

BERRIEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of March 19, 2026

Roll Call Present: David Vollrath, Vice Chair
Sharon Tyler
Alex Ott

Absent: Jim Curran, Chairman

Scheduled: Mike Sepic, Interim Administrator
Teri Freehling, BOC Vice Chair
Hon. Judge Mayfield, Trial Court
Carrie Smietanka-Haney, Trial Court
Mark Heyliger, Road Department
Dr. Marco Tomasi, Road Department

Others:

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Vollrath called the meeting to order at 9:28 am.

Trial Court Update – Hon. Judge Mayfield & Smietanka-Haney

Smietanka-Haney reviewed the 2025 caseload, noting a 1% drop in filings, which is very steady. The clearance rates are being compiled and will be available soon. She noted the State runs an online dashboard where our numbers can be compared to other counties. The State requires a Public Satisfaction Survey every 2 years. The anonymous surveys are being updated and will be available at the courthouse from April 13 through 17. The State also wants to engage incarcerated people, so they are working with the jail as well. Judge Mayfield noted and discussions ensued regarding possible skewed results. Smietanka-Haney will provide a breakdown of duties for the judges during their next report. Judge Mayfield noted there is an increase in continuing education credit requirements. They will have several opportunities as more national conferences are being held. Discussions ensued regarding classes teaching motivational interviewing of clients and ways of diffusing issues, which were initially set for judges. Judge Mayfield would like to provide instruction for most employees as they are handling these situations on a regular basis.

Judge Mayfield addressed a Herald-Palladium article published the previous week that included the quote “referees are like judges”. She noted the actual duties of referees and stated where they can assist with juveniles and domestic relations such as child support. Discussions ensued regarding law clerk needs with Smietanka-Haney noting that one position was removed for the 2026 budget. Judge Mayfield stated they need the ability to serve the public well and that includes utilizing law clerks and referees. Vollrath requested they come back with the information needed to reinstate the position.

Road Department – Bridge Funding – Heyliger & Tomasi

Heyliger introduced Dr. Tomasi, the Engineering Supervisor. Heyliger reviewed the Critical Bridge Funding application for FY29, which is due April 1st. He provided and reviewed the bridge safety inspection reports for Roosevelt Road over Hickory Creek, Glendora Road over the east branch of the Galien River and Log Cabin Road over the east branch of the Galien River. All 3 require EGLE oversight and have strict guidelines with requirements for funding designated by EGLE. Once the grant is established, any overages will need to be paid by the County or with the assistance of an additional non-EGLE grant. Discussions ensued.

Heyliger noted the design work for Glendora from Cleveland Avenue to Hills Road will be finished this year with construction beginning in 2027.

Q & A – Sepic & Freehling

Sepic noted the night meeting locations, which will be the Administration building in April and St. Joseph Charter Township in May. June, July and August are open with MSU Extension planned for one of those months. He is looking for suggestions for the remaining two meetings.

Freehling verified the consent calendar and noted she pulled Resolution P2603175 – Complement Change Road Department – to have it sent back to Administration for formal approval.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Ott, supported by Tyler, to approve the minutes of the March 12, 2026 meeting. Motion Carried.

Resolutions

The following resolutions were signed by the committee:

A2603187 – Accept the FY25 Emergency Management Performance Grant.

A2603188 – Authorize applications to MDOT for Local Bridge Program funding for the FY28-29 construction season.

Sheriff's Funds Distribution Request

None.

Property Use Request

None.

Miscellaneous

None.

Public Comments

None.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

J Arent

Jennifer Arent