

Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

July 10, 2024 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 10th day of July, 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, Burleson, Kinney (Remote from home in Decatur, MI) and Nelson
Managing Director Bret Witkowski
Highway Engineer Barry Anttila
Finance and Human Resources Director Linnea Rader
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

ABSENT:

None

GUESTS PRESENT:

Mike Chappell, County Commissioner
Kurt Doroh, County Commissioner
Mark Bishop, Quality Forest Management (Remote)
Derek Hall, Michigan Department of Treasury
Ronnie Denney, CR376 Arlington Township
Lawrence Jarosz, CR376 Arlington Township
Kathy Conley, CR376 Arlington Township
James Meyer, Hill Drive, Lawrence Township
Mike Sullins, Bangor Township Supervisor

Chairman Boze called the meeting to order at 5 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Askew seconded by Burleson to approve the Agenda.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Mark Bishop of Quality Forest Management provided details of the public bid opening for the sale of timber at the Road Commission's Crocker Pit in Pine Grove Township. Mr. Bishop relayed that he has worked with each of the bidding companies; however, and not surprisingly, the closest mill, Northwest Hardwoods, Inc. (formerly Post Hardwoods), was the highest bidding contractor. Upon recommendation it was moved by Burleson, seconded by Nelson to award the bid for the sale of timber located at the Road Commission's Crocker Pit to the highest bidding contractor, Northwest Hardwoods, Inc., at the purchase price of \$35,563.00, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Bishop advised that, as the Road Commission's consultant, he will work closely with Northwest Hardwoods, Inc. to coordinate this work on behalf of the VBCRC.

Chairman Boze opened the meeting to first public comment. Mike Sullins, Bangor Township Supervisor, questioned roadside mowing on CR681 from Bangor City limits North to 24th Avenue. He asked why a mower traveled on CR681 from CR384 South to 24th Avenue where it turned and headed back north and did not continue South of the City limits on CR681? Witkowski indicated that he would look into the situation, but also encouraged Supervisor Sullins to contact the Road Commission instead of waiting for a board meeting in the future.

Ronnie Denney, 57471 CR376, indicates that his road is “flooded all the time”. Lawrence Jarosz, 57408 CR376, showed pictures of the ditch near his house which he indicates were full and should be dug out. Kathy Conley, 57468 CR376, indicates that they never had problems with the rain when CR376 was paved, but now that it’s gravel the rain drains down the road and pools in driveways and yards.

Jim Meyer of 48192 Hill Drive, introduced himself to the Board. He indicates that he has resided on Hill Drive for 60 years. Recently the Road Commission installed gravel on Hill Drive which has “trapped” the water forcing it to drain in homes and yards. He feels that the roadway should be crowned so as to allow the rainwater to disperse. He shared dated pictures with the Board.

Managing Director Witkowski asked all meeting attendees to add their contact information to the board meeting sign-in sheet so that he could follow up with them. He also encouraged all attendees to contact their legislators as road funding is a real problem throughout the State.

Derek Hall of the Michigan Department of Treasury, introduced himself to the Board and those present. He provided a review of the Road Commission’s audit of FY2023. He reviewed the Road Commission’s revenues and the shortfalls and how all Road Commissions throughout the State of Michigan are struggling. Capital Improvements, pension funding and the OPEB liability were also discussed by Hall. No questions were asked by the Board and Hall left the meeting following his presentation.

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Askew to approve the Minutes of the June 5, 2024 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Kurt Doroh, County Commissioner and liaison to the Board, provided a brief update from the Board of Commissioners’ last meeting, including the decision at a Special Meeting to seek proposals for long-range planning as the county needs more space in several departments and areas.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department:

- Our audit is complete and Auditor, Derek Hall, will be here to review the audit with the Board at this meeting.
- The Act 51 report has been submitted to MDOT following the completion of our audit.
- We are working on our annual report and should have it out within the next month.
- You received an email from me on 6/26/24 with the retirement system annual report attached. This has been submitted to the State of Michigan and approved.
- We have two new Road Maintenance Supervisors. Kevin Clayton and Brian Burrows have been promoted from Road Maintenance Employees into these new positions. They are training in their new job duties and are learning quickly.
- The Operating Budget through July 8, 2024, was also provided to the Board.

Operations Department:

Managing Director Witkowski provided the Operations Department’s report in Brucks’ absence. Sealcoat continues to move slowly due to weather. Roadside mowing progress was also discussed.

Engineering Department:

Highway Engineer Barry Anttila provided the following update for the Board:

- CR388: CR653 east to the county line in Pine Grove Township; working on ditching and drainage improvements.
- CR380: Ruggles Rd to 76th Street in South Haven Township; contractor mobilizing 7/8/2024 and work will begin this week with trenching and widening.
- Dealing with multiple drainage issues, including one in Keeler Township.
- Pavement marking contractor has our maps for 2024.

The Board had questions, which were responded to by Anttila and other staff, as follows:

- Keeler Township and the timing of installation of road sharrow cycling symbols;
- Guardrail installation warrants;
- Options for improvements to CR376 East of CR681, Arlington Township;
- Possibility of monitoring FB community groups;
- De-berming operations and the need to be considerate, get the blade out to cut the berm, and work with terrain on each given roadway.

