



SEPTEMBER 2024 BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ACTIVITY REPORT

Administration Address
219 E Paw Paw Street - Suite 302, Paw Paw, MI 49079
Website: www.vanburencountymi.gov

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

HIGHLIGHTS FOR SEPTEMBER 2024

1. **Medical Examiner Annual Report:** Dr. Patrick Hansma presented the 2023 report, highlighting key health statistics and medical investigations handled by the Medical Examiner's Office for Van Buren County. This was approved during the September 10, 2024, meeting.
2. **Digital Information Department Update:** Jerry Happel discussed the department's progress, including trial deployment of chatbots and plans for an AI policy Steering Committee. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
3. **Materials Management Interlocal Agreement Amendment:** The Board approved an amendment to the interlocal agreement between Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties to establish a multicounty Materials Management Plan and designate the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission as the Designated Planning Agency. This amendment also included a representative from the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indian tribe. This was approved during the September 10, 2024, meeting.
4. **FY 2024-2025 Budget Adoption:** The Board adopted the FY 2024-2025 General Fund Budget and supporting documentation, including property tax millage levies. This was approved during the September 10, 2024, meeting.
5. **Tax Rate Request - L-4029:** The Board approved the 2024 Tax Rate Request (L-4029), which accounts for the renewal of millages for county services, including parks and public safety. This was approved during the September 10, 2024, meeting.
6. **MSUE Memorandum of Agreement Renewal FY24-25:** The Board approved the renewal of the agreement with Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) for FY 2024-2025, with a total contract amount of \$206,603. Services include educational programs, a 50% 4-H educator, and additional agricultural expertise. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
7. **Domestic Violence Coalition Agreement Renewal FY24-25:** The Board approved the renewal of the Domestic Violence Coalition's agreement for FY 2024-2025, with a budget of \$25,000. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
8. **VBCD Resource Recovery Services Agreement Renewal FY24-25:** The Van Buren Conservation District was contracted to administer resource recovery services for FY 2025 at a cost of \$100,000. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
9. **Recovery Zone Services Agreement Renewal FY24-25:** The Board renewed the agreement with the Recovery Zone for FY 2024-2025 at a cost of \$25,160. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.

10. **Youth Center ARPA Funds Agreement:** A subrecipient agreement using \$950,000 in ARPA funds was approved for the Van Buren Intermediate School District Youth Center to support youth programs. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
11. **Lease Termination Agreement - Whelan & Co/Acrisure:** The Board approved the early termination of a lease agreement with Whelan & Co/Acrisure for a property in Paw Paw, effective October 1, 2024, resulting in a loss of \$18,229 in rental income. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
12. **August 2024 Claims:** The Board approved claims totaling \$3,875,671.69 for the month of August 2024. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
13. **Child Care Fund Budget Summary FY 2025:** The Board approved the FY 2025 Child Care Fund Annual Plan and Budget, which includes reimbursement rates for juvenile services. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
14. **Parenting with Love and Limits Contract:** The Board approved a contract with Family Empowerment Services for an evidence-based in-home program to assist families, running 10-12 weeks per session. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
15. **USDA Housing Preservation Grant:** The Board accepted a \$105,701 USDA Housing Preservation Grant and authorized the submission of a grant application to MSHDA for additional matching funds to support home rehabilitation projects. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
16. **MDOT Contract 2022-0144 P7:** The Board approved an MDOT contract to procure a replacement bus to support the County's public transportation services. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
17. **Pray for the Nation Event:** The Board approved a request for the use of Van Buren County Park for the "Pray for the Nation" event scheduled for November 3, 2024. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.

Appointments/Reappointments

1. **Building Authority Reappointment - Paul DeYoung:** Paul DeYoung was reappointed to the Building Authority Board for a term expiring on December 31, 2027. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, meeting.
2. **Appointment to Materials Management Planning Commission:** The Board approved the appointment of individuals to the Materials Management Planning Commission, including representatives from the solid waste and environmental sectors. This was approved during the September 23, 2024, 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

Newsworthy
visit vbcassdhd.org/news

For more information on the latest with HPAI and West Nile Virus visit:
michigan.gov/birdflu and
michigan.gov/wnv

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

Administration

- On August 23rd, VBCDHD was notified of a 2nd dairy herd that had a detection of HPAI (Bird Flu). Our team continues to following MDHHS standard operating procedures for monitoring any individuals who may have been exposed.
- On August 6, VBCDHD was notified of a confirmed case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in a horse in Van Buren County. On August 16, a second case in a horse at another farm in Van Buren County was confirmed.
- On September 5, West Nile Virus (WNV) was detected during regular mosquito monitoring by VBCDHD; on September 10, we were notified that an animal in Cass County was confirmed positive for WNV.

