

Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

November 7, 2024 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 7th day of November, 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 and Nelson
Managing Director Bret Witkowski
Highway Engineer Barry Anttila
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

ABSENT:

None

GUESTS PRESENT:

County Commissioner Doroh

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Burleson seconded by Askew to approve the Agenda.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney seconded by Nelson to approve the Minutes of the October 3, 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 updated the Board as follows: County Commission reappointed Road Commissioners Nelson and Askew; review of County election results.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department by Managing Director Witkowski:

- The Operating Budget through November 5, 2024, is attached.
- The Road-eo and Employee Recognition Event was a success. Thank you all for attending and a special thank you to Commissioner Boze for his assistance in judging again this year.
- The Operations Team had training Monday that included team building and safety training. We did Real Colors personality assessment which went amazingly well. I've received a lot of great feedback from that portion of the day. We also discussed how to have difficult conversations and stop gossip in the workplace. On the safety side they went over pre-trip inspections.
- Barry, David Clift and I attended the Rural Task Force meeting for our region. At the meeting, all projects submitted for 2026-2029 funding were reviewed and prioritized and an additional project for 2025 was added. We were able to ensure the importance and priority of the Road Commission's projects were recognized and approved for funding. The projects that were voted for are:

- o CR 388 from the Village of Bloomingdale to the City of Gobles (2025)
- o CR 687 from CR 372 to CR 376 (2026)
- o CR 378 from the City of Bangor to CR 687 N. (2027) – (Will require the Township to modify their resolution to assist in funding this section.)
- o CR 681 from M-51 to CR 352 (2028)
- o CR 652 from 72nd Avenue to Robinson Road (2029)

In addition, the Road Commission's 7 remaining projects that were submitted for funding were prioritized and placed on the illustrative list in case additional funding is made available.

We are working to get Township billings sent out to Townships.

Operations Department by Managing Director Witkowski:

- Pipe replacements, ditching, shoulders, and hot mix asphalt patching continue, along with other winter prep of roads and equipment.
- 2024 Contract gravel wrapped up last week.
- 3rd round of roadside mowing in Covert and Paw Paw continues; Hartford, Bangor and Lawrence are complete.
- Logging at Crocker Pit is moving along nicely and should wrap up by the time of the meeting.
- Trapper has gotten permission from the private landowner south of 28th Ave in Alma Township and set up late last week. As of Monday, he had already gotten 1 beaver. The small hole that has been torn in the dam before setting traps, has allowed the water to recede from the roads surface already. Currently the trapper is also set up at additional locations in Porter and Decatur Townships.

Witkowski also relayed that the VBCRC accomplished 255 miles of sealcoat-fog seal during the 2024 season and gave kudos to all staff who worked hard to get the job done.

Engineering Department:

- Pavement markings continue. The contractor has most of the road "striping" done, leaving bike symbols and sharrows yet to do.
- Township requests for 2025 work are coming in. We are working to get the townships estimates as soon as we can following receipt of a request.
- Should have a Lawrence Twp. and Bangor Twp. job out for bid this month with hopes to open bids on Dec. 10.
- 40th St. Bridge in Waverly Township approved for replacement in 2027.

Anttila also discussed the Road Commission's bridge preventative maintenance projects for 2026. The pavement marking program was also discussed, and a possible collaboration with other counties being looked into.

Managing Director Witkowski:

1. The VBCRC was fortunate to be chosen as only one of three large bridges approved in Michigan. The 40th bridge over Paw Paw will cost **\$3,900,000**, and Waverly Township and VBCRC will each pay 5% towards it. The bridge will be built in 2027; it will be the first bridge built in Van Buren County since 2015. MDOT will make the official announcement at the end of November 2024.
2. **At the last Van Buren County Commission meeting, Commissioner Askew and Commissioner Nelson's terms were extended for another six years. Congratulations.**
3. Painting a plow is going great. We start picking them up next week and will display them on the side of the old garage. Then, we will have an online contest to see which plow is the favorite. The winning school will win a pizza party for the art class, which I will pay for.
4. The meeting with the grant writers had to be moved from November 1st to November 15th due to health issues with their mother-in-law, which took them out of town this week.
5. The new signs for the Western Garage and the Bloomingdale Garage are scheduled to be installed soon. The signs company's lift went out, so once it is fixed, they will be out to put up the new signs.
6. Harvesting at the Pine Grove pit is going on this week. The forester we have already paid for will be on hand to ensure everything is done correctly. The logging should be done next week.

