



October 2024 Board of Commissioners Activity Reports

Administration Address
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HIGHLIGHTS FOR OCTOBER 2024

1. **Evan’s County Drain Note – Full Faith and Credit Resolution:** During the October 8, 2024, BOC meeting the Board pledged the County’s full faith and credit for a \$350,000 note to fund the Evans Drain Maintenance and Improvement Project.
2. **FY24-25 Snow Removal Bids:** Snow removal bids for the 2024-2025 season, covering 14 locations and totaling \$63,150.00, were approved during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting.
3. **County Administrator Contract Extension:** The County Administrator’s contract was approved for extension through December 31, 2026, with modifications to benefits and recommendations for succession planning. This was formally approved during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting.
4. **Jail Elevator Replacement – Continuation of Services:** The Board authorized the replacement of the jail elevator, installed in 1968, at a total cost of \$123,788.00 during the October 8, 2024, BOC meeting.
5. **FY24-25 Snow Removal Bids:** Snow removal bids for the 2024-2025 season, covering 14 locations and totaling \$63,150.00, were approved during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting.
6. **Updated Training and Travel Policy:** An updated Training and Travel Policy was adopted to improve clarity on reimbursement processes and expense tracking. This was formally approved during the October 8, 2024, BOC meeting.
7. **APRA VBISD Youth Center – Subrecipient Agreement:** The Board previously approved the allocation of \$950,000.00 in ARPA funds for the development of a Van Buren County Youth Center through Resolution on September 26, 2023. Approval of the agreement will ensure continued access to reliable and efficient transportation for the community. The Board approved and formally signed the subrecipient agreement with Van Buren Intermediate School District, authorizing the use of \$950,000.000 in ARPA funds for the VBC Youth Center during the October 8, 2024, BOC meeting.
8. **Specialty Court Grants FY25:** Specialty court grants totaling over \$3.5 million were accepted to support various programs, including the Drug Treatment Court, Swift and Sure Sanctions Probation Program, and Adult Mental Health Court during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting.
9. **September 2024 Claims:** Claims for the month of September 2024 in the amount of \$8,117,379.45 were approved during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting.
10. **Equalization’s 2024 Apportionment Report:** The Board adopted the Van Buren County property tax apportionment report, totaling \$8,117,379.45 in claims for September 2024, was approved along with \$642,275.65 for Drain and Lake Level Assessments during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting.

Appointments/Reappointments

- 1. VBC Planning Commission Appointments – Andrews, G. and Nelson, W.:** Gordon Andrews and Nicholas Carlson were approved for appointment to the Van Buren County Planning Commission to fill unexpired terms, with both appointments expiring on April 1, 2027, during the October 8, 2024, BOC meeting.
- 2. VBC Road Commission Reappointments – Askew, W.C and Nelson, W.:** Wayne Nelson and Dr. W.C. Askew, Sr. were reappointed during the October 22, 2024, BOC meeting to the Van Buren County Road Commission for six-year terms expiring on December 31, 2030.
- 3. Deputy Medical Examiner Appointment:** The Board approved the appointment of Dr. Thomas Koster as Deputy Medical Examiner, replacing Dr. Jared Brooks, whose resignation was also acknowledged, during the October 8, 2024.
- 4. MMPC Appointments:** The Board finalized the Materials Management Planning Committee appointments, ensuring compliance with state mandates and facilitating the development of a regional Materials Management Plan. This was approved during the October 22, 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

Newsworthy
visit vbcassdhd.org/news

For local influenza rates and information visit michigan.gov/flu

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

Medical Director/Nursing

Special Events & Outreach Activities:

- Immunization, STI/HIV, Children’s Special Health Care, Hearing & Vision, and public health outreach events at the Color Walk Outreach event at Woodlands Behavioral Health, Adventist Medical Evangelism Network (AMEN) Outreach, and Cass County GSC Community and Family Fall Expo.
- Immunization nurses attended the annual Immunization Action Plan meeting in Lansing
- Hearing and Vision Technicians attended the State of Michigan’s Hearing & Vision Program’s 75th Anniversary meeting and celebration in Traverse City.
- Flu and COVID-19 clinics have begun! The first outreach clinic was held at VB Senior Services in Hartford.