Read the full press-release and other latest news here:
<https://vbcassdhd.org/uncategorized/2024/09/10/health-alert-eee-and-west-nile-virus-detected-locally/>

Medical Director/Nursing

Special Events & Outreach Activities:

- Immunization, hearing and vision, and dental outreach events at Covert Library, Mattawan Schools, and Hartford Schools
- Successfully passed a site visit conducting by MDHHS of our HIV/STI program
- Annual school and childcare meeting on using the digital immunization record systems
- Attended the annual HIV/STI state conference
- Hearing Tech refresher course sponsored by MDHHS

Community Health

- Over the Counter (OTC) COVID tests are available for the public to pick up at either of our offices. Community Partners interested in distributing tests may reach out to jjordan@vbcassdhd.org to submit a request.
- The team concluded our 2-year long, \$225,000 award with the National Association for City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) P4VE and Sustainability projects.

Environmental Health

- In the month of August, the department reports:
 - 58 septic permits
 - 38 septic final inspections
 - 70 well permits
 - 52 final well inspections
 - 50 routine restaurant inspections
 - 23 restaurant re-inspections
 - 39 temporary food license inspections
 - 31 campground inspections
 - 12 swimming pool inspections
-

Dental Clinic & Outreach

- Dowagiac Dental Clinic
 - served 367 patients in the month of August
 - scheduled 550 new appointments
- Lawrence Dental Clinic
 - served 533 patients in the month of August
 - scheduled 903 new appointments
- Wait times vary from 1-6 months depending on service and provider. We are hopeful we'll be able to begin accepting new patients again soon.
- In the coming weeks we'll be hosting students from Van Buren Tech's Dental Occupations class. They will be shadowing and working in the Lawrence clinic the entire school year.



Director's Report for *September 2024*

- Building Addition Update

Construction kick-off meeting was held Friday, Aug. 23rd. The following Monday, exterior parking/pavement construction began.

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)

August 23, 2024: Execute 3rd Party Contract & Schedule Project Kick-Off Meeting

August 26, 2024: *Begin-New Parking Area on North side of building*

September 23, 2024: *Estimated date to begin Interior Construction*

April/May 2025: *Estimated completion date*

- Transit's 45th Anniversary

This year is Transit's 45th Anniversary. An acknowledgement for years of service took place at the Michigan Public Transit Association (MPTA) Conference at Chrystal Mountain. Transit received a document and will also be receiving a plaque. Please see attached notice and picture of MDOT and Transit Staff. Left to Right are: Fred Featherly, MDOT Project Manager, Tami Naber, Transit, Bob Henderson, Transit, and Jean Ruestman, MDOT Administrator.


- Networking and Services

Event	Location	Date	Rides
SWAN – Southwest Agency Network	South Haven	Monthly	
National Blueberry Festival	South Haven	Aug. 9 - 11	1,019
Blueberry Festival Craft Fair	South Haven	Aug. 10 - 11	437
All Crafts Fair	South Haven	Aug. 31 - Sep. 1	162
Wine & Harvest Festival	Paw Paw	Sep. 6 - 8	TBD
Touch a Truck & Booth	South Haven	Sep. 19	
Trunk or Treat	Lawrence	Oct. 7	
Veteran's Stand Down (Info Table)	Decatur	Oct. 25	
Van Buren Senior Service Trips			
Turkey Ville	South Haven	Aug. 1	20
Hospice at Home	South Haven	Aug. 3	72
Star of Saugatuck	South Haven	Aug. 8	38
Fourwinds Casino	South Haven	Aug. 21	46
Firekeepers Casino	Antwerp Twp.	Aug. 29	50

**Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Schlipp**



45TH ANNIVERSARY



presented to

Van Buren Public Transit

*The Michigan Department of Transportation
is honored to have been in partnership with
you for the past 45 years. Congratulations on your
years of service and dedication to enhancing
public transportation in your community.*



2024





Van Buren Conservation District September 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

As our fiscal year changes October 1, we are reflecting on all of the successes we've had in this last year and looking ahead to what we can accomplish together in the next. We are currently submitting grant applications to improve water quality, install conservation practices on private land, manage invasive species on public lands, and continue recycling electronics and tires!