Witkowski also reported as follows:

- Sealcoat and fog seal wrap-up meeting was recently held with staff.
- Discussion regarding the Paint the Plow program and future planned programs.
- Speed limit setting requirements were discussed in light of the amendment to the statute.
- Road millages were also discussed; township and countywide.

Review of Vouchers:

Voucher #2382	\$	174,056.31	Payroll
Voucher #2383	\$	520,335.48	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2384	\$	181,481.65	Payroll
Voucher #2385	\$	395,856.98	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2386	\$	170,545.01	Payroll
TOTAL	\$	1,442,275.43	

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Askew to approve the Vouchers totaling \$1,442,275.43.

YES: 5
 NO: 0
 MOTION CARRIED.

Chairman Boze presented Commissioner Kinney with a Certificate of Recognition and congratulated him for 15 years of dedicated service as a Road Commissioner for Van Buren County. The Board and those present celebrated with a round of applause.

At Witkowski’s request, Brien provided background regarding staff’s request to de-certify Hamilton Street in Antwerp Township as follows:

Earlier this year Antwerp Township submitted a Resolution to the VBCRC stating that it had received a petition from the residents along Hamilton Street requesting that the Township “start the process starting at 56th Ave heading south to the first resident at 56568 Hamilton Street to construct a culdesec (sic) at the ending location”. The Resolution also recommended that the VBCRC “begin the process with the formation of a legal description and provide all costs associated with certifying Hamilton Street to Antwerp Township”. It was then discovered that Hamilton Street was never removed from certification after the previous attempt to get easements from property owners failed in 2014/15. Meanwhile, the VBCRC moved forward with Antwerp Township to attempt to get easements from all property owners, including a cul-de-sac turn around at the southern end for equipment turnaround purposes, and a dedicated easement for a landlocked parcel at the southern end of Hamilton Street. The VBCRC and the Township were not successful in any of these endeavors. Therefore, because the Road Commission does not currently maintain Hamilton Street from 56th Avenue South for 265’, staff recommends deleting the segment for Act 51 Transportation funds. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Burleson to adopt Resolution 2024-16, as presented. Additional questions were asked by the Board regarding Antwerp Township’s knowledge of the information, which were responded to by staff.

RESOLUTION 2024-16

WHEREAS, Hamilton Street from 56th Avenue South for 265’, Antwerp Township, Van Buren County, Michigan appears on the Certification Map of the Van Buren County Road Commission; and,

WHEREAS, it appears that Hamilton Street South of 56th Avenue was assumed into certification in error when the microfiche films were digitized by the Road Commission in approximately 1981 because Hamilton Street, as it now exists, is West of the road originally depicted in the microfiche film; and,

WHEREAS, the Road Commission does not currently maintain Hamilton Street from 56th Avenue South for 265' as the agency:

1. Was unable to obtain easements from property owners granting right-of-way to the Van Buren County Road Commission, including a cul-de-sac at the southern most end for equipment turnaround purposes;
2. Was unable to obtain a dedicated easement for a landlocked parcel at the southern end of Hamilton Street.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Hamilton Street from 56th Avenue South for 265' in Antwerp Township, Van Buren County, Michigan is hereby deleted for Act 51 Transportation funds, as recommended by Van Buren County Road Commission staff.

