



MINUTES

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

March 10, 2026

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 03:25 PM by Kurt Doroh, Chairman of the Board.

2. Recital of the Pledge of Allegiance / Prayer

Invocation given 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, Kurt Doroh, David DiStefano, Tina Leary, Paul Schincariol. Commissioner Chappel absent and excused and District 5 vacant.

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.

Motion to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

6. Approval of Minutes

A. **February 24, 2026 Board of Commissioners Meeting Minutes

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

7. Public Comment

8. Administrative Affairs

A. **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) - My Way There Website Rebuild & Platform Modernization

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A16/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, MyWayThere.org serves as a public-facing mobility information platform for residents across Southwest Michigan, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and residents without access to private vehicles; and,

WHEREAS, The website provides transportation provider information, program

descriptions, public meeting materials, and access to a legacy “Find-A-Ride” tool built on ASP-based technology; and,
WHEREAS, The current content management system and associated application infrastructure are scheduled to become unsupported as of March 31, 2026; and,
WHEREAS, Without intervention, this would place the platform at risk of failure and public service disruption. As a result, a full platform rebuild—rather than a simple content migration—is required; and,
WHEREAS, The financial impact is a one-time development cost of \$9,720, and the annual operating costs are estimated to be \$2,112, to be adjusted annually; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve an MOU with SWMPC for the purposes of the Digital Information Department via the Digital Innovation Collaborative Exchange (DICE) to rebuild and modernize the MyWayThere organization website platform and associated mobility tools.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

B. ****Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) - Website Modernization & Rebuild**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A17/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, SWMPC’s current website serves as the agency’s primary public repository for meeting materials, plans, and transparency documents; and,
WHEREAS, The existing content management system is scheduled for discontinuation on March 31, 2026, creating an operational risk that necessitates a structural rebuild rather than a simple migration; and,
WHEREAS, This project adopts a phased approach to ensure both near-term continuity and longer-term innovation; and,
WHEREAS, The website will be constructed using the WordPress platform; and,
WHEREAS, The financial impact will be a one-time development cost of \$11,250, and total annual operating costs are estimated to be \$2,112, to be adjusted annually; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve an MOU with SMPC for the purpose of the Digital Information Department via the Digital Innovation Collaborative Exchange (DICE) to rebuild and modernize the SWMPC website platform and associated mobility tools.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

C. ****Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) - US-12 Heritage Trail Website Rebuild & Modernization**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A18/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The US-12 Heritage Trail website serves as a key regional economic driver, generating significant annual traffic and supporting tourism activities across the corridor, including the annual Garage Sale event; and,
WHEREAS, The current platform relies on legacy mapping and registration systems that will cease to function following the March 31, 2026 discontinuation of the existing content management system; and,
WHEREAS, Failure to modernize the platform prior to this date would create operational risk and potential economic disruption for participating communities; and,
WHEREAS, A phased rebuild approach is required to ensure stability while enabling future innovation. The new website will be reconstructed using the WordPress platform; and,
WHEREAS, The financial impact will be a one-time development cost of \$9,720. Annual operating costs are estimated to be \$2,112, to be adjusted annually; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve an MOU with SWMPC for the purposes of the Digital Information Department via the Digital Innovation Collaborative Exchange (DICE) to rebuild and

modernize the US-12 Heritage Trail website platform and associated mobility tools.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

D. ****Resolution of Support – 2026 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Grant Applications to MDARD**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A19/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The Van Buren County Land Preservation Board administers the County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program to permanently preserve productive agricultural land through agricultural conservation easements in partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD); and, WHEREAS, For the 2026 grant cycle, the Land Preservation Board reviewed and scored eligible applications in accordance with the County's adopted selection criteria and is recommending submission of two applications: Carl & Amy Druskovich / Druskovich Farms – Hamilton Township (approximately 219.36 acres; 30% local match) and Christopher & Sandra Rickli – Almena Township (approximately 62.2 acres; 26% local match); and, WHEREAS, Both applications exceed the minimum 25% local match requirement, improving competitiveness for state funding consideration. The proposed projects protect productive agricultural soils, support multi-generation farming operations, strengthen blocks of contiguous preserved farmland, and are consistent with local zoning and master plans; and,

WHEREAS, Approval of this resolution expresses the County's formal support and authorizes submission of the applications to MDARD for funding consideration; and, WHEREAS, There is no financial impact associated with approval of this Resolution of Support. Local match commitments are provided by the applicants; and, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve a Resolution of Support for submission of the 2026 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Grant Applications to the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD).

