



April 2023 Board of Commissioners Activity Report

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Specialty Court Renewal Contract** - There was a request to extend the contract with Rachel Lindley for Specialty Court services. The Specialty Courts Administrator obtained the title on October 24, 2022. She resigned from her position on March 30, 2023. It is imperative that Specialty Courts have a capable person to handle State and Federal grants applications and to ensure that the required reporting is accurate while the Court seeks to hire new personnel. Therefore, the Courts are requesting to extend the contract with Rachel Lindley, former Specialty Courts Administrator, through October 11, 2023. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approved the extension of the contract with Rachel Lindley for Specialty Court services through October 11th, 2023.
- 2. Retirement and Adoption of K9 Bruno** - There was a request for the retirement and adoption of K9 Bruno from the Sheriff's office. K9 Bruno's handler, Daniel Rowse, is no longer in the K9 handler position within the Sheriff's office. Rowse is requesting to adopt K9 Bruno and the Sheriff has agreed to allow Rowse to purchase Bruno upon board approval. K9 Bruno is a 6-year-old male German Shepard and has been with his K9 handler since 2019. It was agreed upon by Sheriff Abbott and a waiver of liability and hold harmless agreement is to be signed by Sheriff Abbott and Rowse. It is customary when K9 handlers leave the unit or retire to have the K9 go with the handler, as this is the family the K9 is accustomed to. The Board of Commissioners approved the adoption and purchase of K9 Bruno.
- 3. Claims** - Claims in the amount of \$1,879,072.40 for March 2023 were submitted and reviewed at the April 11th, 2023, meeting. The Board of Commissioners approves the total claims in the amount of \$1,879,072.40 for the month of March 2023.
- 4. Vital Record Fee and Marriage License Waiver Fee Increase** – There was a request to increase vital record fees and the waiver fee for marriage licenses at the April 11th, 2023, meeting presented by County Clerk Suzie Roehm, and the cost of all paper has increased dramatically, including safety paper for vital records. The last increase in vital record fees was in 2008, fifteen years ago. The current fees are \$13.00 for the first copy and \$4.00 for each additional copy. Over 40% of the state (33 counties) are currently charging \$15.00/\$5.00. This increase would generate approximately \$6,000 annually in additional revenue and offset the increased cost of producing certified copies. When a marriage license is applied for, there is a 3-day waiting period before the license is valid and can be used. Per statute, the waiting period can be waived, and the County Clerk shall collect a waiver fee. The fee has been set at \$5.00 for the 28 years that Clerk Roehm has worked in the office. Clerk Roehm has surveyed MACC and fees range from \$5.00 to \$100.00. It is being requested to raise the fee to \$25.00. In FY21-22 the waiver was requested 33 times. The Board of Commissioners approved the request to increase vital record fees to \$15.00 for the first copy and \$5.00 for each additional copy of the same record purchased at the same time and increase the 3-day waiver fee to \$25.00, effective May 1st, 2023.
- 5. 2023 Equalization Report** - MCL 211.34(1) requires the county board of commissioners to meet in April each year to determine county equalized valuations, which equalization shall be completed and submitted along with the tabular statement required by Section 5 of Act No. 44 of the Public Acts of 1911, as amended no later than May 1 of each year. The assessment rolls of the various assessment jurisdictions have been reviewed by the various local Boards of Review throughout the County of Van Buren and submitted to your Equalization

Department in the appropriate timely manner. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approved the County Equalized Valuations as indicated within the attached equalization report a cumulative total for Real Property of \$4,887,951,732 (Four Billion, Eight Hundred Eighty-Seven Million, Nine Hundred Fifty-One Thousand, Seventy Hundred Thirty-Two Dollars) and a cumulative total for Personal Property of \$579,364,250 (Five Hundred Seventy-Nine Million, Three Hundred Sixty-Four Thousand, Two Hundred Fifty Dollars). The combined total of Real and Personal Property of the Cities and Townships in Van Buren County is \$5,467,315,982 (Five Billion, Four Hundred Sixty-Seven Million, Three Hundred Fifteen Thousand, Nine Hundred Eighty-Two Dollars).

- 6. Blight Elimination Grant Award** - There was a request to accept a grant from the Michigan State Land Bank Authority in the amount of \$89,998.00 for Blight Elimination activities. The State Land Bank Authority issued RFP 2023-001 in September 2022 to provide grant dollars to land banks and local units of government to address blighted properties. Land banks were allocated \$200,000 in funding. The Van Buren County Land Bank Authority (VBCLBA), in partnership with Market Van Buren, worked with local units of government and private property owners to solicit applications for the available funding. The VBCLBA approved 2 applications from Covert Township to demolish houses for which they had a dangerous building hearing and obtained an order to raze. The VBCLBA also approved an application for the demolition and cleanup of a former salvage yard and auto sales/repair location on M-140 Hwy in South Haven. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approved the grant from the Michigan State Land Bank Authority in the amount of \$89,998.00 for Blight Elimination activities.

Reappointments/ Appointments

1. **Reappointment to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board - Carol Sjoquist** – There was a request to review and approve the reappointment of Carol Sjoquist to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board for a three-year term from April 1, 2023, expiring March 31, 2026. Ms. Sjoquist has been a contributing member since 2001. The Board of Commissioners approved the reappointment of Carol Sjoquist to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board for a three-year term from April 1, 2023, expiring March 31, 2026.

2. **Reappointment to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board - Tom Erdman** – There was a request to review and approve the reappointment of Tom Erdman to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board for a three-year term from April 1, 2023, expiring March 31, 2026. Mr. Erdman has been a contributing member since 2008. The Board of Commissioners approves the reappointment of Tom Erdman to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board for a three-year term from April 1, 2023, expiring March 31, 2026.

3. **Reappointment to Van Buren County Planning Commission - Barbara Rose** – There was a request to review and approve the reappointment of Barbara Rose to the Van Buren County Planning Commission for a two-year term expiring on March 31st, 2025. The Van Buren County Planning Commission has a member with a term set to expire on March 31st, 2023, and would like to seek reappointment to the Planning Commission. The Board of Commissioners approved the reappointment of Barbara Rose to the Van Buren County Planning Commission with a term set to expire March 31st, 2025.

4. **Reappointment to Van Buren County Planning Commission - Jan Petersen** – There was a request to review and approve the reappointment of Jan Petersen to the Van Buren County Planning Commission for a two-year term expiring on March 31st, 2025. The Van Buren County Planning Commission has a member with a term set to expire on March 31st, 2023, and would like to seek reappointment to the Planning Commission. The Board of Commissioners approved the reappointment of Jan Petersen to the Van Buren County Planning Commission with a term set to expire March 31st, 2025.

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

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