

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the regular Board of Commissioners' (BOC) meeting to order at 10:37 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

INVOCATION:

Commissioner David Vollrath gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Commissioner Sharon Tyler 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:

9 PRESENT: Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Chokwe Pitchford, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel and R. McKinley Elliott.

3 ABSENT: Rayonte Bell, Jon Hinkelman and Mamie Yarbrough.

Commissioner Pitchford stepped out of the meeting at 10:37 a.m.

APPROVE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 5, 2026, MEETING:

Commissioner Ott moved and seconded by Commissioner Vollrath, to approve the minutes of the March 5, 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): None.

REQUISITION REVIEW - Annette Christie:

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

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

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2603021	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2603069	Requisition List & Purchase Order Change Orders
P2603151	Agreement with Gallagher for Benefit Advocate Center Services
P2603159	Agreement with Allen-Droog Holdings, LLC for public relations services Health Dept.

ADDED RESOLUTION(S): None.

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

8 YEAS: Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Ott, Tyler, Vollrath, Wuerfel and Elliott.

Motion carried, no nays.

Commissioner Pitchford returned to the meeting at 10:43 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 received a report from Drain Commissioner, George McManus. He is seeking Full Faith and Credit from the County for improvements to the Mudhollow Drain. The Committee was provided with the construction expenses for the project. The project was originally engineered in 2024 by the former Drain Commissioner at an estimated expense of \$1.8 million. The current Drain Commissioner reassessed and reduced the improvement work to include just the necessary improvements, resulting in a reduced estimated expense of \$207,000. They reviewed resolutions to be presented at the next BOC Meeting.

The PHS Committee reported they will continue to work on the details of compensation, benefits, timing and process for the County Administrator position to aid in the search. They reviewed resolutions to be presented at the next BOC Meeting.

The Administration Committee received an update from Lisa Jardine, Friend of the Court. She provided 2025 statistics, reporting that the department exceeded the State and Federal Standards. She reported they have one Attorney Referee position open. They currently have 2 full-time and 1 part-time Attorney Referees. The Committee also received an update from the Sheriff's Office. In the update the Sheriff's Office shared the process of Mortgage Foreclosures and provided a copy of the door hanger used to notify homeowners. Due to antiquated State laws, the Sheriff's Office is tasked with notifying homeowners of Mortgage foreclosures.

COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):

Commissioner Tyler reminded the commissioners there is a Brownfield meeting today at 12:30 pm.

Commissioner Vollrath reported he attended the MAC Finance General Government meeting; they viewed a presentation about regionalizing county services and received a legislative update.

Commissioner Harrison met with Congressman Huizenga concerning the decrease in Victims of Crime funding. The funding is decreasing because of the reductions in fines and penalties. These reductions affect funding for non-profit organizations like the Children's Advocacy Center.

Commissioner Freehling reported BCBIT continues to be in a holding pattern, as they wait on the State of Michigan to finalize the mapping for BEAD. She reported the Berrien County Planning Commission received text amendments from Hagar Township and New Buffalo Township.

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):

Gunter Paul, Hagar Township, questioned where his drain assessment refund was for work that was never completed by the previous Drain Commissioner. He does not feel it is fair that homeowners had to pay an assessment and then received no results.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner Harrison stated Corewell Board members would like to tour the Berrien General Facility with Berrien County Commissioners. He will share the date and time with the Commissioners when confirmed.

ANOUNCEMENTS/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 Administration Center 6:00 p.m. (No Committee of the Whole meeting or Parent Committee meetings will be held)

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the next BOC meeting.