



October 2023 Board of Commissioners Activity Report

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Domestic Violence Coalition Agreement 2023 - 2024** - There was a request a request to review and approve the Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024 Domestic Violence Coalition Agreement. This is the annual agreement that is renewed at the beginning of each fiscal year. The dates are the only thing that has changed since last year's agreement. \$25,000 budgeted for services rendered under the Agreement to be paid in two equal installments on November 1, 2023, and March 1, 2024. The Board approved the FY 2023-2024 Domestic Violence Coalition Agreement at the October 10th, 2023, meeting.
- 2. Van Buren Conservation District Agreement 2023 - 2024** – There was a request for the Board to review and approve the Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024 Van Buren Conservation District Agreement. The VBCD currently receives \$100,000 from the County annually to fund solid waste & recycling efforts. This assists with meeting the growing needs of the residents and landowners of Van Buren County regarding solid waste, recycling, and materials management, including household hazardous waste and recycling collection opportunities. \$100,000 budgeted for services rendered under the Agreement. The Board approved the FY 2023 – 2024 Van Buren Conservation District Agreement during the October 10th, 2023, meeting.
- 3. Office of Community Corrections Grant Application** - There was a request for the Board of Commissioners to approve the submission and acceptance of the renewal FY 2024 Community Corrections Grant. The CCAB has approved the submission of the OCC Grant Application, requesting the amount of \$160,531.44 for pretrial supervision and services outlined in the attached application. The Board approved the submission and acceptance of the renewal FY 2024 Community Corrections Grant during the October 10th, 2023, meeting.
- 4. MSU Extension Memorandum of Understanding 2023 – 2024** – The Board of Commissioners reviewed the annual Memorandum of Agreement between Van Buren County and Michigan State University. The contract between MSU and Van Buren County for MSU Extension services in Van Buren County, which was approved in the MSU Extension 2024 County General Fund Budget, includes the following: Base assessment - \$67,925 (#101.0-710.00-801.000) 50% additional 4-H Educator - \$35,368 (#101.0-710.00-888.007) 35% additional agronomy educator and 50% Consumer (#101.0-710.00-888.009) Horticulture/Veterans Liaison - \$97,292(#101.0-710.00-888.003). Total Memorandum of Agreement \$200,585.00. The Board approved the annual Memorandum of Agreement between Van Buren County and Michigan State University and for the Board Chair to sign on the Board's behalf during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.
- 5. Historical Museum** - There was a request for the Board of Commissioners to accept a donation from the Van Buren Historical Society in the amount of \$33,442.00 as pass through funds to complete a project at the Historical Museum. The Van Buren Historical Society voted

to donate \$33,442.00 to Van Buren County. (Funds were donated to them after the storm.) The money will be used to repair the additional exterior soffit and fascia not covered by MML. The work will be done by VanDam and Krusinga, on-site contractors. The price is not to exceed \$33,442.00. The funds will be receipted into the Buildings and Grounds revenue account # 101.0-265.00-001.000 to be distributed and paid out of # 101.0-265.00-930.913. The Board of Commissioners approved the donation from the Van Buren Historical Society in the amount of \$33,442 as pass through funds to complete a project at the Historical Museum during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

6. **October 2023 Claims** – Claims in the amount of \$8,077,784.95 for October 2023 were submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Board of Commissioners during the October 24th Board meeting.
7. **2023 - 2024 Snow Bids** - There was a request for the Board to approve the snow removal bids as recommended by the Buildings & Grounds Director for the 2023 – 2024 snow season. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners requested bids for the 2023 - 2024 seasonal snow removal for designated locations. Two bids were received for the 13 locations. The Buildings & Grounds Director, John Small, reviewed all the snow removal bids that were submitted, and the following is his recommendation:

Lawn Boys South Haven – Courthouse \$5,200.00
Lawn Boys Paw Paw – Human Services East, Hazen St, B&G \$6,000.00
Kusmack Lawncare Paw Paw – Courthouse / Annex \$8,000.00
Kusmack Lawncare Paw Paw – Admin Building / Niles St. Lot \$4,900.00
Kusmack Lawncare Paw Paw – Sheriff's Lot \$4,000.00
Lawn Boys Hartford – Animal Control and Gun Range \$3,700.00
Lawn Boys Museum Historical Society \$1,200.00
Lawn Boys Hartford – DHS & Health Department \$28,000.00
Kusmack Lawncare Veterans Services Sidewalks \$600.00
Kusmack Lawncare Friend of the Court Sidewalks \$600.00
Kusmack Lawncare VBC 315 Kalamazoo Street \$1,800.00
Lawn Boys Storage Building CR. 681 \$1,200.00
Total: \$65,200.00

The funds will be used from GL # 101.0-265.00-801.000 (Buildings and Grounds – Contracted Services). The Board of Commissioners approved the snow removal bids as recommended above by the Buildings & Grounds Director for the 2023–2024 season during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

8. **Use of County Property – Arts & Crafts Fair Wine & Harvest 2024** – There was a request to approve the use of the park area, Courthouse parking lot, and the grassy area between St. Joseph St. and Berrien St. during the 2024 Wine and Harvest. The Paw Paw Service League is a nonprofit organization committed to fund-raisers to be allocated to community needs. The Board of Commissioners approved the request to use the park area, Courthouse parking lot, and the grassy area between St. Joseph St. and Berrien St. during the 2024 Wine and Harvest Festival during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.
9. **Operations Payment for West Michigan Regional Veterans Treatment Court** - There was a request to review and discuss a \$5,000.00 distribution to the West Michigan Regional Veterans Treatment Court. After a presentation from Judge Baillargeon on the West Michigan Regional Veterans Treatment Court, a request was made for \$5,000.00 to fill a gap in operational funds. The \$5,000.00 could be paid from the Specialty Court Reserve Fund. This

fund was established in 2017 with the intent of filling the gaps and assisting in obtaining grants for the Van Buren Specialty Courts. The original Fund balance was \$250,000.00. The remaining balance is approximately \$160,000.00. The Board approved of a \$5,000.00 distribution to the West Michigan Regional Veterans Treatment Court from the Specialty Courts Reserve Fund at the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

10. ARPA - Digitization Project – There was a request on behalf of the Courts and Sheriff's Department to digitize Court and Sheriff/Jail files currently housed in the MDOC-occupied portion of the courthouse basement, as well as the Sheriff's files are currently housed in the basement of the sheriff's house. The total cost for the entire project is \$491,925.62 as quoted by Applied Innovation/Graphic Sciences. As technology has advanced, it has become imperative for organizations to adapt to these changes and transition from traditional paper-based systems to digital platforms. This is especially true for the legal system, where the sheer volume of paper files and documents can become overwhelming, making it difficult for the community and staff to locate and access critical information when required. Unfortunately, we are also dealing with aging buildings that experience decay, mold, and burst pipes-all of which could destroy files that the county is required to keep safe. The digitization of court and sheriff files is imperative to the county for several reasons: 1.) Efficiency: The process of researching and gathering information from paper-based legal files is often lengthy and can be time-consuming, causing significant delays. Digitizing these files will allow for easy accessibility and retrieval of information, enhancing efficiency in the system. Furthermore, digitization will help reduce the amount of physical space required to store paper files, freeing up valuable space and resources. With the dramatic rise in criminal cases, the state has authorized several new positions for MDOC; however, there is no office space left in the building. 2.) Data Security: While paper court files may seem more secure as they are physical documents, they are at risk of damage or disastrous loss in case of fire or natural disasters. Digitizing legal files will enable the creation of secure backups stored in secure databases (like OnBase), ensuring quick and safe document retrieval in case of any unforeseen circumstances. 3.) Cost Savings: Digitizing legal files will help the Sheriff's department and the court, as it substantially reduces operating costs associated with physical storage and maintenance of files. It will eliminate staff time and shredding service fees due to annual retention periods. 4.) Fully Utilizing Resources: The court has already invested in the data management system, OnBase. This software/DMS system was purchased when Friend of the Court went digital with their files. The IT department has discovered that the county is paying for several licenses in OnBase that are underutilized, which could be used in other departments as files become digitized. OnBase is the preferred data management system for the state, as MiFile will also use this system as it becomes integrated into the courts. Applied Innovation/Graphic Sciences is a known provider to the court and, together, they digitize and configure files into the OnBase system. They entered the state bidding process and were awarded a state contract for this type of work; therefore, all county, court, and sheriff departments are confident that the county is receiving the most cost-efficient pricing available for the type of work that is needed. The financial impact on the County of digitizing both Probate/Juvenile Court files, Sheriff's and jail files is quoted as \$491,925.62 as quoted by Applied Innovation/Graphic Sciences. It is recommended that this expense be paid through ARPA and/or CIP. The Board approved the request to digitize both Probate/Juvenile court files, Sheriff's and jail files as quoted by Applied Innovation/Graphic Sciences for the sum of \$491,925.62 during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