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

E. **Board Vacancy EXPEDITED**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A20/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The County Board of Commissioners announced that it is accepting letters of interest for their consideration to fill the vacancy left by the passing of Commissioner Peat; and,

WHEREAS, The Board is authorized by statute to fill the vacancy no later than 30 days from when the vacancy was created and will be effective upon appointment scheduled for March 10, 2026; and,

WHEREAS, The appointment is until a successor is elected at the November 3, 2026, General Election in the manner provided by law and qualifies for office; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve to select Mike Toth to fill the Board vacancy in District 5.

Motion by Tina Leary, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

F. **Out of State Travel - Prosecutors Office EXPEDITED**

ADMINISTRATIVE AFFAIRS RESOLUTION A21/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The Prosecutor has requested approval for out-of-state travel to St. Louis, MO, April 13-16, 2026, for software training for two legal secretaries; and,

WHEREAS, The new software program, Karpel, was initiated in December of 2024. The software is comprehensive and further training would enhance knowledge and understanding of the program, in turn improving efficiency and accuracy with case load and office staff; and,

WHEREAS, There would be no financial impact as the funds have already been allotted in

the training budget; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve the out-of-state-travel request for the legal secretaries to attend Karpel software training in St. Louis, MO, April 13-16, 2026.

Motion by Tina Leary, Second by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Carried

9. Buildings and Grounds

A. **Use of County Property - 2026 Community Events

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS RESOLUTION B2/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The Village of Paw Paw and other entities require recurring use of various County properties during 2026 as outlined below; and,

WHEREAS, National Day of Prayer: an annual event on the first Thursday in May. In 2026, this date is May 7, 2026, 12n - 1pm, in front of and on the Courthouse steps. This has happened for the last 75 years. There will be a children's choir performance along with clergy from the community who will take turns leading prayers; and,

WHEREAS, Paw Paw Village Farmers' Market: a new summer-long event sponsored by the Village of Paw Paw. The request is to use the Courtyard Park for the 2026 Farmers Market Season, 8am - 3pm, every Sunday, May 17th - October 18th, excluding the weekend of the Wine and Harvest Festival (September 13th); and,

WHEREAS, Warner Vineyards 2026 Summer Concert Series: The request is to use the paved, non-Sheriff, parking lots in Paw Paw for overflow parking during their Summer Concert Series, Fridays and Saturdays from 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM, May through October, 2026. The Summer Concert Series provides significant economic benefits to local businesses by attracting visitors to area stores, restaurants, and other establishments; and,

WHEREAS, Paw Paw Days: an annual event hosted by the Paw Paw Area Chamber of Commerce. The request is to use the Courtyard Park, Administration Parking lot, Friday, July 24th, 5 - 7pm, and Saturday, July 25th, 6am - 6pm; and,

WHEREAS, 2026 Wine & Harvest Festival, an annual event attracting over 60,000 attendees the weekend after Labor Day, includes multiple activities that require use of County-owned properties including:

