

**Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners**  
Summary of Proposed Minutes

March 5, 2026 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of March, 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:

Alex Florian, Van Buren Conservation District  
Jena Johnson, Van Buren Conservation District  
Emilly Hickmott, Van Buren Conservation District  
Sara M. Booms, Fifth Third Institutional Services

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Boze seconded by Kinney to approve the Agenda.

YES:           5  
NO:            0  
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment. None was received.

Sara Booms, CFA, Fifth Third Institutional Services, introduced herself to the Board and those present. She provided a portfolio snapshot for the last 10 years including general market conditions, portfolio performance, and expectations for returns over the next five years. Questions were asked by the Board and responded to by Ms. Booms.

Alex Florian and Jena Johnson of the Van Buren Conservation District introduced themselves to the Board and all present as part of the Strike Team who work with the Road Commission to minimize the impact of invasive species in the road right-of-way. They shared a "Story Map" which depicted invasive species – Japanese knotweed and phragmites – in the right-of-way in Van Buren County for the past five years (2021-2025). The maps showed the plants disappear in many places throughout the county. Many questions were asked by the Board and staff which were responded to by Ms. Johnson,

Ms. Hickmott, and Mr. Florian. The Conservation District team left the meeting after the presentation.

Motion by Boze seconded by Askew to approve the Minutes of the February 5, 2026 Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

The February 2026 Board of Commissioners Activity Report was shared with the Board in their packet for review including highlights, Committee and Board appointments/reappointments, and monthly reports from many county agencies.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

**Finance and HR Department:**

- Year-end reporting is underway for 2025.
- We are preparing information for the auditor, with the anticipation of the audit. At this time the audit is scheduled for early April.
- We are holding open interviews on Monday and Tuesday evenings this week for seasonal positions. We participated in a career fair at the Intermediate School District and had many leads that signed up to be reminded about the interviews. We've also advertised extensively on social media. We are hoping for a good turnout.
- We are also holding scheduled interviews this week for Road Maintenance Employees, a Heavy Equipment Mechanic, General Mechanic, and Purchasing Clerk. We anticipate the need to continue the recruitment process for Road Maintenance Employees as we are planning for 5 or more retirements in the next year or so.
- I attended the Commissioners in the Classroom Training last month. It was a great program with wonderful speakers. I did bring an extra copy of the presentation materials back with me if anyone is interested. If this training is offered next year, I highly recommend it.
- Alyssa is working on Township project sheets and has sent reminders to all Townships that haven't submitted their road segments for seal coat yet. Reminder that these are due by March 31 to allow time for each road to be reviewed for necessary culvert repairs, deberming, and patching prior to seal coat.
- Operating Budget was shared through March 2, 2026.

Rader provided an update for the Board regarding interviews which were held earlier in the week and the various positions for which offers were made to candidates. She also discussed the possibility of developing a Mechanic Apprenticeship in the future as the response for the General Mechanic was very positive.

## **Operations Department:**

- Between snow and ice control operations over the past few weeks, crews have also been able to focus on trimming and tree work - even getting the boom mowers out last week. Crews have stayed busy patching potholes and, in some cases, have been able to utilize hot mix asphalt instead of cold patch.
- Two new 2026 boom mowers are scheduled to be built within the first few weeks of March.

## **Engineering Department:**

- CR 653 Federal Aid Project - Crush/shape, trench/widen, drainage corrections, paving, & restoration - MDOT has received obligation, projecting an April bid letting.
- CR 687 grade inspection plan set and bid documents corrections ongoing.
- Township project requests ongoing.
- Bridge submittal deadline April 1. Work on submittal ongoing.
- Proposals were received for engineering services for the structure that carries 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue over the South Branch of the Black River in Geneva Township. Upon review of the proposals the project will be awarded to Scott Civil Engineering, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.
- CR 378, CR 681, CR 653 projects scheduled for 2027-2028 survey, design and engineering proposals have been received. Engineering team will review and award, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.
- I attended the annual APAM (Asphalt Paving Association of Michigan) Conference in Battle Creek on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

## **Managing Director Witkowski:**

1. **The next board meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2026.**
2. The annual CRA highway conference and road show in Lansing starts with dinner on Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, then the normal part of the conference is on Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>. If you would like to go, let Jill or me know so we can get you to sign up and, if needed, get you a hotel room.
3. Very thankful the Sheriff's Department who donated large lights and generators to the VBCRC. They are in the back if you'd like to see them.
4. Starting this month, I will begin attending township night meetings and meetings with township supervisors. As in the past, I will communicate with you when I have a meeting with a supervisor in your district.
5. Revenue for MTF was down 19% in March/January, which is contrary to what we had been told at the CRA webinar that included MDOT and at the SW District Meeting. I have included the email sent by the CRA yesterday regarding the issue.
6. There is legislation proposed by 4 Republicans and 3 Democrats to eliminate the marijuana tax money, which is a good portion of the road funding bill. We will be tracking the progress of the bill.
7. Next week county administrator, John Faul, and I will be going out to lunch.
8. I want to thank the VBC Board of Road Commissioners for allowing me to coach this season at Bangor, a long season that runs from Thanksgiving to now.

