



November and December 2025 Board of Commissioners Activity Reports

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HIGHLIGHTS FOR NOVEMBER 2025

1. **Public Transit – Dispatch Radio Equipment Upgrade** – During the November 13, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approve the purchase of new dispatch radio equipment from Roe-Comm Communications in the amount of \$35,058.00 for the Public Transit department. The equipment replaces outdated and unsupported systems originally acquired in 2008 and 2013.
2. **Substance Use Disorder Contract – SWMBH FY2025–2026 Agreement** - The Board approved the FY2025-2026 Net Cost Agreement with Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health for Substance Use Disorder services during its November 13, 2025, meeting. The \$71,466.00 agreement supports services provided through the County’s Specialty Court and Circuit Court.
3. **Purchase of County Property – Sheriff’s Office, Drain Crew Van** – The Board approved the purchase of a 2025 Ford Low Roof Cargo Van for the Sheriff’s Office during its November 13, 2025, meeting. The purchase, not to exceed \$51,815.00, replaces a non-operational vehicle. This was included in the 2025-2026 Capital Improvement Plan.
4. **Purchase of County Property – Drain Commissioner, Truck** – The Board approved the purchase of a replacement truck for the Drain Commissioner’s Office at a cost of \$38,445.00 during the November 25, 2025, Board meeting. This was included in the 2025-2026 Capital Improvement Plan.
5. **Opioid Settlement – 2025–2026 Grant Awards** – During the November 25, 2025, the Board approved the 2025-2026 grant awards recommended by the Opioid Settlement Steering Committee. Funding was awarded to Van Buren County Specialty Courts (\$155,00.00) and the Van Buren Youth Initiative’s school-based prevention program (\$55,000.00). All awards are subject to standard grant agreements and compliance oversight.
6. **PILOT Settlement – Village of Paw Paw Agreement** – During the November 25, 2025, the Board approved a settlement agreement with the Village of Paw Paw to recover outstanding PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) funds owed to the County. Van Buren County will receive \$57,873.29 for FY2018–2023 and \$11,222.90 for FY2024. The Village has committed to accurate PILOT distributions going forward.
7. **Specialty Court and Community Corrections – FY2026 Grant Awards** – During the November 25, 2025, meeting, the Board accepted FY2025-2026 grant awards for five Specialty Court programs and the Office of Community Corrections, totaling over \$711,000.00. These include support for Adult Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Family Treatment Court, and more.
8. **Position Creation – Community Services Coordinator** – During the November 25, 2025, meeting, the Board approved the creation of a full-time Community Services Coordinator position at a Range 23 classification. The position will support department operations, advisory board coordination, public transparency, and grant initiatives.
9. **October 2025 Claims** – During the November 25, 2025, BOC meeting, the Board approved payment of claims totaling \$15,595,439.02 for County operations during the month of October 2025.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR DECEMBER 2025

- 1. Medical Examiner Annual Report** – During the December 9, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting, Chief Medical Investigator John Storer presented the Medical Examiner's Annual Report for 2024. The report included an overview of death investigations, autopsies, and case trends managed throughout the year.
- 2. 2026 Organizational Meeting and Cancellation of December 23, 2025, Meeting** – During the December 9, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board scheduled its 2026 Organizational Meeting for Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 1:00 PM. The meeting will include the election of officers and a new component featuring departmental presentations outlining key accomplishments from 2025 and strategic priorities for 2026. In conjunction with this action, the Board also canceled its final meeting of the year, previously scheduled for December 23, 2025, as all remaining business requiring action was addressed during the December 9 session. The Board will reconvene for official business at the Organizational Meeting on January 6, 2026.
- 3. Community Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Plan 2026-2030** – During the December 9, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approved the release of the draft Van Buren County 2026–2030 Parks and Recreation Plan for a 30-day public review period. A public hearing was scheduled for January 13, 2026, with final adoption targeted for January 27, 2026. Adoption of the plan is required to maintain eligibility for future DNR and federal grants.
- 4. Road Commission – Communication Guidelines** – During the December 9, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approved formal communication guidelines for Road Commissioners. These guidelines aim to improve coordination with townships, clarify that Road Commissioners represent the entire County, and enhance responsiveness to constituent concerns.

