



March 2024 Board of Commissioners Activity Reports

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR MARCH 2024

- 1. UKG (Kronos) Software Request** – Becky Grabemeyer, Van Buren County's Finance Director, has requested on behalf of the Finance Department to purchase a new timekeeping software. The Board approved this request during the March 26th, 2024, BOC Meeting.
- 2. Request to use County Property – Paw Paw Recycle Roundup & Large Tire Collection Event** – There was a request for the Board from the Van Buren Conservation District to use the County property for their Paw Paw Large Tire Collection and the Paw Paw Recycle Roundup events. This was approved during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 3. 9-1-1 Local Surcharge Renewal Proposal** - The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners concluded that the default county surcharge rate of \$1.17 per device must be increased for the county to meet its obligations associated with the reasonable and necessary expenses of operate and maintain its 9-1-1 system. Shall Van Buren County be authorized to assess a county 9-1-1 emergency services charge on monthly billings to each service user device located within Van Buren County that can access 9-1-1, at a rate not to exceed \$1.83 each month (renewing the current voter approved surcharge) in addition to the default of \$1.17 each month for a total maximum allowed rate of \$3.00 each month, for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029, to be used exclusively for the funding of 9-1-1 emergency telephone call answering and dispatch services within Van Buren County, including facilities, equipment and operations. The Board of Commissioners approved this request during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 4. Road Millage Renewal Proposal** – This proposal will allow Van Buren County to continue to levy 0.9721mill which was previously approved by the electors to fund road maintenance, repair, and reconstruction but which expired with the 2023 levy. Shall there be a 0.9721 mill levy (\$0.9721 per \$1,000 dollars) of the taxable value on taxable property in Van Buren County for the next four (4) years (2024-2027) for the purpose of maintenance, repair, and reconstruction of all public streets, avenues, and roads in Van Buren County. The Board approved the request during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 5. Veteran Services Millage Renewal Proposal** - As the renewal of the previously authorized millage which expired with the 2023 levy, the question presented in this proposal is - shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in Van Buren County be increased by 0.0995 mill (\$0.0995 per thousand dollars of taxable value), for a period of four (4) years, 2024 to 2027, inclusive, to provide funds for operations and services dedicated to veterans who have served honorably in active duty in the United States Armed Forces. The Board approved of the continuation during the March 26, 2024, BOC meeting.

- 6. Public Transit Millage Renewal Proposal** - This proposal will allow Van Buren County to continue its levy for public transit services at 0.2458 mill which was previously approved at 0.2471 mill by the electors in 2020 but has expired with the 2023 levy. As a renewal of previously authorized millage which expired with the 2023 levy the question presented in this ballot proposal is - shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be imposed on taxable property in Van Buren County be increased by 0.2458 mill (\$0.2458 per thousand dollars of taxable value), for a period of four (4) years, 2024 to 2027, inclusive, for the exclusive purpose of providing funds for public transportation purposes, which includes accommodations for seniors and disabled persons. The Board approved the purchase of the two Detective vehicles during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 7. February 2024 Claims** – Claims in the amount of \$ 2,681,214.21 for February 2024 were submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Board of Commissioners during the March 26th, 2024, Board meeting.
- 8. Salary Exception – Courts Staff Attorney** - There was a request on behalf of the Circuit Court, to approve a very qualified applicant who has applied for the Staff Attorney position. The Board approved the request during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 9. Salary Exception – Intensive Probation Officer** – There was a request on behalf of the Juvenile Court, for the Board to approve the hiring of an applicant for the position of Intensive Probation Officer with a salary exception at the AFSCME Range 26 D. The Board approved the request during the March 12th, 2024, BOC Meeting.
- 10. Karpel Contract – State Prosecutor Software EXPEDITED** – There was a request on behalf of the Prosecutors Office to approve a contract for the new Karpel case management system. The Board approved the request during the March 12th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 11. Title VI Policy Update** – Public Transit requested the Board to approve the updated Title VI policy. The Board approved the request during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 12. Out of State Travel Request – Veterans Services** – David Krzycki, Veteran Services Director, requested approval for the Veteran Services Department to attend an out of state conference in Denver Colorado, for the Annual National Conference for County Veteran Service Offices. The Board approved this request during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 13. Van Buren Road Commission Monthly Report** – Bret Witkowski, the Managing Director, presented the Road Commission’s monthly update to the Board during the March 26th, 2024, CoW meeting.
- 14. Public Transit Bi-Monthly Update** – Public Transit Director, Laurie Schlipp, presented the Board with their Bi-Monthly update during the March 13th, 2024, CoW meeting.