- 2026 Arts and Crafts Show, managed by the Paw Paw Service League, which uses proceeds to fund community projects, requires use of the County Park Area, Court House parking lot, and the grassy area between St. Joseph Street and Berrien Street from September 11-13, 2026.
 - The 36th Annual Grape Lake 5K Run/Walk, hosted by Freshwater Community Church, requires use of the Human Services East parking lot at 801 Hazen Street, Paw Paw as a parking and registration area on September 12, 2026, from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM
 - The Paw Paw Vineyard Classic Bike Tour, organized by the Kalamazoo Experiential Learning Center, requires use of the Human Services East parking lot at 801 Hazen Street, Paw Paw as a parking and staging area on September 13, 2026, from 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- WHEREAS, Annual Lakeshore Harvest Ride, a community fundraising bike event promoting health and recreation, which requires use of the South Haven Courthouse Parking Lot for overflow parking when the Kal-Haven Trail Head reaches capacity on September 19, 2026, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM,

WHEREAS, Christmas in the Village: the second year of the event sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority, requires use of the main Courthouse parking lot and front yard area of Courthouse for the tree-lighting ceremony on December 11th and use of the Courtyard Park, December 11- 13, for Christmas in the Park.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve the Village of Paw Paw's and other entities' recurring use of various County properties during 2026 as outlined above.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

10. Finance

A. **911 Local Surcharge Collection Renewal 2026-2027

FINANCE RESOLUTION F11/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, At the August 2024 primary election, VBCO voters approved the renewal of the current 911 Local Surcharge for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2029; and,

WHEREAS, The language provides for the annual review & resolution to collect the 911 Local Surcharge; and,

WHEREAS, This resolution continues the collection of the surcharge from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027; and,

WHEREAS, The 911 Local Surcharge provides approximately 85% of the revenue for 911 in VBCO. Reverting to the default of \$1.17 would result in a loss of approximately 60% of necessary revenue to fund 911; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve the annual Resolution for the continuation of the collection of the voter-approved 911 local surcharge.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

B. **Cash Handling Policy

FINANCE RESOLUTION F12/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The Treasurer evaluated cash handling practices across Departments and identified inconsistencies that increase the risk of error, loss, or misuse of funds; and,

WHEREAS, The revised Policy establishes consistent, auditable standards for how cash and checks are received, recorded, secured, deposited, and reconciled. It reinforces key internal control principles such as separation of duties, timely deposits, documentation, and accountability; and,

WHEREAS, These are common best practices in public finance and are intended to safeguard funds and protect the County and its employees; and,

WHEREAS, While this Policy addresses risks related specifically to cash and check handling, and area within the Treasurer's statutory responsibilities, it also underscores the importance of continuing to evaluate internal controls in other operational areas. It is also important to note the County's external auditors do not specifically look for fraud nor do they make recommendations to prevent it. Their role is to assess financial statements for accuracy and compliance. Therefore, it remains the County's responsibility to proactively identify and strengthen safeguards to reduce the risk of fraud and misuse of funds; and,

WHEREAS, The financial impact will be greater consistency and control, reducing the likelihood of fraud, of how cash is handled throughout County Courts, Offices and Departments; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve to adopt the proposed countywide Cash Handling Policy.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

C. **DCS - Broadband Consultant Contract Extension

FINANCE RESOLUTION F13/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, The current contract with DCS expired December 31, 2025. The Board is being asked to consider extending the contract through December 31, 2026, which is when the ARPA funds must be expended; and,

WHEREAS, While the ROBIN work with MEC is on task and does not require much

oversight, there is a substantial amount of work left to do with Comcast in the South Haven Area; and,
WHEREAS, Working with the BEAD program to fill the Lawrence gap continues, as does working with our legislators to require that Mercury satisfies their RDOF obligations in the Geneva Township area; and,
WHEREAS, The contract extension proposal is to retain DCS for \$12,000 per month as expiring to be paid from GL 444.0-101.00-967.015 (Capital Improvement Fund); and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve the DCS Broadband Consultant Agreement Extension.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