Witkowski reviewed voucher expenses with the Board as follows:

Voucher #2453	\$	213,196.22	Payroll
Voucher #2454	\$	285,967.52	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2455	\$	180,317.27	Payroll
Voucher #2456	\$	311,351.68	Accounts Payable
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>990,832.69</b>	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Kinney to approve Vouchers 2453 through 2456, inclusive, in the total amount of \$990,832.69:

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

With great honor it was moved by Nelson, seconded by Boze to adopt the following Resolution:

**RESOLUTION 2026-03**

WHEREAS: It is with great sadness that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County pays tribute to Randall (Randy) Lee Peat, County Commissioner for the 5th District of Van Buren County and a dedicated leader in our community, who passed away on February 9, 2026; and,

WHEREAS: Commissioner Peat faithfully served the residents of Van Buren County for nine years in his role as County Commissioner, including the past several years as Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners; and,

WHEREAS: During his years of public service, Commissioner Peat also served as Chairman of both the Van Buren County 911 Advisory Board and the Van Buren Economic Development Corporation, and contributed further as a member of the Kinexus Board of Directors, the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department, the Van Buren Veteran Services Committee, the Market One Board, and the Paw Paw Township Planning Commission; and,

WHEREAS: The Van Buren County Road Commission has greatly appreciated Commissioner Peat's partnership and commitment to improving and reconstructing the public road system that serves the residents and communities throughout Van Buren County; and,

WHEREAS: The residents of Van Buren County have been well-served by Commissioner Peat's leadership, dedication, and tireless efforts on behalf of the public.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby adopts this Resolution as a tribute to Randall Lee Peat, honoring his many contributions to local government and to the county's transportation system.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that the Van Buren County Road Commission hereby extends its deepest sympathies to Commissioner Peat's beloved spouse, Madelynn, and to their family members and friends, offering heartfelt condolences during this time of bereavement.

AYES: 5

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Rader explained the Department of Justice's final rule setting standards for state and local governments to ensure that their website content and mobile applications are accessible to persons with disabilities pursuant to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the rule, county road commissions must comply by April 26, **2027**. Alyssa is already working actively towards compliance. The CRA has provided us with a proposed policy for the successful implementation of the digital accessibility standards. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt Policy 2026-01, Digital Accessibility Policy, as presented.

### **Digital Accessibility Policy**

Policy No: 2026-01

#### Purpose

I.

The Van Buren County Road Commission ("Road Commission") is committed to ensuring equal access to information, services, and resources through the use of its information technology for all members of the public, including individuals with disabilities. All the Road Commission's publicly facing web pages, social media accounts, applications, and digital content, subject to exceptions enumerated in this policy, will be made accessible to the widest range of users.

This policy establishes the standards for digital accessibility of information and communication technology to ensure that the Road Commission's publicly facing web pages, social media pages, applications, and digital content comply with applicable state and federal laws.

#### Scope

II.

This policy applies to any new or updated web pages, applications, and digital content developed, procured, maintained, used, or otherwise provided by the Road Commission for use by its employees or the public on or after April 26, 2027. Third-party vendors, licensors, contractors, or suppliers shall meet the policy requirements of this policy as outlined herein.

#### Policy

III.

#### A. Standards

Effective April 26, 2027, the Road Commission shall provide access to digital content and services (internally built or through contractual, licensed, or other arrangements) that comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, Level AA.

B. Exceptions

The following content is exempt from being compliant with WCAG 2.1, Level AA:

- Archived web content<sup>1</sup>
- Preexisting conventional electronic documents<sup>2</sup>
- Content posted by a third-party, unless the third-party is posting on behalf of the Road Commission
- Individualized, password-protected or otherwise secured conventional electronic documents
- Social media posts that are posted before April 26, 2027

However, archived digital content shall be made available by the Road Commission in an accessible format to any individual requesting access to such content.

