



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024

The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners is proud to present its 2024 Annual Report, detailing the initiatives, programs, and accomplishments undertaken to enhance the lives of our residents. This year has been marked by strategic investments, community-driven projects, and significant partnerships to strengthen our county's infrastructure, services, and overall quality of life.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. **Broadband Expansion & Technology Updates:** In 2024, the Board made significant progress on several key initiatives funded through ARPA. A \$7 million allocation was dedicated to expanding broadband access across underserved areas of the county, with agreements established with MEC (*approved January 9, 2024*) and Comcast (*approved May 14, 2024*). These efforts, supported by our consultant DCS, align with the State's Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks (ROBIN) grant program and aim to improve connectivity for rural residents and businesses. Additionally, the Board finalized a \$950,000 subrecipient agreement with VBISD for the ARPA-funded Youth Center project (*approved on October 8, 2024*). The implementation of a \$500,000 court file digitization project also began, streamlining court operations. Other noteworthy ARPA-funded projects completed during the year included assisting the Road Commission with construction on CR 388, supporting the Public Health Department with the purchase of new dental chairs, and aiding the City of South Haven with lead service line replacements.
2. **2024 Annual Borrowing Resolution:** Approved borrowing up to \$7.5 million for the Delinquent Tax Revolving Fund to maintain financial stability. (*Approved February 13, 2024*)
3. **9-1-1 Surcharge Renewal:** Approved a proposal to increase the monthly surcharge to \$3.00 per device to fund 9-1-1 system operations from 2025 to 2029. (*Approved March 26, 2024*)
4. **VBC Public Defender Establishment:** The Board approved the separation of the Van Buren County Public Defender's Office from Allegan County, along with the FY 2024-25 Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) grant application on April 9, 2024. Later in the year, on November 12, 2024, the Board approved the grant and received a comprehensive progress report. The presentation showcased the office's achievements thus far and outlined goals for the current fiscal year, emphasizing enhanced access to justice and improved operational efficiency.
5. **Equalization Report:** Certified real and personal property valuations totaling \$6.25 billion for Van Buren County. (*Approved April 23, 2024*)
6. **Materials Management Plan:** Authorized a Notice of Intent to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to prepare a Materials Management Plan in collaboration with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. (*Approved April 23, 2024*)

- 7. Off-Road Vehicle Ordinance:** Adopted a county-wide ordinance for off-road vehicle use with input from the Road and Parks Commissions. *(Approved June 11, 2024)*
- 8. FY 2025 MVAA Grant Request:** Approved submitting the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency grant application, enhancing programs like dental care and emergency relief. *(Approved June 11, 2024)*
- 9. CPM Construction Contract:** Authorized an additional \$225,000 for the Transit facility expansion, above the existing grant amount. *(Approved July 9, 2024)*
- 10. Facilities Master Plan:** Approved a contract with Tower Pinkster to develop a Facilities Master Plan at an estimated cost of \$180,000–\$230,000. *(Approved August 29, 2024)*
- 11. Materials Management Agreement Amendment:** Updated the interlocal agreement with Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties to include a Pokagon Band of Potawatomi representative. *(Approved September 10, 2024)*
- 12. FY 2024-2025 Budget:** Adopted the General Fund Budget and property tax millage levies for the upcoming fiscal year. *(Approved September 10, 2024)*
- 13. USDA Housing Preservation Grant:** Accepted \$105,701 in USDA funding and approved submitting a grant application to MSHDA for matching funds to support home rehabilitation projects. *(Approved September 23, 2024)*
- 14. Outside Service Contract Renewal:** As part of the budget process the Board approved service contracts with MSU Extension, Van Buren Conservation District, Domestic Violence Coalition and the Recovery Zone *(Approved October 8, 2024)*
- 15. Jail Elevator Replacement:** Authorized replacing the jail elevator, installed in 1968, for \$123,788. *(Approved October 8, 2024)*
- 16. Purchasing Card Policy Update:** Revised the policy to improve clarity, prohibit card sharing, and enforce timely submission of receipts. *(Approved November 26, 2024)*
- 17. Hartford Kayak Launch Project:** Approved a \$61,900 contract with Abonmarche Consultants for engineering and construction administration services as part of a \$405,300 project funded by MNRTF and local contributions. *(Approved November 26, 2024)*
- 18. Camera and NVR Replacement:** Authorized a \$391,804.31 project to upgrade the county's aging security infrastructure, including new cameras and NVR systems, ensuring modernized security operations. *(Approved November 26, 2024)*
- 19. Millage Renewals:** Renewed voter approved millages to fund roads, public transit, and veterans' services that will provide essential support for the community. A new Board approved levied millage of 0.10 mills is anticipated to generate approximately \$400,000 annually.