Managing Director Witkowski:

1. I had a meeting with the cell tower representative and our attorney, and they are finalizing a possible agreement for you to consider at your August board meeting. It will include a one-time payment and 15% or 20% of all future revenue of new companies located on the tower.
2. I have met with 94% of the supervisors; I attended 78% of the township meetings will be at 100% after this week and 18% of the city/village meetings.
3. The quarterly SW District meeting is on August 12 at 10:00 at the Kalamazoo Road Commission.
4. We are in the process of installing signs in Keeler Township. Barry and his department have been working hard to help Keeler Township with some signage around their lakes area. Keeler Township will pay all costs and agree to pay for all expenses for at least a decade for these signs.
5. As we know, election day has moved from one day to a month-long process. The VBCRC has been way ahead of others with millage votes in sharing information with the public. We are now in the stage of answering questions and posting and sharing information on our media platforms. We have a good plan; you should see it on social media.

Review of Vouchers:

Voucher #2365	\$	385,785.94	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2366	\$	172,931.75	Payroll
Voucher #2367	\$	908,847.55	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2368	\$	182,590.37	Payroll
Voucher #2369	\$	824,848.87	Accounts Payable
TOTAL	\$	2,475,004.48	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Askew to approve Vouchers 2365-2369 totaling \$2,475,004.48.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski advised the Board that bids were publicly opened on June 25, 2024 for Underbody Scraper Blades and only one bid was received as attached. It was discovered that bid packages were not received by all bidders requesting bidding specifications, although it was properly advertised. Under the circumstances, and because we are not under time pressure, it is the recommendation of the Operations Director that the one bid we received be rejected, in the best interest of the VBCRC, so as to allow staff to conduct

a second bid opening for award at the August 7, 2024 regular meeting. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Askew.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski shared with the Board a Resolution received from Geneva Township monetarily supporting work on CR384 from CR687 to 62nd Street in 2025. Witkowski explained that the 5-year Plan (2024-2028) adopted by the Board includes Road Commission commitments to federal aid projects on Red Arrow Highway in 2025 and, therefore, it is his recommendation to attempt to include this project in the 2026-2028 Plan if the Township can agree to extend its financial assistance. Witkowski also relayed that he had a conversation with Supervisor Nancy Whaley in this regard. Motion by Askew, seconded by Nelson to authorize the Managing Director to sign the proposed letter to Geneva Township.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Burleson to mark the CRA of Michigan official ballot as follows: Does your road agency approve of the revised CRA Constitution and Bylaws? "YES".

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Kinney lost his remote connection at 6:30 PM due to technical difficulties.

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to mark the MCRCSIP official ballot for the Board of Directors Southern Representative as follows: W.C. Askew, Sr. and none other.

YES: 4
NO: 0
ABSENT: 1
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Kinney's remote connection was restored and he re-joined the meeting at 6:32 PM.

Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze to mark the MCRCSIP official ballot for the Board of Directors At-Large Representative as follows: John Rogers, Kalkaska CRC.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Anttila updated the Board on the award of bids as follows, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission:

- 38th Street from Burgess Road to 72nd Avenue, Decatur Township, to the low bidding contractor, MI Paving & Materials, in the amount of \$178,755.00.
- 92nd Avenue from CR669 to Porter Township line, Decatur Township, to the low bidding contractor, MI Paving & Materials, in the amount of \$297,950.75.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

W.C. Askew, Sr.

Attended Covert Township's July board meeting; concerns raised regarding 30th Avenue project and intersection mowing. Attended Geneva Township's July board meeting; concerns raised regarding 70th Street near Baseline Road bridge project as the seeding may have washed away. Anttila to review. Attended Bangor Township's July board meeting; concerns raised regarding mowing.

Rick Boze

Attended Lawrence, Hartford, Hamilton and Keeler Township’s board meetings and spoke regarding the millage renewal. Also attended both VBCRC public information meetings on June 20, 2024 at the Conference Center.

Doug Burleson

Attended Columbia Township’s board meeting on June 18th. Attended the June 20th public information meeting at 11 AM at the Conference Center. Attended the KATS Policy Committee meeting on June 26th.

The Board also asked questions regarding the ability of townships to opt in/out of the County’s ORV ordinance which were responded to by County Commissioner Chappell.

Greg Kinney

Had out-patient surgery on July 9th, but he continues to be driving restricted, which is the reason for his remote attendance at this meeting.

Wayne Nelson

Attended Porter Township’s June meeting where the ORV ordinance was discussed. Attended Antwerp Township’s July meeting last night with Witkowski.

On motion by Burleson, seconded by Askew the Chairman recessed the regular meeting to open a regular meeting of the Board of Public Works at 6:49 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Nelson to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners at 6:50 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to second public comment. County Commissioner Doroh voiced his appreciation for the VBCRC staff who volunteered their time to participate in local Fourth of July parades.

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Nelson to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 6:51 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Board Secretary

Board Chairman