



AUGUST 2024 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ACTIVITY REPORTS

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR AUGUST 2024

- 1. Broadband Expansion Update:** During the August 13, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, Chris Scharrer from DCS Technology provided an update on the ongoing broadband expansion project, focusing on extending service to rural areas and the involvement of Comcast.
- 2. MSU Extension 2023 Annual Report:** During the August 13, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, Julie Pioch presented the 2023 Annual Report for MSU Extension. Laura Anderson and Mike Reinke also discussed health programs and agricultural initiatives, respectively, highlighting efforts in local farms and vineyards.
- 3. Proclamation Honoring Pete Sinclair:** The Board issued a proclamation recognizing Pete Sinclair for his lifelong commitment to public service, including his work in the Hartford Fire Department, Hartford School Board, and as a Van Buren County Commissioner. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.
- 4. Vehicle Purchase for Buildings and Grounds Department:** The Board approved the purchase of a new vehicle for the Buildings and Grounds Department from Tapper Ford at a cost of \$44,271. This was approved during the August 13, 2024, meeting.
- 5. Disposal of County Vehicles:** The Board authorized the auction and disposal of two county vehicles: a 2011 Chevy Impala and a 2014 Ford F150. This was approved during the August 13, 2024, meeting.
- 6. Access and Visitation Grant Application:** The Board approved the Friend of the Court's application for the SCAO Access and Visitation Grant, which is designed to maximize funds for supervised parenting time. This was approved during the August 13, 2024, meeting.
- 7. Child & Parent Legal Representation Grant Contract:** The Board approved the acceptance of the Child & Parent Legal Representation Grant, which provides partial reimbursement for court-appointed attorneys and social workers assisting in child protective proceedings. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.
- 8. Quality Legal Representation Grant Contract:** The Board authorized the continuation of the Quality Legal Representation Grant, which funds prevention services for families involved with child protective services. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.
- 9. July 2024 Claims:** The Board approved total claims amounting to \$6,375,164.33 for July 2024. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.
- 10. Disposal of Sheriff's Office Patrol Cars:** The Board authorized the auctioning of two old Ford Explorer patrol cars through Biddergy, with an additional vehicle being transferred to the Specialty Courts. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.
- 11. MDOT Contract Revisions for Public Transit:** The Board approved the second revisions of MDOT contracts 2017-0136 P12, P14, and P15, which included additional state funding to cover increased bus chassis costs. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.

Request to Use County Property

- 1. Use of County Property for 2024 Grape Lake 5K Race:** The Board granted Freshwater Community Church permission to use the Community Mental Health parking lot for the Grape Lake 5K Run/Walk on September 7, 2024. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.

Appointments/Reappointments

- 1. Appointments to Southwest Michigan Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC):** The Board appointed Paul Schincariol as the Van Buren County elected official and Bob Baran as the business representative to the MMPC, each for a five-year term expiring in August 2029. These appointments were approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.
- 2. Appointment to Van Buren County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority:** Bryan Myrkle, Village Manager of Paw Paw, was appointed to the Van Buren County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority for a three-year term expiring June 1, 2027. This was approved during the August 27, 2024, meeting.



[Scan the QR code](#) for updates, news, live Board meetings, agendas, minutes, and more!



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**

HPAI (Bird Flu) was detected in Van Buren, VBCDHD was notified on 7/29/24.

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

COVID-19 infections are starting to increase. Review Respiratory Virus Prevention Strategies:
<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/>

Medical Director/Nursing

- Hearing & Vision Tech's screened 152 kids at the local summer migrant programs (Project NOMAD in Covert & Hartford, and Sister Lakes Migrant Program)
- Hearing & Vision and Immunization Teams provided hearing & vision screenings, and immunization record reviews at Paw Paw Elementary Schools' Popsicles on the Playground event.
- COVID-19 & Flu Vaccines will be out this Fall. Information will be posted on our website and social media when vaccine is available.

On July 29, VBCDHD was notified of that the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) detected highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in Van Buren County, increasing the total number of affected herds in Michigan to 27. We are following MDHHS Standard Operating Procedures for monitoring any individuals that may have been exposed. Full press release: <https://vbcassdhd.org/uncategorized/2024/07/29/hpai-confirmed-in-van-buren-county-dairy-herd-key-updates/>

Don't forget to protect yourselves from Tick Bites!
<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/>

Preventing Mosquito Bites and Arboviruses. Read the MI Weekly Arbovirus Summary:
https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/MIDHHS/2024/07/05/file_attachments/2929154/Weekly_Arbovirus_Summary_7-5-2024.pdf

Community Health

Health Promotions team members, Holly Young and Jennifer Zordan, presented on the national stage at the National Association for City and County Health Officials annual NACCHO 360 conference. The duo presented on our new Healthy Small Town campaign. The campaign will be rolled out soon.



