



## March 2023 Board of Commissioners Activity Report

Administration Address  
219 E Paw Paw Street - Suite 305, Paw Paw, MI 49079  
Website: [www.vanburencountymi.gov](http://www.vanburencountymi.gov)

Telephone No.  
(269) 657-8253  
Email: [Admin@vanburencountymi.gov](mailto:Admin@vanburencountymi.gov)

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Public Hearing for Hartford Kayak Launch** – Van Buren County Board of Commissioners supports the submission of an application titled, “Paw Paw River Water Trail Public Access Development” to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the development of a parking area and an ADA pathway to an ADA kayak/canoe launch in Hartford Township along County Road 687. The proposed application is supported by the County’s 5-Year Approved Parks and Recreation Plan. Van Buren County has made a financial commitment to the project in the amount of \$58,310 matching funds, in cash and/or force account. If the grant is awarded, the applicant commits its above local match and pledged amounts from the following identified sources: Hartford Township \$58,310 and Van Buren Conservation District \$5,000. Van Buren County Commissioners hereby authorize the submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Application for \$283,780, and further resolves to make available a local match through its financial commitment and the Hartford Township and Van Buren Conservation District commitment totaling \$121,620 (30%) of a total \$405,400 project cost, during the 2024-2025 fiscal years.
- 2. MERS 457 Plan** – There was a request to approve the addition of a MERS 457 plan as an offering to employees. Currently, eligible employees are enrolled in our Defined Benefit Pension Plan through MERS. They contribute 5% into their pension each pay period and this amount cannot be modified. For any employee who wishes to contribute additional money into a retirement account, we currently offer a 457b plan through Fidelity to do so. Administration brought a recommendation to the Board in the past to replace Fidelity altogether. However, we have employees who are satisfied with Fidelity and the services they offer, so instead, we would like to add MERS 457 plan to our offerings and keep Fidelity for those employees who are currently enrolled. Any current employee who has an account with Fidelity can continue to use it or have the option to transfer their funds into MERS. All new employees will only be offered the plan through MERS. HR has received more inquiries lately from current employees and their desire to have their funds all with MERS. If this is approved, we will be bringing MERS back onsite for educational sessions on what will be all of our offerings (Defined Benefit Pension, Health Care Savings Plan and the new 457 plan). The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approved the addition of a MERS 457 plan as an offering to employees.
- 3. Assistance from John Faul** – Mr. Faul serves on multiple local boards and would need to clarify that there is no conflict of interest. Register of Deeds Paul DeYoung has also offered to assist if needed. There was a motion to direct Chairman Peat to verify with legal counsel that no conflict of interest would exist and authorize him to contact John Faul to inquire and negotiate a contract for a temporary Administrator position, and to engage in discussions with Paul DeYoung if needed.
- 4. Wage Scale Placement – Chief Deputies** - There has been a request to place the Chief Deputies on the Non-Union scale as they were removed from collective bargaining units

beginning in 2023. During negotiations, the Elected Officials had a request to remove their Chief Deputies from AFCSME and this request was agreed upon by the union. Since they were previously placed on the AFSCME scale, there is a need for replacement to the Non-Union scale. We have gathered as much data from comparable counties as available to place these positions on appropriate ranges on the scale. The following recommendations based on the data are intended to be competitive with the comparable county's averages and provide no decrease in current wage for each of these employees:

- Chief Deputy Clerk: placed on the Non-Union, R26F at \$31.91 hourly/\$62,229.96 annually.
- Chief Deputy Drain Commissioner: currently vacant; to be placed on the Non-Union R26 BOC-0003 (6/25/21) range \$46,962.05 - \$63,984.96.
- Chief Deputy Register of Deeds: placed on the Non-Union R25F at \$29.57 hourly/\$57,666.18 annually.
- Chief Deputy Treasurer: placed on the Non-Union R26G at \$32.63 hourly/\$63,635.13 annually.

The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the wage scale placement for the Chief Deputies.