Local incidences we’re following:

- Monitoring the 2nd dairy herd with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. The 1st dairy herd was released from monitoring without any issues during their monitoring period.
- Investigating reports of vaccine-preventable diseases including Varicella (Chickenpox), Pertussis, and TB.

Flu and COVID season is upon us. Contact our department at (269) 621-3143 ext. 1300 to schedule a vaccine appointment or find one at your nearest pharmacy or primary care provider.

visit cdc.gov/covid and cdc.gov/flu for more information

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.
- Thanks to VB GSC, a brand new vending machine offering FREE access to family health and self-care items including dental care kits, diapers, wipes, naloxone, feminine hygiene, and healthy living children’s books and more will be up and running at our Lawrence office this month

Environmental Health

- In the month of September, the department reports:
 - 65 septic permits
 - 46 septic final inspections
 - 77 well permits
 - 37 final well inspections
 - 62 routine restaurant inspections
 - 20 restaurant re-inspections
 - 29 temporary food license inspections
 - 3 campground inspections
 - 15 swimming pool inspections
-

Dental Clinic & Outreach

- Dowagiac Dental Clinic
 - served 354 patients in the month of September
 - scheduled 1,052 new appointments
- Lawrence Dental Clinic
 - served 442 patients in the month of September
 - scheduled 843 new appointments
- October marks the renewal of the Veteran Services Dental Grant in Cass and Van Buren Counties. In fiscal year 2024, we provided over \$56,000 in dental care to 128 Veterans in Van Buren and Cass County. We look forward to continuing to providing this great service.

John Faul
County Administrator



DAVID KRZYCKI
Veterans Services Director

VAN BUREN COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES

Phone: (269) 657-8200 Ext 1612
Fax: (269) 415-0250

226 E. Michigan Avenue
Paw Paw, MI 49079

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Web: www.vanburencountymi.gov

1. This report covers the reporting period from Aug 2024 – Sep 2024.
2. I would like to introduce our newest member of the Van Buren County Veteran Services Team. Jayna Miller, from Lawton, MI.
3. We are waiting on the final approval for our MVAA FY2025. Grant has been submitted on time and is currently being processed.
4. Statistical information Indicates:
 - Veteran Services conducted **294** contacts in August and **321** contacts in September. Overall, this year we saw **2,916** contacts for FY 2024. **Claims, Supplementary Claims, Aid and Attendance** and **Relief Inquiries** were the main topics during this last Fiscal Year.
 - The dental program spent **\$4,575.45** in August with **22** visits and **\$2,942.10** in September with **15** visits. In FY2024 we saw **258** veterans for dental services.
 - In FY2024 we have spent **\$83,881.25** of the 2024 MVAA grant.
 - Soldiers and Sailors approved **\$21,295** in relief in FY2024.
 - Return Benefits to Veterans for Compensation, Backpay, Aid and Attendance, Pensions, and Caregivers totaled: \$7,891,219.74. (Returned to Veterans and Families in Van Buren County)
5. Statistics April 2023 and May 2024
 - **VA Claims/Actions:** We had **98** claims/actions filed in August and **82** in Sep. This reflects all various actions related to additional benefits, relief, DIC and health care.
 - **Appeals:** We had **1** appeal in Aug and **9** appeals in Sep.
 - **Health Care:** Veteran services had **2** veterans signed up for VA Health Care in Aug and **1** veteran signed up in Sep.
 - **Home/Event Visits:** Veteran services conducted **2** home visits in this reporting period.

- **Assisted Living Visits:** Conducted a total of **4** Assisted Living Visits this reporting period.
- **Community Events:** Conducted **9** outreach and County Events since our last report.

