Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners
Summary of Proposed Minutes

November 5, 2026 - Regular Meeting

BE IT REMEMBERED: That on the 5th day of November 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

GUESTS PRESENT:

Georgette Peterson, Arlington Township Supervisor
Peggy Douglas, Arlington Township
Larry Jarosz, CR376 - Arlington Township
Ronnie Denney, CR376, Arlington Township
Ted Bobak, CR376 - Arlington Township

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion by Nelson seconded by Kinney to appoint Linnea Rader Secretary Pro Tem for the purpose of recording and preparing the minutes of the November 5, 2026, Regular Meeting.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Boze seconded by Askew to approve the Agenda.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Motion by Kinney seconded by Nelson to approve the Minutes of the October 8, 2026, Regular Meeting as presented by the Board Secretary.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

The Chairman opened the meeting to first public comment.

Ted Bobak - here for an update on CR 376 east on drainage and trees. Witkowski responded to questions and will contact tomorrow.

Georgette Peterson commented to say thank you on how the Road Commission works with the Township

Ronnie Denney doesn't understand why CR 376 was torn up. Says 73rd by Wal-Mart is a dead end that looks good.

County Commission Update.

None.

Department Updates were provided as follows:

Finance and HR Department:

It's evaluation season! Staff evaluations are underway.

We've received the final NRF Payment for the year. For 2026 we received a total of $2,593,164.50, which is 31% less than MDOT's projections of $3,784,489.15, but 100% more than last year! $340,000 will be held back in next year's budget from those dollars as that's what we can estimate is attributable to the Marijuana wholesale tax.

A celebration of life vehicle procession for Kolten Hewer, Eaton County Road Commission employee who was killed in October, is taking place Saturday, November 7 in Charlotte, Michigan. We have 4 employees currently planning to attend.

We are working on special maintenance projects (sealcoat, fog seal, de-berming, gravel spreading) costs for 2027. We will be able to get this ready as soon as we have liquid pricing for sealcoat and fog seal for 2027. In the meantime, for estimating purposes, Townships have been advised to add 10% to 2026 pricing.

Operating Budget is attached through November 3, 2026.

Operations Department:

3rd round of roadside mowing is underway and progressing nicely. As of 10.30 we are roughly a third complete.

Graders are out shaping and compacting gravels before winter. Also, as of 10.30 we are a little over halfway complete.

Ditching and pipe replacements continue county wide.

Boom mowing also continues.

Crews are also out hot mixing and putting on shoulder gravel in preparation for

winter.

We have had two fall road tours with Pine Grove and Decatur Townships.

The City of South Haven has also reached out for estimates on doing more chipseal for them next season.

It's hard to believe, but our early fill salt deliveries for the '26/'27 plowing season began rolling in last week.

Surplus equipment is being stripped and lined up in Lawrence, in preparation for a next November auction. An exact date has not yet been set.

Witkowski added that the Road Commission will be auctioning equipment later this month with the first opportunity provided to local municipalities.

Engineering Department:

CR 687 between CR 376 and CR 372 in Bangor/Hartford Twp's is nearing the end. Contractor finished the base course paving last Saturday and finished top course this week. Shoulders and concrete drives were attempted today, but the weather didn't cooperate, will continue as weather allows.

Some additional drainage and asphalt work was completed on Howard Dr. in Lawrence Twp. This week at the Townships request.

There are 4 townships remaining to finish up our road rating for the year; Lawrence, Paw Paw, Antwerp, and Decatur.

Pavement markings have continued this week in the county. We should be close to having this wrapped up for the year.

CR 378; the catch basin and pipe replacement started November 2, 2026, and is now open to traffic.

Staff is working on engineering for next year.

Managing Director Witkowski:

The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 17th, 2026.

The Southwest District Council meeting is on Monday, November 9th at 10:00 at the Kalamazoo County Road Commission. If you would like to ride with me, let me know.

The office will be closed on Wednesday, November 11th in honor of Veterans Day.

My thank-you lunch for staff will be December 15th at lunch; the location is TBD.

I met with all 18 supervisors for my annual one-on-one meetings and attended 17 Township night board meetings. I have yet to attend the Porter Township night board meeting, which will be on November 11.

I thought the Township meetings went well; the key point is they need to get us their work by March 31st, 2027, or they will have to wait until 2028 to get projects

to the winning bidders on Township projects.

We had a wrap-up meeting for seal coat and fog season, looking at bringing in-house getting the equipment ready during off-season; the suggestion was to change the color of the sign and change it to read Wet Tar.

Congrats to Commissioner Kinney, who was reappointed to the board for another term.

The federal buyout program, which we did this year, went well; they had it a few months ago, and Van Buren was the 4th project in, but in 3 minutes and 21 seconds, $45,000,000 was allocated, so I appreciate Barry and his staff being on top of it.

New safety signage is up for Mattawan schools, a project in combination with Mattawan schools, Antwerp Township, and VBCRC.

Some of the plows from the high school paint-a-plow contest are parked beside the cold storage building.

Fact: 42 counties have 3-person road commission boards, and 34 have 5-member commission boards.

