



JULY 2024 Board of Commissioners Activity Reports

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR JULY 2024

- 1. Michigan Association of Counties Annual Conference:** The Board rescheduled the September 24, 2024, meetings to September 23, 2024, to allow members to attend the Fall Conference from September 24-26, 2024. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 2. Out of State Travel Request for ORAS Training:** Approval was granted for Brianne Smith, Karl Stamm, and Logan Hudson to attend the Ohio Risk Assessment System (ORAS) training in Cincinnati, Ohio, from August 5-9, 2024. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 3. Inmate Medical Care Provider Contract:** The Board approved switching inmate medical care providers from Advanced Health Care to ATC, resulting in cost savings and maintaining current medical staff levels. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 4. Great Start Collaborative Partnership Grant:** The Board approved the acceptance of a \$4,000 mini grant to support the “60 Day Journey to Family Wellness” program for specialty court participants. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 5. CPM Construction Contract:** Approval was granted for a third-party contract with CPM Construction for the expansion of the Transit facility, including additional expenditures up to \$225,000 over the existing grant amount. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 6. Saddle Lake Legal Lake Level Control Structure:** The Board approved annual expenditures of over \$10,000 for maintaining the normal level of Saddle Lake, including maintenance and repair of lake level infrastructure. This was approved during the July 23, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 7. Van Buren Housing Assistance Program:** The Board approved the Community Services Department’s request to apply for and administer the Van Buren Housing Assistance Program with an initial budget of approximately \$650,000. This was approved during the July 23, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 8. June 2024 Claims:** The Board approved total claims amounting to \$14,912,270 for the month of June 2024. This was approved during the July 23, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 9. Approval of 2024 Millages – Road Commission, Public Transit, and Veterans Services:** In the 2024 elections, Van Buren County voters passed the Road Commission millage, securing ongoing funding for infrastructure improvements and maintenance. Additionally, the Public Transit and Veterans Services millages were renewed, ensuring these essential programs continue to support the community.
- 10. Approval of 2024 9-1-1 Local Surcharge Renewal:** Van Buren County voters approved the 9-1-1 surcharge renewal, a critical measure for sustaining the operations and funding of the county’s Dispatch Center. This renewal ensures the continuous support of vital emergency services for the community.

Request to Use County Property

1. **Youth Fair Parking Approval:** The Board approved the use of the Department of Health and Human Services parking lot for overflow parking during the Van Buren County Youth Fair from July 15-21, 2024. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
2. **Paw Paw Vineyard Classic Bicycle Tour:** Approval was granted for Kalamazoo Experiential Learning Center to use the Human Services East parking lot on September 8, 2024, for the Paw Paw Vineyard Classic Bicycle Tour. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
3. **Lakeshore Harvest Ride:** The South Haven Courthouse parking lot was approved for overflow parking for the Lakeshore Harvest Ride on September 14, 2024. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.

Appointments/Reappointments

1. **VBCMh Board Appointment:** Annie Brown was appointed to the Van Buren Community Mental Health Board of Directors for a term expiring March 31, 2027. This was approved during the July 23, 2024, BOC meeting.
2. **Southwest Michigan Materials Management Planning Committee Appointment:** Commissioner Paul Schincariol was appointed to the Southwest Michigan Materials Management Planning Committee. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.
3. **Health and Human Services Board Appointment:** Cathy Ontiveros was reappointed to the Van Buren DHHS Board for a term expiring on November 1, 2025. This was approved during the July 9, 2024, BOC meeting.

Access updates, community news, live Board meetings, agendas, minutes, and more!

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

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/VanBurenCountyMI>

Agendas and Minutes: www.VanBurenCountyMI.gov/AgendasMinutes





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

Medical Director/Nursing

- Training and education our nursing team participating in this month: Vaccine Champions Stakeholders Meeting, Underserved Populations Preparedness Planning, Mass Fatalities Planning & Response for Rural Communities, MI HIV/STI Conference, Annual Hearing & Vision Coordinators Meeting
- Our Nursing Director accompanied a representative from MDHHS for a planned site visit at our department to review storage and handling of the SNS MPox Jynneos Vaccine. No follow-up actions noted.
- STI Nurses tested for STIs and offered on-site vaccination for Hep A, Hep B and HPV at Woodlands Substance Abuse and Community Mental Health Services Outreach Event
- Nursing and Community Health Staff co-planned, hosted, and participated in the Marcellus Dino Fest on June 14, providing information about our local public health services
- Hearing & Vision Tech's attended Mattawan's Early Kindergarten Round Up and Sister Lakes Elementary's Migrant screening events to provide hearing and vision screening for children
- Our team continues to monitor and attend state calls regarding HPAI (bird flu).

On June 27, the CDC recommended the updated 2024-2025 COVID-19 vaccines and the updated 2024-2025 flu vaccines to protect against severe COVID-19 and flu this fall and winter.

