

## Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

May 1, 2024 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May, 2024 at 5:00 PM, E.D.T., the Board of County Road Commissioners for the County of Van Buren met in regular session at the Road Commission Administrative Office in Lawrence, Michigan.

### PRESENT:

Road Commissioners Askew, Boze, Burlison, Kinney (Remote) and Nelson  
Managing Director Bret Witkowski  
Finance and Human Resources Director Linnea Rader  
Operations Director Greg Brucks  
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

### ABSENT:

None

### GUESTS PRESENT:

County Commissioners Doroh and Chappell

Chairman Boze called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Burlison seconded by Askew to approve the Agenda.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Askew seconded by Nelson to approve the Minutes of the April 4, 2024 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. None was received.

County Commissioner Doroh presented the following update:

- Provided update from Chris Scharrer of DCS Technology regarding their final major push to get broadband in all of Van Buren County. Currently there remain 122 unserved locations, mostly in South Haven Township with a few in Paw Paw and Antwerp Townships.
- The new public defender for Van Buren County is Karla Tankut. She will oversee the newly formed Van Buren County Public Defender's Office. Van Buren and Allegan Counties had a shared Public Defender's Office but the record keeping and management became too difficult for the joint operation. There will be two separate offices beginning in October.
- Millage renewals on the August Ballot include Road, Veteran Services, Public Transit, and 9-1-1 Local Surcharge.
- Commissioners approved the continuation of the cooperative agreement between MSUE and Van Buren County to provide the Veterans' Therapy Garden.
- Commissioners approved the purchase of 50 laptop computers as part of the annual replacement program at a total cost of \$26,117.76.
- K9 Kuno retired due to health and age and the Commissioners approved adoption by his handler.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

**Finance and HR Department:**

- Attended the Midwest Advanced Public Service Institute (MAPSI) ongoing leadership program earlier this week.
- Nicholas Mead recently graduated from the Michigan Public Service Institute and Rader requested that he be recognized for his accomplishment. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt the following Resolution:

**RESOLUTION 2024-10**

WHEREAS: On April 11, 2024 **Nicholas Mead**, Fleet & Facilities Superintendent, graduated from the Michigan Public Service Institute (MPSI); and,

WHEREAS: MPSI consists of a three-year training program which provides instruction designed expressly for city and county public service supervisors, managers, and directors; and,

WHEREAS: MSPI courses focus on training in public service as well as enhancing individual growth, professional development, and other challenges faced by public service professionals from municipalities of all sizes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby recognizes and honors **Nicholas Mead** for his dedication to Public Works through professional development and the enhancement of individual growth.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board wishes **Nicholas Mead** continued success in his position at the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5

NO: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Rader continued her update as follows:

- Received a Proclamation from Richard Hall, Mayor of the City of Hartford, on behalf of the Council, Staff and Citizens of Hartford expressing their thanks and appreciation to Linnea Rader for her time and service as Interim Manager, and to Bret Witkowski for the recommendation and allowing Rader to serve as the Interim Manager.
- Judge Brickley went outside of sentencing guidelines and imposed a maximum sentence of 84 months to 15 years to Logan Brown, the individual convicted of the death of Rene Rangel, Jr. Rader went on to say that the Prosecutor also did an amazing job to make Road Commission staff feel as safe as possible while doing their jobs. Rader also thanked Sheriff Abbott and his staff for doing an outstanding job backing-up the Road Commission's road staff.
- There is another hearing tomorrow on a case involving an employee who had his toes run over by a motorist during road maintenance operations last year.
- Rader requested and was granted an extension to file the Road Commission's Act 51 Report through June 30<sup>th</sup> so as to allow the audit to take place in May.

Commissioner Nelson thanked Rader for her efforts to keep staff informed of the Rangel court proceedings and for guiding them through the trial process.

**Operations Department:**

- Scraping gravels, patching asphalts, boom mowing, shoulder work, ditching and pipe replacements county wide continue.
- Trees on the 29th St ditching project in Pine Grove- trees are all down and stump removal will begin Tuesday. North Lake ditching in Pine Grove, should happen on May 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Tree crews began working on 2 local projects in Antwerp last week in preparations for a wedge and seal treatment, and should wrap up this week.
- Guardrail spraying continues.
- Hot rubber crack fill also continues.

- Open interviews were pretty successful for summer help. We ended up with 2 for the engineering department, 3 for the maintenance department now, and one additional sometime mid to late July and 1 apprentice road maintenance employee...contingent on background and drug screens.
- This seasons contract gravel began Monday in Pine Grove.
- Roof replacement on the Bloomingdale salt barn is slated to begin this week.
- Prices should be in for the installation of an oil/water separator at the Western Garage on Tuesday afternoon. This is basically the first step in a more extensive remodel.
- Tentatively planning on kicking off 2024 seal coat season on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Brucks also relayed that the new mowers have arrived and that one was parked out front for the Board and guests to see. In addition, Brucks explained that an old artesian well started working again on CR669 north of Shaw Road and is taking the road with it. Brucks is working now to find a solution. In the interim, the roadway has been closed.

The Board asked questions regarding summer help interviews and applications received, which were answered by Staff.

