



September 2023 Board of Commissioners Activity Report

Administration Address
219 E Paw Paw Street - Suite 302, Paw Paw, MI 49079
Website: www.vanburencountymi.gov

Telephone No.
(269) 657-8253

Email: Admin@vanburencountymi.gov

** Please note: As of **10/01/2023** we will no longer send the Board of Commissioners Activity Reports via email to the local Municipalities. Stay up to date with the Board's activity on our [Website](#) or on our [Facebook page!](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Sheriff Body Scanner** - There was a request from the Sheriff's department to approve the purchase of a body scanner to prevent the introduction of illegal substances into the jail. There has been a significant increase in attempts to smuggle illegal substances into the jail. This poses a high degree of risk to not just inmates but also correctional staff. Full body searches are not allowed unless there is a probable cause or a judicial order, which makes it difficult to find these substances. We believe this machine will help protect the health and safety of all of those in jail as well as reduce our risk of liability. The cost is \$184,500, which includes a highly recommended 5-year warranty. We can utilize \$132,162 from unallocated Marijuana Tax/Fee money. The remaining will come from the Jail Commissary Fund that has received more revenue than expected. The Jail Commissary Fund can be utilized because the scanner will also be used to inspect commissary packages. Note that this is a single quote as they are the only company that sells this brand specific to correctional facilities. All the facilities in the State that have a body scanner use this brand. The Board approved this purchase during the September 12th, 2023, meeting.
- 2. 2023 – 2024 County Budget** – Public Act 621 of 1978, an amendment to Public Act 2 of 1968, otherwise known as the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act, provides a system of unified procedures for the preparation and execution of budgets for units of local government. The County Administrator/Controller received revenue projections and expenditure requests for all County departments. The County Administrator/Controller has reviewed in detail those requests and has recommended a 2023-2024 General Fund Budget, as well as supporting documentation required by Public Act 621. It is the intent of the Board of Commissioners to provide the solvency of County fiscal operations by adopting a General Appropriations Act as required by law. It is the intent of the Board of Commissioners to articulate policy relative to monitoring, maintenance accounting and implementation of the General Appropriations Act as required by law. It is the intent of the Board of Commissioners to continue its allocation for substance abuse services of 40% of the convention facility/liquor tax revenue as required by Public Act 106 of 1985, as amended by Public Act 276 of 2022. A public hearing for the Proposed 2023-2024 Budget was held on August 8, 2023, after due notice was published in a newspaper of general circulation. The 2023-2024 Budget is based on the intent of the Board of Commissioners to levy property tax millages as follows: County Operating 4.4347, Ambulance 0.9324, Roads 0.9721, Public Safety 0.5332, Public Transit 0.2458, Conservation District 0.0991, and Veterans Relief 0.0995. The 2023-2024 General Fund and Non-General Fund Budgets have been apportioned to the various County departments. The Board of Commissioners adopted the General Appropriations Act for all Funds including anticipated fund balances, revenues, expenditures, and budget policies as attached and made a part hereof.

