Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

October 8, 2026 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 8th day of October, 2026 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
Finance and Human Resources Director Linnea Rader
Operations Director Greg Brucks
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

ABSENT:

None

GUESTS PRESENT:

Kerlvin Kiewiet, Rainbow Beach Subdivision
David Van Doren, Rainbow Beach Subdivision
Vic Pantea, Scott Lake
Thomas Hammond, Scott Lake

Chairman Burleson called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Witkowski requested the addition of Agenda Item 10(G), Request for Permissive Use Agreement. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve the request for the addition to the Agenda.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve the Agenda, as revised.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney seconded by Boze to approve the Minutes of the September 2, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. Kelvin Kiewiet introduced himself to the Board as residing in the Rainbow Beach Subdivision. He explained the handout he had provided to the Board prior to the meeting commencement. He is here today regarding Park and Pierce Avenues where access is being sought by a resident owning the 18 acre parcel to the north of the subdivision. Mr. Kiewiet had several asks of the Road Commission including a request to state on the record whether Park or Pierce Avenues have been accepted into the county road system and, if so, to produce the acceptance record; do not issue a driveway permit onto those “paper roads” until jurisdiction can be established; keep outsider access and any new driveway off those “unaccepted” strips until the record is clear. He also declared that his “attorney has advised him to wait for our decision on the driveway

permit". Mr. Kiewiet requested that the permit not be granted while acceptance is still "unclear". Witkowski asked Mr. Kiewiet to contact him the next day to further discuss as he had just received a file with the certification records from Lansing.

County Commission Update:

The September 2026 Board of Commissioners Activity Report was shared with the Board.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department:

Server Upgrade

- The server upgrade that has been underway for almost two years is in its final stretch.
- Gene and an employee have been working Fridays and Saturdays for the past month to wrap it up.
- A new rack server is being installed, which will be more compact and easier to work with.
- Wiring is being cleaned up and obsolete equipment removed.

New Phone System

- We are moving to a new phone system that lets employees return calls from the road through our system instead of their personal cell phones.
- This keeps personal numbers private and prevents after-hours calls and texts to staff.
- Staff can respond to concerns and requests sooner, including from the job site, where they can answer follow-up questions on the spot.

Document Management (Nucleus One)

- Our retention schedule requires us to keep a large volume of paper, and we are out of room. Both office vaults, the storage out back, and the filing cabinets on the mezzanine are full.
- Filing and retrieving paper records, especially for FOIA requests, takes a lot of staff time.
- We have invested in Nucleus One, which stores our documents electronically and makes them searchable.
- All 2025 and 2026 permits are loaded, and 2024 driveway permits are in progress. We will keep working backward.
- Staff in the field can use the app to check whether a permit is on file for a driveway going in.
- Board minutes are also going in, so we can search more than 100 years of minutes to find when something happened instead of reading through hundreds of pages.
- Township files are being added too, which will let us give township officials and residents a better history of projects and when they took place.

Samsara Trial

- We are starting a trial of Samsara on five pieces of equipment as a possible replacement for our current GPS system.
- It includes a work order system for the shop, which currently tracks maintenance on a whiteboard. With hundreds of pieces of equipment, that leaves too much room for things to be missed.
- Tasks can be assigned to mechanics and tracked so nothing slips through the cracks and equipment is maintained properly.
- Outward-facing cameras provide ground intelligence, reporting potholes, downed signs, and anything else out of the ordinary as vehicles travel our roads.
- It also detects G-force changes, which helps flag gravel roads that are getting rough.
- We will also receive ground intelligence data from other Samsara-equipped vehicles on our roads, such as delivery vehicles.
- Video helps with liability claims by showing the conditions our crews came upon, such as a tree down in the middle of the night. It works much like a body camera does for police.
- Cameras also support crew safety by recording what happens during traffic regulating and road closures.

