



MINUTES

**Board of Commissioners Chambers
219 East Paw Paw Street**

July 22, 2025

Commissioners

Gail Patterson-Gladney, District 1
Mike Chappell, District 2
Kurt Doroh, District 3
David DiStefano, District 4
Randall Peat, District 5
Tina Leary, District 6
Paul Schincariol, District 7

Board of Commissioners Meeting

1. Call to Order
On the above date the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 02:15 PM by Randall Peat, Chairman of the Board.
2. Recital of the Pledge of Allegiance / Prayer
Invocation by Commissioner Doroh.
3. Roll Call
The roll was called by County Clerk Suzie Roehm with the following commissioners answering to their name and district: Gail Patterson-Gladney, Mike Chappell, Kurt Doroh, David DiStefano, Randall Peat, Tina Leary, Paul Schincariol.
4. Additions/Deletions to the Agenda
5. Approval of Agenda
All items on the agenda marked with '*' are part of the consent agenda. Commissioners or the public can request that items be removed from the consent agenda.
Request to remove Item 8.A. from the consent agenda.
Motion to approve the agenda as amended.
Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried
6. Approval of Minutes
 - A. **July 8th, 2025 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes
Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried
7. Public Comment
8. Administrative Affairs
 - A. **Proclamation: Sheriff Abbott - Sheriff of the Year
This item was removed from the consent agenda. The Proclamation was presented to Sheriff Daniel Abbott on being selected as Sheriff of the Year. Congratulations, Sheriff Abbott.

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A42/7-22-2025
WHEREAS, that it is an honor to recognize Michigan Sheriff's Association's 2025 Terrence L. Jungel Sheriff of the Year Award recipient as Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott.
This award reflects Sheriff Abbott's outstanding leadership and commitment to justice,

service, and community; and,

WHEREAS, the Sheriff of the Year Award is determined on a basis of exceptional leadership, dedication, and unwavering dedication to public service. Sheriff Abbott has displayed these qualities to their fullest extent. With over 30 years of service to Van Buren County, Sheriff Abbott is an exemplary model of selfless public service to the community; and,

WHEREAS, Sheriff Abbott joined the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office in 1993 with a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of citizens in Southwest Michigan. Since then, he has consistently gone above and beyond the call of duty, leading with compassion and courage. As an indication of his natural leadership abilities within law enforcement, Sheriff Abbott received the title of sheriff in 2017; and,

WHEREAS, under the continued leadership of Sheriff Abbott, Van Buren County Sheriff's Department has upheld the highest standards of law enforcement. With his direction, Van Buren County Sheriff's Department has championed initiatives that prioritize safety, transparency, and community engagement. From innovative crime prevention strategies to youth outreach programs, the impact that Sheriff Abbott's leadership has had on Van Buren County will be deeply impactful and long lasting; and,

IN SPECIAL TRIBUTE, therefore, this document is signed and dedicated to congratulating Sheriff Daniel Abbott on receiving the 2025 Terrence L. Jungel Sheriff of the Year Award from the Michigan Sheriffs Association. We are grateful for his steadfast commitment to the safety and well-being of citizens within Van Buren County and across our state.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by Mike Chappell, Carried

B. **Out-of-State Travel Request - Prosecutor's Office

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A43/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, there has been a request on behalf of Prosecuting Attorney Susan Zuiderveen to grant permission for herself and Assistant Prosecutor Rachel Keeley to travel to Texas to attend the Crimes Against Women & Children Conference from August 2nd through August 7th, 2025; and,

WHEREAS, the conference will better equip the Prosecutor's Office to handle cases of child sexual assault and child abuse, which have significantly increased in Van Buren County; and,

WHEREAS, Prosecutor Zuiderveen emphasized the importance of quality training in this specialized area as one of her top priorities to ensure justice for child victims and to strengthen the office's ability to be their voice; and,

