

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes**  
**April 16, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the regular Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting to order at 8:35 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:

8 PRESENT: Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, Mamie Yarbrough and R. McKinley Elliott.

4 ABSENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran, Chokwe Pitchford and Julie Wuerfel.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MARCH 19, 2026, MEETING:**

Commissioner Tyler moved and was seconded by Commissioner Freehling, to approve the Committee of the Whole minutes from March 19, 2026. Motion carried, no nays.

**REQUISITION REVIEW - Annette Christie:**

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

**SCHEDULED DISCUSSION:**

**Recycling Event Recap- Jill Adams, Parks and Recreation Director**

Jill Adams provided the Commissioners with a recap of the Reduce, Reuse, Recycling event held on April 14, 2026, at Lake Michigan College. 760 vehicles passed through the event to drop off recyclable items, an 11% increase over last year's event and a 5 year high. She expressed appreciation for all the work staff members Jayson Field and Genevieve Graves, of the Berrien County Parks Department, dedicated themselves to making the event a success.

**Materials Management Plan- Bekah Schrag, SWMPC**

Bekah Schrag presented information on behalf of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission regarding the Materials Management Plan:

- In 2023, the State updated Part 115, replacing the Solid Waste Management Plan with the Material Management Plan.
- The goal of the plan is to focus on diversion from landfills.
- To provide existing manufacturers in Michigan with recycled materials from within the State.
- The plan requires benchmark recycling standards be set.
- The plan is to be completed in 36 months and includes a public comment and public hearing, with the approval process targeted for the end of July 2027.
- Items to still be addressed in the plan include funding mechanisms, siting criteria, additional data gathering and the approval process.
- Grant funding has been made available for the planning stages. Berrien County is eligible for \$147,158.

**Drain Yearly Review- George McManus, Drain Commissioner**

Drain Commissioner, George McManus presented highlighted items within the Annual Drains Report:

- The County Drain office is now compliant with the Soil Erosion Sedimentation Program with the State and has developed a good working relationship with EGLE.
- Old equipment that was no longer being used was sold, garnering \$233,000 in revenues.
- Office staff FTEs were reduced from 4.5 to 4 saving \$24,000 a year.
- The office realized \$100,000 in savings on personnel expenses, reduced engineering expenses by 67% and legal expenses by 73%.
- He reported when he entered the office there were 24 uncompleted projects, those projects are processing.

- The office also held educational programs with builders and engineers related to soil erosion and storm water.

**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 9:04 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.***