YES: 5

NO: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Witkowski reviewed the proposed recommendation to increase Schedule C Equipment Rental Rates in 2025 to more accurately cover actual costs based on the prior 5-year average equipment maintenance costs. Motion by Askew, seconded by Burleson to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION 2023-17

WHEREAS: The provisions of the rules and regulations of the Michigan Department of Treasury requires that the Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners and the Michigan Department of Transportation annually determine uniform equipment rental rates, referred to as "Schedule C", representing charges to be made by the Road Commission for the use of County Road Commission equipment against force account construction and maintenance projects; and,

WHEREAS: The Michigan Department of Treasury has provided that individual County Road Commissions may adjust the published rates in "Schedule C" to reflect either the increase or decrease in equipment costs in their particular county; and,

WHEREAS: In the opinion of the Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners, the rental rates as set forth in "Schedule C" are insufficient to meet actual equipment expense.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the equipment rental rate charged by the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Van Buren, Michigan for the equipment owned by said Road Commission shall be set at 141% of the published rates as shown on "Schedule C" for the year 2025.

YES: 5

NO: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Witkowski presented the 2025 preliminary budget summary in the absence of Finance and HR Director Rader as follows:

MTF – MDOT estimates indicate the VBCRC should receive approximately \$12,793,484.35. Based on receipts to date for 2024 we have estimated 2024 MTF revenues to be slightly lower than that number at \$12,425,770.00. We will carefully monitor the modifications and receipts for 2025 and make any adjustments that are necessary.

Recommended heavy maintenance and maintenance projects are indicated in the attached budget (pages 3-5). The asset management plan sets forth a reasonable plan for improvements. This preliminary budget includes all of the 2025 projects as well as two additional projects which Townships have sent resolutions in support of.

Road Projects include:

- CR 215 from 44th Avenue to 48th Avenue is budgeted to include safety improvements. This is a federal aid safety project.
- Red Arrow Hwy from the City of Hartford to CR 681 is budgeted to have the road surface milled off and re-paved.
- CR 388 from the Village of Bloomingdale to the City of Gobles is also budgeted to have the road surface milled off and re-paved.
- On Red Arrow Highway at CR 652 South the traffic signal is going to be upgraded.
- CR 384 from CR 687 to 62nd Street is budgeted to have the road surface milled off and re-paved. This is an additional project that was not included in the asset management plan, but the Township resolution dedicates just under 50% of estimated costs.
- 12th Avenue at CR 388 is budgeted for intersection improvements. Following our road project on CR 388, the Township would like the intersection that approaches to be raised and improved. The Township will primarily fund this project with a \$15,000 contribution from the Road Commission.

Routine maintenance has been budgeted to accomplish the basic needs of the road system.

In special maintenance (page 6), we have budgeted for 50 miles of primary seal coat with fog seal. Additionally, we have budgeted for crackseal, trees, drainage improvements, de-berming and other special maintenance activities as listed.

The County-wide millage allocations have been preliminarily estimated based upon the projected increases from 2024 collections. The County Treasurer will forward the actual estimate once they have numbers available.

Capital Expenditures (page 8) are outlined with the necessary items for 2025 that can be accomplished with the \$1.5 million annual allocation. Additionally, the facility allocation of \$405,000 has been budgeted to continue improvements.

The budget hearing is scheduled for the December Board meeting.

Witkowski presented information regarding the proposed 2025 wage adjustment, including data from Social Security Administration, Michigan Transportation Fund, the Midwest CPI, and Van Buren Taxable Values. Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to approve a cost-of-living adjustment for 2025 of 2.9%.

YES: 5
 NO: 0
 MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Burleson to approve The Daltons' offer to extend prices for the 2025 season, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5
 NO: 0
 MOTION CARRIED.

The Board discussed brush/trees along the guardrail section of 30th Street south of M43 in Alma Township and asked specifically about maintenance.

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Nelson to accept the proposal from Yellow Rose Transport to extend its bid price of \$64.00/ton for CST Trap Rock for the 2025 season, provided the VBCRC take delivery of total tonnage needed for 2025 by April 1, 2025.

