

Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners
Summary of Proposed Minutes

January 9, 2025 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 9th day of January, 2025 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 and Nelson
Managing Director Bret Witkowski
Highway Engineer Barry Anttila
Finance and Human Resources Director Linnea Rader
Operations Director Greg Brucks
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

ABSENT:

None

GUESTS PRESENT:

Ivona Tylka-Suleja, CR376 - Arlington Township

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Askew seconded by Burleson to approve the Agenda.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney seconded by Nelson to approve the Minutes of the December 12, 2024 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. Ivona Tylka-Suleja introduced herself to the Board as residing on CR376 in Arlington Township. She advised she was checking on the progress of paving the segment of CR376 that was turned back to gravel five or six years ago. Managing Director Witkowski explained that he recently met with Arlington Township's new supervisor and that if she could wait that later on the agenda he would provide an update for the Board in this regard. Ms. Tylka-Suleja remained present.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department:

- The Operating Budget through December 31, 2024 was provided to the Board.
- We are working hard on year end preparation with billing, reporting, etc.

Questions were asked by the Board regarding the status of W-2s and the process was explained by Rader.

Operations Department:

- VBCRC crews are working on snow and ice control as winter weather events require. VBCRC winter weather operations are posted on our Facebook page.
- Crews continue to trim and remove trees on Paw Paw Road between 8th Avenue and 40th Avenue in Paw Paw Township.
- Crews are trimming trees and patching potholes on their plow routes as weather allows.
- Auction is advertised and “pre-bidding” has begun on Rangerbid. Live bidding to begin on 1.20.25. Visit <https://bid.rangerbid.com/> to view auction items.
- We are preparing to let Contract Gravel for bid. I would like to either switch to 23A altogether for resurfacing gravel roads or, minimally, put a modification into our current 22A specifications to add additional fines and percent loss by wash into the sieve analysis. The main difference between 22A and 23A gravel is the clay content, with 23A having a higher percentage of clay as shown below:
 - 22A
A stabilized gravel that's a mixture of sand, clay, and crushed stone. It's often used as a base or stabilizing layer for roads and gravel driveways. 22A gravel can also be used to fill potholes in gravel driveways and to start new driveways and parking lots.
 - 23A
Similar to 22A, but with a higher clay content of 9–16%. 23A gravel is typically used to build up and maintain road shoulders.

Brucks recommended that when contract gravel is let for bid in 2025 that we request bids on 22A, 22A Modified, and 23A which will allow staff to more carefully review costs and make a solid recommendation to the Board. Questions were asked by the Board regarding differences in each product, what other agencies were utilizing, etc. which were responded to by Brucks. It was the consensus of the Board to support this bid analysis.

Engineering Department:

- Western Garage Oil/Water Separator - Krohn Excavating was awarded the bid. The VBCRC has received their Performance & Payment Bonds. Staff will work with contractor to develop schedule based on completion date in bidding specifications (May 30, 2025).
- Other 3 projects awarded by the Board are still pending township approvals (Lakeshore Drive, Lawrence Township; 69th Street, Bangor Township; 12th Avenue at CR388; Pine Grove Township).
- Engineering staff continue to work on 2025 Federal Aid projects.

- Grade Inspection meeting held 12/18/24 for paving project on Red Arrow Highway from CR681 to City of Hartford. Corrections will be made for the final project submittal.
- 52nd Street bridge repairs in Columbia Township were completed. The new weight restrictions were lifted, and the bridge posting is back to its original 30/49/64 ton limits.
- Hill Drive estimate has been sent to Lawrence Township for their review.
- Grade Inspection meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2025 for CR 388 project.
- A Request for Proposals was distributed/advertised for the preliminary and final design engineering for the bridge that carries 40th Street over the Paw Paw River in Waverly Township. Proposals are due by 1/31/25 at 3:30 PM and they will be brought to the Board for award at the February 13th meeting.

Managing Director Witkowski:

1. Windows at Western are being installed.
2. My meetings with Township supervisors have started. I met with Almena Township last week. I will email each commissioner as I set up meetings with the Supervisor in your district.

I met with the new Supervisor of Arlington Township, Georgette Peterson, earlier this week and spoke with her about the possibility of work on CR376 from CR681 to CR215. We will follow up with the township in two to three months to continue these discussions.