6. Public transportation gave 20 rides in Aug and 24 rides in Sep.

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

- **Aug**
 - Veteran Housing meeting at VB Tech
 - Received a more donations of canes, and walkers
 - Visited VFW South Haven
 - South Haven Salute to Veterans
 - Conducted our Veterans Social
 - Visited the Decator VFW
 - Visited the South Haven American Legion
- **Sep**
 - Paw Paw Wine Festival
 - Visited the American Legion in Bangor
 - Rotary Club presentation in South Haven
 - Conducted Veterans Social
 - Hired new VSO
- **Upcoming events for Veteran Services:**
 - Receive FY2025 Grant
 - Decator Standdown October 25th
 - Veterans Day Services 8-11 Nov
 - Senior Center (Veterans Day Service) 12 Nov
 - Veterans Social
 - Thanksgiving Meals (23 Nov)
 - Christmas Meals (14 Dec)
- **In the FY 2024:**
 - we contacted **2,916** veterans,
 - completed **1148** actions/claims,
 - filed **55** appeals,
 - enrolled **55** veterans in health care,
 - conducted **10** in home visits,
 - had **32** senior living visits
 - received **24,500** in donations for ESA Program
 - provided **262** rides from Transportation
 - conducted **66** community events across Van Buren County.

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 October 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

As we enjoy Fall, we have wrapped up recycling collection events and are reminding folks that year-round opportunities are available! We are also working on next year's Food, Farm, & Fun Guide, and we'd love it if you'd help us find great businesses in Van Buren County to include. We will have tax bill inserts to you by the requested date as well. Please feel free to reach out to us anytime with questions and concerns.

Conservation is work done best with partners. Thank you for being one of them!

Recycling Collections: One-day collections have finished up for 2024! We look forward to sharing total impact numbers with you in next month's report. In the meantime, several recycling opportunities continue. These services are available at no direct cost to all Van Buren County residents and landowners. Services made available through EGLE grants, VBCD Operations millage, Van Buren County funds, and municipal contributions.

- **Electronic recycling** | Available year-round at:
 - Community Thrift Shop | 1000 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw | Call 269-657-4186 for hours
 - Senior Services of Van Buren County | 8337 M-140, South Haven | Call 269-468-9476 for hours
- **Year-round tire recycling** | Available May - October at:
 - Columbia Township Transfer Station | 18868 52 ½ St., Grand Junction | Saturdays and 1st Sundays 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
 - Cover Township Transfer Station | 1 ¼ miles west of M-140 on 34th Ave. | Saturdays 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
 - Village of Decatur | coming in 2025!
- **Battery recycling** | Available year-round at:
 - Hartford Public Library
 - Paw Paw Public Library
 - South Haven Senior Services Center
 - Van Buren Conservation District Office
 - Van Buren District Library Branches: Antwerp Sunshine, Bangor, Covert, Lawrence, Webster Memorial (Decatur)

Food, Farm, Fun Guide Advertising Due January 15: We work with you but also our farms, food and drink producers, and plant nurseries and florists. The folks who work with and steward our shared natural resources every day. We promote these awesome folks with our Guide and marketing. Local conservation done by supporting our farmers, bolstering our local food system, and promoting business working with our land and water. The bonus is we're not push-y, the profits are for our advertisers and not in selling ads. The Guide also promotes our county's public green spaces, museums, festivals, and non-profits working in natural resources.

How you can help:

- Share this information!
- Print and hang our flier (see attached)
- See or share the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide for yourself:

1035 E. Michigan Avenue, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
269.657.4030 x5 ◊ www.VanBurenCD.org ◊ info@vanburencd.org



Van Buren Conservation District October 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

- Food, Farm, & Fun Guide (webpage and digital booklet): VanBurenCD.org/food-farm-fun
- Advertising information: VanBurenCD.org/2025-fffg-advertise

Technical Assistance to Help Address Wastewater Challenges: Many rural, small, and Tribal systems face unique financial and operational challenges, including aging infrastructure, workforce shortages, increasing costs, and declining rate bases. EPA's grant funding will be used to assess the most pressing water challenges in communities, provide training on water infrastructure and management best practices, help communities navigate the federal funding application process, and strategically invest in reliable infrastructure solutions.

EPA is accepting applications until November 25, 2024. Information about how to apply is available on our Training and Technical Assistance Program for Rural, Small, and Tribal Wastewater Systems [webpage](#).

EPA Announcement - Final Rule on Lead Pipe Replacement and Available Funding: The Biden-Harris Administration issued a final rule requiring drinking water systems across the country to identify and replace lead pipes within 10 years. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has several funding sources for complying with this final rule.