USE OF COUNTY PROPERTY

- 1. Public Event Parking Approvals:** Permitted parking lot usage for events, including the Lakeshore Harvest Ride (September 14), Paw Paw Vineyard Classic (September 8), Grape Lake 5K Race (September 7), and Pray for the Nation (November 3). *(Approved July 9, August 27, and September 23, 2024)*
- 2. VBC Youth Fair Parking:** Approved using the Department of Health and Human Services parking lot for overflow parking during the Van Buren County Youth Fair. *(Approved July 23, 2024)*
- 3. Arts & Crafts Fair – Wine & Harvest Festival:** Approved the use of county property for the 2024 Arts & Crafts Fair during the Wine and Harvest Festival. *(Approved June 11, 2024)*
- 4. Paw Paw Days:** Approved using county property for the Paw Paw Days Classic Car & Truck Show. *(Approved February 27, 2024)*
- 5. Recycling Events:** Permitted the Van Buren Conservation District to use county property for the Recycle Roundup and Large Tire Collection events. *(Approved March 26, 2024)*

COMMITTEE/BOARD APPOINTMENTS/REAPPOINTMENTS

- 1. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission:** Roger Engle was appointed for a two-year term expiring December 21, 2025. *(Approved February 13, 2024)*
- 2. Van Buren Cass District Board of Health:** Janet Engle was appointed for a three-year term expiring November 1, 2026. *(Approved February 13, 2024)*
- 3. VBCMHA Board of Directors:** Catherine Bolton and Angela Dickerson were reappointed for terms expiring March 1, 2027. *(Approved February 27, 2024)*
- 4. Surveyor's Peer Group:** Travis Krentz was appointed to the Van Buren County Surveyor's Peer Group. *(Approved March 12, 2024)*
- 5. Brownfield Redevelopment Authority:** John Young and Lisa Phillips were reappointed for terms expiring June 1, 2027. *(Approved March 12 and March 26, 2024)*
- 6. Deputy Medical Examiner:** Dr. Christine James was appointed as Deputy Medical Examiner. *(Approved March 12, 2024)*
- 7. Community Corrections Advisory Board:** Judge Susan Metzger and Karla Tankut were appointed, ensuring compliance with Michigan Department of Corrections funding requirements. *(Approved May 14, 2024)*
- 8. VBCMHA Board:** Christopher Tapper, Michael Saenz, and Clare Olney were appointed to the Van Buren County Community Mental Health Board of Directors. *(Approved May 14, 2024)*
- 9. Community Mental Health Board:** Annie Brown was appointed for a term expiring March 31, 2027. *(Approved July 23, 2024)*
- 10. Southwest Michigan MMPC:** Commissioner Paul Schincariol and Bob Baran were appointed to the Materials Management Planning Committee for terms expiring in August 2029. *(Approved July 9 and August 27, 2024)*
- 11. DHHS Board:** Cathy Ontiveros was reappointed to the Van Buren County DHHS Board for a term expiring November 1, 2025. *(Approved July 9, 2024)*
- 12. Brownfield Redevelopment Authority:** Bryan Myrkle was appointed for a three-year term expiring June 1, 2027. *(Approved August 27, 2024)*
- 13. Road Commission:** Wayne Nelson and Dr. W.C. Askew, Sr. were reappointed for six-year terms expiring December 31, 2030. *(Approved October 22, 2024)*
- 14. Planning Commission:** Gordon Andrews and Nicholas Carlson were appointed to unexpired terms expiring April 1, 2027. *(Approved October 8, 2024)*
- 15. Deputy Medical Examiner:** Dr. Thomas Koster was appointed, replacing Dr. Jared Brooks. *(Approved October 8, 2024)*
- 16. Land Bank Authority:** Paul DeYoung was reappointed to the Land Bank Authority for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2028. *(Approved November 26, 2024)*
- 17. Kinexus Workforce Development Board:** Tom Barbarini, Chris Randall, and Luke Barber were reappointed for terms expiring June 30, 2027. *(Approved November 26, 2024)*



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