WHEREAS, the cost of attendance has already been allocated within the Employee Training budget and there is no request for additional County funds, but rather approval for out-of-state travel; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the out-of-state travel request for Prosecuting Attorney Susan Zuiderveen and Assistant Prosecutor Rachel Keeley to attend the Crimes Against Women & Children Conference in Texas from August 2nd through August 7th, 2025.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

C. **Address Assignment Protocol - DID

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A44/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, the Van Buren County Digital Information Department has completed a comprehensive revision of the Van Buren County Addressing Manual, to enhance clarity, expand services, and align all procedures with the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and Next Generation 911 (NG911) standards; and,

WHEREAS, the 2025 Addressing Manual includes significant enhancements such as the implementation of a Rural Identification (Rural ID) system for providing 911-only location identifiers to undeveloped parcels, and a countywide addressing framework that cities and villages may opt into, improving consistency and emergency coordination across

jurisdictions; and,

WHEREAS, the revised manual requires a driveway permit prior to address assignment to ensure proper geospatial validation, and further designates County oversight for the naming and numbering of private roads serving three or more residences; and,

WHEREAS, the Addressing Manual also introduces a public-facing online application portal to streamline the submission and tracking of address-related requests and increase transparency and accessibility for applicants; and,

WHEREAS, a simplified, tiered fee schedule has been introduced to reflect actual service costs while reducing the financial burden on residents, with new fees as follows:

- Township Address Assignment: \$50 (includes green reflective sign);
- Rural ID Assignment: \$50 (includes red reflective sign);
- City/Village Address Assignment: \$25 (no sign included);
- Replacement Sign: \$25;
- Address Verification: \$25 in person, free online; and,

WHEREAS, the new fee structure and manual updates support operational cost recovery, public safety, and improved responsiveness to first responders, while also facilitating future ordinance development; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve and adopt the updated 2025 Van Buren County Addressing Manual, including the Rural ID system, countywide expansion of addressing services, the new fee schedule, and launch of the public-facing online application portal.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

D. ****Intergovernmental Agreement - St. Joseph County Digital Information Department**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A45/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, on March 25, 2025, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approved a proposal for the development of a shared Digital Information Department with St. Joseph County; and,

WHEREAS, this proposal has now progressed to the stage of formalization through an Intergovernmental Agreement, requiring official approval at the July 22, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting; and,

WHEREAS, both Van Buren and St. Joseph Counties are at similar stages in the development and implementation of AI automation, making the collaborative formation of a shared department logical and beneficial to both parties; and,

WHEREAS, the initiative has been reviewed and approved by the AI Task Force, Steering Committee, and Administrators from both counties, ensuring consistency with long-term strategic goals; and,

WHEREAS, a significant component of this agreement includes the revamping of the Van Buren County website to improve AI communication capabilities, which will be completed in-house and generate cost savings through the discontinuation of current services from CivicPlus; and,

WHEREAS, the identified savings, together with a \$30,000 commitment from St. Joseph County in the first year, will be used to fund the creation of a Digital Communications Coordinator position to manage internal and external messaging and support departmental communication efforts; and,

WHEREAS, the continuation of the Intergovernmental Agreement beyond the initial year will be contingent upon future contributions from St. Joseph County in an amount reflective of services rendered; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with St.

Joseph County for shared Digital Information Department Services, effective upon execution and subject to ongoing funding commitments.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

- E. ****Appointment to the Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC)
– Compost Facility Operator**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A46/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, there has been a request to approve the appointment of Adam Brent as the Compost Facility Operator representative to the Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC); and,
WHEREAS, the MMPC was notified in April 2025 of a vacancy for the Compost Facility Operator position, previously held by Kim Haneberg of the City of Dowagiac; and,
WHEREAS, the Dowagiac compost facility no longer meets the criteria required under Part 115 for designation as a compost facility, thereby necessitating the appointment of a new qualified representative; and,
WHEREAS, Adam Brent, owner and operator of a compost facility in Holland and currently developing a second facility in Benton Harbor, has applied and expressed his interest in serving on the committee; and,
WHEREAS, Mr. Brent's qualifications and regional operations support the intent of the MMPC, which represents a multi-county collaboration rather than any one individual county; and,
WHEREAS, the appointment of Mr. Brent will ensure continued compliance with Part 115 requirements and support the effective functioning of the MMPC in its planning and oversight duties; and,
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the appointment of Adam Brent as the Compost Facility Operator representative to the Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC).