Learn more about the final rule, grants, funding, and projects here:

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-issues-final-rule-requiring-replacement-lead-pipes-7>

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller, Colleen Forestieri, Carlie Southland*) - In September, the Ag and Water Quality team coordinated our annual aerial fly-on cover crop co-op. Over 3,400 acres of cover crops were planted in two days with this method.
- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) - The Strike Team worked at record pace to manage the Phragmites and Japanese knotweed along Van Buren County rights-of-way. Strike Team crew member, Cole Lambrich, moved on to his next position with Pizzo Native Plant Nursery. We wrote and completed our fourth GLRI proposal for invasive species management for partners. High-priority invasive species were managed and surveyed in partnership with EGLE and DNR.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** (*Kyle Mead*) - September was a busy month for the specialist in regards to covering Cass County in the absence of a technician for that county. All of these Cass County farms will be reverifications for MAEAP and the specialist. Although, it is the first time working with them for the Van Buren specialist aside from the one in Edwardsburg which will be a new three-system verification when they are ready. The plan for the new fiscal year is to split Cass County into three parts to be split between Cass, St Joseph, and Van Buren Counties to provide coverage. The Van Buren specialist has already developed a map that the other technicians and the MAEAP Verifier agree works and everyone seems happy with. For FY24 end,



Van Buren Conservation District October 2024 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

the specialist is happy with his final numbers. Reverifications have been hard to get done lately because many of those farmers need to make changes before Verification can be completed. The specialist is already scheduling assessments and Verifications for FY25.

- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – This month, we had our 2nd annual “Grazing Workshop” at the Farm Research Cooperative in Bloomingdale. An excellent time was had by around 80 guests and a further 10 staff members of the VBCD. The highlight of the day wasn’t the speakers, although they were all great as well, but it was the lunch. Around 80% of the lunch served was grown within Van Buren County. Link to Article on Grazing Workshop from the Farmers Exchange Further highlights of the month include finishing up our 2024 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) fillings, and getting prepped and ready for the next fiscal year and all the new practices and funding that will be coming with it.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – We were out in the community this month attending public events and holding the Paw Paw River Cleanup. We cleared over 5 miles of river of trash! Check out the photos to see what the VBCD did for the community this month!
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – September begins our wrap up of the collection season. We visited Columbia Township for a passenger & semi tire and electronic collection to start the month. After that, grant prep and reporting started to occupy our minds as we barrel towards the end of the fiscal year. We are excited to be wrapping up a few of the recycling infrastructure projects at transfer stations within the next month and see others taking shape.



ROAD COMMISSION TALKING POINTS

Signs Prohibited in Road Right-of-Way

A News Release was sent out on October 2nd reminding all Van Buren County political campaigns and their supporters that political signs placed with a county road right-of-way will be removed as they can create safety hazards and impede maintenance operations. Illegally placed signs may be removed by the Road Commission and are available for retrieval by contacting the Road Commission at 269-674-8011 or via email at vbcrc@vbcrc.org. Signs not claimed within 14 days of their removal may be discarded. This includes political, real estate, and garage sale signs in the road right-of-way.

Road Commission to Begin Third Round of Roadside Mowing

For the first time in recent history the Road Commission will soon begin its THIRD round of roadside mowing. The first round of mowing took longer than the second as crews mowed substantially more right-of-way than contractors were able to mow in previous years. This THIRD round of mowing will, once again, be a substantial cut as crews will work to mow as much right-of-way as equipment allows.

Pavement Marking Contract Work Underway

As sealcoat and fog seal operations are close to wrapping up for the season, the pavement marking contractor is working to paint lines across Van Buren County on selected roadways. There are only approximately four (4) pavement marking contractors with equipment that meets specifications for roadway painting in Michigan, and only one contractor submitted a sealed bid for work in Van Buren County. Therefore, the VBCRC is, to an extent, subject to the contractor's schedule as they conduct work in many counties throughout the State of Michigan.