3. **MDOT Contract 2022-0144/P4** - The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has provided Agreement NO. 2022- 0144/P4. This contract needs to be digitally signed for MDOT before September 13, 2023. This contract is FY 2023 Section 5339. These funds will be used for up to one bus that has met MDOT's requirements to replace. The cost would consist of \$138,718 from Federal funding and \$34,679 State funding. The Board approved this request at the September 12th, 2023, meeting.
4. **MDOT Contract 2022-0144/P5** – There has been a request for approval, a resolution, and signatures for MDOT Contract 2022-0144/P5 which provides Federal Section 5311 Capital funding for replacement buses. MDOT has issued this contract for buses to replace aging vehicles in Transit's fleet. The Board approved the request for the approval, a resolution, and signatures for the MDOT Contract 2022-0144/P5 which provides Federal Section 5311 Capital funding replacement buses at the September 26th, 2023, meeting.
5. **Judge Baillargeon - Regional Veteran's Treatment Court** - Judge Baillargeon spoke regarding the Regional Veteran's Treatment Court. To view his presentation, visit our [Youtube](#) page to watch the livestream!
6. **September 2023 Claims** – Claims in the amount of \$2,159,344.00 for September 2023 were submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Board of Commissioners during the September 26th Board meeting.
7. **ARPA VBISD Youth Center** - There was a request for the Board to approve authorization of the use of \$950,000 in ARPA funds for a Van Buren County Youth Center in conjunction with the Van Buren Intermediate School District. There have been numerous discussions on the use of ARPA funds to address youth mental health issues because of COVID. VBISD has worked with Commissioners and other stakeholders to develop a conceptual program. The Board of Commissioners approved the authorization to use \$950,000.00 in ARPA funds for a Van Buren County Youth Center in conjunction with the Van Buren Intermediate School District during the September 26th meeting.
8. **Local Emergency Planning Committee Member List** - There was a request to approve the updated LEPC/LPT member list. The LEPC/LPT Member List has been updated, removing inactive members, removing members that no longer wish to participate, adding new community members that wish to participate, and establishing alternate voting positions for several members/positions. This was done due to low attendance preventing quorums at LEPC meetings. The Board approved the updated member list for the LEPC/LPT.
9. **Keeler Township Ambulance Interlocal Agreement** – There was a request to terminate the Ambulance Services Inter-Local Agreement with Keeler Township and amend the VBEMS Ambulance Services Contract to include Keeler Township effective August 21, 2023. Keeler Township has belonged to the Cass/Van Buren Emergency Services Authority who contracted with Pride Care for ambulance services in Keeler Township. Pride Care effective August 21, 2023, discontinued operations in Keeler Township. Keeler Township desires to separate from the Authority and discontinue the inter-local agreement that allows us to distribute millage money to them directly. In its place, Keeler Township has asked us to add Keeler Township to our existing VBEMS contract. Consequently, our millage money for the third quarter will be: July 1, 2023 – August 20, 2023: Pride Care August 21, 2023 – September 30, 2023: VBEMS. The Board approved the termination of the Ambulance Services Inter-Local Agreement with Keeler Township and amend the VBEMS Ambulance Services Contract to include Keeler Township effective August 21, 2023.

- 10. Keeler Township Ambulance VBEMS Service Contract** - There has been a request to amend the VBEMS Ambulance Services contract to expand the geographical service effective August 21, 2023, to include Keeler Township and to terminate the Ambulance Services Inter-Local Agreement with Keeler Township. The local unit of government (Keeler Township) has requested VBEMS to assume ambulance services paid through the Ambulance millage effective August 21, 2023. There will be no gap in ambulance service coverage. The Board approved the amending of the VBEMS Ambulance Services contract to expand the geographical service effective August 21, 2023, to include Keeler Township and to terminate the Ambulance Services Inter-Local Agreement with Keeler Township.
- 11. Budget Adjustments** - The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners recognizes its duty to appropriate funds for County operations. The Michigan Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act (Public Act 2 of 1968, as amended) provides a system of unified procedures for the preparation, execution, and amendment of budgets for local units of government. Instances of budgetary non-compliance are reported in the County's annual financial statements, and, by extension, to the State of Michigan. The last scheduled Board of Commissioners meeting in September is September 26, 2023. budget amendments for the 2022-2023 fiscal year must be performed by September 30, 2023, which is the last day of the fiscal year. The need for, and the amount of, budget amendments may not be known until the last days of the fiscal year. The Board approved the authorization of the County Administrator and/or the Finance Director to amend the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget as necessary to maintain compliance with Public Act 2 of 1968, as amended.
- 12. Blight Elimination Grant - Round 2** - There has been a request for the Board to accept the Blight Elimination Grant in the amount of \$115,316.00. the Blight Elimination Grant Program through the State Land Bank Authority, awarded \$250,000 to all counties in the first round. In the first round, the Van Buren County Land Bank Authority (VBCLBA) did not utilize all available funding. For round 2, we solicited additional projects for both the remaining guaranteed funding and competitive funding. The following projects were approved for guaranteed funding: 106 South Center Street, Hartford – demolition (fire) 1014 Third Street, Bangor – demolition (fire). The following project was approved for competitive funding: 606 East Washington, Lawton – demolition. The Board approved the Blight Elimination Grant in the amount of \$115,316.00.
- 13. Blight Elimination - Round 3** - There has been a request for the Board to authorize the Treasurer to sign the grant agreement with the Michigan State Land Bank Authority. There have been numerous discussions on the use of ARPA funds to address youth mental health issues because of COVID. VBISD has worked with Commissioners and other stakeholders to develop a conceptual program. All land banks were awarded \$500,000 in round 3 of the state's blight elimination grant program. The VBCLBA would like to proceed with a grant agreement for the funds to be used for eligible projects in the county. The State Land Bank Authority (SLBA) has not yet finalized the criteria for this round of funding. Once that is made available, the VBCLBA will solicit projects and then submit qualifying projects to the SLBA for their approval. Once approved by the SLBA, the projects may proceed. The Board approved the authorization of the Treasurer to sign the grant agreement with the Michigan State Land Bank Authority.
- 14. Sale of Old Ambulance** - There was a request to sell a 1995 Ford Ambulance for one dollar to the Van Buren County Intermediate School District. We would like to sell an old ambulance that we utilized for our dive team. We are requesting that we are allowed to sell this 1995 Ford Ambulance to the Van Buren Intermediate School District for their first responder program. This vehicle is not in a condition to be used by the Sheriff's Office for emergency situations like