Environmental Health

- In the month of July, the department reports:
 - 69 septic permits
 - 34 septic final inspections
 - 76 well permits
 - 35 final well inspections
 - 44 routine restaurant inspections
 - 26 restaurant re-inspections
 - 16 temporary food license inspections
 - 16 campground inspections
 - 36 swimming pool inspections
-

Dental Clinic & Outreach

- Dowagiac Dental Clinic
 - served 378 patients in the month of July
 - New DDS schedule has current openings for treatment
 - booked through March 2025 for regular hygiene (cleanings)
- Lawrence Dental Clinic
 - served 531 patients in the month of July
 - New DDS schedule has current openings beginning as early as September for treatment
 - booked through January 2025 for regular hygiene (cleanings).
- Dental Outreach wrapped up another successful summer screening kids participating in the summer migrant programs. They screened 121 kids, providing fluoride treatment to all, cleanings for 83 kids, placed 317 sealants on teeth (!), and referred a number of students for urgent care and restorative treatment needs. We're grateful to be able to continue to provide this program at no-cost to the kids and families.

John Faul
County Administrator



DAVID KRZYCKI
Veterans Services Director

VAN BUREN COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

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1. **This report covers the reporting period from June 2024 – July 2024.**
2. **MVAA FY2025 Grant has been submitted on time and is currently being processed.**
3. **Statistical information Indicates:**
 - Veteran Services conducted **173** contacts in June and **310** contacts in July. **Claims, Supplementary Claims, Aid and Attendance and Relief Inquiries** were the main topics during these last 2 months.
 - The dental program spent **\$3536.50** in June with **19** visits and **\$5983.01** in July with **21** visits.
 - In FY2024 we have spent **\$58,358.39** of the 2024 MVAA grant. We have **\$28,472.61** remaining in our FY2024 MVAA Fund.
 - Soldiers and Sailors did not meet during this reporting period. There were no qualified candidates.
4. **Statistics April 2023 and May 2024**
 - **VA Claims/Actions:** We had **97** claims/actions filed in June and **98** in July. This reflects all various actions related to additional benefits, relief, DIC and health care.
 - **Appeals:** We had **5** appeals in June and **8** appeals in July.
 - **Health Care:** Veteran services had **2** veterans signed up for VA Health Care in June and **6** veterans signed up in July.
 - **Home/Event Visits:** Veteran services conducted **4** home visits in this reporting period.
 - **Assisted Living Visits:** Conducted a total of **7** Assisted Living Visits this reporting period.
 - **Community Events:** Conducted **7** outreach and County Events since our last report.
5. **Public transportation gave 20 rides in June and 24 rides in July**

6. The following events were conducted June-July 2024.

- **June**
 - 8 June 2024 American Legion in South Haven
 - Received a donation of canes, and walkers
 - Visited VFW South Haven
 - Visited Blueberry Hill Assisted Living
 - 27 June, Porter Township Town Hall Meeting
 - Conducted our Veterans Social
 - House visit to assemble a Chair
- **July**
 - 14-20 Youth Fair Vanburen County
 - Visited the American Legion in Bangor
 - Visited the American Legion in Decatur
 - Conducted Veterans Social
 - Meet with Dave Manson with IDP for Veteran Housing Options

*** 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 for Veteran Services:**
 - Steel Headers Fishing 16-17 Aug, South Haven
 - 6-7 September, Wine Festival
 - Receive FY2025 Grant
 - Veteran Housing Discussion with Dave Manson
 - Decatur Standdown October
 - Veterans Social

Notes: 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 August 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

Grant Awarded: The Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD) has been awarded a two-year \$568,618 grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) through their Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program. Over the next few years, the VBCD will promote a cost share program for farmers to implement conservation practices like cover crops, no-till and filter strips. Depending on the practice, location, and eligibility, up to 90% of the cost of installing conservation practices may be cost-shared. These practices benefit farmers and will help keep our waterways clean.

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! This year's final collection events are:

-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

County-wide Invasive Species Treatment: 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.

Grant Opportunity with DNR: DNR Parks and Recreation Division's Waterways Grant Program | Each year, local units of government and state colleges and universities are eligible to apply for grant assistance for recreational boating improvements and development at grant-in-aid harbors and boating access sites. The grant-in-aid program provides matching funding to help support quality recreational boating infrastructure. Communities are asked to match 50% of required funds. [Applications for the next round of waterways grant funding are due April 1, 2025.](#) Learn more about all DNR-administered grant programs at Michigan.gov/DNRGrants.