Neighborhood Roads Fund

- There is a Neighborhood Roads Fund webinar on Tuesday, so I should have a good update for you at Thursday's meeting.
- We are hoping to learn more about when to expect funds and how much comes from marijuana revenue versus corporate income tax revenue.
- MDOT estimated we would receive approximately $3.5 million for the year. To date, we have received $1.5 million.
- By my best estimate, approximately $250,000 to $300,000 of that is marijuana revenue.
- For now, the budget includes only the corporate income tax portion we have received, which we will be able to put into the roads next year.

Five-Year Plan

- I worked with Engineering and Operations to put together the updated five-year plan. We will be presenting more on it next month.
- Projects are scored with a point system based on the Transportation Asset Management Plan criteria, so our decisions are data-driven.
- As additional funding comes in and we decide where it should go, we will be able to defend those decisions to the public.

Open Enrollment

- Open enrollment wraps up this week. All you need to do is make sure your beneficiaries are up to date. If you missed it, let us know and we will send you the link to update your life insurance beneficiary information.

Roadeo

- Thank you to Commissioner Rick Boze for coming out to help judge at the Roadeo.
- The Roadeo went really well. We had a small snafu with lunch, but it all got worked out.
- A huge thank you to Brian and Brenda for pulling lunch together for us on short notice.

Training

- Doug Cartland, our management consultant, came in last Thursday and led a wonderful training on maintaining and improving our high level of excellence as a team. He talked a lot about sustainability and what we need to do to keep moving forward in a positive direction.

Operating Budget – Attached through October 5, 2026.

In addition, Rader discussed the recent death of a fellow Eaton County Road Commission staff member in a construction zone. Rader had spent time today in Eaton County to provide support to their Manager and staff. The Board and all present shared in the grief of losing another road worker in this preventable incident.

Operations Department:

- Sealcoat for 2026 is in the book!
- Drainage crews have been busy ditching and replacing cross culverts.
- 2nd round of roadside mowing is complete.
- One of our 2026 Western Star Plow Trucks will be on display at this year's Superintendents Association of Michigan (SAM) Conference.

Brucks also discussed fog seal, which as of today is almost 70% complete. He also relayed that operations will conduct a third round of mowing which begins on Monday.

The Board relayed several See-Click-Fix complaints which were taken by staff and entered into the agency’s system.

Engineering Department:

Department Report was read by Witkowski in Anttila’s absence:

• CR 365 between the Village of Lawrence and I-94 in Lawrence Township is complete and open to traffic! Paint lines are coming soon.
• 12th Avenue/Mill Lake Road in Bloomingdale Township was paved this week, paint lines and gravel shoulders are to follow.

• CR 687 between CR 376 and CR 372 in Bangor/Hartford Townships continues this week with replacing driveway culverts and crosspipe replacements.
• Bids were opened for large culvert replacements on 82nd Street in Covert Township and on 77th Street in South Haven Township.

Managing Director Witkowski:

1. **The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 5th, 2026.**
2. Annual Township meetings will be at the Lawrence Administration Building on Wednesday, October 14th at 6:00 PM, and Thursday, October 15th at 1:00 PM.
3. Wednesday, October 28th: Michigan Tech training on Gravel roads at VBCRC from 8 a.m.–Noon. This is open to all townships, cities, and village officials. We will also send invites out to the county commissioners.
4. I met with all 18 supervisors for my annual one-on-one meetings and attended 16 Township night board meetings. I have yet to attend Hamilton and Porter Township night board meetings, which I will complete in October and November.
5. Commission Boze and I attended the Commissioners' conference, and it was a good conference.
6. A county in our region asked me, through their county administration and board chair, to consult as they begin the process of replacing their road commissioner manager. I will not be compensated for this, just one county helping another county.
7. The CRA feature on VBCRC came out this month. I have copies in each box for you to take to your townships.
8. We have 61 vendors using ACH for payments.
9. The new signage is up on Red Arrow and CR 681; Lawrence Township and Hartford Township paid for it. Kirby has begun installing new safety signs for Mattawan schools, which Mattawan schools are paying for through Antwerp Township.
10. We will be doing a paint-a-plow for high schools this year. The theme for this school year is 250 years of freedom; you have some of the proposals for the plows on your table for Alyssa to approve.
11. Fuel costs are up 13.78% for diesel and 12.77% for unleaded for the year. We are averaging $14,636 in fuel costs per month through August.