### **Engineering Department:**

- CR 360 pipe replacement is underway in Hamilton Township. Pipe is in and just needs to be paved back.
- Howard Drive project is moving along in Lawrence Township.
- Antwerp Township projects are advertised for a bid opening on May 9 as well as the CR 388 project from CR 653 to the Kalamazoo County line.
- CR 380 project should start in June.
- CR 384 project we are waiting on a schedule from the Contractor.
- Working on estimates for future projects.

### **Managing Director Witkowski:**

1. Last year we worked with the DNR to install trail signs along the trail that crossed roads in the South Haven area. The project went well last year, and the DNR emailed me last week to see if VBCRC would work with them on some trail signs. He can do that by talking to Kirby; we sent the price quote to DNR and the DNR contacted me this week and they would like to double the project. Our DNR contact is working with their finance department to see if they have the budget for the whole project.
2. The cell tower owner at the Western Garage wants to negotiate the contract with VBCRC; as I told the owner, we already have a contract with five years left. I do not like using attorneys very often, but Bill Henn has dealt with them a lot, so he will help us with the contract to get the maximum money we can from the tower.
3. Bill Henn is reviewing a proposed agreement with Antwerp Township; once he gets it back to us, we will bring it to the board for consideration. I suggest a June or July timeline with the board getting it one month and moving either way the following month.
4. We have an agreement all set and signed with the farmer to farm the property in Bangor Township.
5. So far in April we have 107 See Click Fix requests, with a 99% on-time answering rate. The most common request is Drainage, Water or Washouts.
6. The next meeting of the Van Buren County Supervisors is **Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7 PM** at the Van Buren Conference Center, Lawrence. The VBCRC has been placed on the agenda to discuss the county-wide road millage renewal.
7. Next SW Council meeting is **Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup>** at 10:00 AM in Cass County.
8. The contractor began re-shingling the roof of the salt barn dome in Bloomingdale this week.
9. We selected the painter to paint the salt facility in Lawrence and the old sign shop behind the administration building, which is now being used again.
10. We have reserved the Van Buren Conference Center on June 20 to hold informational meetings for the public on the millage renewal request. The first is tentatively set for 11:00, and the second is at 6:00 PM. We have some brochures that we would be happy to deliver or mail to you for your township meetings. The

5-year plan is ready for printing. So, you can hand one to each township when you attend their meetings.

11. I contacted the Van Buren County Equalization Department. The numbers are not official until October, but taxable value increased 8.40% in Van Buren County for 2024.

Witkowski also reported that the Wood School signs have been installed in Bangor Township. He encouraged the Board to drive by and take a look as Kirby Heindorf, VBCRC Traffic Services Employee, did a great job with the installation. Witkowski relayed that he, too, received the Proclamation passed by the City of Hartford as described by Rader. Witkowski also plans to attend all city/village and township meetings over the coming weeks/months to discuss the road millage renewal.

Voucher Approval:

Voucher #2356	\$	170,761.84	Payroll
Voucher #2357	\$	498,126.54	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2358	\$	176,307.93	Payroll
Voucher #2359	\$	671,887.61	Accounts Payable
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,517,083.92</b>	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Askew to approve Vouchers 2356-2359 totaling \$1,517,083.92.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski presented a request from Highway Engineer Anttila regarding the award of bids being opened as follows: May 2, 2024 (Proposals) Traffic Signal Modernization Design on CR652S/24th Street at Red Arrow Highway, Antwerp Township; May 9, 2024 at 11:00 AM, 46<sup>th</sup> Street, Paw Paw Township (wedge paving); CR388, Pine Grove Township (crush and shape, trench, widen and pave); 30<sup>th</sup> Street and 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Antwerp Township (wedge paving). Anttila requested that the Board consider authorizing Road Commission staff to award these bids/proposal, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission, pending township approval, so as to not delay the projects until the Board meets again in June. Motion by Burleson, seconded by Askew to authorize the Managing Director, Bret Witkowski, to award the bids/proposal, pending any required township approval, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

AJ Brucks, Permit Officer-County Weighmaster, explained a request for a permit by William and Patricia Brown to install their new septic in the county road right-of-way due to new Health Department requirements for lake properties. Because the Road Commission has 27' of additional right-of-way on CR380 at the Browns' site, AJ Brucks recommended granting them permission through an agreement that would be recorded with the Register of Deeds so that it runs concurrent with the land as opposed to the property owner(s). Motion by Burleson, seconded by Nelson to authorize the Managing Director to execute a Permissive Use Agreement with William and Patricia Brown for the installation of a new septic at 47663 CR380, Columbia Township.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

**W.C. Askew, Sr.**

No report.

**Rick Boze**

Attended Keeler, Hamilton, Hartford, and Lawrence Township's board meetings and all was good.

**Doug Burleson**

No report.

**Greg Kinney**

Requested that millage renewal materials be delivered to Arlington, Waverly, Paw Paw and Decatur Townships as he is mobility restricted.

**Wayne Nelson**

No report.

The Chairman opened the meeting to second public comment. None was received.

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Askew to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 5:45 PM.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

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Board Secretary

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Board Chairman