

Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

November 6, 2025 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 6th day of November, 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 Boze, Burleson, Kinney and Nelson
Managing Director Bret Witkowski
Highway Engineer Barry Anttila
Finance and Human Resources Director Linnea Rader
Administrative Assistant-Board Secretary Jill Brien

ABSENT:

W.C. Askew, Sr. (Excused)

GUESTS PRESENT:

County Commissioner Mike Chappell
Larry Jarosz, CR376 - Arlington Township

Vice-Chairman Burleson called the meeting to order at 5 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Boze seconded by Nelson to approve the Agenda.

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

Motion by Kinney seconded by Boze to approve the Minutes of the October 2, 2025 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

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

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. Larry Jarosz introduced himself to the Board and those present and spoke about CR376 East, which was "tore up" five or six years ago. He shared that in the 1970's the road was "tore up" in front of his father's home so his father had to "eat the dirt", but the roadway was left alone in front of a resident's home who worked for the Road Commission so he didn't have to "eat the dirt". He heard that there is a 4-year plan to improve the segment, and he asked the Board if he is going to "die of old age" before the work is completed? He doesn't understand how the road could be paved in the 1950's and be considered a priority road then, but not a priority road now. He asked if the determination to be considered a "priority road" has something to do with who lives on the roadway? The Board responded that was not how priorities worked. Mr. Jarosz said that he understands the Board does not like what he has to say and that he has dealt with the Road Commission all the way back to the 70's and that the Road Commission is not "all that honest".

County Commission Update:

No report.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department:

- Board reviewed the Operating Budget through 11/4/25.

- Township project bills are being prepared and sent out to townships. Questions about invoices should be sent to Jill.

Operations Department:

- Roadside mowers and boom mowers are still making their way around the county.
- Staff are trimming their plow routes in preparation for winter.
- Storm cleanup crews continue to work around the county.
- Graders and hot mix patching crews also continue to prepare for winter.

Engineering Department:

- Cider Court was base paved on Thursday, October 30th. Top course paving scheduled for Saturday, November 1st was rained out and is now scheduled to take place on Wednesday, November 5th.
- The paint contractor has completed pavement marking for the year in Van Buren County.
- The City of South Haven made repairs to CR689 south of CR388 where the watermain broke and compromised the asphalt.
- 32nd Avenue bridge in Covert Township was rehabilitated by Road Commission staff starting on October 13th. The bridge was base paved by our staff. We are waiting on contractor work to complete the project (final guardrail, and top course paving).
- 36th Avenue bridge in Bangor Township was base paved by our crew. We are waiting for the paving contractor to pave the top course. Hopefully that can happen this upcoming week.
- Final walk through on CR388 took place this past Wednesday with MDOT. All went well. Guardrail and other work was completed in October.
- Rumble strips are to be installed on CR384 in Geneva Township this week, pending weather.
- Joel Hoort will be attending the KATS Technical Committee Meeting on November 5th. October KATS Technical meeting was canceled.
- Out of our 6 preventative maintenance bridge projects 2 still remain detoured (CR665 in Waverly Township; and CR215 in Hamilton Township). They are waiting on fabrication of guardrail bolts and passing tests.
- Working on 2026 Federal Aid projects.

Managing Director Witkowski:

1. The next board meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2025.
2. The SW district meeting will be on Monday, November 10, in Allegan County. If anyone would like to ride along, please let me know.
3. We had 15 of the 18 Township representatives at the annual Township meetings. I appreciate the fact that all the Road Commissioners were able to attend the meetings, as well as the positive comments from the local supervisors at the meeting on Wednesday.
4. FYI, NPR is reporting on the restart of the Palisades and Three Mile Island nuclear plants. They are to air the story before Thanksgiving, and if I find out, I will let you know.
5. The middle school paint plows are making their way back to Lawrence. They will be on display next to the cold storage facility. Once we hold the contest to pick your favorite plow and have a winner, I will host a pizza party for the winning school's class.
6. Shout out to Linnea and staff for having the union contract for your consideration before the end. Greg sat through all the meetings.
7. Interesting facts from Click fix, top 5 issues
 - a. Storm Cleanup 276
 - b. Tree and Limb Concern 230
 - c. Gravel Roads 195
 - d. Street sign and signal issue 158
 - e. Potholes 138
8. The road funding increase remains unclear, but it is clearer after speaking with the CRA. Our funding increase is expected to begin in March 2026. However, for a couple of months, we may experience a decrease in funding. They are still trying to determine how much of an increase in the corporate tax portion and whether the marijuana tax cases will end up at the Supreme Court. The increases will start in 2026 and continue until 2030.

