

Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

January 8, 2026 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 8th day of January, 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
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:

Donna Spenner, Lawrence Township Supervisor
Christopher Tapper, Decatur Village Manager
Vic Pantea, Homeowner (Arlington Township)
Tom Hammond, Scott Lake, Arlington Township

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Witkowski requested that the Board add item 10(D), Resolution Urging Legislature to Fund Replacement of CR657 over the East Branch of the Paw Paw River, Antwerp Township.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Burleson to approve the Agenda, as amended.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney seconded by Boze to approve the Minutes of the December 17, 2025 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. Lawrence Township Supervisor Donna Spenner spoke about the upcoming removal of fuel pumps by Crystal Flash. McDonald Towing is installing temporary pumps which may be used by the Township; however, if these pumps should go down the Township is looking for a secondary fuel resource for its cemetery sexton and for its Fire Department. A short discussion was held regarding fuel types and estimated amounts utilized, as well as times for accessing pumps. Staff will look into and respond directly to Supervisor Spenner.

Chris Tapper, Manager of the Village of Decatur, introduced himself to the Board and those present. On behalf of the Village, Mr. Tapper thanked Greg Brucks and Barry Anttila for their help and collaboration on various Village projects and questions. In addition, as a resident of Waverly Township for approximately 45 years he thanked the VBCRC for doing an "amazing job" plowing the roads, and for all the work we do.

Vic Pantea introduced himself to the Board. He questioned why there was no representation by the Road Commission at Arlington Township Board Meetings as questions often came up and he feels that someone - staff or commissioner - should attend. Commissioner Kinney responded that pursuant to the County's Communication Guidelines, any requests for service or complaints should be filed first with the Road

Commission by contacting the office to ensure proper follow-up and action. Witkowski also explained that he does attend township board meetings on a rotational basis or should a township relay a concern.

Tom Hammond of Scott Lake in Arlington Township introduced himself to the Board and relayed that we have “lost paved roads” and questioned whether sealcoat on gravel roads is an option because he knows money is short. Road funding was discussed, especially as it related to the increases expected in 2026-2027. Witkowski asked Mr. Hammond to provide his phone number on the sign-in sheet so that he could call to discuss these issues with him in greater detail.

County Commission Update:

None

Department Updates:

Finance and HR Department:

The Operating Budget through December 31, 2025, is attached.

We are working hard on year end preparation with billing, reporting, etc. A reminder that questions regarding Township billing/invoices should be directed to Jill. Township invoices are requested to be paid in full no later than February 26, 2026.

Commissioner Burleson asked a great question at the last meeting regarding the costs of overtime plowing. Here's the details:

- o A regularly scheduled day of plowing has an approximate cost of: \$62,000
- o A primary only weekend overtime plow has an approximate cost of: \$16,000
- o A full system overtime plow has an approximate cost of: \$60,000

These are estimates because every event has different characteristics and may require more/less time, equipment, materials. I'll have all the details associated with the numbers at the meeting so we can discuss further.

It's important to note that the true cost of each overtime plow is NOT just the difference between the overtime and regular plow cost, but the ENTIRE cost. Regardless of whether the crew is plowing or not, regularly scheduled workdays are considered normal/planned costs.

Questions were asked by the Board and responded to by Rader.

Operations Department:

- It's been pretty much snow and ice control since the last meeting on December 17th.
- We took delivery of our two (2) 2025 mowing tractors last week.
- We will be working to get Safety-Kleen's products independently tested to potentially consider re-refined or recycled lubricants in the future.

Additional information regarding the new mowers was provided by Brucks, and questions were asked by the Board. The old mowers will be converted to boom mowers to take the place of older equipment.

Engineering Department:

- Working on projects and estimates.
- CR 687, CR 653, CR 657 culvert/bridge.
- Putting together Requests for proposals for survey and engineering for some future projects.
- Submitting CR 378 Project for Federal Aid buyout program on 1/6/26.
- Joel attending the KATS meeting on Thursday 1/8/26.
- Myself, Dave Clift, Dave Mills, Brian Burrows will be attending a workshop put on by EGLE next week (1/13-1/14), Transportation and the Environment in Mt. Pleasant.
- We received Proposals for Geotechnical Evaluation Services for CR657 over the East Branch of the Paw Paw River, Antwerp Township. The low bidding engineering firm,

Soils and Structures, was awarded the contract at \$12,305.00, in the best interest of the VBCRC.

Questions were asked by the Board regarding the project on CR687 near Van Auken Lake relating to the possible cutting down of a hill. The Board also discussed a milkweed farm established in Hamilton Township as it relates to a possible additional solution to the State's right of way restrictions.