COMMITTEE AND BOARD APPOINTMENTS/REAPPOINTMENTS

- 1. Kinexus Group Workforce Development Board Reappointment – Saleeby, G.** – During the December 9, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approved the appointment of George Saleeby to the Kinexus Workforce Development Board for a term ending December 31, 2028. Kinexus supports regional employment services, job training, and labor market alignment.
- 2. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) – Catherman, R.** – During the December 9, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approved the reappointment of Rick Catherman to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission for a term ending December 21, 2027. The SWMPC helps coordinate transportation, infrastructure, and land use planning across the region.
- 3. Land Bank Authority – Morris, Z. and Hackenberg, T.** – During the December 9, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approved the reappointments of Zachary Morris and Todd Hackenberg to the Land Bank Authority for terms ending December 31, 2028. The Authority works to return tax-reverted and underutilized properties to productive use through redevelopment or sale.



[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

**Boil Water Advisory Lifted
for Blue Star Highway
Area**

**ByHeart Infant Formula
Recall: Important Safety
Alert for Families in Van
Buren & Cass Counties**

Medical Director and Nursing

In early November, the STI/HIV Team provided HIV testing at Cass County Jail. Immunization and lead nurses attended the IAP Fall Meeting in Lansing on November 10, followed by the Michigan Care Improvement Registry (MCIR) Provider Meeting on November 12. STI/HIV nurse and health promotion staff delivered an STI presentation at Hartford High School on November 18. To close out the month, fit testing for nursing staff was conducted.

Arbovirus activity continues to be monitored, including West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis. View the latest summary [here](#)¹. Seasonal influenza activity remains low but is increasing nationally, primarily among children and young adults. Influenza A H3N2 is currently the predominant strain in Michigan, with Influenza A H1N1 also emerging. Read the [MI Flu Focus](#)² for more details.

For children: Most insurance plans cover flu vaccination at no cost. For uninsured or underinsured children, the CDC's Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program is available through our health department. Eligibility includes ages 0–18, uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid eligible, Alaskan Native, or American Indian. Qualifying information can be found [here](#)³ or call (269) 621-3143 for details.

For adults: if insured, flu vaccines are typically covered, but you can check with your provider to confirm. For uninsured or underinsured adults, our health department participates in the Adult Vaccine Program (AVP).

You can also find vaccination locations at Vaccines.gov⁴ for more information. For eligibility and scheduling, please call (269) 621-3143.

LOWER YOUR FLU RISK

If you have a chronic condition like...

- LUNG DISEASE
- HEART DISEASE
- DIABETES

there are many important things you need to do to stay healthy

ANNUAL FLU VACCINATION IS A CRITICAL PART OF YOUR CARE

#FightFlu

There's still time: get vaccinated to help fight flu.

Photo courtesy of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID).



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Newsorthy

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for Blue Star Highway
Area**

**ByHeart Infant Formula
Recall: Important Safety
Alert for Families in Van
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Environmental Health

- 47 septic permits
- 48 well permits
- 27 restaurant inspections
- 1 temporary food inspections
- 12 septic final inspections
- 44 well final inspections
- 12 restaurant reinspections

Dental Clinic and Outreach

Both clinics were slightly less busy than usual this past month but remain on track with previous years. Dowagiac served 289 patients, while Lawrence saw 471 patients. Staff continue to accommodate new patients as best as scheduling allows.

Beginning January 1, our Lawrence location will offer earlier appointment times starting at 7:00 a.m., Monday through Thursday, to better accommodate patient schedules. To support this expanded access and improve team efficiency, we will transition to a four-day, 10-hour schedule. Fridays will be reserved for scheduling, triage, and administrative work, and will be closed to patients.

