

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the regular Board of Commissioners' (BOC) meeting to order at 10:38 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

INVOCATION:

Commissioner Teri Freehling gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Undersheriff Greg Sanders led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

ROLL CALL:

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

7 PRESENT: Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, and R. McKinley Elliott.

5 ABSENT: Rayonte Bell, Jon Hinkelman, Chokwe Pitchford, Julie Wuerfel and Mamie Yarbrough.

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 26, 2026, MEETING:

Commissioner Tyler moved and seconded by Commissioner Ott, to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2026, Regular Meeting. Motion carried, no nays.

COMMUNICATION(S):

County Clerk Stacy Loar-Porter received and distributed to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) the following communication(s):

- Email from Wexford County Clerk- 26-06 Resolution Repealing MCL 46.415(2). Email received 3/2/2026.
 - Resolution 26-06 Support Repealing MCL 46.415(2)
- MSU Extension Benton Harbor Farmer and Food Business Listening Session on March 16, 2026. Email received 3/3/2026.

PRESENTATION- VETERAN K-9, MAUREEN ADAMS, VETERAN AFFAIRS ADMINSTRATOR:

Maureen Adams, Veterans Affairs Administrator, was proud to announce the handoff of the first Berrien County Veteran Service K-9, Ollie to Veteran Tammy Robinson, to provide emotional support services. Ollie was trained by Megin Szepesi of K9 Warriors and Scott LaRoe of Magnum K9. Veteran Tammy Robinson served in the Army from 1988-1993. The Veteran K-9 Service in Berrien County was made possible by a member of the Community Foundation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING RESOLUTIONS - Public comments at this portion of the meeting must be related to resolutions listed on today's agenda only. 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, 3.9B-C). The public should refer to the resolution # that they are commenting on as a part of their comments:
None.

RESOLUTIONS - CONSENT CALENDAR:

The following resolutions are considered routine and will be adopted by one motion unless a request for removal, discussion, or explanation is received from a County Commissioner.

Commissioner Vollrath moved and supported by Commissioner Freehling, to approve today's Consent Calendar.

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2603020	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2603068	Requisition List & Purchase Order Change Orders
P2603152	Approve electronics recycling agreement
A2603156	Agreement for trash pickup for Animal Services

A2603158	Appoint Dave Albers as Emergency Management Coordinator
P2603161	GIS Professional Contract with Spicer Group for Drains data
A2603162	MDOT Contract 26-5027
F2603163	Authorize Corporate Counsel to file legal claims \$25,000 under
A2603164	Contract VFP Fire Services for fire extinguisher services
F2603165	Amend RAP agreement for additional funds
F2603166	Amend sub contact agreement Niles for additional RAP funds
F2603168	Donation to City of Buchanan of excess property
B2603169	Honorary Resolution

ADDED RESOLUTION(S): None.

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

7 YEAS: Curran, Freehling*, Harrison, Ott, Tyler, Vollrath, and Elliott.

**Commissioner Freehling abstained from Resolution #B2602068 on REV Excavating requisitions #26001143 due to an abundance of caution.*

Motion carried, no nays.

COMMITTEE REPORT(S) – Finance, Administration, and Personnel & Human Services (PHS) Committees:

The Finance, Administration, and PHS Committees presented their Committee Reports. Parent Committee minutes are available at www.berriencounty.org. Discussion was held.

The Administration Committee reported that they received an update on the deferred maintenance list, from Building and Grounds. It was noted that work on the remodel project for the Administration Building could begin in May and is aimed for completion by winter 2026. The Road Department reported that engineering for the 2026 township road projects have been completed. Wightman and Associates will be contracted to assist with 4 Federal Road Grants, due to the vacant Road Engineer position in the department.

The Finance Committee reported they reviewed 8 road project bids and reviewed waivers that were submitted. The new Deputy Register of Deeds was introduced to the Committee.

The PHS Committee reviewed and approved a schedule change request for the Health Department. Resolutions that will be presented at the next BOC meeting were considered and approved. They received a presentation from Robin McGinnis from Caring Connection concerning issues with the funding due to the cuts at the Federal level.

Motion

Commissioner Harrison moved and seconded by Commissioner Curran, to approve the appointment of Robert W. Byers and Kenneth W. Flowers to the Workforce Development Board to complete unfilled terms. The terms for Byers and Flowers will expire on 12/31/2028. Motion carried, no nays.

COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):

Commissioner Curran reported that the Historical Society completed a financial review.

Commissioner Vollrath reported that the Berrien County Land Bank received State reimbursement for the demolition of the Modern Plastics building. He also reported that the Michigan Association of Counties Judicial and Safety Committee is reviewing their legislative platform. Chairperson Elliott stated that case load standards be a strong part of that platform. Cases need distinguishment between felony case load and a misdemeanor case load.

Commissioner Freehling announced that the River Valley Senior Center will be celebrating the retirement of Director Tim Hawkins and will be hosting an Open House from 12:00-6:00 pm today at the Senior Center.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

Interim Administrator Mike Sepic presented his Administrator's Report. Discussion was held.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS - 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):

Rod Fuller, Lincoln Charter Township, spoke on his purpose in life.

Adolf Pelzer, Hagar Township, expressed his desire to have the coffee pot located in a place that was more accessible by the public and how the Board should make the meeting room more welcoming to the public.

OTHER BUSINESS:

CHAIRPERSON APPOINTMENT

Chairperson Elliott appointed Commissioner Tyler to replace Commissioner Vollrath on the Public Works Board for the remainder of the appointment term.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:11 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the next BOC meeting.