Witkowski also stressed the importance of construction zone safety. He also congratulated Greg Brucks on his appointment to the Board of Trustees in Porter Township. Witkowski also discussed the Bridge Council's recent award of another bridge replacement in Van Buren County along with a preventative maintenance bridge package of five bridges. Finally, the Southwestern District Council Meeting is being held on November 9th at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County.

Review of Vouchers:

Voucher #2484	$	211,806.52	Payroll
Voucher #2485	$	971,607.69	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2486	$	202,187.95	Payroll
Voucher #2487	$	843,087.41	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2488	$	221,666.36	Payroll
TOTAL	**$**	**2,450,355.93**	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Kinney to approve Vouchers 2484 through 2488, inclusive, in the total aggregate amount of $2,450,355.93.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski presented the proposed 2027 Regular Board Meeting Schedule. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt the 2027 Regular Meeting Schedule, as presented.

* January 7
February 4
March 4
* April 1
May 5 (Wednesday - Summer Hours)
June 2
* July 14
August 4
September 1
* October 7 (Thursday - Winter Hours)
November 4
December 16

* Board of Public Works

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski presented the updated Township Partnership Guide and generally reviewed the updates for the Board and those present including updates to staff information, and policies and procedures. The biggest change to the Guide is contained within the Road Project Procedure, which has recently been updated and will be discussed in depth with our Townships at next week's Township Annual Meetings. Beginning next construction season, any project that is let for bid will be awarded by the VBCRC without further approval by the Township unless the lowest responsible bid comes in OVER the estimated project cost. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to approve the Township Partnership Booklet, as presented, allowing staff the ability to make minor changes to wording and formatting as may be necessary to finalize for distribution to the Townships, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Bids to remove and replace existing culverts on 82nd Street in Covert Township were reviewed by Witkowski with the Board. Upon recommendation it was moved by Askew, seconded by Boze to award the bid to the low bidding contractor, Krohn Excavating, LLC, for the total bid price of $386,990.00 upon approval of the project by Covert Township, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission and Covert Township.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski reviewed bids with the Board for removal and replacement of existing culverts/catch basins on 77th Street in South Haven Township. Upon recommendation it was moved by Askew, seconded by Boze to award the bid to the low bidding contractor, Krohn Excavating, LLC, for the total bid price of $149,271.00 upon approval of the project by South Haven Township, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission and South Haven Township.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski explained a bill that has been introduced that would exempt qualifying snow plows and other emergency vehicles from certain federal diesel emissions requirements. The effort began with the Chippewa County Road Commission where they had six plow trucks down due to emissions systems during a single December 2025 storm. The CRA developed the attached Resolution as a way to support the Protecting Lifesaving Operations During Winter

Storms (PLOW) Act. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PLOW STORMS ACT
2026-19

WHEREAS, the Van Buren County Road Commission is charged by state law with maintaining safe and efficient transportation on county roads and highways for the residents, businesses, emergency responders and visitors to Van Buren County; and

WHEREAS, county road agencies provide critical winter maintenance services, including snow and ice removal operations that allow law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, school transportation, utility crews and the traveling public to safely access Michigan's roadways during winter weather events; and

WHEREAS, many county road agencies throughout Michigan, particularly in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, conduct snow and ice removal operations on a near-daily basis during the winter season, often under severe weather conditions that include substantial snowfall, extreme cold temperatures, and prolonged storm events; and

WHEREAS, county road agencies operate specialized heavy-duty snowplow trucks equipped with front plows, underbody blades, wing plows, and material spreaders that are essential to maintaining passable roadways and ensuring continuity of transportation services; and

WHEREAS, modern diesel emissions systems installed on these specialized winter maintenance vehicles have demonstrated significant reliability challenges during snowplowing operations due to the unique operating conditions associated with winter maintenance activities, including prolonged idling, low-speed operation, stop-and-go movement, repeated maneuvering, highly variable engine loads, and extreme temperatures; and