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

- F. ****Deputy Medical Examiner Appointment - Kostelecky, N.**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A47/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, Van Buren County is under contract with WMU Med to provide legal medical examiner services required for the County; and,
WHEREAS, Dr. Nicolas Kostelecky is a certified forensic pathologist and a new addition to the WMU Medical Examiner's office. Dr. Nicolas Kostelecky became an assistant faculty member and forensic pathologist on July 1, 2025; and,
WHEREAS, pursuant to MCL Section 52.201a, before Dr. Nicolas Kostelecky may serve as a Deputy Medical Examiner for Van Buren County, he must be officially appointed by the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners; and,
WHEREAS, this evolution in service delivery no longer requires the specialized legal expertise of a licensed attorney, and instead, the duties may be performed effectively by a Legal Case Manager with a different skill set better suited to the program's goals; and,
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the appointment of Dr. Nicolas Kostelecky, MD, as Deputy Medical Examiner for Van Buren County, Michigan.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

9. Buildings and Grounds

10. Finance

- A. ****Claims**

CLAIMS RESOLUTION C7/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, claims in the amount of \$4,608,800.34 were submitted and reviewed; and,
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve of the total claims in the amount of \$4,608,800.34 for the month of

June 2025.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

B. ****Register of Deeds - Retrieval Fees**

FINANCE RESOLUTION F35/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Van Buren County Register of Deeds office suspended in-person access to microfiche records, including to title companies, and implemented a temporary measure to electronically retrieve and deliver document copies from film to support the real estate market; and,

WHEREAS, since that time, there has been a significant and continued increase in remote work by title companies, leading to a substantial portion of Register of Deeds staff time being diverted to the retrieval and electronic delivery of older documents from film—records that were previously accessed directly by the public; and,

WHEREAS, the ongoing demand for this service has impacted on the office's ability to carry out essential duties such as indexing, recording incoming documents, and providing timely service to local citizens; and,

WHEREAS, it is suspected that some title companies are reselling these copies as part of proprietary title plant operations, further underscoring the need for cost recovery through a fee-based structure; and,

WHEREAS, the retrieval process requires multiple steps, including payment verification, document retrieval from the vault, image enhancement, hard copy generation, scanning, PDF conversion, email dispatch, record tracking, and administrative verification, with an estimated average time investment of thirty (30) minutes per request; and,

WHEREAS, the estimated hourly cost of employee time, inclusive of salary, benefits, and overhead, is approximately \$50, and the proposed retrieval fee of \$35 represents a partial but reasonable cost recovery; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the establishment of a \$35 retrieval fee, effective July 22, 2025, for each document search and electronic delivery of older documents on film in Libers 815 and lower, conducted by the Register of Deeds office on behalf of requesting title companies.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

C. ****Approval of the Van Buren County Land Bank Authority Purchasing Policy**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A36/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, Van Buren County, in collaboration with Cass and Berrien Counties, shares a non-competitive grant from the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) to support supervised parenting time programming; and,

WHEREAS, the grant funds allocated for the current fiscal year under Contract No. SCAO-2025-046 have been fully expended due to program demand and service delivery; and,

WHEREAS, a formal request was submitted to SCAO for additional funds to continue reimbursing services provided under the grant program, and the request has been approved by the State; and,

WHEREAS, the First Amendment to Contract No. SCAO-2025-046 provides an additional allocation in the amount of \$1,238.46, representing the remaining balance of available statewide funding for such services; and,