We are preparing our winter 2024 tax bill inserts for municipal boards to consider including when you mail out your tax bills in a few months, so please look for those emails/phone calls soon. Unique to this year, we are conducting a survey to get the community's input on what our priorities should be. We do this at least every five years, and we're looking forward to receiving feedback and working on solutions to concerns. Please consider helping us promote that survey when the time comes (likely in January).

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:

-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

Free Workshop October 8 on New Energy Siting PA 233: The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) has announced they will be hosting the Renewable Energy Academy (REA), a series of free workshops in select regions across Michigan that provide local officials, zoning administrators, planning commissioners, planning staff, etc., with information to proactively prepare for the new siting landscape required under Public Act (PA) 233. Timing is important, as PA 233 becomes effective on November 29, 2024.

<https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/materials-management/energy/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-academy>

Grant Opportunity for Water Infrastructure: The EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) is a federal credit program for eligible water and wastewater infrastructure projects. A wide varied of projects can be funded related to drinking water and wastewater facilities.

The WIFIA program can provide technical assistance to prospective borrowers, particularly disadvantaged and small communities, that need support to complete their application. Funding available on an ongoing basis. Learn more here: <https://www.epa.gov/wifia/wifia-available-funding>

Grant Opportunity for Brownfield Sites: The EPA's Brownfields Program provides grants and technical assistance to communities, states, tribes and others to assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse contaminated properties. The new grants will advance environmental justice and help transform once-polluted, vacant, and abandoned properties into community assets while spurring economic revitalization in underserved communities.



Van Buren Conservation District September 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

The Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization will host outreach webinars on September 19, 2024, and September 24, 2024, to explain the Narrative/Ranking criteria for interested applicants and to address commonly asked questions. Applications are due Nov. 14, 2024 Read more here:

<https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/marc-grant-application-resources#Open%20Solicitations>

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - The Ag and Water Quality team was busy this month recruiting farmers for our aerial fly-on cover crop co-op that takes place in September. The team also prepared contracts for those eligible for cost share.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - August was a peak month for our field season as we wrapped up several projects and pivoted to road commission work. We also responded to a public report of State Watch List invasive species, red swamp crayfish, at Ross Coastal Plain Marsh. No red swamp crayfish were found, however several native white river crayfish (a common look-alike) were found. We also surveyed and conducted additional treatments of our Grand Junction and Keeler kudzu sites. Our Strike Team shrank from three to two crew members, as Basia returned to school.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - The specialist had some verifications get canceled that were scheduled, so only a half day of verifications were completed for the month. New customers continue to roll in asking about forestry and small livestock (homestead type) operations. The two NACD techs and I all work well and invite each other to visits to make the most of the visit and the operator's time. Next month will see a few more verifications and assessments, but the fiscal year is coming to a close and the specialist is already gearing up to reach out to farmers that will be due for Re-Verification in the next fiscal year.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) - In August, many of our clients who had applied to the Conservation Stewardship program have been reviewing and signing their final conservation plans for the Conservation Stewardship Program. NRCS and District staff have been working to obligate more than \$1 million for enhanced versions of standard conservation practices.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) - August was full of community interaction with over 270 folks met in-person! We're doing what we do best, bringing our community more programs, services, and education. Keep an eye out - we are cleaning up our community, too, with our Paw Paw River Cleanup and Lawrence Recycle Roundup. Reach out to learn more!
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) - In August, we held the 2024 South Haven Recycle Roundup. The event successfully served over 225 households and collected thousands of pounds of material to be safely disposed of or put back in the economy. Later in the month, we also visited Pine Grove Township collecting over a trailer load of tires!