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - The Ag and Water Quality team assisted with Kids' Day at the Van Buren County Fairgrounds, as well as their auction. The team has also been busy preparing for and assisting with our 2024 Annual Meeting.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The CISMA Team spent July on land and in water, at private properties and community events. We are keeping the ball rolling with the creation of outreach materials and high-priority invasive species surveys and treatment while looking to our future. We are gearing up

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Van Buren Conservation District August 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

for the next phase in the treatment season and exploring opportunities to deepen collaboration with partners.

- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) – The specialist has been helping to cover Allegan County and Cass County with their tech vacancies. Allegan is in the process of hiring a new technician following Mike Ludlam’s retirement but Cass is holding off until Oct 1. In the meantime, several techs are dividing up those counties to help with high priority Re-verifications and easy New-verifications. The Van Buren specialist has exceeded his new verification goal for the year and is nearing his goal for re-verifications, where the extra effort in other counties has helped in reaching that goal.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCs) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – Highlights in July include volunteering time at the Van Buren annual youth fair. Many of the families raising livestock for these events have had some kind of engagement with the VBCD and partnered USDA agencies. Local engagement like this helps the team strive towards USDA’s goal of “locally led conservation.”
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – July is the height of the busy summer season – take a look at the photos (below) of staff working in water conservation, recycling, and more! Spread the word on our upcoming public events on the water! Learn more, and register, for the Paw Paw River Cleanup and Upper Jephtha Lake Paddle at VanBurenCD.org
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – July was a busy month of events including Paw Paw Large Tire, Palisades Park Education, and VBCD Annual Meeting. Preparations for the next fiscal year began as well while we assessed the current programming and budget needs for continuation into the future.



ROAD COMMISSION TALKING POINTS

Road Commission Adopts “Paint the Plow Program”

The Board adopted Policy 2024-01, Paint the Plow Program, at its August Board meeting. This community outreach program allows the VBCRC to partner with local school districts and community members to promote winter driving safety and general road safety. All local high schools have been invited to paint creative, original artwork onto a VBCRC snowplow blade to be made visible during winter snow removal months. Each year the VBCRC will select a Paint the Plow theme. Artwork must be pre-approved by the VBCRC. This year’s theme is: School Pride.

Millage Update

The August 6th Primary Election saw the successful passing of seven (7) Township road millage proposals, as well as the successful passing of the county-wide road millage proposal. The importance of the funds generated by the county-wide road millage AND each township road millage cannot be over-stated.

While budget constraints make it necessary for the Road Commission to focus our limited resources on roads with higher traffic volumes that provide connection routes (most of our primary roads), this focus ensures that our resources make the greatest impact on the County as a whole. Contributions from each Township, however, whether township millage funds or dedicated road funds, ensures the residents of each township also feel a positive impact.

Road Commission Right-of-Way Maintenance

As of 2024 the VBCRC brought roadside mowing back in-house and no longer utilizes a sub-contractor. The first round of mowing began in May and took longer to accomplish as Road Commission staff mowed significantly more of the right-of-way than contractors were able, and in the process of doing so removed small trees/woody brush which made for slow progress.

The second round of mowing began at the end of July/beginning of August and is moving along a little quicker than the first round. Staff hopes to get a third round of mowing in before the end of the season, which hasn’t been seen in Van Buren County in quite some time, if ever!

Roadside brush spraying and treatments to control invasive species on the roadsides is also scheduled to begin very soon. Property owners may request to be omitted from the brush spray program by completing an application form stating that they agree to maintain the roadside area by the cutting of all roadside weeds, brush and low hanging limbs a minimum distance of 15 feet off the traveled portion of the road and 15 feet above the road surface.

More information about the mowing program, and the brush/invasive species spray programs can be found on the Road Commission’s website at <https://www.vbcrc.org/vegetationmaintenance> or by calling (269) 674-8011.

Friends of the Blue Star Trail

The Road Commission received a request from the Friends of the Blue Star Trail (FOTBST) seeking a partnership with the VBCRC in its application for grant funds through the Michigan Department of Transportation’s “Transportation Alternatives Program” (TAP). The Blue Star Trail is a planned 20-mile paved, non-motorized, shared use recreational trail that connects the communities of Saugatuck in Allegan County and South Haven in Van Buren County.

The VBCRC will serve as the applicant of these grant funds on behalf of the FOTBST as the VBCRC is an Act 51 Agency and is an eligible entity for the TAP grant funds. The VBCRC will not be providing any funding for the planned trail project. Should the Grant application be approved, the VBCRC will be reimbursed by the FOTBST for any fees/costs associated with administering the Grant. More information about the Blue Star Trail is available online at <https://www.fotbst.org/>.