WHEREAS, emissions-related system failures frequently result in engine derating, reduced vehicle performance or complete removal of snowplow trucks from service during active winter weather events when reliable operation is most critical; and

WHEREAS, county road agencies serve as “re-responders” during winter weather emergencies by opening and maintaining roadways so that police, fire, emergency medical services, utility crew and other emergency responders can perform their duties; and

WHEREAS, emergency vehicles are currently afforded exemptions under federal diesel emissions regulations in recognition of their public safety mission, yet municipally operated snowplow equipment performing similarly critical public safety functions is not included within those exemptions; and

WHEREAS, the PLOW Storms Act would recognize the unique operational requirements and public safety role of municipally operated snow removal equipment by including such vehicles within the existing emergency vehicle framework of the federal Clean Air Act while engaged in winter maintenance operations; and

WHEREAS, passage of the PLOW Storms Act would improve the reliability of winter maintenance fleets, enhance public safety, reduce costly downtime, and help ensure continuity of essential transportation services during severe weather events;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the VAN BUREN County Road Commission hereby expresses its strong support for the PLOW Storms Act and urges its prompt consideration and passage by the United States Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission respectfully urges Michigan's congressional delegation to support legislation recognizing the critical public safety role of municipally operated snow removal equipment and the need for reliable winter maintenance operations.

YES: 5
NO: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Rader provided discussion with the Board regarding the proposed Five-Year Road Plan. This year 2031 has been added to the Plan. As in years past, we have used the criteria set forth in the Road Commission's Transportation Asset Management to develop the proposed Five-Year Road Plan. The criteria is as follows:

- PASER road ratings
- Connectivity
- Traffic Counts
- Funding Sources

Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to approve the *2027-2031 Five-Year Road Plan for the Van Buren County Road Commission as presented by Finance and Human Resources Director Rader allowing staff the ability to make minor changes to wording and formatting as may be necessary to finalize, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission. Questions were asked regarding the criteria used, which were responded to by Rader. Additional questions were asked about other segments of road way and planned/unplanned improvements.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

*The Road Commission's 2027-2031 Five-Year Road Plan is available for inspection upon contact the Administrative Office at 269-674-8011.

Rader presented the 2027 Preliminary Budget for the Board and those present as follows:

MTF – Currently I'm presenting a conservative estimate for 2027 MTF revenues. We are still several months from knowing where the MTF stands for 2026 and comparing the estimated vs actual estimates. Once we can do that with some accuracy, we will update the 2027 MTF estimates.

NRF – Neighborhood Roads Fund. In the preliminary 2027 budget I'm presenting $1.5 million, which is what we have received to date that I've calculated to be as a result of Cooperate Income tax (CIT) rather than Marijuana tax. My recommendation would be to plan to spend the CIT portion that is collected each year in the following calendar year. Based on collection timing, we won't be receiving fiscal year dollars until the tail end of construction season anyway. This will ensure we do not find ourselves in a financial crunch going into any winter season.

State and Federal Aid – This is a big year for bridges. With the 40th Street in Waverly bridge and the CR 657 culvert turning into a bridge, we have a lot of state revenues this year. Those two alone accounts for $4.27 million in state aid. The CR 378 road project brings in another $480,000 rounding out a substantial state and federal aid year.

County-wide Millage – I'm estimating a 2% increase. As final numbers come in, we can adjust as needed. The County Treasurer will forward the actual estimate once they have numbers available.

Township Contributions as well as Local Heavy and Local Special Maintenance are all place holders awaiting Township decisions on projects. These three accounts offset each other.

Recommended heavy maintenance and maintenance projects are indicated in the attached budget (pages 3-5). Based on NRF revenues, we have been able to utilize the asset management plan to select the next two projects to move forward with in 2027.
Road Projects include:

- CR 378 from the City of Bangor to CR 687 N is budgeted for reconstruction. This is a federal aid project as well as Bangor Township funds.
- CR 681 from Red Arrow Highway to CR 365 is budgeted for a crush, shape and repave. This is one of the projects the NRF is making possible.
- CR 665 from 24th Avenue to the Village of Bloomingdale is budgeted for a crush, shape and repave as well as a large culvert replacement. The NRF is also making this

project possible.