11. 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant Packet - There has been a request to approve the 2023 EMPG and 2021 EPMG ARPA grant from FEMA via the MI State Police in the total amount of \$25,402.00. The 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant and 2021 EPMG American Rescue Plan Act allocation is 30.01247% of the Subrecipient's (Van Buren County) Emergency Program Manager's (Coordinator's) salary and fringe benefits. The

2023 EMPG and 2021 EMPG ARPA Grant Packet was also emailed to Finance Operations Manager, Rebekka Garvison, on 10/3/23 for review with a clarification email from the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division. The 2023 Emergency Management Performance Grant and 2021 EPMG American Rescue Plan Act allocation is 30.01247% of the Subrecipient's (Van Buren County) Emergency Program Manager's (Coordinator's) salary and fringe benefits. The Board of Commissioners approved the 2023 EMPG and 2021 EPMG ARPA grant from FEMA via the MI State Police in the total amount of \$25,402.00, and for the Board Chair to sign on the Board's behalf (as the Chief Elected Official) during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

12. 2023 Apportionment Report - It is the statutory duty of the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, under P.A. 87 of the M.C.L.A. 46.1 at its annual session in October of each year to ascertain, determine and apportion such amounts as directed by 211.37 of the General Property Tax Law. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners does hereby certify that the governing body of each taxing jurisdiction has reduced their millage as required in Sec. 24 (e) and Sec. 34 (d), General Property Tax Laws, and Article 9 of the State Constitution of 1963. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners authorizes and directs that all 2023 property taxes in Van Buren County be spread as one total sum for each taxing unit. The Board of Commissioners adopted the Van Buren County Tax Report of 2023, the apportionment, and millage of taxes to be spread in accordance with the statute, during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

13. 2023 Drain and Lake Level Assessments - The Drain and Lake Level Special Assessment Rolls for the year 2023 are dated, signed, and filed in the office of the County Clerk by the Van Buren County Drain Commissioner. The total for the Drain and Lake Level Special Assessment Rolls is \$644,145.41 representing drain and lake level projects and maintenance work performed. These Drains and Lake Level Special Assessment Rolls are to be spread on the various tax rolls of the appropriate townships, cities, villages in Van Buren County. The Board of Commissioners accepted the 2023 Drain and Lake Level Special Assessment Rolls totaling \$644,145.41 and authorizes the spread of the project special assessments to the various municipalities involved during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

14. Rose Street Benefit Consulting Services Agreement – Renewal - There has been a request to renew our employee benefit consulting agreement with Rose Street Advisors for another three years. Our current agreement with Rose Street Advisors expires on December 31, 2023. Rose Street helps with strategic planning and development of Van Buren County's health and welfare program including medical, prescription drug, dental, life, disability, vision, flexible spending accounts, and wellness components. Rose Street advises Van Buren County as to the tactical and operational components necessary to support current and future objectives relative to the program's design, implementation, administration, maintenance, and management. Rose Street Advisors have increased their monthly fee from \$3,000 to \$3,500. This fee is incorporated in our Blue Cross Blue Shield invoices. The Board approved the agreement with Rose Street Advisors for another three years to expire December 31, 2026, during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