9. Shout out to Dave Stafinski and Randy Moser for finishing 7th at the State Road-eo, and to Dave for finishing 3rd overall.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to award Dave Stafinski and Randy Moser a day off, with pay, for their successful representation of the VBCRC at the State Road-eo.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

10. I will start coaching high school basketball on November 19 and adjust my hours to accommodate the school schedule. As I have in the past, I will share those hours with you in my weekly update and with the staff. Staff also have access to my calendar, so they are aware of my schedule that way as well.
11. As always, Greg and his staff are willing to work with your townships on road plans; encourage them to reach out and ask. We are doing that for a Township for a possible Township millage request in 2026.

Vouchers were reviewed by Witkowski as follows:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Voucher #2436 | \$ 900,485.34 | Accounts Payable |
| Voucher #2437 | \$ 180,152.03 | Payroll |
| Voucher #2438 | \$ 1,022,190.56 | Accounts Payable |
| Voucher #2439 | \$ 170,769.15 | Payroll |
| TOTAL | \$ 2,273,597.08 | |

Upon a Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze Vouchers #2436-2439, inclusive, totaling \$2,273,597.08.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski outlined the County's Guidelines for Road Commissioner Effective Communications, which require that the Road Commission "update the Board of County Commissioners as to the effectiveness of these Guidelines a minimum of once a year, and to make suggestions for improvements". Witkowski relayed a conversation he had with County Administrator Faul wherein Faul suggested that he would be proposing to his Board that the Guidelines be reviewed once every four years, which is the term of a county commissioner, instead of on an annual basis. Motion by Kinney, seconded by Nelson, to authorize Witkowski to send a letter to the County Commission affirming that the current Guidelines remain effective for the Road Commission, with no recommended changes. The letter will also request that the Guidelines be reviewed every four years or as needed by either the County Commission or the Road Commission.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to adopt the 2026 Regular Meeting Schedule, as presented.

*January 8

February 5

March 5

*April 2

May 6

June 3

*July 8

August 5
September 2
*October 8
November 5
December 17

*Board of Public Works

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

Rader reviewed the process for the Board's year-end evaluation of Managing Director Witkowski. Rader requested that each Commissioner indicate on the evaluation form whether they "agree" or "disagree" with each of the Managing Director's self-evaluation comments, and to provide additional comments to help Witkowski in his understanding. By unanimous consent it was agreed by the Commissioners to designate Rader as the appointed representative to receive the Commissioners' evaluations. Rader advised that she will tabulate the comments she receives to be ready for discussion at the December meeting. She reminded the Board that from a human relations standpoint it is better to reach a consensus on "Total Appraisal Points" through discussions rather than coming up with the average of all Commissioner totals, but that in the end this is their year-end evaluation of the Managing Director to be conducted as they deem appropriate.

Rader reviewed the proposed 2026 Preliminary Budget with the Board and those present. Rader advised that revenues outlined in the preliminary budget are very different from those being estimated by MDOT because she does not believe that it would be responsible to allocate funds when we are unsure whether we'll receive them. Therefore, we have created a nominal placeholder of \$500,000 until we receive better information, at which time the budget can be adjusted. Road projects included in the proposed budget were reviewed along with routine maintenance, special maintenance, and capital expenditures. The Budget Hearing will be held at the upcoming regular December Board meeting before the Board considers its adoption. In the mean time, Rader asked that the Board contact her with any questions regarding the proposed preliminary budget.

Rader outlined union contract negotiation sessions and the new agreement that was ratified by the Union with only three "no" votes from the Union Membership. The new Agreement provides a competitive benefit package and living wage, and revisions to health insurance contributions, all of which are important to recruit and retain employees for the organization. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve the Agreement between the Van Buren County Board of County Road Commissioners and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFL-CIO Local 2901, effective January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2029 as presented by Finance and Human Resources Director Rader.

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

Witkowski outlined the proposed certification of Cider Court, South Haven Township. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to adopt the following Resolution, as presented:

RESOLUTION CERTIFYING CIDER COURT

Resolution 2025-17

At a regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners for the County of Van Buren, Michigan held on November 6, 2025 it was moved by Commissioner Boze and seconded by Commissioner Nelson to adopt the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, South Haven Charter Township has provided the Van Buren County Road Commission with a Resolution dated December 11, 2024 supporting the certification of Cider Court in South Haven Township, Van Buren County, Michigan; and,

WHEREAS, road improvements have been completed on Cider Court, and the Van Buren County Road Commission has determined that the roadway meets the standards required for inclusion in its certified road system; and,

WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the Managing Director that it is in the best interest of the residents of South Haven Township, the motoring public, and the Van Buren County Road Commission to certify Cider Court from 73.50th Street West and North to the cul-de-sac, in South Haven Township, Van Buren County, Michigan more particularly described as follows:

THAT PART OF SECTION 11, TOWNSHIP 1 SOUTH, RANGE 17 WEST, SOUTH HAVEN TOWNSHIP, VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE OF SAID SECTION 11 THAT IS 2117.79 FEET SOUTH OF THE NORTH QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION 11, SAID POINT BEING 518.66 FEET NORTH OF THE CENTER OF SAID SECTION 11; THENCE SOUTH $88^{\circ} 28' 00''$ WEST 545.06 FEET; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY 292.35 FEET ON A 183.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE RIGHT WHOSE CHORD BEARS NORTH $45^{\circ} 46' 00''$ WEST 262.24 FEET; THENCE NORTH PARALLEL WITH SAID NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE 664.34 FEET; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY 18.99 FEET ON A 25.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS NORTH $21^{\circ} 46' 03''$ WEST 18.54 FEET; THENCE EASTERLY 256.37 FEET ON A 55.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE RIGHT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH $89^{\circ} 59' 53''$ EAST 79.75 FEET; THENCE SOUTHWESTERLY 18.99 FEET ON A 25.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH $21^{\circ} 45' 56''$ WEST 18.54 FEET; THENCE SOUTH PARALLEL WITH SAID NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE 664.34 FEET; THENCE SOUTHEASTERLY 186.93 FEET ON A 117.00 FOOT RADIUS CURVE TO THE LEFT WHOSE CHORD BEARS SOUTH $45^{\circ} 46' 00''$ EAST 167.66 FEET; THENCE NORTH $88^{\circ} 28' 00''$ EAST 546.83 FEET TO SAID NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE; THENCE SOUTH ON SAID NORTH AND SOUTH QUARTER LINE 66.02 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. CONTAINING 2.42 ACRES MORE OR LESS. (See Exhibit A).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby certifies Cider Court from the centerline of 73.50th Street West and North to the cul-de-sac as shown and described on the attached Exhibit A.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds for the County of Van Buren, State of Michigan.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be published once each week for three (3) successive weeks in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, a newspaper printed and circulated in the County, and the Affidavit of Publication shall be filed with the Clerk of Van Buren County and the Supervisor of South Haven Township.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to adopt the following Resolution, as presented:

RESOLUTION 2025- 18

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Managing Director, Bret Witkowski (BretWitkowski@vbcrc.org), and the Highway Engineer, Barry Anttila (BarryAnttila@vbcrc.org), are hereby AUTHORIZED to execute M.D.O.T. Contract No. 25-5551, Control Section EDF 80000; Job Number 223548CON for work as follows:

Hot mix asphalt cold milling and paving along Kalamazoo Street from Blue Star Highway northerly approximately 0.2 miles to South Haven city limits; including concrete curb and gutter, and permanent pavement markings; and all together with necessary related work.

YES: 4
NO: 0
ABSENT: 1
RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Rader presented data from Social Security Administration, MTF, Midwest CPI, and the Van Buren Taxable Value used to prepare the recommendation for the 2026 wage adjustment of 3.5%. This is a weighted average of the factors based upon the impact each has on Road Commission funding. In accordance with the Agreement, union employees are guaranteed a minimum salary increase of 2%. However, if the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) granted to non-union personnel exceeds this amount, union employees shall receive the same higher COLA. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve the 2026 wage scale as presented by Finance and HR Director Rader.

Roll call vote:

Boze: Yes
Kinney: Yes
Nelson: Yes
Burleson: Yes
Askew: Absent
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney and seconded by Nelson to adopt the following two (2) Resolutions:

RESOLUTION 2025-19

WHEREAS: On October 23, 2025 Anthony White, 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: Anthony White 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 Anthony White for his dedication to Public Works through challenging himself professionally toward personal growth and career enhancement.

RESOLUTION 2025-20

WHEREAS: On October 23, 2025 Trevor Holt, 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: Trevor Holt 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 Trevor Holt for his dedication to Public Works through challenging himself professionally toward personal growth and career enhancement.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

Wayne Nelson

Attended board meetings in all three townships within assigned district since the last meeting of the Road Commission. There were no complaints in Porter Township. Antwerp Township discussed the proposed trail at length. Ultimately on a 3/2 split decision, the township board voted to continue the project. No complaints in Almena Township. Also attended a Zoom meeting regarding the Lakeshore Trail, and attended both Township Annual Meetings.

Greg Kinney

Attended the 10/28 Township Annual Meeting. As a point of reference Kinney also announced that the library millage passed in Decatur.

Rick Boze

Attended Keeler Township's board meeting last night. A small claims court action was discussed. Also attended the 10/29 Township Annual Meeting.

Doug Burleson

Attended all three district township board meetings. Columbia Township was quiet; Bloomingdale Township was also quiet; Pine Grove Township had about a dozen people in attendance regarding the curve on CR388 at 12th Avenue. Also attended both Township Annual Meetings.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to approve Commissioner special per diem requests for attendance at Township Annual Meetings.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1

MOTION CARRIED.

The Board and staff discussed the curve on CR388 at 12th Avenue relating to the various improvements made by staff in the area to date. A formal letter will be drafted to Pine Grove Township outlining those improvements so as to help with responding to public concerns. Concerns regarding sign pollution were also discussed.

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 6:22 PM.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Board Secretary

Board Chairman