Two New Broom Trucks Purchased by VBCRC

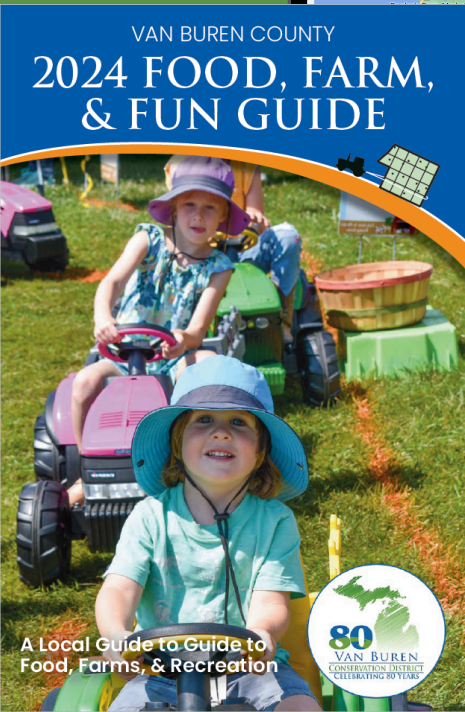
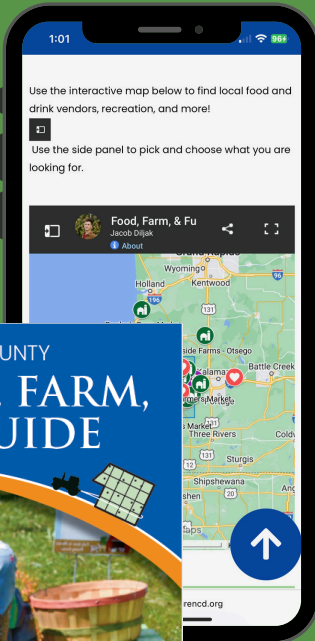
Two (2) new brooms were recently purchased by the VBCRC, which are already out working throughout the County.



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



Advertise in the 2025 FOOD, FARM, & FUN GUIDE



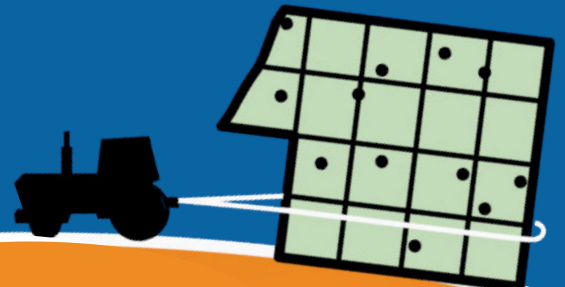
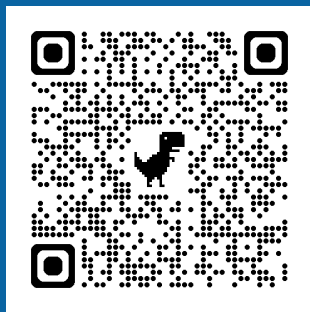
Are you a farmer, local food or drink producer, agritourism business, or a nursery/greenhouse?

Join the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide! We proudly promote our local economy and local farms, businesses, and folks like you. Reach thousand of customers at affordable prices with discounts available.

Learn more and view the Food, Farm, & Fun Guide by using the URL below or scanning the QR code.

Be sure to register by **January 15, 2025!** With questions, contact us using the information below.

SCAN ME



VanBurenCD.org/food-farm-fun



Outreach@VanBurenCD.org



269-633-9052



Citizen Planner Program

In Person

This course on zoning and planning roles, responsibilities, and best practices is suitable for new and experienced planning officials and interested community members. It is hosted several times a year across the state. Sessions meet once a week for six weeks. The three-hour sessions include lectures and hands-on learning exercises that cover:

- » **Understanding the planning and zoning context:** Learn the legal sources and limitations of local planning and zoning authority and explore your understanding of ethical decision-making.
- » **Planning for the future of your community:** Recognize the function and importance of a master plan, know the process for developing one, and its relationship to zoning.
- » **Implementing the plan with zoning:** Discover the importance of zoning, learn how zoning

is administered, and gain confidence in your zoning reviews, including site plans.

- » **Making zoning decisions:** Learn how to adopt and amend a zoning ordinance, understand the role of the zoning board of appeals, and learn about basic property development methods.
- » **Using innovative planning and zoning:** Strategize about placemaking and design-based solutions to address new challenges our communities face.
- » **Successfully fulfilling your role:** Strengthen your ethical decision-making skills, develop your public engagement toolkit, and gain insights on when to ask for help.