water rescue or body recovery efforts. We ask the sale price of this vehicle to be \$1.00. The Board approved the sale of the 1995 Ford Ambulance for one dollar to the Van Buren County Intermediate School District.

- 15.911 Audio Recording Project** - There was a request to proceed with an upgrade of the 911 Audio Recording System. With the completion of the VHF Radio System upgrade project, we have discovered some challenges with our current audio logging system that have created potential liability concerns. These concerns include multiple instances of the recording system failing to record radio traffic on the MPSCS system. While troubleshooting and investigating source causes, it was determined that additional and upgraded equipment is needed to maintain a technologically forward-facing posture. The estimated cost of the project is \$185,000.00. The current 911 Fund Balance has sufficient funds to cover the cost of the project. (\$1,894,193.00). Equature proposal includes 5-year maintenance. If 100% paid up front, we would realize a savings of approx. \$57,000.00 over the course of the 5 years. Quotes from Motorola (radio) & Equature (recording vendor) have been obtained and are attached. The phone vendor, InDigital, has indicated that their cost would be no more than \$5000.00 but would need to verify current equipment prior to a purchase agreement. These are the vendors who are currently utilized by 911 for recording all audio files including phone & radio systems. The Board approved the request to proceed with an upgrade of the 911 Audio Recording System.
- 16. Access & Visitation Grant** - There was a request to approve the SCAO Access and Visitation Service Contract and to authorize the Board Chair to sign on the Board's behalf. For several years, Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Friends of the Court have filed a joint Access & Visitation grant application to share funds between our counties. The FY24 application has been approved and the contract is available for the Board Chair's signature. This grant provides for supervised parenting time in complex cases. We are working to expand the use of this service in Van Buren County this year. The Board approved the SCAO Access and Visitation Service Contract and authorized the Board Chair to sign on the Board's behalf.
- 17. Opioid Steering Committee - Purchase of Naloxone Kits** - There was a request to purchase 94 Naloxone kits using Opioid Settlement Funds in the amount not to exceed \$10,200.00. The Opioid Settlement Committee has recommended the use of funds for the purchase of 94 Naloxone Safety Kits to be distributed as follows: Public Schools (48), Parochial Schools (6), Cities/Villages (11), Townships (17, Bloomindale Village & Twp Combined), County (12), totaling 94 kits. The kits are designed to be placed in public spaces that can be accessed quickly in the event of an emergency. The use of these monies for this purpose meets the criteria for harm reduction, which is an allowable expense. The Board approved this request.
- 18. Elected Officials Salaries** - There was a request to adopt new salaries for the County Clerk, Treasurer and Register of Deeds to be in alignment with the averages of our comparable counties for an effective date of October 1, 2023. In July, Administration conducted and provided results from a salary study of Elected Official's salaries of our comparable counties. In that survey, it concluded that our County Clerk, Treasurer, and Register of Deeds fell below that average. We are seeking to bring each of those Elected Officials' salaries to be the average and to increase our County Clerk's Election stipend as it hasn't been updated in several years. Clerk: \$85,047.96 and Election Stipend increased from \$2,000 to \$5,000, Treasurer: \$83,661.76, Register of Deeds: \$80,516.66. The Board approved the adoption of the new salaries for the County Clerk, Treasurer and Register of Deeds to be in alignment with the averages of our comparable counties for an effective date of October 1, 2023.