Our Dowagiac location will maintain its current hours of 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, with no patient appointments on Fridays. This adjustment aligns with common practice in the dental field and allows us to enhance patient convenience and optimize staff resources

¹ https://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/-/media/Project/Websites/emergingdiseases/Folder3/Weekly_Arbovirus_Summary.pdf?rev=a42c5ee32bbf4e80983102593114ea77

² <https://www.michigan.gov/flu/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder1/Folder43/MIFluFocus.pdf>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines-for-children/about/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.vaccines.gov/en/>



Director's Report for November 2025

In Process

- New radio equipment for dispatch coming soon
- New scheduling software coming next
- Passenger Transportation Information Management System (PTIMS) coming soon – Tami attended a one-day training session

Staff Update

- 2 drivers have left us, and we are hiring 2 part time drivers, possibly 3.

State/Budget Update

- With the new state budget, our state Local Bus Operating (LBO) funds will increase from 30.5895% to 34.8467% for Fiscal Year 2026, an increase of 4.2572%. Great news, but still a little lower than the previous Fiscal Year 2025 by .1618%. Fiscal Year 2025 was at 35.0085%.
- Fred Featherly, our MDOT Project Manager for over 17 years, is retiring December 4th. Alex Simonetti will be his replacement. See attached email from Fred.

Networking and Services

Event	Location	Service Date	# Rides
SWAN – Southwest Agency Network	South Haven	Monthly	NA
Wine & Harvest Festival	Paw Paw	September 5-7	813
Veterans Stand Down (Displays)	Decatur	October 10	NA
Countryside B&B Rides	South Haven	November 16	TBD
New Year's Eve Trolley & Bus	South Haven	December 31	TBD

Building Addition Update

- Thank you to all who visited our Open House on Wednesday, September 24, 2025.
- New Handrail installed Monday, November 3rd around the new sidewalk.
- Visitors are welcome anytime!

Fiscal Year 2025 Final Stats

- 99,959 total rides
- 542,928 miles traveled
- 78,390.85 gallons of fuel used
- 59,609.14 hours worked!

**Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Schlipp**

Happy Thanksgiving and Happy Holidays!

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

Email: KrzyckiD@vanburencountymi.gov
Web: www.vanburencountymi.gov

1. This report covers the reporting period from Oct-Nov FY2026.
2. Happy Birthday United States Space Force, and National Guard!
3. **Statistical information Indicates:**
 - Overall, this year we have seen **547** contacts for FY26. New contacts, **General Inquires, Aid and Attendance inquiries, and Relief.** are the main topics during this period.
 - The dental program has spent **\$26,235.33** in FY26 with **131** visits.
 - For FY26 we resubmitted our original grant per guidance from the Michigan House Senate.
 - Soldiers and Sailors had **1** a fully developed relief request for consideration in FY2026 and issued a payment of \$4,708.86.
 - We had **3** burial relief approved for **\$900.00** total in FY26.
4. **Statistics Aug-Sept FY2025**
 - **VA Claims/Actions:** We had **84** claims/actions filed in October and **79** in November. This reflects all the various actions related to additional benefits, DIC, Relief, Aid and Attendance, and requests for DD214's.
 - **Appeals:** We had **15** appeals in October and **16** appeals for November.
 - **Health Care:** Veteran services had **3** veterans signed up for VA Health Care in this reporting period.
 - **Home/Event Visits:** **1** home visits in this reporting period.
 - **Assisted Living Visits:** Conducted a total of **0** Assisted Living Visits this reporting period.
 - **Community Events:** Conducted **10** outreach and County Events since our last report.
5. Public transportation gave **14** rides in October and **28** rides in November.
6. The following events were conducted during this reporting period FY26.

