

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**March 26, 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 Robert Harrison gave the invocation.

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

Commissioner Chokwe Pitchford 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 (*arrived at 10:47 a.m.*), Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling (*arrived at 10:47 a.m.*), Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman (*arrived at 10:47 a.m.*), Chokwe Pitchford, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough (*arrived at 10:47 a.m.*) and R. McKinley Elliott.

0 ABSENT: None.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 19, 2026, MEETING:**

Commissioner Vollrath moved and seconded by Commissioner Ott, to approve the minutes of the March 19, 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):

- Communication from Washtenaw County. Email received 3/24/2026
  - Resolution 26-055 Supporting State Legislative Action
- SWMI Fairways and Fresh Air. Email received 3/23/2026

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

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2603023	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2603071	Requisition List & Purchase Order Change Orders
P2603182	Complement Change Prosecutor's Office
P2603186	Renew agreement with Orchard Hill Landfill for recycling drop-off station
A2603187	Accept FY25 Emergency Management Performance Grant
A2603188	Apply for Critical Bridge Funding to State of Michigan

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

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

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

Motion carried, no nays.

*Commissioner Freehling announced that she abstained from Resolution #B2603071, Requisition 26001768 for Rev Excavating, LLC out of an abundance of caution.*

**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 Administration Committee reported that they received an update from Animal Services. It was reported that Animal Services is down a few staff members at this time. Statistics were also reported for the year; they took in 269 dogs and released 231 dogs, took in 213 cats and released 237. The committee also received an update from 911 stating the staffing level should be 33 telecommunicators, they are currently at 28. An update on the implementation of the CAD system was provided; implementation will begin with the Fire Departments which is scheduled to begin by the Fall. Implementation for the Police Departments will follow and the goal is to be completed by the end of the year.

The PHS Committee reported they reviewed advance step hire requests that were submitted, some of the changes were for the Public Defender's office to aid in filling vacant positions.

The Finance Committee reported they received an update from the I/S Director concerning technology upgrades for the County and communities. They also received a report from Berrien County Treasurer, Shelly Weich. The Treasurer reported 3/31 is the last day for taxpayers to pay their 2025 property taxes without them being delinquent. She also reported that she travelled to 11 local jurisdictions to be available to residents. When she began the visits there were 1,949 late properties, after meeting with residents to work out payment plans, there are now only 438.

The Finance committee requested input from the Commissioners regarding the County's membership with the National Association of Counties. The annual membership cost is \$3,086. It was also reported the investment work being completed between the Treasurer's office and Meeder Investments has been successful.

*Members of the Finance Committee arrived in the meeting at 10:47 a.m.*

**COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):**

Commissioner Tyler reported that she attended the Niles Buchanan Cass Transportation Study. At the meeting the SWMI Planning Commission reported there are TAP funds available for use from 2024 for projects in our area. Each Road Department will receive a notice to apply for the available funds.

Commissioner Harrison reported that the PHS Committee has received 3 applications for the Administrator position so far, they expect to receive more closer to the deadline. He reminded the Commissioners to advise him on the desired dates of touring the Berrien General Facility.

Commissioner Bell stated he met with Jill Adams, Parks Director and the City of St. Joseph concerning the traffic flow by Silver Beach. A survey containing two proposed traffic flows was shared with the nearby residents. The results of the survey should be available in a month.

**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):** None.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**NACO Membership**

There was discussion on continuing the County's membership with the National Association of Counties (NACO). The membership expense was removed from the 2026 budget during the budget workshops. NACO requested to present the benefits of the membership to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Pitchford stated he serves on the Board of NACO and if the County is no longer a member, he will have to vacate his position on the Board.

The consensus of the Commissioners was that the fiscally responsible action was to not renew the membership for this year. The membership will be reviewed for possible funding in the 2027 budget.

**April 2, 2026, Board of Commissioners Meeting:**

Chairperson Elliott announced the April 2, 2026 Board of Commissioners meeting will be cancelled.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:**

- 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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R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

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Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

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