5. **MERS Establishing Authorized Signatories** – There was a request to authorize the positions of County Administrator, Finance Director, or Board Chairman to be an authorized signatories for MERS Contracts and Service Credit Purchase Approvals. Previously, the Board approved the position of County Administrator to sign contracts and Service Credit Purchase Approvals on Van Buren County's behalf. Considering the vacant County Administrator position, we currently do not have any positions within the County authorized to sign MERS documents on the County's behalf. The Board of Commissioners approved the request to authorize the positions of County Administrator, Finance Director or Board Chairman to be an authorized signatories for MERS Contracts and Service Credit Purchase.
6. **Adult Recovery Court Contract for FY 2023** – There has been a request from the Circuit Court to seek Board approval and a signature for the FY23 Adult Recovery Court Contract with Van Buren Community Mental Health. The Van Buren County Adult Recovery Court and Van Buren Community Mental Health will continue their long-standing relationship. The Van Buren County Adult Recovery Court will reimburse Van Buren Community Mental Health up to \$55,000 for the Subrecipient's expenses under this contract. The Board of Commissioners approved the resolution of the Adult Recovery Court Contract for the 2023 fiscal year.
7. **Claims** – Claims in the amount of \$2,310,061.73 for February 2023 were submitted and reviewed. The Board of Commissioners approved the total claims in the amount of \$2,310,061.73 for the month of February 2023.
8. **Salary Exception – Finance Director** – There has been a request to approve a salary exception for a highly qualified Finance Director candidate. after conducting interviews for the Finance Director role, one candidate separated themselves through their extensive work experience in municipal finance. We are keeping the candidate's name confidential as the acceptance is contingent on a salary exception and this candidate would like to give proper notice to their current employer. We are seeking to bring this candidate in at the step our previous Finance Director, Ryan Post, was at prior to taking the County Administrator role. R37, \$121,805.97. The Board of Commissioners approved the salary exception for the Finance Director position at R37, \$121,805.97.

9. **Life EMS Contract Renewal** – There has been a request to approve the three-year contract renewal for Life EMS ambulance services. Life EMS provides ambulance services to the municipalities of Pine Grove, Bloomingdale, and Columbia Townships, as well as the City of Gobles. The three-year contract for their services is up for renewal. The only notable change is a standard update to the current fee schedule. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approves the three-year contract renewal for Life EMS ambulance services.
10. **Request to use County Property – Paw Paw Large Tire Recycling Event** -The Van Buren Conservation District requested to use County property for the Paw Paw Large Tire Recycling Event. The Paw Paw Large Tire Recycling Event is to take place on July 10th from 10:00a - 1:00p and July 11th from 3:00p - 7:00p. The Conservation District is requesting the use of county restrooms inside of the building for their staff/volunteers as well. The Board of Commissioners approved the use of County property for the Paw Paw Large Tire Recycling Event.

### **Appointments/ Reappointments to Boards & Committees**

1. **Opioid Steering Fund Steering Committee** - There was a request to discuss and approve the creation of a steering committee for the allocation of funds from the Nationwide Opioid Settlement. Van Buren County recently received a check for \$197,347.90 as part of the nationwide opioid settlement against several pharmaceutical companies. As of July 2022, Van Buren County is expected to receive an estimated total of \$1,362,485 over the next 18 years. Discussions with stakeholders in the County and local community agencies determined that the most viable way to allocate these funds is to create a focused steering committee. The intent of this committee would be to vet projects that could then be brought to the Board of Commissioners for funding approval. Given the relatively narrow scope of allowable expenditures, that approach seemed more appropriate than the broader-reaching application process for ARPA funds. The following stakeholders were identified as potential members for the steering committee,

- Richard Godfrey (Prevention Task Force)
- Mike Chappell (Prevention Task Force)
  - Dan Abbott (VBC Sheriff)
  - Jewell Daily (Recovery Zone)
- Becky Fatzinger (CMH Suicide Prevention Task Force)
  - Danielle Persky (VBCDHD)
- Nikki Van Sandt (CMH SUD Treatment)

The Board of Commissioners approved the creation of a steering committee for the allocation of funds from the Nationwide Opioid Settlement.

2. **Appointment to Interim County Administrator – John Faul** - The County Administrator fills the position of IT Director; therefore, it is necessary to amend the contract with John Faul to be an Interim County Administrator instead of a consultant. The current Interim IT Director, CJ Johnson, is being recommended for the permanent position. There was a motion to amend the contract with John Faul to change the position from Consultant to Interim County Administrator to allow him to fill the IT Director position at an appropriate wage classification.

---

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VanBurenCountyMI/> 

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/van-buren-county-government> 

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VanBurenCoMI> 

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>