15. Salary Exception - Director of Finance – EXPEDITED - There was a request to approve an expedited salary exception for the Director of Finance in an unclassified position at the rate of \$132,000.00 annually. The Finance Director position has effectively been vacant since September 14, 2023. After posting and conducting interviews, we identified a highly qualified candidate with 17 years of experience in both private and public sectors. Specifically, for public finance experience, the candidate was the Finance Director for a local unit of government for 5 years. They have given a very positive review. The candidate is a CPA with extensive

knowledge of BS&A, budget development, audit compliance, accounts payable/receivable, payroll, etc. We have researched alternative costs, should we want to outsource this position. It is significantly more expensive to outsource with less leadership and services provided. Having an on-site in-house Director is very important for budget development and audit compliance throughout the County. The position was budgeted for \$122,000.00. Because of the vacancy, the increased salary will be absorbed into this year's budget. The Board approved the expedited salary exception for the Director of Finance in an unclassified position at the rate of \$132,000.00 annually during the October 24th, 2023, meeting.

Appointment/Reappointment Requests

- 1. Appointment to the Building Authority – Robert Linderman** – There was a request to approve the re-appointment of Robert Linderman to the Building Authority for a three-year term beginning January 1st, 2024, and will expire December 31st, 2026. The Board approved this request.

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Watch us on our [YouTube page](#). 

All board meeting agendas and minutes can be found on the county website:

<https://www.vanburencountymi.gov/129/Agendas-Minutes>



Hours of Operation:

Monday - Thursday 8am - 5pm
Friday 8am - 2pm

Cass County

Immunizations
1st & 3rd Wednesdays

STD testing & treatment
Thursdays

Dental
Monday - Friday

Van Buren County

Immunizations
Thursdays

STD testing & treatment
Wednesdays

Dental
Monday - Friday

**Newsworthy
visit vbcassdhd.org/news**

“Action Level exceedance” for lead found in City of Dowagiac drinking water. Filters and additional information are available.

A bat positive for rabies was found in Van Buren County.

Cases of COVID-19 have increased in both counties in September

Administration

- MI Public Health Accreditation Cycle 8 for our department is complete. Each program received high remarks from program auditors. We await the final report and in the meantime will be celebrating our team’s success and all of the hard work that went into preparing and being present for accreditation.
- This fiscal year we will receive the “Strengthening the Public Health Workforce and Infrastructure in Michigan” (CDC Infrastructure) grant award in the amount of \$704,738 over a 4-year period. Funding may be spent in any grant year(s) we wish. If split equally, \$176,184 a year.
- Workforce Development funding is rolled over into FY2024 in addition to the FY2024 award amount of \$110,000.
- All staff completed AcuMax assessments and participated in two workshops designed to better understand how we behave as individuals and help improve internal communication. We’ll continue this work through the coming year.

Medical Director/Nursing

- Outreach Flu Clinics begin this month; the full flu clinic schedule and instructions for schedule appointments can be found on our website at vbcassdhd.org/medical/predominant-diseases/flu/
- We are still awaiting shipment of our commercial (private) COVID-19 vaccine
- Staff attended the Council on Aging Health Fair on September 8
- Staff attended the Immunization Action Plan coordinators meeting

Community Health

- Attended the SMC Campus bash providing resources & education to new college students (COVID, flu vaccines, sexual/personal health)
- Attended the Cass Family Fair hosted by Cass County Great Start Collaborative providing resources & education to families with preschoolers (safe sleeping, importance of reading, good nutrition)

- Began work on the Vaccine Partnership Grant awarded by NACCHO to develop strong partnerships with at-risk communities and stakeholders to improve vaccine confidence. We'll be focusing on the communities of Covert and Marcellus.
 - Our team was awarded 5 cases of English and 2 cases of Spanish Charlie's Kids' Book "Sleep baby safe and snug", beloved safe sleep education books designed to aide in the prevention of infant deaths due to unsafe sleeping conditions and will be distributed to caregivers of infants and pregnant persons throughout Cass and Van Buren County.
 - Team worked diligently to assist all departments with accreditation, providing material design and other supports
 - We are encouraged by the growing engagement and partnerships in the new Eat Well Be Well Nutrition and Physical Activity Education program. Select partners have been invited to a gathering at the end of October to discuss current programs and identify nutrition and physical activity program gaps in our communities.
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Environmental Health