D. New Age Laboratories Loan – Partial Mortgage Discharge and Loan Amendment - EXPEDITED

FINANCE RESOLUTION F14/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, New Age Laboratories previously received financial assistance through the Van Buren County Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The loan was secured by multiple parcels of real property; and,
WHEREAS, The business has requested a partial discharge of the mortgage to release the residential house and associated acreage while maintaining the remaining vacant parcels as collateral. The Van Buren County EDC Board reviewed the request and evaluated the position of the existing loan and collateral; and,
WHEREAS, The EDC determined that releasing the house and acreage while retaining the remaining vacant parcels provides substantial collateral and maintains the EDC and Van Buren County in a strong and secure financial position. The remaining properties provide significant equity and place the County and EDC in first position on four parcels of real estate; and,
WHEREAS, The requested change will allow the borrower to restructure certain existing financing and reduce higher-interest obligations. This restructuring is expected to improve the company's financial stability and allow additional capital to be reinvested into the business; and,
WHEREAS, At its February meeting, the Van Buren County EDC Board approved a motion to proceed with the partial release of the house and acreage while maintaining the remaining vacant land parcels as collateral. The EDC has recommended moving forward with the required approvals so the discharge documents can be executed and recorded; and,
WHEREAS, In addition to the partial mortgage discharge, a second amendment to the loan agreement is required to reflect the updated collateral structure and loan terms associated with the release. There is no direct financial impact to the County budget. The remaining collateral provides significant equity and maintains the County and EDC in a secure loan position.; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve the partial discharge of mortgage for the New Age Laboratories loan, and approve the second amendment to the loan agreement.

Motion by Paul Schincariol, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

E. 2026 PC Refresh – EXPEDITED

FINANCE RESOLUTION F15/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, Every year, the IT department purchases about 50 computers as part of the annual PC refresh project aimed at replacing aging devices deployed around the County; and,
WHEREAS, The target lifecycle for all laptops and desktops is 5 years in operation. This purchase would allow us to replace desktop and laptop computers in the environment that have reached the end of the targeted lifecycle. The proposed purchase includes 33 desktop PCs and 14 laptops; and,

WHEREAS, This is a planned budgeted expense that will be funded from the Technology Improvement Fund, 636.0-228.00-752.005. Due to the overall cost, this purchase requires Board approval to comply with purchasing policies; and,
WHEREAS, The total amount of the purchase is \$53,834.43. Due to current market conditions related to RAM manufacturing, prices have been fluctuating on a weekly basis, and we have been unable to secure a quote that is valid for more than 1 week; and,
WHEREAS, With prices continuing to rise, we are asking the Board's approval to spend up to \$55,000 on the purchase of this equipment; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve the 2026 PC Refresh purchase.

Motion by Tina Leary, Second by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Carried

11. Labor, Negotiations, and Contracts

12. Public Transit

A. **MDOT Contract 2022-0144 P9 CMAQ

TRANSIT RESOLUTION T2/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, MDOT contract 2022-0144 P9 will acquire additional bus replacement funding; and,
WHEREAS, This contract consists of CMAQ money for a bus replacement to be used in conjunction with MDOT contract 2022-0144 P7; and,
WHEREAS, The grant funds received will total \$99,788.00; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve MDOT contract 2022-0144 P9.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

B. **MDOT Contract 2022-0144 P10 Federal 5311 Operating

TRANSIT RESOLUTION T3/3-10-2026

WHEREAS, MDOT has issued Contract 2022-0144/P10 to assist with 18% of estimated eligible costs for FY 2026 and is required by MDOT in order to record agreement of utilization of funds provided by the Federal Transit Administration, United States Department of Transportation, and MDOT; and,
WHEREAS, The funds shall be used by Van Buren Public Transit in accordance with Master Agreement 2022-0144; and,
WHEREAS, The grant received will total \$433,210; and,
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, approve MDOT Contract 2022-0144/P10.

Motion by Gail Patterson-Gladney, Second by David DiStefano, Carried

13. Veterans Services

14. Commissioner's Roundtable

15. Chairman's Update

16. Board Correspondence

A. Wexford County Resolution In Support of Repealing MCL 46.415

B. Berrien County Mortgage Foreclosure Protection

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 03:39 PM.

Kurt Doroh, Chairperson

Suzie Roehm, County Clerk