

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott. called the regular Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting to order at 8:38 a.m. in the Board of Commissioners' Room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, in St. Joseph, Michigan.

ROLL CALL:

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

7 PRESENT: Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel and R. McKinley Elliott.

5 ABSENT: Rayonte Bell, Chokwe Pitchford, Alex Ott, Sharon Tyler and Mamie Yarbrough.

REQUISITION REVIEW - Annette Christie:

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

SCHEDULE DISCUSSION: PAW PAW LAKE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT BOND #34, DAN FETTE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR:

Community Development Director, Dan Fette, provided an overview of PA 185 of 1957 and how it relates to the County Department and Board of Public works (DPW).

- Purpose: Enables counties to finance, construct, and operate public improvements (sewer, water, and solid waste systems) for local municipalities.
- The DPW: The County Board of Commissioners establishes a Department of Public Works (DPW) to administer these powers.
- The Board of Public Works: Appointed to act as the implementing and financing agency for regional infrastructure projects.

Local municipalities initiate projects by requesting assistance from the County DPW. The DPW evaluates the need and prepares the plans and cost estimates. They develop an intergovernmental contract with the municipality(s) to define project scope, cost-sharing, finance methods and maintenance duties. The Board of Public works recommends the project to County Board of Commissioners for approval. Each participating municipality must adopt a resolution approving the contract and pledging payment. If the County Board approves the project, they would authorize the issuance of bonds.

He explained the financing and security associated with County Bonds. Bonds are secured by contractual payments from the participating municipality(s), the Municipality's and the County's limited-tax full faith and credit pledge. The municipality(s) make semiannual payments over the bond term.

Once all the bonds are retired, title to the project is transferred to the participating municipality(s).

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING, MARK HEYLIGER, ROAD DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR:

Mark Heylinger, Road Department Director, explained the changes to the Michigan Transportation Fund package for 2026. Changes made by the State of Michigan include:

- Removed transfer of \$600 million from the General Fund.
- Removes 6% sales tax from gasoline
 - Replaced with a 20 cent per gallon gas tax
- Incorporates an increase of 24% tax on wholesale marijuana

- Adds \$1.04 billion from Corporate Tax Income

The timeline of these changes has affected the revenue flow within the County Road Department budget.

- October 2025 the MTF payments that made up the \$600 million from the General Fund stopped.
- Gas Tax collection began January 2026, but revenues from the tax collection will not be distributed to the counties until March 2026.
- Corporate Income Tax collection began January 2026; the funding will begin to Road Departments after the \$1.2 billion General Fund and Housing/Community Development priorities are met.
- Wholesale Marijuana Tax collections are to begin in the 4th Quarter of 2026; monthly payments will not be seen until March 2027.

Due to this timeline and the change in when revenues will be received by the Road Department, the Department is asking the Board of Commissioners to approve Resolution #F2601132 which assists with cash flow due to the reduced funding payments from the Michigan Transportation Fund.

There was discussion held over concerns with the State follow-through on the revenue due that will be associated with the Corporate Income Tax.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Per the Berrien County Board of Commissioners’ Bylaws, 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.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Stacy Loar-Porter, County Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.