- **October 2025**
 - Visit American Legion (South Haven, Bangor)
 - Visit VFW (South Haven)
 - Decatur Veterans Stand Down (Decatur)
 - Veterans Social (Paw Paw)
 - Meeting with NACVSO on grant
- **November 2025**
 - Veterans Day
 - Bangor AL
 - Bangor High School Salute to Veterans
 - South Haven VFW, AL
 - Senior Center Paw Paw Veterans Salute
 - Victims Services Speaking Engagement (Lawrence)
 - Thanksgiving Meal Issue (30)
- **Upcoming events for Veteran Services:**
 - Christmas Meals (13 Dec)
 - Breakfast and Services February 2026.
 - Onboard new hire
 - Dennis last day January 9, 2026. Happy Retirement!!

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 November 2025 Program Update

Submitted by Emily Hickmott, Executive Director

The VBCD staff has returned to the office with the reopening of the federal government. We are grateful to all of the partners that lent us and offered their meeting space and assistance during that time. We are writing many grant applications right now and planning upcoming events. Contact information is available at VanBurenCD.org/about to find out how our team can best help you. Our full board reports can be found on our website as well.

Did you know? Conservation districts are designed to address *local* resource concerns. We depend on input from the people of Van Buren County to address the most important issues in our own backyards. To help guide us, we conduct a Conservation Needs Assessment at least every five years. Our latest from 2025, indicated that the top five resource concerns in Van Buren County are:

1. Proper use and disposal of farm chemicals/fertilizers
2. Forest/woodland loss due to housing, business, and farmland development
3. Drinking water/groundwater
4. Pollinator populations
5. Recycling/proper garbage disposal

Didn't get a chance to complete the survey? Send us your concerns, questions, and ideas for conservation anytime!

Upcoming Events (Details available on [our website](#)):

- Staff training: Michigan State University Facilitated Meeting Workshop | December 2-4
- Staff training: Michigan Association of Conservation Districts Annual Conference | December 7-10
- Staff training: Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable, & Farm Market Expo | December 9-11
- Small Grower Meeting | December 10
- Van Buren Conservation District Board Meeting | Wednesday, December 17, 2025 | 10:00 AM | VBCD Office / USDA Service Center | 1035 E Michigan Ave., Paw Paw, MI 49079
- Office Closed for Christmas | December 25 and for New Year's Day | January 1

Program Updates:

- **Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects** (*Erin Fuller and Colleen Forestieri*) - Staff coordinated the planting of nearly 300 new native trees and shrubs in southwest Michigan as part of a grant project through the Van Buren Conservation District and Michigan Lakes and Streams Association. This project offers landowners on six lakes in southwest Michigan (Round, Gravel, and Eagle Lakes in Van Buren County and Harwood, Birch, and Baldwin Lakes in Cass County) the opportunity to have native trees and shrubs planted on their properties. These plantings will reduce runoff, improve the quality of water in our lakes and



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streams, and provide valuable wildlife habitat. This project is made possible by a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant through the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

- **SWxSW Corner CISMA (Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) Team** (*Abbie Bristol, Alex Florian, Jena Johnson*) – We have wrapped up the year’s field season work and are pivoting to planning for 2026. We completed Road Commission management in record time, treating and monitoring over 500 Phragmites and Japanese knotweed sites in Van Buren County. All despite the challenges presented by the government shutdown. Based on the Watch List invasive species concerns from 2025, we have synthesized the necessary responses into three projects, submitted to the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program.
- **Coastal Resilience Outreach and Education Project** (*Jena Johnson*) – We completed the “Protecting Van Buren County Coastal Areas Through Outreach and Education” grant project, funded by EGLE and NOAA. This included hosting a “Dune Day” educational event; designing and distributing an educational mailer to over 5,000 households; and designing, building, and hosting an event centered around an educational library display, all for coastal residents of Van Buren County. Jena also attended municipal meetings for the coastal communities of VBC and collaborated with Covert Township officials.
- **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and Regen Ag Program** (*Kyle Mead*) – The specialist set goals for the upcoming year, including 12 soil health tests, 18 soil health assessments, and 120 completed risk reductions. He is available to work with landowners to adopt practices that reduce risk, improve prosperity and ecosystems, and increase food systems in our region.
- **National Association of Conservation Districts (NRCS) Technical Assistance** (*Lucas Hartman, Gabriel Francisco*) – The technicians met with producers and developing EQIP plans to ensure that, once federal operations resumed, all materials were ready for timely submission helping to minimize further delays for participating farmers. In addition to these efforts, they are working on the grant application that funds their positions.
- **Outreach** (*Jacob Diljak*) – Work on the annual report is well underway, along with the 2026 Food, Farm, & Fun Guide. Additionally, VBCD staff held the fall Volunteer Water Monitoring event – an event where we monitor water health throughout the county with volunteers.
- **Resource Recovery & Recycling** (*Kalli Marshall, Jacob Diljak*) – The team held public educational events like Sustainable Samplers and Battery Safety Day with South Haven Area Emergency Service. We concluded the collection season with the Lawrence Recycle Roundup – serving over 180 households for recycling and safe disposal of a variety of materials. Kalli concluded the NextCycle Michigan Accelerator Showcase Pitch Competition, and was awarded \$5,000.00 for recycling improvements in Van Buren County.