- 19. Juvenile Court RTA Grant** - There was a request for the renewal of the existing Raise the Age (RTA) grant contracts. Juvenile Court has been the recipient of a Raise the Age grant since the legislation changed in 2021. This grant allows reimbursement for any expense related to a youth who receives a new charge after age 17. These include wages / fringes for court staff, court appointed attorneys, driving classes, GED test costs, etc. With the start of the new fiscal year on 10/1/2023, it is being requesting an expedited grant contract signature, so we do not lose any days of grant reimbursement. Signature needs to be completed in the EGrAMS online system. Paper copies attached for reference only. The Board approved the renewal of the existing Raise the Age (RTA) grant contracts.
- 20. Juvenile Court FY23 QLR Grant Amendment** - There was a request for the amendment to the FY23 Quality Legal Representation (QLR) grant contract. this grant contract was previously signed. The amendment is to change Van Buren County from recipient to sub-recipient with no financial changes. Signature needs to be completed in the EGrAMS online system. Paper copies attached for reference only. The Board approved the FY23 Quality Legal Representation Amended grant contract.
- 21. Juvenile Court – QLR & CPLR Grant Contracts** - there has been a request to approve the renewal of the existing Quality Legal Representation (QLR) & Child & Parent Legal Representation (CPLR) grant contracts. Because of timing concerns. Juvenile Court has been the recipient of two MDHHS grants for several years - Quality Legal Representation and Child & Parent Legal Representation. These grants reimburse partial costs of attorneys and a social worker who provide ancillary services to families involved in child protective cases. In line with this court's philosophy of being a resource for Van Buren County families, these interventions have proven effective at preventing removal of children from their homes or an earlier return to their home. services may include establishing paternity or custody, filing for divorce, assisting with domestic violence or landlord tenant issues, helping restore a driver's license, finding housing, completing applications for disability or assistance, resolving contract disputes, and other barriers to permanency for children. Only Van Buren County and Wayne County are pilot counties for these innovative solutions and the State is pleased with our success. Due to many questions and program requirement changes, it has taken a long time to get to the point of contract signature. Signature needs to be completed in the EGrAMS online system. The Board approved the renewal of the existing Quality Legal Representation (QLR) & Child & Parent Legal Representation (CPLR) grant contracts.
- 22. Friend of the Court - CRP Grant Contract** - There was a request to approve the Friend of the Courts Cooperative Reimbursement Program Grant Contract and to authorize the Board Chair to sign the appropriate documents on behalf of the Board. The Friend of the Court is largely funded by the Cooperative Reimbursement Program at a rate of 66%. The previous contract ran from 2017 - 2024 and the current contract is from 2024 - 2028. This contract allows us to bill us for reimbursable expenses. Van Buren County is a combined county, which means our office handles establishment and enforcement. Establishment is a function of the prosecutor's office, so this contract has been signed by Chief Judge Brickley and Prosecutor Zuiderveen. The total grant award is \$10,357,445.06, FY23-24 \$1,881,388.06 FY24-25 \$1,971,804.86 FY25-26 \$2,066,739.28 FY26-27 \$2,166,423.44 FY27-28 \$2,271,088.82. The Board approved the Friend of the Court Cooperative Reimbursement Program Grant Contract and authorizes the Board Chair to sign the appropriate documents on behalf of the Board.

Appointment/Reappointment Requests

1. **Board of Canvasser Appointment** – There was a request to fill the expiring terms on the Board of Canvasser for a 4-year term expiring October 31, 2027. The county committee of each political party is required to submit to the County Clerk no later than September 1st of each odd-numbered year the names of three persons qualified to serve on the Board Canvassers. The County Clerk presents the submitted names to the members of the Board of County Commissioners who are then required to fill each vacant position with one of the three persons nominated for the position. This is a 4-year term expiring October 31st, 2027. Michigan election law stipulates that the Board of County Commissioners must elect the positions “by ballot.” As the Open Meetings Act prohibits voting procedures at a public meeting which prevents citizens from knowing how members of a public body voted, a “secret” balloting process cannot be employed by the Board of County Commissioners when filling the positions. The names submitted by each party are: Republican – Nancy Thomas, Tonya Schuitmaker, Douglas Nelson and for Democrat – Doug Cultra, Nancy Backas, David Goldenberg. After discussion, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners voted to select Nancy Thomas (R) and Doug Cultra (D) to fill the expiring terms. The Board of Commissioners appoints Nancy Thomas (R) and Doug Cultra (D) to the Board of Canvassers for a 4-year term expiring October 31st, 2027.

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