

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**January 29, 2026**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Vice Chairperson Teri Sue Freehling called the Special Board of Commissioners' (BOC) meeting to order at 9:37 A.M. in the Berrien County Conference Center at 2149 East Napier, Benton Harbor, Michigan.

**INVOCATION:**

Commissioner John Hinkelman gave the invocation.

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

Administrator Brian Dissette 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:

10 PRESENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Chokwe Pitchford, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel and Mamie Yarbrough.

2 ABSENT: Alex Ott and R. McKinley Elliott.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 22, 2026, MEETING:**

Commissioner Vollrath moved and seconded by Commissioner Wuerfel, to approve the regular minutes of the January 22, 2026, 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 Iron County Clerk. Email received 1/21/2026.
  - Resolution in Support of Repealing MCL 416.415

**DISCUSSION- BS&A CLOUD CONVERSION AND IMPACTS ON TAX SYSTEM, I/S DIRECTOR CHRIS SWIHART AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR DAN FETTE:**

Community Development Director Dan Fette, I/S Director Chris Swihart and County Treasurer Shelly Weich, presented a memo explaining the transition many of the local jurisdictions are making to BS&A cloud software from BS&A .NET software. The City of St. Joseph will be voting on the conversion of BS&A Tax.NET to BS&A Cloud on Monday.

The current process of tax collection between the County and the local municipalities is a centralized property tax database that began in 2011. The shared system shares tax data automatically with the county which makes tax settlements and balancing easier for the County Treasurer's office and reduces the workload and technology costs for the local units.

BS&A has launched a cloud version of their software, stating they are phasing out the .NET version of the software, and they will stop supporting the .NET version. If the County and local units are not using the same version of the tax software the automatic sharing of tax information will end.

I/S Staff and the Treasurer's office will create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of St. Joseph outlining the required data exchange and responsibilities. The MOU will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for approval.

The I/S Director will be discussing possible package deal options with BS&A to assist with the possible move of the County to BS&A Cloud, as well as possible options for assistance for the smaller jurisdictions.

**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 Tyler moved and supported by Commissioner Pitchford, to approve today's Consent Calendar:

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2601058	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2601063	Weekly Requisitions & Purchase Order Change Orders

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

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

10 YEAS: Bell, Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Pitchford, Tyler, Vollrath, Wuerfel and Yarbrough.

Motion carried, no nays.

**DISCUSSION- INTERIM COUNTY ADMINSTRATOR**

PHS Chairperson, Commissioner Harrison, stated the PHS Committee received names of people that would be interested and qualified to be the Interim County Administrator.

**Motion**

Commissioner Harrison moved and supported by Commissioner Curran to appoint Mike Sepic, as the interim County Administrator, at a rate of \$95.00 per hour, until a County Administrator is hired permanently.

There was discussion on:

- Interim work week: The work week will be 20-30 hours per week, in accordance with the County's Part-Time policy.
- Start date: The start date is 2/2/2026. Sepic will meet with Administrator Dissette Friday or Saturday for a briefing on current county items
- Job Description: The current job description for County Administrator will be used for the interim.

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

9 YEAS: Bell, Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Pitchford, Tyler, Vollrath and Yarbrough.

1 NAY: Wuerfel.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Wuerfel requested that the PHS Committee develop an interim hiring policy for the County Administrator and Interim Corporate Counsel for future use. There was consensus of the board for these policies to be created.

Commissioner Pitchford inquired about the next steps in searching for an Administrator. Commissioner Harrison stated the plan is to retain a search firm to assist in the search, the search could take 2-4 months.

**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):** None.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Update to Commissioner Bylaws**

There was discussion concerning updating the board bylaws to increase communication and notes on information reviewed by the Executive Committee to create more inclusion for all commissioners.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:16 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.***