ROAD COMMISSION TALKING POINTS

2026 Road Commission Meeting Schedule

At its November 6th meeting the Board scheduled 2026 meetings as follows. Board meetings begin at 5:00 PM and are held at the Road Commission office, 325 West James Street, Lawrence, MI unless noticed otherwise:

January 8	February 5	March 5
April 2	May 6	June 3
July 8	August 5	September 2
October 8	November 5	December 17

Road Commission Public Hearing on Proposed 2026 Budget

The Road Commission will hold a public hearing on its proposed 2026 budget on **Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at 5:00 PM**. The proposed 2026 budget is available for public inspection at the Road Commission during open lobby hours of 7 AM to 3:30 PM Monday through Friday, or by calling Finance and HR Director Linnea Rader at 269-674-8011, Extension 233, to make an appointment.

Road Commission Reschedules Its December Meeting

The Road Commission continues to receive updates on the new transportation package; however, details for *individual counties* have not yet been released. This lack of clear financial information has created some obvious dilemmas for Finance and HR Director Rader in preparing the proposed annual budget for consideration by the Board. When looking ahead on the calendar it was discovered that additional information would become available through the County Road Association AFTER our scheduled board meeting on December 11th. As a result, the December 11th meeting was moved to WEDNESDAY, December 17th at 5 PM. It is our hope that waiting an extra week will provide an opportunity for distribution details to be released, or at the very least for the County Road Association to translate the Legislature's action into how it impacts the VBCRC, in particular.

Township Annual Meetings Provide for Good Discussions

Representatives from 15 of the 18 Township attended one of the two scheduled Township Annual Meetings held October 28th and 29th. Managing Director Witkowski presented information on **Road Planning, Road Certifications, Project Funding, and Whose Tree Is It Anyway?** As a reminder, the video of the presentation is available on our website at: <https://www.vbcrc.org/townships>. IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER include:

Road Planning Forms due 12/31/25

Road Names-Segments due 3/31/26 (Sealcoat and Fog Seal, Crackseal & Deberming)

In addition, Operations Director Greg Brucks is available to assist townships in developing a road plan using facts such as PASER road ratings, traffic counts, connectivity, and funding, which takes the "feelings" out of decision-making. Greg can be reached at (269) 674-8011, Extension 227, or via email at GregBrucks@vbcrc.org.

Bangor Garage Re-Opens After Remodeling

We are thrilled to share that long overdue renovations were recently completed at the Road Commission's Bangor Garage, which included new restroom facilities, interior framing, insulation, drywall and lighting, including windows, doors, and trim. The Garage was closed during the summer months and staff reported to the Lawrence Garage while the project was completed. If you want to see the incredible before-and-after photos or take a tour of the newly renovated building? Contact Bret Witkowski, Managing Director, at 269-674-8011, Ext. 222, or email BretWitkowski@vbcrc.org.