3. **The next SW Council meeting is in Ottawa County on February 10, 2025. Please let Jill or me know if you would like to attend.**
4. List of projects for which the staff has worked hard to get grants:
 - A. 2025 CR388 from Bloomingdale to City of Gobles \$935,190 grant \$655,454, Bloomingdale Township
 - B. 2025 Red Arrow Hwy. From City of Hartford to CR 681 \$1,118,830 grant \$162,000, Hartford Township
 - C. 2025 CR 215 from 48th Ave to 44th Ave \$1,230,000 grant \$750,000, Arlington Township
 - D. 2025 CR 384 from CR 687 to 62nd Street. \$447,294, local \$200,000, Geneva Township
 - E. 2026 CR 687 from CR 372 to CR 376 \$1,681,237 grant \$912,879, Hartford and Bangor Townships
 - F. 40th Street Bridge, \$3,900,000, grant \$3,500,000, Waverly Township
 - G. 2027 CR 378 to CR687 N \$1,500,000, grant \$774,051 Bangor Township
 - H. 2028 CR681 from M51 to CR352 \$1,900,000, grant \$1,274,771, Hamilton Township
 - I. 2028 CR 653 from M-40 to I-94 \$1,511,000, grant \$1,208,800, Antwerp Township
 - J. 2029 CR 652 from 72nd to Robinson, \$1,002,250, grant \$456,771, Antwerp Township
5. Tracking how far behind we are of other counties in MTF funding:
 - A. Van Buren \$12,530,385.12
 - B. Allegan \$18,836,280.18
 - C. Berrien \$21,005,869.82
 - D. Kalamazoo \$27,394,375.87

Witkowski brought discussion to the Board regarding the VBCRC's loss of urban miles due to the 2020 census which resulted in a loss of \$126,330.00 per year in Michigan Transportation Funds. This translates to a loss of \$1,263,300.00 over a decade, which is when the next mandated census would take place.

Audience member Ivona Tylka-Suleja brought questions regarding the use of marijuana revenues for road projects which were responded to by the Board and Witkowski. Use of these funds for roads is, unfortunately, are restricted. Other possible funding sources were discussed for work on the gravel segment of CR376 in Arlington Township, such as grants or special assessments. Bret will follow up with the Supervisor after March to continue discussions with the hope of coming up with a plan based on the township's budget.

Managing Director Witkowski reviewed Vouchers with the Board as follows:

Voucher #2391	\$	387,867.31	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2392	\$	300,091.28	Payroll
Voucher #2393	\$	156,585.72	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2394	\$	199,505.59	Payroll
Voucher #2395	\$	91,385.15	Accounts Payable
TOTAL	\$	1,135,435.05	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Askew to approve Vouchers 2391-2395 in the amount of \$1,135,435.05, as presented.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney, seconded by Boze to appoint Brien to act as Chairperson of the meeting for the purpose of reorganizing the Board.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Brien opened the floor for nominations for the office of Chairman. Kinney nominated Burleson for the office of Chairman, to which Burleson consented. Boze nominated Askew for the office of Chairman, and Askew consented to the nomination. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations for the office of Chairman were closed by Brien. Roll call votes were taken on each nominee in the order in which they were nominated being announced by Brien as follows:

The first election is for Commissioner Burleson as Chairman.

Roll call:

Askew: NO
Burleson: YES
Kinney: YES
Nelson: NO
Askew: NO

Brien announced that an election would be held for the second nominee, Commissioner Askew as Chairman.

Roll call:

Askew: YES
Burleson: NO
Kinney: NO
Nelson: YES
Boze: YES

Brien announced that the nominee with the majority vote is Commissioner Askew who will serve as Chairman of the Board for the year 2025.

Brien opened the floor for nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman. Askew nominated Burleson for the office of Vice-Chairman, and Burleson accepted the nomination. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman were closed by Brien and an election was held for Burleson as Vice-Chairman.

Roll call:

Askew: YES
Burleson: YES
Kinney: YES
Nelson: YES
Boze: YES

Brien relinquished the Chair to the newly elected Chairman W.C. Askew, Sr.

