

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**March 19, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Vice Chairperson Teri Sue Freehling called the regular Board of Commissioners' (BOC) meeting to order at 10:33 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

**INVOCATION:**

Commissioner Mamie Yarbrough gave the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

Commissioner Robert Harrison led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

**ROLL CALL:**

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

9 PRESENT: Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Chokwe Pitchford, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel and Mamie Yarbrough.

3 ABSENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran and R. McKinley Elliott.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 12, 2026, MEETING AND THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 11, 2026, STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING:**

Commissioner Pitchford moved and seconded by Commissioner Ott, to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2026, Regular Meeting and the March 11, 2026, Strategic Planning 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 resident- TIF for Nye Property. Email received 3/16/2026
- Michigan Transportation Alternative Program Grant Award for S. Roosevelt Shared Path. Email received 3/17/2026
  - Grant Summary
  - TAP Project Quarterly Status report
  - TAP Infrastructure Project Development Guide

**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 Harrison moved and supported by Commissioner Ott, to remove Resolution #P2603175 Complement Change Road Department and to approve today's Consent Calendar.

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
P2603003	Monthly Per Diems
F2603022	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2603070	Requisition List & Purchase Order Change Orders
F2603170	Full Faith & Credit Mud Hollow Drain #344
P2603171	Comprehensive Agreement Amendment #2 25-26
P2603173	Apply Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant Madeline Bertrand County Park
P2603174	Accept donation of blood pressure mobile machines

F2603176 Approve public relations support agreement SABO  
A2603177 Apply for MIDC funds for Public Defender Office financing  
F2603178 Establish petty cash fund for Court filings  
P2603179 Apply for Voice Change Hope grant for prevention activities  
P2603183 2026 Scrap Tire Recycling MOU  
P2603184 Accept MALPH grant for wellbeing of Health Department staff only

**ADDED RESOLUTION(S):** None.

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

9 YEAS: Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Ott, Pitchford, Tyler, Vollrath, Wuerfel and Yarbrough.

Motion carried, no nays.

**Motion:**

Commissioner Pitchford moved and supported by Commissioner Wuerfel, to postpone the approval of Resolution # P2603175 Complement Change Road Department. The Commission is seeking additional information.

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

9 YEAS: Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Ott, Pitchford, Tyler, Vollrath, Wuerfel and Yarbrough.

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](http://www.berriencounty.org) Discussion was held.

The PHS Committee reported they received an update of operations from the Parks Department. They reviewed a title change for a position and approved the Tire Recycling Program to be brought to the Board of Commissioners. They also discussed recruitment issues.

The Administration Committee reported they received an update from Judge Mayfield and Court Administrator Carrie Smietanka in regard to the need for court referees and law clerks. The expense to fill the vacant positions were removed from the current year budget, but the committee will discuss possible funding options. Also, resolution for the Road Department to apply for Bridge funding for 3 local bridges was reviewed.

The Finance Committee reviewed waivers and bids that were presented. It was reported that the contract with DCS, who provides services for BCBIT expired in December 2025 and there were no expenses budgeted in 2026. However, DCS was engaged by the County for services in January and February of 2026. Interim Administrator Sepic spoke with DCS and it was mutually agreed that payment was due for services rendered in January and February. As the need for their services has diminished, he had begun conversations with the vendor regarding their services. There is a mutual agreement to pause the contract forward, however, the vendor already invoiced for March. Consensus of the Board was to allow Sepic to negotiate the cost due for March and for January and February expenses to be paid through a requisition presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval to pay at the next BOC meeting. The funding for the January, February and March expenses will come from the Contingency Fund as they were not included in the budget for 2026.

**COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):**

Commissioner Tyler reported the County Brownfield Committee at the last meeting approved the Three Oaks Brownfield Plan, contingent on approval by the Village of Three Oaks. The plan includes 34 units, with 8 income restricted units. They also approved the Lake Charter Township Brownfield plan, that includes 76 units, with 30 income restricted units.

Commissioner Vollrath wished the Brandywine Girls Basketball team good luck, they are playing in the State semi-finals today.

Commissioner Harrison reported that he and Commissioner Hinkelman attended the Conservation District meeting, he stated there is wonderful cooperation between the Conservation District and the Berrien County Drain

Commissioner George McManus. He presented two dates to the commissioners that the Corewell Board has available to tour the Berrien General Facility. He asked commissioners to please email him the day that works best for them. He stated that interview dates have been selected for the week of April 27th, PHS will try and avoid the dates of the Michigan Association of Counties Conference and the April 30<sup>th</sup> Strategic Planning morning meeting.

Commissioner Freehling reminded the Commissioners of the follow up Strategic Planning meeting to be held April 30, 2026, at 9:00 am at the Berrien County Conference 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):**

Adolf Pelzer, Hagar Township, stated the headphones to assist in hearing the meeting still do not work properly and that he still cannot hear what the commissioners are saying.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**COW Meeting Schedule Revision:**

Motion:

Commissioner Pitchford moved and supported by Commissioner Tyler, to approve the revised COW meeting schedule as presented. The revision includes only having COW meetings on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of the month.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:**

- March 26, 2026, No Committee of the Whole Meeting.
- April 3, 2026, County facilities closed for Spring Holiday.
- April 9, 2026, Will be a Night meeting at the Administration Center at 6:00 p.m. (No Committee of the Whole meeting or Parent Committee meetings will be held)

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 A.M.

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Teri Sue Freehling, Vice Chairperson

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Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

***Minutes are to be approved at the next BOC meeting.***