Appointment/Reappointment Requests

1. **VBC Surveyor's Peer Group Appointment** – There was a request to approve the appointment of Travis Krentz to the Van Buren County Surveyor's Peer Group. Mr. Krentz's appointment was approved during the March 12th, 2024, BOC meeting.
2. **VBC Brownfield Redevelopment Re-Appointment** – There was a request for the Board to approve of the appointment of John Young to the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority for a three-year term set to expire on June 1st, 2027. Mr. Young's appointment was approved during the March 12th, 2024, BOC meeting.
3. **Deputy Medical Examiner Appointment** – There was a request for the Board to approve the appointment of Dr. Christine James as the Deputy Medical Examiner in Van Buren County. The Board approved this request during the March 12th, 2024, BOC meeting.
4. **VBC Brownfield Redevelopment Authority Board Re-Appointment** - There was a request to approve the re-appointment of Lisa Phillips to the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority for a three-year term set to expire on June 1st, 2027. Ms. Phillip's appointment was approved during the March 26th, 2024, BOC meeting.

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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

STI testing & treatment
Thursdays

Dental
Monday - Friday

Van Buren County

Immunizations
Thursdays

STI testing & treatment
Wednesdays

Dental
Monday - Friday

**Newsworthy
visit vbcassdhd.org/news**

NEW! March 1, 2024 CDC Respiratory Virus (COVID, flu, RSV) Guidance recommends that all people use core prevention strategies:

- Stay up to date with immunizations
- Practice good hygiene
- Take steps for cleaner air
- When you may have a respiratory virus:
 - Take precautions to prevent spread
 - Seek healthcare promptly for testing and/or treatment

Medical Director/Nursing

- We had our first suspect measles case reported this month and have been fielding many calls from concerned parents and citizens. For more information on Measles visit: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/childrenfamilies/immunization/measles>
- HIV/STI team provided outreach, education and testing to Woodlands Behavioral Health Clinic and Cass County Jail
- Seasonal Flu Vaccination Coverage Michigan's goal is to vaccinate 4 million residents during the 2023-2024 flu season. As of Feb 24, 2024, there have been 2,823,918 doses administered (73.7% towards goal) for the 2023-2024 flu season. Visit the Flu Vaccination Dashboard at www.michigan.gov/flu for more info.
- Influenza-associated Pediatric Mortality Nationally, 93 influenza-associated pediatric death has been reported for the 2023-2024 flu season. No pediatric deaths have been confirmed by MDHHS for the 2023-2024 flu season to date.
- Michigan ILI (Influenza Like Activity): 6.0% ↑ (Last week: 5.4%) Regional Baseline*: 2.3% A total of 8,781 patient visits due to ILI were reported out of 145,945 outpatient visits. *Regional baseline is determined by calculating the mean percentage of patient visits due to ILI during non-influenza weeks for the previous three seasons and adding two standard deviations. *Influenza A H1N1 is the predominant strain circulating, with H3N2 following close behind as well as Influenza B.
- Children's Special Health Care Services has expanded eligibility for the program to age 26. As of January 1, the program has begun accepting medical reports and enrolling eligible clients for the expansion. Call our office for more information or to see if your dependent is eligible.

<-- Read more about the NEW! CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance: <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/guidance/respiratory-virus-guidance.html>

Community Health

- Currently distributing PPE to Van Buren ISD Tech programs to support seven (7) of their programs including dental, patient care, automotive, construction trades, graphic design, and others.

