

Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners

July 8, 2026 - Regular Meeting

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

Thomas Hammond
Vic Pantea
Ivona Tylka-Suleja
Phillip Pitts
County Commissioner Mike Chappell
Alan C. Smaka, P.E.

Chairman Burleson called the meeting to order at 5 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Boze seconded by Askew to approve the Agenda.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney, seconded by Boze to approve the Minutes of the June 3, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. Yvona Tylka-Suleja introduced herself to the Board as a resident of CR376 in Arlington Township. She asked if there were any updates or actions taken for improvements on CR376. Phillip Pitts also asked for a brief overview. The Managing Director advised that they could stay until the meeting was over to have a discussion, or that he would call them if they left before the end of the meeting.

County Commission Update:

No update, per Commissioner Chappell.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department:

- Vendors will now be able to receive payment through ACH (direct deposit). This also means you can receive your mileage reimbursements via ACH. Forms are available to be completed to get signed up. We are working on contacting all vendors to offer this option.
- We are finalizing the Annual Report. It will be distributed soon.
- We've offered the Communications and Permit Clerk position to our top candidate. She is scheduled to start July 13, 2026.

- The National Work Zone Memorial is again located temporarily at the Clare Welcome Center through July 13. Rene Rangel, Jr's name remains on the memorial wall.
- The Local Road Research Program (LRRP) is moving right along. RFPs have been received for the chip seal (seal coat) project and gravel road project and we are working on agreements with the universities to begin. I sit on the board for the LRRP as well as the chip seal project itself.

The AI-assisted road condition data collection project is currently in development.

- Operating Budget is attached through July 6, 2026.

In addition, Rader also discussed the new boardroom set up which will happen soon.

Operations Department:

- First round of roadside mowing is complete and the 2nd round has begun.
- Contract gravel is done in every township that requested it, with the exception of Lawrence and Porter. Porter will begin Monday the 6th.
- All townships have seen at least one round of dust control.
- Boom mowing, trimming, gravel road scraping, pothole patching, pipe replacements and ditching all continue county wide.
- As of now, we picked up a little bit of seal coat for the City of Hartford this week, bringing this years total to 165.65 miles. That's almost 20,000 tons of stone and almost 1.1 million gallons of emulsion and fog seal.
- All sealcoat equipment is ready to roll.
- Patching, shoulders, and edge work ahead of sealcoat also continue and are progressing nicely between the rain drops this week. Our tentative start date for sealcoat is July 7th.

Brucks also mentioned:

- Sealcoat operations began yesterday.
- Our new boom truck showed up today and is out front on display.
- Yesterday the Conservation District discovered its first stand of Stiltgrass in Lawrence Township. They will provide updates on how they plan to attack this aggressive invasive species in Van Buren County.

The Board asked questions regarding road closures during sealcoat in relation to emergency vehicles. Although roads are temporarily closed due to the size of the equipment, emergency vehicles will be allowed to pass through the work zone.

Engineering Department:

- CR 352 (60th St. to CR 681, Keeler Twp.) – Cross culverts have been installed. Ditching and driveway culvert work is ongoing. If the contractor remains on schedule, paving could begin within the next couple of weeks.
- CR 653 (Red Arrow Hwy. to 48th Ave., Antwerp Twp.) – Trenching is completed and pulverizing is scheduled for this week.
- CR 687 (CR 372 to CR 376, Hartford and Bangor Twps.) – Awaiting the pre-construction meeting.
- Antwerp Twp. Overlay Projects – Most projects have been paved. Remaining work includes shoulders and restoration items. The remaining paving projects are Crescent Estates Subdivision and 33rd St. from Red Arrow Hwy. to 48th Ave.
- 12th Ave./Mill Lake Rd. (Bloomington Twp.) – No schedule has been provided at this time.
- The pavement marking contractor has started striping.

Anttila also reported that the MDOT bid letting for the Kalamazoo Street project is next Tuesday.

