

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes**  
**February 5, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the regular Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. in the Board of Commissioners' Room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, in St. Joseph, Michigan.

**ROLL CALL:**

The Chairperson instructed the Clerk to take a roll call with the following results:

11 PRESENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler (*arrived 8:42 a.m.*), David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough (*arrived 8:39 a.m.*) and R. McKinley Elliott.

1 ABSENT: Chokwe Pitchford.

**REQUISITION REVIEW - Annette Christie:**

**Executive Administrative Assistant Annette Christie presented the requisitions to the Board for their review and discussion.**

**PUBLIC HEARING: HAVOR SHORES BROWNFIELD PLAN, Presented by Dan Fette, Community Development Director.**

**Motion:**

Commissioner Vollrath moved and seconded by Commissioner Freehling, to recess the regular meeting at 8:38 A.M. and open the public hearing for the Harbor Shores Parcels 1 and 2 Brownfield plan.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll resulting as follows:

9 YEAS: Bell, Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Ott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, and Elliott.

*(Commissioners Tyler and Yarbrough arrived after the public hearing had begun)*

Motion carried, no nays.

Community Development Director, Dan Fette presented the following information to the Commissioners:

This project represents the next phase of the Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment, transforming approximately 21 acres of the former Whirlpool Plant 3 and 4 industrial sites.

- Total Investment: \$96.5 million total capital investment.
- Infrastructure: \$34 million dedicated to roads, utilities, and marina facilities.
- Housing Density: 216 total residential units across five distinct housing types.
- Timeline: Phased construction begins in 2026/2027, with full completion by 2036.

**Eligible Property under PA 381**

- Only property meeting statutory eligibility criteria may be included in a Brownfield Plan.

**Pre-2023 Eligibility Categories**

- Facility: Subject to environmental regulation under Part 201 or 213
- Functionally Obsolete: Cannot adequately serve intended use due to design or technological changes
- Blighted: Declared dangerous, unfit, or a public nuisance
- Tax-Reverted / Land Bank Property

## 2023 Amendments

- Eligible property may support redevelopment through tax increment financing (TIF) when redevelopment advances environmental remediation, economic development, *or—under new provisions—housing development.*

The project directly addresses critical housing shortages identified in the 2023 Berrien County Housing Diagnosis:

- Town homes: 107 units across four housing types (Townhome A–D), ranging from 1,100–2,400 square feet per unit.
- Courtyard Homes: 27 units of 1,650 square feet each.
- Loft Condominiums: 20 units averaging 1,200 square feet.
- Apartments: 24 rental units of 1,180 square feet each.
- Villas: 38 units of 1,200 square feet.
- Hotel: Incorporating amenities such as a spa, restaurant, and short-term accommodations.

Additionally, to address the “missing middle” housing need, the project reserves 20 townhomes for families <120% of area median for a period of 10 years.

The site meets the definition of 'Housing Property' under Section 2(y)(i) of PA381 because 216 residential units, 20 of which are reserved for income qualified households, are proposed on the parcel. It therefore qualifies as 'Eligible Property' under Act 381.

Rent- Loss Subsidy Calculation was provided along with the estimate of captured value and tax increment revenues. The cost of the plan will be advanced by the Developer. No advance from the County or other local units of government are contemplated.

Commissioner Ott inquired how the number of income-qualified homes are decided for a project. Dan Fette stated the State will not approve the plan if it is less than 10% of the homes. The County does not have a current policy on the required percentages of income-qualified homes. This project's number of income-qualified homes is 20% of the total number of homes being built.

There was discussion regarding a neighboring community exploring a 'Community Benefit' type of addition to a Brownfield Plan. Dan Fette stated he did not recommend this type of agreement for any Berrien County Brownfield Plans.

**Public Comments:** None.

### **Motion:**

Commissioner Tyler moved and seconded by Commissioner Vollrath, to conclude the public hearing at 9:01 A.M. and return to regular session.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll with the following results:

11 YEAS: Bell, Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Ott, Tyler, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough and Elliott.

Motion carried, no nays.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS – Per the Berrien County Board of Commissioners' Bylaws, those speaking during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name and city, township, or village. (Article III, 3.9 B-C):** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 A.M.

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R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

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Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

***Minutes are to be approved at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.***