appointees will have the ability to serve in leadership roles with the Park Department. The Park has reached a third agreement on the irrigation system which is a little more than \$41,000. She gave a report on the park update projects.

Councilmember Cotton – The Fire Territory has called a meeting to hear first reading on their 2026 budget. The Investigation and Reconciliation committee has a meeting this week.

Councilmember Kapitan – The Plan Commission met last week and discussed Midwood platting. The Environmental Advisory Board is working hard. The student application process is open. Their newsletter is online. Thanks to all for a safe, amazing, and clean Popcorn Festival. In the next couple of weeks there will be

a couple of focus groups to better understand how residents view the current recycling program. The dates are listed online. The Human Relations Council will have a joint meeting on September 16th.

Councilmember Domer - No board of Works meeting since the last Council meeting. The second meeting of the East Side Master Plan stakeholder group will meet September 19th.

Councilmember Pupillo – VFD is offering free installation of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms for residents of the City of Valparaiso and Center Township. Thanks to all public safety professionals for a safe Popcorn Festival.

Councilmember Anderson – Utility Board meeting is tomorrow.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

TO HEAR CITIZENS' FULL COMMENTS, PLEASE REFER TO THE WATCH CITY MEETINGS SECTION OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO'S WEBSITE (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)

Deb McLeod – She is asking for help. The rallies will continue. They have done everything they have been asked to do. A new contingent has been showing up and are there to instigate trouble. They are hitting people with signs and grinding on women. It is not safe.

Mayor Costas – They are having a meeting later this week. Law enforcement and the Prosecuting Attorney will be there. They will talk about separation of the two groups.

Councilmember Domer – She has only seen Deb and Lisa come forward at BOW meetings. Why are they the only group that has to get a permit?

Mayor Costas – They are trying to ensure safety. Deb has a large group. The challenge is when they are on the sidewalk. What legal means does the City have to say people cannot be there?

Linda Rows – DeMotte for her mother Elise Diltz – Valparaiso. She came up here for protests because she thought she would be safe. They support local businesses before and after protests. She was a constitutional law professor and retired attorney. It is much more constitutional to separate the two groups because you are protecting the constitutional rights of both sides.

Lisa Kaffenberger – Valparaiso. They had been assured steps would be taken to ensure their safety. None of the assurances were upheld. This was the largest turnout and least police presence. They are asking for separation between the two groups. She is the founder and organizer of NWI. She was left off the list for this week's follow up meeting. She is requesting an explanation for the failure to uphold the safety plan discussed in the meeting, clarification on why additional police support was not made available, a commitment to clear protocols and officer accountability for future events and her inclusion in any and all future meetings related to protest coordination or public safety as a lead organizer of NWI activists.

Patricia Riley Chirilla – Chesterton. She is a frequent participant in the protests. She is not sure permits are required. They are going to abide by things as much as they can. Separation is the best way to get both sides heard. If they are there for something other than to antagonize then why are they not saying something for their cause?

Mayor Costas - Separation is the City's reasonable goal.

Attorney Patrick Lyp - On Tuesdays there is an example of separation. Folks supporting pro-life are on one side of Lincolnway and folks supporting pro-choice on the other side. It tends to work very well. Sometimes it is difficult to determine who is on which side. Also, where the sidewalk ends so does the City's jurisdiction. The courthouse square is predominately county and sheriff's officers. VPD coordinates with the County.

Patricia Graham – 205 Wayne. She is the one the person dressed as Trump was rude and disrespectful to. She asked two police officers to tell him to be respectful and that his actions were not appropriate. They did not do that. The person's actions were baiting.

Laurie McCar – Valparaiso. She was standing next to Patricia Graham during the encounter with the counter-protester. She had to remove herself from the area for her sanity. She is asking for separation and to be protected.

Hope McGinty – Valparaiso. There was a mother at the protest with two younger children. The person dressed as Trump was talking to the children.

Anita Adas – Valparaiso. She would like to see protestors and counter-protesters separated. She would like the protestors to be moved to the front of the courthouse. The protests started out as a very positive and peaceful event. In the beginning the two groups were separated. They were on the front side of the courthouse. Somehow that changed and they were moved to the back side of the courthouse. The counter-protestors started showing up and the climate changed. Aggression increased. Their message was anger and violence.