It is safe to receive COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same visit. Data continues to show the importance of vaccination to protect against severe outcomes of COVID-19 and flu, including hospitalization and death.

In 2023, more than 916,300 people were hospitalized due to COVID-19 and more than 75,500 people died from COVID-19. During the 2023-2024 flu season, more than 44,900 people are estimated to have died from flu complications.

Van Buren Cass DHD will alert the public via Social Media and our Website when the 2024-2025 flu and COVID-19 vaccines are available.

Newsworthy

visit vbcassdhd.org/news

No cases of HPAI (Bird Flu) in Van Buren or Cass County as of 7/2/24.

For more information on the latest with HPAI visit: Michigan.gov/birdflu

Environmental Health

- In the month of June, the department reports:
 - 62 septic permits
 - 36 septic final inspections
 - 54 well permits
 - 33 final well inspections
 - 57 routine restaurant inspections
 - 22 restaurant follow-up inspections
 - 13 temporary food license inspections
 - 1 campground inspections
 - 5 swimming pool inspections
-

Dental Clinic & Outreach

- Dowagiac Dental Clinic
 - served 362 patients in the month of June
 - New DDS schedule has current openings, mostly booked through November 2024 for treatment
 - booked through March 2025 for regular hygiene (cleanings)
- Lawrence Dental Clinic
 - served 569 patients in the month of June
 - New DDS schedule has current openings, mostly booked through October 2024 for treatment
 - booked through summer 2025 for regular hygiene (cleanings). New full-time hygienist starting this month, we should see more availability.



Director's Report for June 2024

- New buses update
Santa came early for Transit – We now have Eleven new buses!

- Building Addition Update
We received three general contractor bids. Bids were opened May 29th. We received MDOT's approval to proceed with the lowest bid and approval for the 3rd party contract language. We are now at the point of needing Board approval and signature for the 3rd party contract and additional costs which is on today's agenda.

Our proposed schedule is as follows:

April 29, 2024: Issue Invitation for Bid

May 8, 2024: 10:00AM Pre-Bid Meeting at Van Buren Public Transit's facility

May 15, 2024: Issue Addendum #1 - Questions & Answers (See website for answers)

May 22, 2024: Issue Addendum #2 - Questions & Answers (See website for answers)

May 29, 2024: 2:00PM Deadline for Submission of Bids and Public Bid Opening

June 17, 2024: Notice of Award (MDOT approval)

July 9, 2024: 3rd Party Contract & additional cost approvals (BOC)

TBD: Execute 3rd Party Contract & Schedule Project Kick-Off Meeting



Project Link on county's website under Public Transit:

<https://www.vanburencountymi.gov/823/Business-Opportunities>

- Services/Networking

SWAN – Southwest Agency Network	South Haven	Monthly
Provider Fair – DHHS Host	Hartford	May 22
Touch A Truck	Decatur	May 30
Veterans Expo – American Legion	South Haven	June 8
Project Connect	Lawrence	June 14



Veterans Expo, American Legion Post 49

**Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Schlipp**



Van Buren Conservation District July 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

Staff at the Conservation District can hardly believe how quickly summer is going, and I'm sure we're not alone! We have four recycling collection events left on the calendar for 2024, so please help us spread the word about those. Additionally, three permanent site tire recycling sites have opened up that are available to all Van Buren County residents and landowners during regular hours May - October. You can find those details here: <https://vanburencd.org/permanent-site-tire-recycling/>

Recycling Collections: Details and tire sign-up available at:

<https://vanburencd.org/van-buren-county-recycling-collections/>. Please encourage folks to sign up their tires ahead of time! July and August Collections are:

-Recycle Roundup Collection | August 3, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM | South Haven Public Works | 1199 8th Ave., South Haven, MI 49079

-Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection | August 15, 2024 | 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM | Pine Grove Township Transfer Station | 32nd Street (north of CR 388), Gobles, MI 49055

-Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection | September 9, 2024 | 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM | Columbia Township Transfer Station | 18868 52 1/2 Street | Grand Junction, MI 49056

-Recycle Roundup Collection | October 19, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Van Buren ISD Tech Center | 250 South Street | Lawrence, MI 49064 | Enter from South Street

In partnership with the Van Buren County Road Commission, the SWxSW Corner CISMA Strike Team of the Van Buren Conservation District will be treating county road rights-of-way for invasive species. The Strike Team will be targeting invasive Phragmites and Japanese knotweed in county road rights-of-way. Invasive knotweed and Phragmites grow aggressively causing harm to road infrastructure, homes and buildings, and our environment. Treatment will begin the week of August 15, 2024 and will continue until the first hard frost of the season. For more information on invasive species or this treatment, please contact Strike Team Coordinator Abbie Bristol by emailing InvasivesMGMT@VanBurenCD.org or by calling 269-633-9058.