Managing Director Witkowski:

1. **The next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 5th, 2026.**
2. Van Buren Conversation District annual meeting will be on Friday, July 17th, 2026, from 8:30am until 10:45am, at 210 N Exchange Street, Lawrence. If you would like

to go, feel free to let me know to sign you up.

- 3. I met with all 18 supervisors for my annual one-on-one meetings and attended 11 township board meetings.
- 4. Cell Tower contract is signed. Revenue increases by 53%. We will receive a \$30,000 one-time payment. We will also get 20% off any new tenant on the tower. The new contract starts in December 2026. The contract was approved by our attorney.
- 5. CRA selected the VBCRC as its featured county in the September quarterly publication. When I receive a date and time for the interview, I will inform the board.
- 6. As you know, we were blessed when the House passed \$800,000 in funding for the bridge on CR 657. It was passed by the Senate last week and is now awaiting the Governor's signature. The state budget starts on October 1st.
- 7. Linnea and Alyssa are coordinating boardroom updates. In the next few months, the big screen TV will be installed where the board members' sign is now, making board and other meetings, especially those on Zoom, easier. The existing TV will be moved to the shop to replace the non-working unit.
- 8. We will be hosting the paint-a-plow for high schools this year. We will soon have four themes for the board and staff to vote on.
- 9. Here is an update on equipment purchases for 2026:
 - A. **Three Ford F-250s:** Built on June 29th; estimated delivery July 9–10, Tapper of Paw Paw was low bid.
 - B. **Forestry bucket truck:** Estimated delivery anytime, we saved \$110,000 on this vs. estimate. (Update: delivered).
 - C. **New Western Star plow trucks:** Delivered and currently parked behind the shop. They're on Truck & Trailer's schedule to be outfitted.
 - D. **Buffalo Mega 3 Turbine Blower:** Received and fitted on the back of a truck, ready to go for sealcoat.

Review of Vouchers by Managing Director:

Voucher #2470	\$	694,273.56	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2471	\$	206,143.69	Payroll
Voucher #2472	\$	808,465.15	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2473	\$	203,314.41	Payroll
Voucher #2474	\$	667.29	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2475	\$	772,224.92	Accounts Payable
TOTAL	\$	2,685,089.02	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to approve Voucher numbers 2470 through 2475, inclusive, in the total amount of \$2,685,089.02.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski explained the two official MCRC SIP ballot proposals in front of the Board for consideration. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Askew to mark the MCRC SIP Board of Directors Southern Representative ballot as follows: Deb Kestner, Saginaw CRC.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze to mark the MCRC SIP Board of Directors At-Large Representative ballot as follows: Brett Laughlin, Ottawa CRC.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski discussed the 2026 CRASIF Board of Trustees election forms and letters of interest in front of the Board for consideration. Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze to mark the official ballot for the 2026 CRASIF Board of Trustee Candidates as follows: Tom Doty, Beth Hunt, and Laurita Humphrey.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Rader requested that the Board update designated signatories for all Road Commission authorized financial institutions to reflect positions rather than individual names. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to appoint the following positions as authorized signatories for all Van Buren County Road Commission authorized financial institutions:

Van Buren County Road Commission Managing Director
Van Buren County Road Commission Finance and Human Resources Director
Van Buren County Road Commission Administrative Assistant
Van Buren County Treasurer
Van Buren County Deputy Treasurer

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Rader outlined the proposed amended Capital Asset Determination Policy. The amended policy was developed by the County Road Association of Michigan Finance and Human Resources Committee in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and closely conforms to capital asset accounting practices as recommended by the Government Finance Officers Association. Motion by Boze, seconded Askew to adopt amended Policy 2016-07, Capital Asset Management Policy*, as presented by Rader.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

*To obtain a copy of Policy 2016-07, please contact the Road Commission's Administrative Office at 269-674-8011.