- In the month of September, the department reports:
 - 39 septic permits
 - 31 septic final inspections
 - 59 well permits
 - 35 final well inspections
 - 16 public pool inspections
 - 48 routine restaurant inspections
 - 20 restaurant follow-up inspections
 - 29 temporary food license inspections
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Dental Clinic & Dental Outreach

- Dowagiac Dental Clinic
 - served 442 patients in the month of September
 - booked through June 2024 for treatment
 - booked through October 2024 for regular hygiene (cleanings)
- Lawrence Dental Clinic
 - served 466 patients in the month of September
 - booked through June 2024 for treatment
 - booked through October 2024 for regular hygiene (cleanings)
- 2023 Van Buren Veterans Grant served 134 veterans and spouses for a total of \$53,406.03 in dental care. Veteran dental service grants for both counties restart this month
- Mobile Dental Outreach visited 13 schools (294 children screened) to provide kindergarten oral health assessments, a public health code requirement that all kindergarteners in the state of MI receive a dental screening before or during their first year of Kindergarten.
- SEAL! MI program begins October 9th with a first visit to Covert Public Schools.
- Distributed over 100 toothbrushes & toothpaste at Covert's pancake breakfast community event

BOARD OF COUNTY ROAD COMMISSIONERS OF VAN BUREN COUNTY

Road Commissioner Talking Points – October 2023

2024 BUDGET

The Board received its first look at the DRAFT 2024 budget at the October regular meeting. The budget being proposed contains an estimated \$6.2 million in heavy maintenance projects, \$9.7 million in routine and special maintenance, together with allocations for facility maintenance/improvements and necessary equipment purchases.

A public hearing will be (tentatively) held on Thursday, December 14th at 5:00 PM to receive public comment on the 2024 proposed Road Commission budget.

AMENDMENT TO POLICY 2022-01 PROJECTS FUNDED BY TOWNSHIPS

At the recommendation of the Managing Director, Policy 2022-01, Projects Funded by Townships, was amended to include approval for LED traffic signs to be installed by the Road Commission, as approved by the Highway Engineer. The Policy amendment is as follows:

4(C) . . . LED traffic signs installed by the Road Commission upon receipt of a Resolution from the Township stating:

i. That the Township will pay for any and all costs associated with the purchase and installation of the approved sign(s).

ii. That the Township will pay for any and all costs associated with the maintenance, replacement and/or removal of a LED sign(s) as may be deemed necessary by the Road Commission for a minimum of 10 years following installation.

iii. That the Road Commission's engineering staff shall have the sole discretion, based upon sound engineering decisions made in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission, to remove the LED sign(s) at any time following installation upon written notice to the Township.

TOWNSHIP ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Road Commission held their Township Annual Meetings on October 17 and 18 at the Road Commission's storage-maintenance facility in Lawrence. Both sessions were well attended by Township officials including Supervisors, Treasurers, Clerks, and Trustees.

If you were unable to attend one of the sessions, look for an email to come from Alyssa McAndrew, Communications/Project Clerk, containing a link to the video and materials. Information will also be posted on the Road Commission's website at www.vbcrc.org/townships.

SEALCOAT AND FOG SEAL PROGRAMS WRAP UP WHILE CONSTRUCTION SEASON CONTINUES STRONG

The Road Commission has completed its 2023 Sealcoat and Fog Seal Programs. Both Programs were very successful with Road Commission staff accomplishing **152 miles (770,000 gallons of emulsion) of seal coat in 18 days, and 142 road miles (240,000 gallons of emulsion) of fog seal in 14 days.**

And while the days are growing cooler and shorter, many road projects remain active. We ask that all motorists remain alert and focused as they travel throughout Van Buren County work zones.

Motorists are also encouraged to be prepared for road and bridge work by visiting the Road Commission's website at www.vbcrc.org or check us out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VBCRC.

To receive project a complete maintenance & operations update, please see the Road Commission's **Weekly Update** visit www.vbcrc.org/projectupdates.