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - The Ag & Water Quality Team has been hard at work preparing for summer educational activities. The team also prepared a farm newsletter (Farming for the Future: Bringing Conservation to the Farm) that is mailed to 1,163 farmers in the area.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - June saw the SWxSW Corner CISMA team continuing some of our most important work. A Survey of the South Haven kudzu site turned up no indication of kudzu, a big success after several years of management. Continued surveys for Hydrilla have not led to any new detections. We then finished out the month by holding 3 landing blitz events to educate boaters about the importance of not spreading invasive species.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - A light month for deliverables but there were several meetings that the specialist attended. He also took a week's vacation at the end of the month. For the time being, he is helping to get farmers that have lapsed

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Van Buren Conservation District July 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

with MAEAP Verifications, or that are about to lapse, get re-assessments so that they can be Re-Verified with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD).

- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCs) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) - The team was happy to host two Royalty ID student interns, This year, Jay and Cameron visited all the way from Texas! These young men were hard at work training to become professional calf ropers in the rodeo circuit, and were here learning the ins and outs of conservation work as part of their program. They were showed a lot of what Van Buren County has to offer: blueberry picking, forestry work and tree planting, invasive species surveying, and dune climbing and Lake Michigan swimming.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - June saw successful recycling collections and outreach efforts. The VBCD connected with our state legislators and we are diligently working on events happening in the near future - keep an eye out! Don't forget to attend our Annual Meeting, Director Election, & Picnic July 31, 2024!
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - In June, the Van Buren Conservation District held the first Recycle Roundup of 2024! We helped 300 households in Van Buren County to responsibly recycle and dispose of tons of materials. We also held a passenger & semi tire and electronic collection in Keeler Township for the first time ever, and it was highly successful.

ROAD COMMISSION TALKING POINTS

Audit FY2023

Derek Hall, Senior Auditor for the Michigan Department of Treasury, updated the Board at its July meeting with the findings from his audit of the Van Buren County Road Commission for FY2023. Mr. Hall veered slightly from his typical audit discussions to focus on helping the Board understand the difficult position of all Michigan Road Commissions as it relates to funding short-falls coupled with significant increases in road-related materials, such as petroleum based asphalt products. As Mr. Hall relayed, despite the Road Commission having contributed over \$10 Million towards roads, and Townships having contributed over \$6 Million, the wish list has only grown. Michigan law makers have not addressed the gas tax, nor have they addressed electric vehicles and the fact that they cut into the gas tax for road repairs. But Mr. Hall stressed that Van Buren County is far above other counties specifically because of the county-wide road millage. Many other Michigan county road commissions are able to fill the pot holes, plow the roads, and maybe do 10-20 miles of chip seal - enough to throw a band-aid on the problem - then do it all over again the following year.

STAY BACK FROM THE SNOWPLOW - IT'S NOW THE LAW!

Governor Whitmer recently signed into law Senate Bill 465 which makes it illegal to drive closer than 200' from an active snowplow. For a point of reference that is roughly comparable to 13 car lengths. In addition, the law requires motorists to stay at least 20' away from a snowplow stopped at an intersection. This law will not only help to keep motorists safe and decrease the potential for property damage, but will also help municipal drivers clear roads more efficiently and, more importantly, keep them safe from harm too. Hanging back provides motorists better visibility and allows more reaction time to hit the brakes if the snowplow stops, which they often do. Other good reasons to stay back include:

- The snowplow may be spreading salt, sand and/or calcium chloride;
- Snowplows can be unpredictable. They make wide turns and sometimes overlap lanes. And they must maneuver to clean intersections, including backing up.
- Wing plows can be invisible. While in use it can kick up enough snow to obscure it completely from view, yet it extends 2 to 10 feet beyond the truck's width and can weigh nearly as much as a compact car!

ROAD COMMISSION TO HARVEST TIMBER AT CROCKER PIT

Mark Bishop of Quality Forest Management is assisting the Van Buren County Road Commission to sustainably harvest selected timber with a particular emphasis on the importance of promoting environmental conservation and long-term resource availability. Through the sealed bid process, various timber harvesters placed their bid for selected black oak, red oak, white oak and hickory timber. The high bidding contractor, Northwest Hardwoods, Inc. of Hamilton, MI was awarded the contract at the purchase price of \$35,563.00 in the best interest of the Van Buren County Road Commission. All work outlined in the contract must be completed during the months of July through March to minimize the risk of spreading oak wilt disease.

VARIOUS TOWNSHIPS AND CITIES/VILLAGES SUPPORT COUNTY-WIDE ROAD MILLAGE

A big **THANK YOU** to the townships and cities/villages that have voiced their support of the renewal of the county-wide road millage through a Resolution passed by their Board/Council. Voters have supported the millage in Van Buren County since 1978 when the millage was first passed. Receiving municipal support, however, is also critical as they, too, benefit through the millage either directly, in the case of cities/villages, or through the allocation by the Road Commission of RevShare Funds in the case of the 18 townships in Van Buren County. If your Board has not already considered a Resolution of support, please contact the VBCRC for a sample form.

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