1. Conforming Alternative Version

Where it is not possible to make web content directly accessible due to technical or legal limitations, the Road Commission will use a conforming alternate version of web content as defined by WCAG 2.1.

2. Authority

The Finance and Human Resources Director has authority to oversee execution of this policy. The Finance and Human Resources Director shall appoint a Web Accessibility Coordinator to act as a single point of contact for accessibility concerns, feedback, and information submitted by members of the public to the Road Commission.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
POLICY ADOPTED.

Witkowski reviewed the bid tabulation for heavy maintenance on CR352 in Keeler Township. Upon recommendation by Anttila it was moved by Boze, seconded by Nelson to award to Thomas Excavating, Inc., the low bidding contractor, for the total bid price of \$897,331.50, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

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<sup>1</sup> Archived web content is content that (1) was created before April 26, 2027; (2) is retained exclusively for reference, research, or recordkeeping; (3) is not altered or updated after the date of archiving; and (4) is organized and stored in a dedicated area or areas clearly identified as being archived.

<sup>2</sup> Conventional electronic documents are web content or content in mobile applications that is in the following electronic file formats: portable document formats ("PDF"), word processor file formats, presentation file formats, and spreadsheet file formats.

Witkowski reviewed the bid tabulation with the Board for work on Silver Saddle Road in Columbia Township. Upon recommendation by Anttila it was moved by Nelson, seconded by Burleson to award the project to the low bidding contractor, Tree Tech, LLC, for the total bid price of \$14,8941.25 upon approval of the project by Columbia Township, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission and Columbia Township.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

The bid tabulation for heavy maintenance work on 73<sup>rd</sup> Street in South Haven Township was reviewed by Witkowski for the Board. Upon recommendation by Anttila it was moved by Askew, seconded by Nelson to award the bid to the low bidding contractor, American Arbor, LLC for the total bid price of \$71,367.01 upon approval of the project by South Haven Township, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission and South Haven Township. The Board inquired as to the credibility of America Arbor as they had not been awarded a project in Van Buren County to the Board's recollection. Brucks provided details regarding the satisfactory vetting by staff.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

Brucks discussed bids that were received for Contract Gravel. He is currently in the process of collecting all sieve analysis reports from bidding contractors as they were not supplied with the bids. Upon recommendation by Brucks it was moved by Boze, seconded by Kinney to authorize the Operations Director to award the bid to all bidding contractors with the primary supplier being the lowest responsible contractor in each township and at each Road Commission Garage, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission and the applicable townships.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

Witkowski provided discussion for the Board regarding the bridge structures the Road Commission selected to apply for Local Bridge funds. If chosen, these projects could be eligible for Federal and/or State funds in FY2029. The 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge over Rogers Creek in Covert Township was selected as an applicant for replacement. Covert Township will be considering their match percentage at their next meeting. The proposed Resolution is worded such that the VBCRC's commitment would match Covert Township's commitment. Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze to adopt the following Resolution:

**RESOLUTION 2026-04**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for the replacement of the structure that carries 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue over Rogers Creek in Covert Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The structure is posted for a weight limit of 30 Tons; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge does not meet present day standards for shoulder clearance or traffic lane widths, and the bridge does not provide the safety margins now required by present day design standards; and,

WHEREAS: The current structure is rotting and cracking; and,

WHEREAS: Because of the deterioration of the present structure and its poor rating, a complete replacement would be in the best interest of the traveling public; and,

WHEREAS: The Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County supports a complete replacement of the 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue structure and hereby financially commits to the replacement as follows: a minimum of 2.5%, and not to exceed 10% in Local Funds to match Covert Township's commitment, plus one-half of all engineering costs to be split 50/50 with Covert Township.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby concurs in the importance of the replacement of this structure and urges approval of the Application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue over Rogers Creek in Covert Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said replacement can be ready within 1-year after notification of a successful application.

YES: 5

NO: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Witkowski discussed the application for Local Bridge funds for the structure that carries 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue over the Mentha Drain in Pine Grove Township. Pine Grove Township has approved a 10% commitment, plus ½ of the cost of engineering to be split with the Road Commission. The recommended Resolution matches Pine Grove Township's commitment. Upon a motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson the following Resolution was adopted:

#### **RESOLUTION 2026-05**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for the replacement of the bridge that carries 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue over the Mentha Drain in Pine Grove Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The structure is posted for weight limits of 31/53/67; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge does not meet present day standards for shoulder clearance or traffic lane widths, and the bridge does not provide the safety margins now required by present day design standards; and,