- The CR 657 culvert that will become a bridge is budgeted for this year. A legislative allocation has been made to cover a majority of the cost of the replacement.

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

In special maintenance, we budgeted for almost 70 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. In 2026 and 2027 we have focused primary tree funds on larger projects to ensure we can move forward with road projects as funding allows. In late 2026 and 2027 this focus will be on CR 669 between Old Swamp Road and M-40.

Capital Expenditures are outlined with the necessary items for 2027. We have added an additional $500,000 to the annual allocation due to the need to replace a distributor. Additionally, the facility allocation of $415,000 has been reduced to $315,000 based on the overrun of costs for 2026.

The budget hearing is scheduled for the December Board meeting.

Witkowski presented a request by a landowner for a Permissive Use Agreement to direct bore underground private sewer line under Woodland Drive in the Whitewood Beach Resort subdivision, Arlington Township. The proposed sewer line would run from a new septic system on the north side of Woodland Drive on parcel 80-03-180-015-01, south to parcel 80-03-240-017-01 to the drain field on the south side of Woodland Drive. The current landowner owns both parcels. Note: the house on the south side of the road is planned to be torn down. The Health Department has reported that in order to do a new septic system (current septic is lake side, failing, and wont hold capacity of water usage) and drain field to meet the size of house and occupancy needs, the drain field would not be able to fit on the same parcel with the existing house. The landowner would either have to build the drain field on the other side of the road via a sewer line or they could do a 1000 holding tank on original parcel only, which would need to be pumped regularly, even up to a couple times a month, depending on water usage. A Single Site Permit to Work in the County Road Right of Way, Permit Fee, and Certification Insurance meeting VBCRC requirements will be submitted by Kalamazoo Excavating. Construction would follow engineering specs for private utilities and private utility signs would be required to be installed. If approved, the landowner will have to sign a Permissive Use Agreement with the VBCRC for us to allow this encroachment within the public road right of way as well as obtain and maintain an Annual Working in the Road Right of Way permit with the Road Commission for the extent the private utility remains within the road right of way. The Board confirmed that the property owner owned both parcels on the north and south side of Woodland Drive. Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to authorize the Managing Director to enter into a Permissive Use Agreement with property owner Denise Woytowych for the direct bore of an underground private sewer line from septic to drainfield under Woodland Drive, Arlington Township, with the Agreement to be recorded with the Van Buren County Register of Deeds.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

W.C. Askew, Sr. - Attended Covert Township on 9/8. No problems. Attended Geneva Township, no problems. Attended Bangor Township with Witkowski, no problems. Attended South Haven Township, no problems. Attended the Township Supervisors' Meeting on 9/24.

Rick Boze - Attended Keeler Township on 10/1. Had questions which were responded to last night. Attended Hartford Township on the 10th, all good. Attended Lawrence Township on the 17th, all good. Attended the Township Supervisors' Meeting on 9/24. Attended the CRA Commissioners Conference on 9/27-28. Attended the Snowplow Road-eo and Employee Appreciation Luncheon on 9/30.

Greg Kinney - No report.

Wayne Nelson - Attended the Employee Appreciation Luncheon on 9/30.

Doug Burleson - Attended Pine Grove Township on 10/2. Attended the Township Supervisors' Meeting on the 24th. Attended the Employee Appreciation Luncheon on 9/30.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to recessed the regular meeting to open a regular meeting of the Board of Public Works at 6:38 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners at 6:43 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to second public comment. Vic Pantea, Scott Lake, discussed a question regarding a ditching project in a subdivision in Arlington Township where Park Lane was ditched, and Sycamore was not. Staff confirmed that Sycamore West of Park Avenue is not certified and is, in fact, private. Pantea also asked other questions about the project's cost, which was responded to by staff.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 6:47 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

_____ _____

Board Secretary Board Chairman