YES: 5
 NO: 0
 MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Burleson, seconded by Boze to adopt the following staff tributary resolutions:

RESOLUTION 2024-18

WHEREAS: On October 24, 2024 Kirby Heindorf, Traffic Services Employee, graduated from the American Public Works Association (APWA) Michigan Road Scholar Program; and,

WHEREAS: The Michigan Road Scholar Program is a three-year comprehensive training program where, for one week per year, workers are trained in various aspects of municipal road right-of-way work; and,

WHEREAS: Attendance is required at all sessions, including evening functions, that include training in work zone safety, snow and ice control, traffic incident management, equipment operations and safety, tree pruning/chainsaw and chipper safety, driving/trailer safety, pesticide use/licensing, pipe materials/construction techniques, trenching/shoring, and more; and,

WHEREAS: Kirby Heindorf has successfully attended all three training years and has been designated as an **APWA MICHIGAN ROADS SCHOLAR**.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby recognizes and honors Kirby Heindorf for his dedication to Public Works through challenging himself professionally toward personal growth and career enhancement.

RESOLUTION 2024-19

WHEREAS: On October 24, 2024 Chris Milhollin, Road Maintenance Employee, graduated from the American Public Works Association (APWA) Michigan Road Scholar Program; and,

WHEREAS: The Michigan Road Scholar Program is a three-year comprehensive training program where, for one week per year, workers are trained in various aspects of municipal road right-of-way work; and,

WHEREAS: Attendance is required at all sessions, including evening functions, that include training in work zone safety, snow and ice control, traffic incident management, equipment operations and safety, tree pruning/chainsaw and chipper safety, driving/trailer safety, pesticide use/licensing, pipe materials/construction techniques, trenching/shoring, and more; and,

WHEREAS: Chris Milhollin has successfully attended all three training years and has been designated as an **APWA MICHIGAN ROADS SCHOLAR**.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby recognizes and honors Chris Milhollin for his dedication to Public Works through challenging himself professionally toward personal growth and career enhancement.

YES: 5

NO: 0

RESOLUTIONS 2024-18 AND 2024-19 ADOPTED.

Motion by Askew, seconded by Burleson to adopt the 2025 Regular Meeting Schedule, as proposed:

*January 9

February 13

March 6

*April 3

May 7 (Wednesday)

June 4

*July 9

August 6

September 10

*October 2 (Thursday)

November 6

December 11

*Also Board of Public Works.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

In the absence of Rader, Witkowski and Brien presented information for the Board regarding his year-end evaluation. Witkowski's self-evaluation was included for the Board's review, as well as his individual and organizational goals for 2025. The Board was asked to complete ratings with comments to be provided to Board Chair Boze prior to December 2, 2024.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

W.C. Askew, Sr.

10/8 attended regular meetings in Geneva Township, Bangor Township and Covert Township. 10/9 attended regular meeting in South Haven Township. 11/4 attended the Southwest Council Meeting.

Rick Boze

11/8 attended regular meeting in Hamilton Township. 11/10 attended regular meetings in Lawrence and Hartford Townships.

Board discussion regarding the intersection of CR681 at Red Arrow Highway and possibility of cost sharing for additional signs by Hartford and Lawrence Townships.

Request by Boze for special per diem for commissioners attending Snow Plow Road-ee. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Burleson.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Doug Burleson

10/16 attended Bloomingdale Township regular meeting. 11/6 attended Pine Grove Township regular meeting.

Discussion regarding north side of bridge on CR388 "washing in". Asked to place on punch list.

Greg Kinney

No report.

Wayne Nelson

Attended Antwerp Township regular meeting on 10/8. Attended Porter Township regular meeting on 10/9. Attended Alma Township regular meeting on 10/16.

Attended the CRA Southwest District Council meeting on 11/4. He commended the Managing Director for establishing solid working relationships with the Directors of the CRC's in the Southwest District.

Nelson also congratulated County Commissioner Doroh on his successful campaign.

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 6:29 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Board Secretary

Board Chairman