WHEREAS: Because of the deterioration of the present structure and its poor rating, the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County supports a complete replacement of the structure, in the best interest of the traveling public; and,

WHEREAS: Pine Grove Township has financially committed 10% of the replacement costs, and the Van Buren County Road Commission hereby agrees to a financial commitment of 10% of the replacement costs resulting in a total local commitment to the replacement costs of 20%; and,

WHEREAS: Pine Grove Township has financially committed to one-half of all engineering costs incurred in the replacement of the structure, and the Van Buren County Road Commission hereby agrees to a financial commitment of one-half of all engineering costs resulting in a total local commitment to all engineering costs of 100%.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby concurs in the importance of the replacement of this structure and urges approval of the Application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue over the Mentha Drain in Pine Grove Township through the Local Bridge Program.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said replacement can be ready within 1-year after notification of a successful application.

YES: 5  
NO: 0

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.

Witkowski reviewed the proposed applications for Local Bridge Funds in the form of a preventative maintenance “bridge bundle”. Upon a motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney the following Resolutions 2026-06 through 2026-10 were adopted by the Board as follows:

**RESOLUTION 2026-06**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries Blue Star Highway over the Black River in South Haven Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: epoxy overlay on deck and approach slabs, and re-seal joints; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries Blue Star Highway over the Black River in South Haven Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

### **RESOLUTION 2026-07**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries CR380 over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: epoxy overlay on deck and approach slabs, and re-seal the reference line (joint); and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries CR380 over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

### **RESOLUTION 2026-08**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries CR681 over the Paw Paw River in Lawrence Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge is in need of an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, and concrete repairs on the approach slabs; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries CR681 over the Paw Paw River in Lawrence Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

### **RESOLUTION 2026-09**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries CR687 over the South Branch of the Black River in Geneva Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires preventative maintenance work as follows: an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, and possible rip rap work on the North abutment; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries CR687 over the South Branch of the Black River in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

**RESOLUTION 2026-10**

WHEREAS: The Board has reviewed the application for Local Bridge Funding for preventative maintenance to the bridge that carries 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township in 2029; and,

WHEREAS: The bridge requires an epoxy overlay on the deck and approach slabs, re-seal joints, and seal fascia beams; and,

WHEREAS: Preventative maintenance work on the structure would be in the best interest of the traveling public as it would prolong the life of the structure.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County concurs in the importance of preventative maintenance on this structure and urges approval of the application for Local Bridge Funding for the structure that carries 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue over the Cedar Creek in Geneva Township.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That plans for said preventative maintenance can be ready within 120 days after notification of a successful application.

AYES: 5

NAYS: 0

RESOLUTIONS 2026-06 through 2026-10 ADOPTED.

Rader reviewed the Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) accounting report for FY2025 with the Board. She pointed out that in 2017 the total Net OPEB liability was \$14,296,393. With the Board's aggressive funding of the OPEB trust over the last six years and the modifications made to future benefits, the 2025 year-end total Net OPEB liability is (\$1,474,313). She stated that the 2026 actuarially determined contribution is zero; however, it was her recommendation to contribute \$75,000 to act as a buffer for potential market losses and additional inflationary precautions for the future. Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze to approve the contribution of \$75,000 to the Van Buren County Road Commission OPEB Plan Trust for 2026.

YES: 5

NO: 0

MOTION CARRIED.

Rader reviewed the Pension Valuation Report by Watkins Ross with the Board. Based on accrued benefits, the plan is currently 128.64% funded which represents a healthy plan. The recommended employer contribution for 2026 is \$362,966 per page 12 of the Actuarial Valuation Report. Given the value of projected benefits, Rader recommended funding just over the recommended contribution to \$400,000 to assist in providing stability for the Plan into the future. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve a contribution of \$400,000

to the Van Buren County Road Commission's Pension Plan for 2026.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

**W.C. Askew, Sr.** - Attended the Township Supervisor's meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup>, and the Southwest Council meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Rick Boze** - Attended Keeler Township's board meeting on Tuesday. Also attended the Township Supervisor's meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup>, and the Southwest Council meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Greg Kinney** - Attended the Township Supervisor's meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Wayne Nelson** - Attended all three liaison Township Board meetings. Reported issues were brought to Witkowski. Attended the Southwest Council meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February and the Township Supervisor's meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Doug Burleson** - Attended Bloomingdale Township's board meeting on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

The Chairman opened the meeting to second public comment. None was received.

Motion by Askew, seconded by Boze to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 6:51 PM.

YES: 5  
NO: 0  
MOTION CARRIED.