Participants who complete Citizen Planner have the option to earn the Master Citizen Planner credential.

Citizen Planner Online Course

Self-Paced

This online, self-paced version of Citizen Planner is designed for people who cannot attend an in-person program or who prefer to learn at their own pace.

The course is highly interactive, with engaging stories, videos, and activities. Most participants complete the course in about 15 hours.

Zoning Board of Appeals Online Certificate Course

Self-Paced

This course covers the roles and responsibilities of the zoning board of appeals (ZBA),

effective decision-making, and due process. The curriculum features ZBA-specific content, engaging activities, case studies, and the latest Michigan case law.

The self-paced course is designed for local government ZBA members, local government staff, managers, municipal attorneys, and interested community members. The course includes six modules that can be accessed in any order:

- » Understanding basic ZBA roles and responsibilities
- » Effective decisions and ordinance interpretations
- » Hearing appeals of administrative decisions
- » Issuing variances from ordinance standards
- » Nonconformities and other responsibilities
- » Circuit court review and standards

Most participants complete the coursework in about seven hours.

Equipment Needs

Participants in courses with online components will need an internet connection and a computer or internet-enabled mobile device. Larger screens will provide a better viewing experience.

Certificates of Completion

To earn a course certificate, participants must attend and complete all modules.



Zoning Administrator Certificate Program

Hybrid

This comprehensive program is designed to reduce legal risk for zoning administrators and communities. It is essential training for new and experienced zoning administrators, planners, consultants, code enforcement officials, and related administrative staff.

Participants must complete the Citizen Planner Program, or be recognized by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), before starting this course.

The program covers the following topics:

- » Job descriptions, responsibilities, and ethics
- » Legal issues
- » Application forms and review processes
- » Reviewing site plans
- » Inspections and violations
- » Preparing files, reports, and record keeping



- » Interactions with other professionals and agencies and performing departmental duties
- » Customer service and counter behavior

The program includes a webinar; self-paced online learning modules; and in-person lectures, learning activities, and networking opportunities. Total instruction time is about 18 hours. To earn the Zoning Administrator Certificate, participants must complete the entire program and pass an open-book exam.

Find Out More

Ongoing training is essential for planning and zoning officials to help minimize legal risk and plan for a community's future! To learn more about or register for the courses described here, or to discuss hosting an in-person course in your community, contact:

Program Coordinator

Phone: 517-353-6472

Email: cplanner@msu.edu

Web: <https://extension.msu.edu/planning>



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Land Use Planning & Zoning Certificate Courses

MSU Extension offers a variety of land use certificate courses for appointed and elected planning and zoning officials, government staff, and interested community members.

In-person, self-paced online, and hybrid courses are available.

GOVERNING ESSENTIALS VAN BUREN COUNTY



DESCRIPTION:

In January, many Michiganders will be starting their terms as elected or appointed officials in our local units of government. To help prepare local officials for their service, MSU Extension is bringing the popular Governing Essentials program to Van Buren County.

Governing Essentials is a program designed for local elected and appointed officials that are looking to sharpen their skills and promote good governance practices. The program aims to cultivate a basic understanding of transparent, efficient, and impactful governance practices across three topics:

- Navigating the Open Meetings Act
- Mastering Parliamentary Procedure with Robert's Rules of Order
- The Components of Extraordinary Governance

By attending this program, individuals involved in governance will acquire the tools needed to navigate complexities, foster transparency, and effect positive change.

Light refreshments will be provided, and all registrants will receive copies of the program materials and access to recorded versions of the program.

REGISTRATION:

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/2024VBGovEss/>

Find more MSU Extension local government programs at:
https://www.canr.msu.edu/van_buren/government-and-community

DATE:

Saturday, December 14th

TIME:

9:00 am – 12:30 pm

COST:

\$20

LOCATION:

MSU Extension – Van Buren County

57418 CR 681, Suite A

Hartford, MI 49057

CONTACT:

Tyler Augst

(269) 657-8213

augsttyl@msu.edu

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Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the event contact Tyler Augst two weeks before the start of the event (12/01) at (269) 657-8213 or augsttyl@msu.edu. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.