Managing Director Witkowski:

- The next board meeting is scheduled for February 5th, 2026.
- If interested, the CRA is offering classroom training on February 17th, 2026, from 7:30 to 3:00 in Mount Pleasant. If interested, please contact Jill or me.
- I met with State Representative Pauline Wendzel's staff about the possibility of getting a state grant for the bridge that needs to be replaced in Antwerp Township. Information will be coming out soon.
- The VBCRC took delivery of two new roadside mowers last week; the current roadside mowers will help with boom mowing, etc.
- The new 2/1 sand-to-salt mixture is making a difference vs. the previous 5/1.

Review of Vouchers by Witkowski:

Voucher #2446	\$	277,719.40	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2447	\$	202,553.13	Payroll
Voucher #2448	\$	633,171.30	Accounts Payable
TOTAL	\$	1,113,443.83	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Kinney to approve Voucher #2446-2448, inclusive, totaling \$1,113,443.83.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

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

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Brien announced the first order of business is the election of a Chairman of the Board. Askew nominated Burleson for the office of Chairman, and Burleson consented to the nomination. There being no additional nominations for the office of Chairman, Brien closed nominations and announced that a vote will be taken for Burleson as Chairman.

Boze:	Yes
Burleson:	Yes
Kinney:	Yes
Nelson:	Yes
Askew:	Yes

Brien then requested nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman. Askew nominated Boze for the office of Vice-Chairman, and Boze consented to the nomination. Brien asked if there were any other nominations for the office of Vice-Chairman. Kinney nominated Nelson for the office of Vice-Chairman, and Nelson declined the nomination. There being no further nominations Brien closed nominations and announced that a vote will be taken for Boze as Vice-Chairman.

Boze:	Yes
Burleson:	Yes
Kinney:	Yes
Nelson:	Yes
Askew:	Yes

Brien relinquished the Chair to the newly elected Chairman, Doug Burleson.

Chairman Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of Board Secretary. Boze nominated Brien for Board Secretary. There being no additional nominations Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Chairman Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of Chief Fiscal Officer. Askew nominated Witkowski for Chief Fiscal Officer. There being no additional nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of a Board Attorney. Nelson nominated Varnum Law. There being no additional nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of a Representative to the KATS Policy Committee. Kinney nominated Witkowski as the Board's designated representative. There being no further nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of an Alternate Representative to the KATS Policy Committee. Kinney nominated Burleson. There being no further nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Chairman Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of a Representative to the KATS Technical Committee. Boze nominated Anttila as the Board's designated representative. There being no further nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Burleson requested nominations for the appointment of an Alternate Representative to the KATS Technical Committee. Nelson nominated Joel Hoort. There being no further nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Burleson requested nominations for the designation of a Board member to serve on the Van Buren County Parks Commission. Boze nominated Nelson, and Nelson accepted the designation. There being no further nominations, Burleson called for a vote:

YES: 5
NO: 0

Chairman Burleson requested a Motion to approve Commissioner Special Per Diem Requests for attending Annual Township Meetings with Managing Director Witkowski in the 2026. Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze.

YES: 5
NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

(Kinney briefly left the meeting at 5:57 PM).

Witkowski shared the recommended changes to the Board's Act 51 certified miles for 2026. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt Resolution 2026-01 certifying Act 51 roads under the jurisdiction of the Van Buren County Road Commission as follows:

RESOLUTION 2026-01

WHEREAS: Public Act 51 of 1951, as amended, provides that the Michigan Department of Transportation shall jointly, with the Board of County Road Commissioners, ascertain and fix the total mileage of County Primary Roads and the total mileage of County Local Roads in each county of the state which have been taken over as County Primary and County Local Roads; and,

WHEREAS: In complying with the provisions of said Act, the Michigan Department of Transportation has requested that this Board certify the mileage and location of such roads required by said Act to be fixed and ascertained.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Van Buren, Michigan, does hereby certify that all of the roads on which lengths have been entered along the road bands of the attached township and enlarged section maps are normally open to automobile traffic during the months of May through October, and are under the jurisdiction of the Van Buren County Road Commission as follows:

Township	Sheet Numbers	Township	Sheet Numbers
Pine Grove	80-1, 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F, 1G	Antwerp	80-11, 11B, 11C, 11D, 11E, 11F, 11G, 11H, 11J, 11K, 11L, 11M, 11N, 11P, 11Q, 11R, 11S, 11T, 11U, 11V, 11W, 11X, 11Y, 11Z, 11AA, 11BB, 11CC, 11DD, 11EE, 11FF, 11GG, 11HH, 11JJ, 11KK, 11LL, 11MM, 11NN, 11PP, 11QQ, 11RR, 11SS, 11TT, 11UU, 11VV, 11WW, 11XX, 11YY
Bloomingdale	80-2, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F	Paw Paw	80-12, 12A, 12B, 12C, 12D, 12E, 12F, 12G, 12H, 12J, 12K, 12L, 12M, 12N, 12P
Columbia	80-3, 3B, 3C, 3D, 3E, 3F, 3G, 3H	Lawrence	80-13, 13A, 13B, 13C, 13D
Geneva	80-4, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4E, 4F	Hartford	80-14, 14A, 14B, 14C
South Haven	80-5, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D, 5E	Porter	80-15, 15A(1-7), 15B(1-2), 15C(1-4), 15D, 15E, 15F
Almena	80-6, 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D, 6E, 6F, 6G, 6H, 6J, 6K, 6L, 6M, 6N, 6P	Decatur	80-16, 16A, 16B
Waverly	80-7, 7A, 7B, 7C, 7D, 7E, 7F, 7G	Hamilton	80-17, 17A
Arlington	80-8, 8A, 8B, 8C, 8D, 8E	Keeler	80-18, 18A, 18B(1-11), 18C(1-5), 18D, 18E, 18F
Bangor	80-9, 9A, 9B, 9C	Urban	South Haven, Almena, Waverly, Antwerp, Paw Paw
Covert	80-10, 10A		