Councilmember Cotton – If the County has jurisdiction over the courthouse square, why are they coming to the Board of Works for permission?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – They are giving us an assembly acknowledgement. The City looks purely at the sidewalk around the square. The Board of Works will remind them they need County approval also.

Councilmember Cotton – Who says they are compelled to stay on two things?

Attorney Patrick Lyp – The Porter County Commissioners have jurisdiction. We have talked to the Commissioners. One of the challenges is when you have large groups congregating on the north side of the courthouse square, and there are people driving up and down Lincolnway, they tend to look left or right. Last year they had two instances where pedestrians were hit. Their suggestion is with larger groups they should congregate on the south side and in large part that has worked. For safety of drivers. For safety of those participating. For safety of pedestrians. The preferred area for large groups to congregate is the south side of the courthouse square.

Kathryn Denzine – Valparaiso. Adam Ritz is the person who was dressed as Trump and he attempted to grind on her. He tried to get the attention of police and tell them she was attempting to grind on him. It was inappropriate and lewd and should not take place in a public setting let alone during a political event. A decision was made by a large group of protestors to safely and calmly surround and protect some of the vulnerable protestors. She asked that in the meeting later this week they clarify what they need to provide assault or sexual assault charges against these individuals for future rallies if they continue this behavior.

Mike Lowe – 150 West 625 North, Valparaiso. A few months ago, he went to Knox to do a rally. They felt safer in Knox than they do in Valparaiso. They kept the two groups separate.

Natalie – Valparaiso. She has always felt safe in Valparaiso. She joined NWI because she felt it was an organization that represents what she believes in. She feels they have done everything to work with the City and the police. It is important to her that these events are safe and fair. She used to bring her young kids. They keep getting reassurances and nothing happens. These events should be fair.

Jordan Hart – Dyer, IN. He is a long-time organizer and activist. The counter protestors were there to single out children, women and elderly. They were there to provoke.

Brian Williams – Gibraltar Court, Valparaiso. He thanked Councilmember Pupillo for the Resolution regarding SROs in the schools. He understands the money issue. He hopes the discussion keeps going.

James Ferguson – 303 Indiana. He stands on the other side of the street during the protests. People try to block his signs.

Adam Ritz – 1911 Beech Street. He thinks it is an eyesore with the protesters on the north side. Keep them on the south side. No one is touching or assaulting anyone. When the Trumpers go to the others they go to ask them their opinion.

Mayor Costas – Would you agree to separation?

Adam Ritz – They stay separated. They just go over there and talk to them and see what their opinion is.

Mayor Costas – It appears separation is a good solution because people are feeling very strongly about the positions and we don't want provocation. Would you agree to separation?

Adam Ritz – We are just trying to voice our opinion too. They don't provoke people. They just go over there and the people go crazy and start yelling.

Sue Christiano - 277 Ravinia Drive North, Valparaiso. People were being bopped on their heads with signs. She had a girl with a megaphone next to her. When she moved the girl followed. When she left the protest, she tooted her horn like you would to a neighbor. She got pulled over.

Faith – Jefferson Street, Valparaiso. What she saw this last time was unacceptable.

Alex Gayheart – Michigan City. He has never been afraid at a protest in Michigan City. He was afraid here in Valparaiso on Labor Day. He was targeted as a queer folk.

Mark Stanley – Boone Grove. He is not an activist but he feels compelled to have a voice. The Counter protestors have put the City between a rock and a hard spot. There is also verbal violence.

Brian Noswich- 207 Academy. He received many calls from people who had trouble getting to where they wanted to because of the protests. Businesses will be hurt. Several have suggested moving protests to the fairgrounds. He commended the VPD.

Councilmember Cotton – The Civil Rights movement would not have gotten anywhere if they had asked those guys not to protest in places that people wouldn't be activated and conscious. He takes exception to that remark.

Councilmember Hunt – She thanked all of the speakers. She thanked the Mayor for confirming he is taking this seriously.

The Next Council Meeting will be September 22, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

/s/ Holly Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer