

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the regular Board of Commissioners' (BOC) meeting to order at 10:40 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

INVOCATION:

Commissioner Julie Wuerfel gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Commissioner Alex Ott 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:

12 PRESENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Alex Ott, Chokwe Pitchford, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough and R. McKinley Elliott.

0 ABSENT: None.

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 12, 2026, MEETING:

Commissioner Ott moved and seconded by Commissioner Pitchford, to approve the minutes of the February 12, 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):

- SW Michigan – Members: Tune In! Visit Southwest Michigan is on the air! Email received 2/12/2026.

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 Bell moved and supported by Commissioner Pitchford, to approve today's Consent Calendar.

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
P2602002	Monthly Per Diems
F2602018	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2602066	Requisition List & Purchase Order Change Orders
P2602135	Amend funds to reflect increase in grant for Health Department
P2602138	Approve 2026 Health department fee schedule
P2602139	MALPH Wellbeing Mini grant Request to Apply
A2602134	Contract with MDOT partner project M-139 & Napier
A2602148	Approve Act 51 map certification
P2602149	Apply for Rural Health Transformation Grant

ADDED RESOLUTION(S): None.

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

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

Motion carried, no nays.

Commissioner Pitchford left the meeting at 10:44 a.m.

Commissioner Bell left the meeting at 10:44 a.m.

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 Finance Committee reported on the sale of property of Schwartz Drain. Corporate Counsel Hackworth stated the resolution that will be presented to the Board of Commissioners does not address the remainder of the parcel which is not included with the purchase. There will be time to discuss options for the remaining land. The Committee also reported approval of a resolution to be presented to the Board of Commissioners to engage with Michigan Association of Counties Michigan Leadership Institute in search of the new County Administrator at a cost of \$9,560 and direct expenses not to exceed \$1,250.00. The PHS Committee is working on the job description and contract for the position.

The PHS Committee reported receiving an update from the Register of Deeds, noting the amount of significant funding the department contributes to the General Fund.

The Administration Committee reported receiving an update from the Road Department. The committee had discussions with Mark Heyliger concerning conversations with the Village of Baroda regarding the committee that has been formed to evaluate the possible dissolution of the Village initiated through a voter petition received. The Administration Committee stated the Board of Commissioners has final say concerning roads being assigned to Berrien County. The County currently has a practice that is followed for accepting roads, the practice will be developed into a policy.

COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):

Commissioner Hinkelman inquired if the county had researched the option of in-house engineering services as an alternative to each department contracting with outside services.

Commissioner Tyler reported that the Brownfield Committee discussed new possible projects in Lake Township and Royalton Township. She also reported that SWMBHA is in search of a new director.

Commissioner Curran announced that SW Michigan Coastal Leadership Academy is hosting a workshop for Adaptation Strategies for Coastal Hazards. The event will be held Tuesday, March 31, 2026, from 12:00-4:30 pm at Weko Beach, 5239 Lake St., Bridgman. For more information visit tinyurl.com/SWMLcoastal.

Commissioner Freehling announced public meetings are being held to review the feasibility of a possible merger between Medic One and SMAC ambulance services. The meetings are scheduled for March 16, 2026, to be held at Corewell Hospital and March 17, 2026, to be held at Niles Charter Township Hall. She will share the time and specific details when she has received them.

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, suggested the County consider making the meeting room a waiting room for visitors.

Lora Freehling, Lincoln Charter Township, Berrien County Register of Deeds, announced an Estate Planning Legal Clinic being held April 10, 2026, from 4:00-7:00 pm at the Region IV Area Agency on Aging, 2900 Lakeview Ave., St. Joseph.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:19 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the next BOC meeting.