- Nutrition initiatives we've been focusing on: Feeding America West Michigan to support mobile food pantries, Double Up Food Bucks where program participants can purchase double the amount of produce with the same money; and engagement with local farmers and farm stands.
- Senior Project Fresh: We are now a NEW lead agency for Senior Project Fresh, working closely with MDHHS to provide free nutrition education and \$25 in coupons that can be exchanged for fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods sold at local farmers' markets and roadside stands.
- We've been collaborating with Bronson on a Promoting Active Communities (PAC) assessment to identify barriers to active living in our communities and develop solutions to overcome them.
- Working with University of Michigan grad students, we are in the initial phases of developing the Healthlink app, an app aimed to inform, educate and engage our community connecting them with nutrition education and physical activity opportunities.
- Our team hosted dental-themed story times at several Van Buren District Library locations (Lawrence, Mattawan, Bangor, Decatur) for Children's Dental Hygiene Awareness month.
- A nurse and a community health team member worked together to distribute marijuana lock boxes to all dispensaries in Cass County to provide to their customers while also promoting and signing these businesses up as participants in the Wear One Campaign, a campaign that provides free and discreet access to condoms and sexually transmitted infection resources, such where to locate testing and treatment.

Environmental Health

- In the month of February, the department reports:
 - 46 septic permits
 - 25 septic final inspections
 - 40 well permits
 - 44 final well inspections
 - 30 routine restaurant inspections
 - 14 restaurant follow-up inspections
 - 1 temporary food license inspections
 - 1 swimming pool inspections



Dental Clinic & Outreach

- Dowagiac Dental Clinic
 - served 379 patients in the month of February
 - booked through mid-October 2024 for treatment
 - booked through March 2025 for regular hygiene (cleanings)
- Lawrence Dental Clinic
 - served 433 patients in the month of February
 - booked through November 2024 for treatment
 - booked through May 2025 for regular hygiene (cleanings)

Background: FEB-March FY2024 REPORT

Statistical information Indicates:

- Veteran Services conducted **191** contacts in February and **246** contacts in March. **Claims, Appeals, Aid and Attendance** were the main topics during these last 2 months.
- The dental program spent **\$4359.00** in February with **16** visits and **\$2583.00** in March with **21** visits.
- In FY2024 we have spent **\$33,399.81** of the 2024 MVAA grant. We have **\$53,431.19** remaining in our FY2024 MVAA Fund.
- Soldiers and Sailors did meet once during this reporting period and there were no qualified applicants.

Statistics February 2023 and March 2024

- **VA Claims/Actions:** We had **115** claims/actions filed in February and **134** in March. This reflects both Compensation, Aid/Attendance, and Pension request, along with various actions related to additional benefits.
- **Appeals:** We had **7** appeals in February and **3** appeals in March.
- **Health Care:** Veteran services had **12** veterans signed up for VA Health Care in February and **4** veterans signed up in March.
- **Home/Event Visits:** Veteran services conducted **0** home visits in this reporting period.
- **Assisted Living Visits:** Conducted a total of **13** Assisted Living Visits this reporting period.
- **Community Events:** Conducted **16** outreach and County Events since our last report.

Public transportation gave **14 rides in February and 22 rides in March.**

- **February**
 - Visited White Oaks, Blueberry Hill Assisted Living
 - Visited Laurel Oaks South Haven Assisted Living
 - Added new Cabinet to our Historical Hallway
 - Visited VFW Decator
 - Visited VFW South Haven
 - Ordered New Coins
 - Conducted our 1st Veterans Social
- **March**
 - Breakfast and Services in Hartford
 - Attended the planning session for American Legion "Veteran Event".
 - Harford Bible Church Senior Briefing
 - Visited the American Legion in Bangor
 - Visited the American Legion in South Haven

- Lions Club Paw Paw Presentation
- Visited Light House Assisted Living
- Breakfast and Services in Covert, MI
- Conducted 2nd Veterans Social
- Submitted quarterly report to MVAA for FY 2024 Quarter #2.