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of Board Secretary. Boze nominated Brien for the office of Secretary and Brien consented. Hearing no further nominations the nominations for the office of Board Secretary were closed by Askew and an election was held.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of Chief Fiscal Officer. Askew nominated Bret Witkowski as Chief Fiscal Officer, which was seconded by Boze. Hearing no further nominations the Chairman announced that an election would be held for Bret Witkowski as Chief Fiscal Officer for the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of a Board Attorney. Boze nominated Varnum Law. Hearing no further nominations the Chairman announced that an election would be held for Varnum Law as Board Attorney.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of a Representative to the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Policy Committee. Kinney nominated Witkowski. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations were closed and an election was held to designate Witkowski to serve as the Board's Representative on the KATS Policy Committee.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of an Alternate Representative to the KATS Policy Committee. Kinney nominated Burleson. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations were closed and an election was held to designate Burleson as the Board's Alternate Representative to the KATS Policy Committee.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of a Representative to the KATS Technical Committee. Boze nominated Anttila. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations were closed and an election was held to designate Anttila as the Board's representative to the KATS Technical Committee.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the appointment of an Alternate Representative to the KATS Technical Committee. Nelson nominated Joel Hoort. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations were closed and an election was held to designate Joel Hoort as the Board's representative to the KATS Technical Committee.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Askew requested nominations for the designation of a Board Member to serve on the Van Buren County Parks and Recreation Commission. Kinney nominated Askew. Hearing no further nominations, the nominations were closed and an election was held to designate Askew to serve on the Van Buren County Parks and Recreation Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0

Nelson informed Askew of the next Parks Commission meeting being held tomorrow at 10:30 AM. Askew then declined the nomination. Motion by Burleson to rescind the motion adopted to designate Askew to serve as the Board's designee to the Van Buren County Parks and Recreation Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Board discussed the current appointment and obligations relating to the designation. Kinney nominated Nelson, which was seconded by Boze. An election was then held to designate Nelson to serve on the Van Buren County Parks and Recreation Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0

A discussion regarding a possible second millage in 2026 was led by Witkowski. Transportation revenues are declining and the State has not come up with a solution. If the Board decides to move forward it was Witkowski's recommendation to do so on the August 2026 ballot. The Board discussed various options for the proposed millage. Witkowski asked the Board to use its judgment at township meetings to get feedback to bring back for future discussion.

Brucks provided discussion for the Board regarding deBest's supplemental bids for mowing Blue Star Highway submitted when bids were opened in 2024. At that time the Board reserved future consideration for the supplemental bids at Brucks' recommendation as deBest was a newly awarded contractor for this work. Brucks advised that in 2024 he was very pleased with the performance of deBest, Inc. as their work product and timeliness made for a very successful season. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to accept the supplemental bids from deBest, Inc. for the years 2025 (\$5,272.00; \$1,318.00 2025 cost per additional mowing, as authorized) and 2026 (\$5,472.00; \$1,368.00 2026 cost per additional mowing, as authorized), in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Anttila discussed the proposed Resolutions in front of the Board supporting bridge structures to be placed on the list for either full replacement or for preventative maintenance work with the Local Bridge Program. If chosen, these projects could be eligible for participation from Federal and/or State funds in 2028. Anttila discussed funding options for the replacement applications as the structures could move up higher on the State's list if the local commitment is higher than the standard match (plus 100% of engineering costs). Anttila recommended VBCRC commitments on a sliding scale at this time for bridge replacements beginning at the same percentage the Townships were willing to commit to in 2024. Then when the Township's commitment becomes known to the VBCRC the Resolutions can be brought back to the Board for amendment to the percentage match as the Township up to 10%. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to adopt the following Resolutions:

RESOLUTION 2025-01

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for the replacement of the structure that carries 8th Avenue over the Black River in Geneva Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The structure is posted for weight limits of 31/40/40; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge does not meet present day standards for shoulder clearance or traffic lane widths, and the bridge does not provide the safety margins now required by present day design standards; and,

WHEREAS: The current structure restricts the waterway causing scour and erosion issues; and,

WHEREAS: Because of the deterioration of the present structure and its poor rating, a complete replacement would be in the best interest of the traveling public; and,