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That Barry Anttila, Highway Engineer, is hereby authorized to electronically sign the Cover Sheet to digitally submit the certification package to the Michigan Department of Transportation.

YES: 4

NO: 0

ABSENT: 1 (Kinney)

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

(Kinney returned during discussion). Greg Brucks led discussion regarding the recently awarded bid for Lubricants and Fluids to all bidding vendors with **Safety-Kleen** as primary supplier for 15W-40, 10W30, and Tractor Hydraulic Oil, and **Rowleys Wholesale** as primary supplier for all other products in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission. Since then it has been discovered that Safety-Kleen quoted products that

did not meet specification although we were led to believe that the products we were quoted were 100% virgin oil as they were on the Detroit Fluids Approved List. However, after further review at the encouragement of another bidder we have found that the products do, in fact, contain recycled base oil, which goes against Section 1(D) of the VBCRC's bidding specifications. Therefore, it was Brucks' recommendation that the Board **RESCIND** its award of 15W-40, 10W30, and Tractor Hydraulic Oil to Safety-Kleen and award the contract to Rowley's Wholesale, as single source provider of Lubricants and Fluids for the 2026 season. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to **RESCIND** the award made to Safety-Kleen as primary supplier for 15W-40, 10W-30, and Tractor Hydraulic Oil, and award the Lubricants and Fluids contract to all bidders with Rowleys Wholesale as primary supplier for the 2026 season, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski discussed with the Board and those present the recent meeting with Jake of Representative Pauline Wendzel's office regarding an application for an appropriation through the Michigan House of Representatives for Legislatively Directed Spending Items (LDSI) for the bridge that carries CR657 over the East Branch of the Paw Paw River in Antwerp Township. A Resolution from our Board urging Michigan Legislature to prioritize and provide funding for this bridge replacement would help our application. In addition, we will be asking our community partners for letters of support over the coming days. Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION 2026-02

WHEREAS: A recent inspection of the bridge structure that carries CR657 over the East branch of the Paw Paw River in Antwerp Township revealed deterioration to the bridge deck; and,

WHEREAS: As a result of these findings, on October 17, 2025 the Van Buren County Road Commission implemented new weight limits on the structure; and,

WHEREAS: This structure supports approximately 2,500 to 3,000 vehicles daily and, therefore, closing the bridge and detouring traffic approximately six (6) miles is not a viable option; and,

WHEREAS: The estimated cost to replace the structure is approximately \$850,000, which must be funded through the Van Buren County Road Commission's general funds and/or county-wide road millage funds as the bridge is NOT eligible for federal or state funding in its current form; and,

WHEREAS: Allocating funds from the Road Commission's general budget or county-wide road millage reduces resources available for other essential road projects, forcing those projects to be delayed or postponed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County strongly urges the Michigan Legislature to prioritize and provide funding for the replacement of this critical structure through the House of Representatives Appropriations Requests for Legislatively Directed Spending Items (LDSI). This primary road is a vital transportation corridor for Van Buren County, serving thousands of motorists daily, including school transportation, emergency response vehicles, and commerce, making its timely replacement essential for public safety and economic stability.

AYES: 5

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

Wayne Nelson:

Didn't attend any meetings elsewhere since last regular meeting.

Greg Kinney:

There is a rumor going around that he had a stroke, which is a vicious lie.

Doug Burleson:

Attended Bloomingdale Township's board meeting on 12/17. Attended Pine Grove Township's board meeting on 1/7. Things are "normal".

Rick Boze:

Attended Lawrence Township on 12/18. Attended Keeler Township on 1/6.

W.C. Askew, Sr.:

No report.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to recess the Regular Meeting to open a regular meeting of the Board of Public Works at 6:08 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 6:14 PM with all Members being present.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Chairman Burleson opened the meeting to Second Public Comment. Mr. Hammond asked several questions regarding the budget, which were responded to by Finance and HR Director Rader.

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Burleson to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 6:18 PM.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Board Secretary

Board Chairman