*** VHA continues to support VBC with the Homeless Veterans Program once a month. Jordan Brinker is our POC at VA for this program.”

- **Upcoming events:**

- MVAA Training in Frankenmuth, MI
- Southwestern Area on Aging Briefing
- Gold Star Mothers Event, VFW Decator
- River Ridge Retirement Village
- Lions Club Foundation Veterans Expo.
- National Conference, Denver, CO
- Memorial Day Event, Bangor MI

Military Branch Birthdays

- Army. June 14, 1775.
- Coast Guard. August 4, 1790
- Air Force. September 18, 1947
- Navy. October 13, 1775.
- Marine Corps. November 10, 1775.
- National Guard December 13, 1636.
- Space Force, December 20, 2019.



Van Buren Conservation District March 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

Our conference season is coming to a close, and our event season is officially upon us! We had a great day connecting with producers around grain, grazing, and forestry topics at our Farming for the Future Conference on March 13 at the Van Buren ISD Conference Center. Recordings of several sessions will be available on our YouTube channel soon. www.youtube.com/VanBurenCD

April 8-12, staff will be out of the office to have our **Tree Seedling Sale**. In addition to being open for pre-order pickup and selling leftover stock, we will be holding a petting zoo at our Paw Paw location (the VBCD office) on Saturday, April 13, 2024. We will have very cute baby farm animals, so come check them out!

Pre-order Pickup and Leftover Stock Sale Dates & Times

- Thursday, April 11, 2024 | 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM
- Friday, April 12, 2024 | 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM
- Saturday, April 13, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Locations

- VBCD Office | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079
- Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum | 903 S Bailey Ave., South Haven, MI 49090

Recycling collections kick off soon and details for all events have been posted at <https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>. Please encourage folks to sign up their tires ahead of time! In April you can find us...

- Large Tire Collection** | April 22, 2024 | 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | South Haven DPW | 1199 8th Ave, South Haven
- Large Tire Collection** | April 23, 2024 | 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM | South Haven DPW | 1199 8th Ave, South Haven
- Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection** | April 27, 2024 | 8:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Decatur Transfer Station | 300 W Beers St., Decatur

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In February, the Ag & Water Quality Team staff attended and spoke at several workshops and conferences, as well as prepared for future conferences and field days that we will be hosting. Additionally, we were invited to partner on a grant application with the Sand County Foundation: "Expanding the impact of farmer-led groups: A Michigan pilot to advance climate-smart agriculture."
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The SWxSW Corner CISMA Team held our annual meeting to inform the public about current CISMA projects. In this transitional time, we wrapped up permitting and reporting needs from 2023, held and attended meetings, and treated invasive shrubs on partner properties. As our reflection of 2023 comes to a close, we are looking ahead to a full and productive field season!



Van Buren Conservation District March 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - The specialist participated in a tradeshow in Benton Harbor that targets fruit and vegetable growers. He shared a booth with other technicians from the area and talked to several farmers. There were also several planning meetings throughout the month as the team gears up for Farming for the Future in March and then for Michigan Envirothon as the specialist helped plan the March regional competitions. Between meetings, the specialist worked to get several different growers ready for Verifications that are scheduled for March as well.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) - Kicking off 2024 has been a whirlwind for Lucas and Gabe. A large number of EQIP, ACT-Now, and High-Tunnel applications have been submitted by area residents and now we face the task of getting them properly documented and into the system! Can't wait to start seeing all these fantastic ideas surrounding conservation happening in our community!
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - Free, year-round nitrite and nitrate water screening is available at the VBCD office! If you have not gotten our 2023 Annual Report, visit our office or go to VanBurenCD.org/annual-reports. Our Backyard Symposium recordings are now available on our YouTube channel at www.YouTube.com/c/VanBurenCD
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - February was a month of preparation, learning, and educating. Materials Management Planning has been progressing with meetings to keep Van Buren County on track and Kalli has been busy attending meetings and training to learn about the process. For the second year, Kalli and Jacob attended Lawton Middle School Career Day to teach students about their jobs. Paw Paw Middle School Michigan Green School application was reviewed and approved this month, the only in Van Buren County.