WHEREAS: The Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County supports a complete replacement of the 8th Avenue structure and hereby financially commits to the replacement as follows: a minimum of Seven and One-Half Percent (7½%), and not to exceed 10% in Local Funds to match Geneva Township's commitment, plus one-half of all engineering costs to be split 50/50 with Geneva Township.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby concurs in the importance of the replacement of this structure and urges approval of the Application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 8th Avenue over the Black River in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said replacement can be ready within 1-year after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-02

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for the replacement of the bridge that carries 2nd Avenue over the Mentha Drain in Pine Grove Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The structure is posted for weight limits of 31/53/67; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge does not meet present day standards for shoulder clearance or traffic lane widths, and the bridge does not provide the safety margins now required by present day design standards; and,

WHEREAS: Because of the deterioration of the present structure a complete replacement would be in the best interest of the traveling public.

WHEREAS: The Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County supports a complete replacement of the 2nd Avenue structure and hereby financially commits to the replacement as follows: a minimum of five percent (5%) and not to exceed 10% in Local Funds to match Pine Grove Township's commitment, plus one-half of all engineering costs to be split 50/50 with Pine Grove Township.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby concurs in the importance of the replacement of this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 2nd Avenue over the Mentha Drain in Pine Grove Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said replacement can be ready within 1-year after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-03

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries Blue Star Highway over the Black River in South Haven Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: epoxy overlay on deck and approach slabs, and re-seal joints; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries Blue Star Highway over the Black River in South Haven Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-04

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries CR687 over the South Branch of the Black River in Geneva Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, and possible rip rap work on the North abutment; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries CR687 over the South Branch of the Black River in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-05

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries CR681 over the Paw Paw River in Lawrence Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge is in need of an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, and concrete repairs on the approach slabs; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries CR681 over the Paw Paw River in Lawrence Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-06

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries CR380 over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: epoxy overlay on deck and approach slabs, and re-seal the reference line (joint); and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries CR380 over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-07

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries 16th Avenue over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, re-seal joints, and seal fascia beams; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 16th Avenue over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

RESOLUTION 2025-08

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries 44th Avenue over the Paw Paw River in Waverly Township in 2028; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, and seal railings and fascia; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 44th Avenue over the Paw Paw River in Waverly Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

AYES: 5

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTIONS 2025-01 through 2025-08 ADOPTED.

Anttila discussed the 2025 safety project in Arlington Township on CR215 and requested that the Board adopt the proposed Resolution allowing signature of the Contract by Barry Anttila and Linnea Rader on behalf of the VBCRC. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION 2025-09

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Highway Engineer, Barry Anttila (BarryAnttila@vbcrc.org), and the Finance and Human Resources Director, Linnea Rader (LinneaRader@vbcrc.org), are hereby AUTHORIZED to execute M.D.O.T. Contract No. 24-5527; Control Section HRRR 80000; Job Number 217987CON for work as follows:

Hot mix asphalt base crushing and shaping, shoulder widening and paving along County Road 215 from 48th Avenue to 44th Avenue; including drainage, concrete curb and gutter, spillway, guardrail, riprap, shoulder corrugations, permanent signing and pavement markings; and all together with necessary related work.

YES: 5
NO: 0
RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

Wayne Nelson

Attended Almena Township's December meeting. Also attended a meeting with Almena Township's Supervisor Joe Leduc last Friday together with Managing Director Witkowski. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to approve Nelson's request for a Special Per Diem for his attendance at the annual meeting with Supervisor Leduc.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Greg Kinney

No report.

Doug Burleson

Attended Columbia Township on 12/17/24. The Township asked that he pass along compliments to the plow driver on 24th Avenue in the Scott Lake area.

Rick Boze

Attended Keeler Township on December 3rd. Attended Hamilton Township on the 10th. Attended Lawrence and Hartford on the 12th.

W.C. Askew, Sr.

Attended South Haven Township's board meeting last night.

On motion by Burleson, seconded by Nelson the Regular Meeting was recessed at 6:37 PM to open a Regular Meeting of the Board of Public Works.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney, seconded by Boze to reconvene the Regular Meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners at 6:47 PM with all Members present.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

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

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 6:48 PM.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.