Rader reviewed proposed revisions to the Social Security Number Privacy Policy which include minor job title corrections. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to adopt amended Policy 2007-01, Social Security Number Privacy Policy*, as presented.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

*To obtain a copy of Policy 2007-01, please contact the Road Commission's Administrative Office at 269-674-8011.

Rader reviewed proposed revisions to Policy 2022-03, Revenue Sharing Policy, with the Board. Over the past year we have received requests from three townships to use RevShare funds on crosspipe replacements that included ditching, driveway culvert replacements, tree removals, or other enhancements to improve water flow. Our current policy does not allow for use of RevShare funds for this additional drainage work outside of the crosspipe replacement. In addition, it was noted that the current policy does not allow for use of RevShare funds on NEW crosspipe installations. It was recommended that the Board approve these revisions to the Policy, along with allowing for RevShare use on tree removals if the removals are part of, or in advance of a road improvement project. This would not include individual tree removals, but removals from a road section or segment in advance of a road improvement project. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to approve amended Policy 2022-03, Revenue Sharing Policy*, as presented.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

*To obtain a copy of Policy 2022-03, please contact the Road Commission's Administrative Office at 269-674-8011.

Rader reviewed the proposed Artificial Intelligence Usage Policy. She relayed that Van Buren County was one of the first and most progressive counties in Michigan in the development of AI use. She outlined the Road Commission's participation in the AI Task Force established in Van Buren County and expressed that we have been pleased to participate in that Task Force with them. The policy developed for the Board's consideration ensures that AI is utilized ethically, legally, and according to guidelines put in place by the Board. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt Policy 2026-04, Artificial Intelligence Usage Policy*, as presented.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

*To obtain a copy of Policy 2026-04, please contact the Road Commission's Administrative Office at 269-674-8011.

Rader summarized the proposed amendments to the Non-Union Personnel Policy. Many of the changes related to bringing the policy in line with the new unionized employees contract, in addition to changes that relate to the new Earned Sick Time Act (ESTA). Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to approve the Non-Union Personnel Policy* as presented, with the ability to make minor changes to formatting and wording as may be necessary when removing the redline/strikeouts by Finance and Human Resources Director Rader.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Note: To obtain a copy of the Non-Union Personnel Policy please contact the Road Commission at 269-674-8011.

Anttila reviewed the bid tabulation for the project on 40th Street South of Fisk Lake Road and at Round Lake in Waverly Township. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Kinney to award the bid to Michigan Paving & Materials, the as-read low bidding contractor, in the total amount of \$77,386.00, in the best interest of Waverly Township and the Van Buren County Road Commission, contingent upon approval of the bid by Waverly Township.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

W.C. Askew, Sr.

Attended Covert Township last week with Bret.

Rick Boze

Attended Keeler Township on 6/2. On 6/9 attended Hamilton Township. On 6/11 attended Hartford Township. On 6/18 attended Lawrence Township. On 6/29 he met with Hartford Township, Abonmarche, and Market One Real Estate to review the proposed Hartford Industrial Park. The proposal includes a new road from CR687 to 66th Street estimated at \$4M. Motion by Nelson, seconded by Askew to approve Boze's request for a special per diem for his attendance at said meeting.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Greg Kinney

No report.

Wayne Nelson

Attended the Parks Commission meeting on 6/9. Also attended a meeting at the Road Commission on 6/15 with Bret and a representative of State Representative Pauline Wendzel's office. (No special per diem requested).

Doug Burleson

Attended Bloomingdale Township on 6/17. He also advised that Bloomingdale Township is now working hard to get its road millage back. The 4-mill millage was lost in 2024 and the Township is now asking for the voters to approve a 2.9-mill millage and has formed a committee to assist in this undertaking.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to recess the regular meeting to open a regular meeting of the Board of Public Works at 5:52 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Burleson to reconvene the regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners at 5:56 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 Kinney to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 5:56 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Board Secretary

Board Chairman