ROAD COMMISSION TALKING POINTS

March 15, 2024

5-Year Plan Approved by Board

The Board approved the Road Commission's 5-Year Plan (2023-2027) at the March 7, 2024 regular meeting. The current Plan takes a more sensible approach to better match what can realistically be accomplished within our budgetary constraints. The adopted Plan uses very specific criteria to make decisions for the projects:

- Connectivity
- PASER data collection
- Traffic Volume
- Funding Sources

The Plan developed balances preserving, upgrading and replacing highway assets in the most effective and cost-efficient manner. The Plan can be found on the Road Commission's website at <https://www.vbcrc.org/projects>.

County-Wide Road Millage Renewal

The constituents have supported a county-wide road millage in Van Buren County since 1978. This millage generates revenue for the "maintenance, repair and reconstruction" of public streets, avenues and roads in Van Buren County, including those located in the various Cities and Villages. Many road projects are completed by the Road Commission using revenue generated from the millage.

At its March meeting the Board approved a request to the Board of County Commissioners to approve a Millage Renewal Proposal on the August 4, 2024 Primary Election Ballot. The Commissioners will consider this request at its March 26th meeting.

2024 Budget Adjustment

The 2024 Budget was adjusted at the Board's March meeting. Revenues were adjusted to more accurately reflect anticipated Michigan Transportation Funds. In addition, the maintenance budget was increased due to more general maintenance expenditures as a result of the decrease in snow and ice control. Other more noteworthy adjustments include increases in expenditures in Primary Heavy Maintenance (CR380 project) and Primary Special Maintenance (adjusted sealcoat and fog seal). The 2023 Final Budget, and the 2024 Budget Adjustment can be found on the Road Commission's website at: <https://www.vbcrc.org/budget>.

Bridge Resolutions

MDOT's Local Agency Bridge Program is soliciting applications for bridge projects for Fiscal year (FY) 2027. VBCRC's Engineering staff are in the process of putting together the applications which are due April 1st. Included in this year's submission are the following bridge replacements: 8th Avenue over the Black River, Geneva Township; 40th Street over the Paw Paw River, Waverly Township; and 2nd Avenue over the Mentha Drain, Pine Grove Township. Also included in the submission are the following bridge preventative maintenance projects: 28th Avenue over the South Branch of the Black River, Arlington Township; CR358 over the West Branch of the Paw Paw River, Paw Paw Township.

Thank you to all townships that have supported the application of these bridges for funding through resolutions and letters of support!

Farmers Are Asked to Keep Right-of-Way Crop Free
“We Mow - So Don’t Sow!”

With spring quickly approaching, area farmers are anxiously awaiting another planting season. But before spring tillage and planting gets underway, the Van Buren County Road Commission wants to remind farmers that crops must be a minimum of 14' from the road's edge, or behind the “back slope” of an existing ditch. Any crops planted in the right-of-way are there at the farmers' risk and no compensation for loss of crops in the right-of-way will be considered pursuant to Road Commission Policy 2022-02.

Because the Road Commission maintains the right-of-way by performing mowing cycles to keep roadsides and intersections clear and suitable for travel, farmers should be aware that any crops planted within the right-of-way will be mowed. The Road Commission also performs roadside chemical vegetation management in the late summer to control brush and woody vegetation within the road right-of-way. The road right-of-way is specifically reserved for the placement of road signs, and public utilities. The road right-of-way is typically a width of 66 feet (33 feet on either side of the centerline of the road).

To review a copy of the Board of County Road Commission's Policy 2022-02, Right-of-Way Mowing, Brush Control & Spraying Policy visit the Road Commission's website at: www.vbcrc.org/vegetationmaintenance, or contact the Road Commission's Managing Director, Bret Witkowski, at 269-674-8011, Extension 222, BretWitkowski@vbcrc.org. The Road Commission's Policy complies with the standards created by law (MCL 247.665b).

To receive project and complete maintenance & operations updates (Weekly Update) please see visit the Road Commission's website at www.vbcrc.org/projectupdates.