Fuel usage is up 7.21% overall; diesel usage is up 4.68%; unleaded usage is up 24.31% for the year. Diesel accounts for 86.08% of usage, and unleaded accounts for 13.92%. We are averaging 13,765 gallons in fuel usage per month through September.

Review of Vouchers:

Voucher #2489	$1,100,175.65	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2490	$202,695.60	Payroll
Voucher #2491	$1,305,966.95	Accounts Payable
Voucher #2492	$188,350.82	Payroll
TOTAL	**$2,797,189.02**	

Motion by Nelson, seconded by Boze to approve Vouchers 2489 through 2492, inclusive, totaling $2,797,189.02.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Rader discussed Schedule C Equipment Rental Rates which are hourly rates for equipment use charged by MDOT. In 2026 the VBCRC used a modified rate of 139% of the published rates to balance the actual costs to operate and maintain our fleet. She recommended a decrease to 132% to more accurately cover actual costs based on the prior five-year average equipment maintenance costs. Motion by Boze, seconded by Askew to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION 2026-20

WHEREAS: The provisions of the rules and regulations of the Michigan Department of Treasury requires that the Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners and the Michigan Department of Transportation annually determine uniform equipment rental rates, referred to as “Schedule C”, representing charges to be made by the Road Commission for the use of County Road Commission equipment against force account construction and maintenance projects; and,

WHEREAS: The Michigan Department of Treasury has provided that individual County Road Commissions may adjust the published rates in “Schedule C” to reflect either the increase or decrease in equipment costs in their particular county; and,

WHEREAS: In the opinion of the Van Buren County Board of Road Commissioners, the rental rates as set forth in “Schedule C” are insufficient to meet actual equipment expense.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the equipment rental rate charged by the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Van Buren, Michigan for the equipment owned by said Road Commission shall be set at 132% of the published rates as shown on “Schedule C” for the year 2027.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Rader provided details for the Board regarding the Commissioners’ evaluations of the Managing Director for 2026. After discussion it was moved by Askew, seconded by Boze to award far exceeds expectations thus resulting in a 6% performance-based stipend being awarded to the Managing Director. Commissioner Kinney commenting that the numbers do not support such rating.

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

Witkowski thanked the Board for their support and financial decisions provided over the year. Several Commissioners provided supportive comments.

Motion by Boze and seconded by Kinney to adopt the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION 2026-21

WHEREAS, on October 22, 2026, Zane Yandell, Road Maintenance Employee, graduated from the American Public Works Association (APWA) Michigan Road Scholar Program; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Road Scholar Program is a comprehensive three-year training program in which participants attend one week of instruction per year covering the many aspects of municipal road right-of-way work; and

WHEREAS, attendance is required at all sessions, including evening functions, with training in work zone safety, snow and ice control, traffic incident management, equipment operations and safety, tree pruning, chainsaw and chipper safety, driving and trailer safety, pesticide use and licensing, pipe materials and construction techniques, trenching and shoring, and other related topics; and

WHEREAS, Zane has successfully completed all three years of training and has earned the designation of APWA Michigan Roads Scholar.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Road Commissioners of Van Buren County hereby recognizes and honors Zane Yandell for his dedication to the field of public works and for challenging himself professionally in pursuit of personal growth and career advancement.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Brucks presented the Daltons proposal to extend prices for roadside and guardrail brush spraying for the 2027 season. The Daltons have been acquired by Ferrovia Services LLC. Previously the Board has taken action in April of 2022 to award the sealed bid to the Daltons, and in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 have accepted proposals to extend prices. Motion by Boze, seconded by Nelson to approve The Daltons' offer to extend prices for the 2027 season for Guardrail and Roadside Brush Control, in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission.

Discussion took place regarding extension of pricing vs. letting bids.

YES: 4
NO: 1
MOTION CARRIED.

Rader presented data from Social Security Administration, MTF, Midwest CPI, and the Van Buren Taxable Value used to prepare the recommendation for the 2027 wage adjustment of 4.0%. 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 1.5%. 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 Askew to approve the 2027 wage scale as presented by Finance and HR Director Rader.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.

Commissioner Updates and Reports:

W.C. Askew, Sr.; Attended Covert, Geneva, and South Haven Townships, no concerns. Drove 69th double chip seal and kudos to crew. Attended the Township Annual meetings at the Road Commission.

Rick Boze; Attended Keeler and Hamilton Townships, no concerns. Attended both Township Annual Meetings. Attended Lawrence Township meeting as well, where they signed Howard Drive program sheet.

Greg Kinney; No report.

Wayne Nelson; Attended Almena Township, no concerns. Attended a Parks and Recreation meeting regarding the Historical Museum signage.

Doug Burleson; Attended the Township Annual meetings at the Road Commission. Attended Columbia, Bloomingdale, and Pine Grove Townships, no concerns. Attended paved and gravel road training meeting.

The Chairman opened the meeting to second public comment.

Georgette Peterson commented that she attended the gravel and paved road training that was held at the Road Commission and found the training very informative.

Motion by Boze, seconded by Kinney to adjourn the Call of the Chair at 5:51 PM.

YES: 5
NO: 0
MOTION CARRIED.