WHEREAS, this increase will directly result in additional reimbursement to Van Buren County, supporting the delivery of supervised parenting time without any negative financial impact on the County's General Fund; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the First Amendment to Contract No. SCAO-2025-046 as approved by the State Court Administrative Office.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

D. ****Amendment to Increase Access & Visitation Funding Grant**

FINANCE RESOLUTION F37/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, Van Buren County, in collaboration with Cass and Berrien Counties, shares a non-competitive grant from the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) to support supervised parenting time programming; and,

WHEREAS, the grant funds allocated for the current fiscal year under Contract No. SCAO-2025-046 have been fully expended due to program demand and service delivery; and,

WHEREAS, a formal request was submitted to SCAO for additional funds to continue reimbursing services provided under the grant program, and the request has been approved by the State; and,

WHEREAS, the First Amendment to Contract No. SCAO-2025-046 provides an additional allocation in the amount of \$1,238.46, representing the remaining balance of available statewide funding for such services; and,

WHEREAS, this increase will directly result in additional reimbursement to Van Buren County, supporting the delivery of supervised parenting time without any negative financial impact on the County's General Fund; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the First Amendment to Contract No. SCAO-2025-046 as approved by the State Court Administrative Office.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

11. Labor, Negotiations, and Contracts

A. ****FOC Position Elimination/Creation**

LABOR RESOLUTION L10/7-22-2025

WHEREAS, the Van Buren County Friend of the Court (FOC) has historically employed a Staff Attorney (Court Association, R31) responsible for establishing child support and/or paternity in cases involving custodial parents receiving state assistance; and,

WHEREAS, due to recent statewide policy changes implemented by the Michigan Office of Child Support, the volume of such establishment cases has significantly decreased throughout Michigan, including in Van Buren County; and,

WHEREAS, in response to these statewide changes, the Van Buren County FOC has received approval to participate in a pilot project in collaboration with the Michigan Office of Child Support and the State Court Administrative Office aimed at reducing the adversarial nature of establishment proceedings and encouraging more collaborative outcomes; and,

WHEREAS, this evolution in service delivery no longer requires the specialized legal expertise of a licensed attorney, and instead, the duties may be performed effectively by a Legal Case Manager with a different skill set better suited to the program's goals; and,

WHEREAS, the new Legal Case Manager position will be responsible for implementing a Diversion Docket to assist payers earlier in the enforcement process, prior to show-cause hearings, which is expected to enhance compliance and reduce court congestion; and,

WHEREAS, the Legal Case Manager will also contribute to various FOC initiatives including, but not limited to, the suspension of DNR licenses, thereby reflecting a broader and more proactive role within the FOC framework; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed reclassification will result in the elimination of the currently vacant FOC Staff Attorney position from the Court Association bargaining unit (R31) and the creation of a Legal Case Manager position in the AFSCME FOC Unit (R24), aligning job classification and duties appropriately; and,

WHEREAS, this change will result in projected annual cost savings of approximately \$34,000.00, while ensuring that evolving operational needs are effectively addressed; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners approve the elimination of the Friend of the Court Staff Attorney position and authorize the creation of the Legal Case Manager position, effective July 22, 2025, in accordance with the updated job descriptions and responsibilities presented.

Motion by Mike Chappell, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

12. Public Transit

13. Veterans Services

14. Commissioner's Roundtable

- Van Buren County Youth Fair
- Southwest Michigan Behavioral Health
- Palisades Drill
- Warner Vineyards Concert Series
- New Business Gobles Antique Mall
- Veterans Social July 31st
- Steelheaders
- Market One
- South Haven Short Term Rentals
- Bangor City PFAS

15. Chairman's Update

- Recognized Commissioner Chappell as Air Force Veteran

16. Board Correspondence

17. Closed Session

18. Public Comment

19. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by Paul Schincariol, Carried
The meeting was adjourned at 02:31 PM.

Randall Peat, Chairperson

Suzie Roehm, County Clerk

