CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING

March 19, 2026

The Cass County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, March 19, 2026, in Commission Chambers.

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Chair Jones provided the Invocation. Commissioner Northrop led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Clerk/Register Monica McMichael called roll:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Tom Langley, James Lawrence, Alan Northrop, Jeremiah Jones, Michael Grice, Samuel Barrera, Roseann Marchetti and R.J. Lee.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the March 19, 2026, Cass County Board of Commissioner's Agenda. Motion carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda Items Only)

Public comment occurred.

RECOGNITIONS

Sheriff Clint Roach read a Letter of Commendation and recognized Deputy Gavin Mark.

PRESENTATIONS

Cassopolis Swim Program: Local resident Jill Vihtelic introduced YMCA representatives Jill Haboush and Corey VanBuskirk. All three organize and manage the Cassopolis Swim Program, a local program aimed at teaching 4th grade students in Cassopolis Schools to swim.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Langley, that the following items be voted on at one time by roll call vote and be considered as a consent agenda by the Board of Commissioners:

(M-39-2026) A motion to approve the March 5, 2026 meeting minutes

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (8): Commissioners Grice, Northrop, Barrera, Jones, Lawrence, Langley, Marchetti and Lee.

No (0): None.

The Consent Agenda carried by roll call vote.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Administrator Rentfrow presented the Finance Report.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioners Lawrence, Jones and Marchetti offered committee reports.

COUNTY PARTNERS

Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Administrator Justin Hillsburg, Interim Market One Director Dan Peate and Road Commission Director Bob Thompson shared updates with the board.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

M-40-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with Van Buren Conservation District for scrap tire cleanup. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-41-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the Clerk/Register Fee Schedule Update. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-42-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the use of $249,192 from the Bombardie bequest to partially offset the funding shortfall for the Lawless Park Project. Discussion followed.

The Chair requested the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (4): Commissioners Lee, Marchetti, Jones and Barrera.

No (4): Commissioners Langley, Lawrence, Northrop and Grice.

Motion M-42-2026 failed by roll call vote.

M-43-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the allocation of $127,327 from the Capital Improvements Fund to cover the remaining shortfall associated with the Lawless Park Project. Discussion followed.

The Chair requested the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (4): Commissioners Jones, Barrera, Lee and Marchetti.

No (4): Commissioners Langley, Lawrence, Northrop and Grice.

Motion M-43-2026 failed by roll call vote.

R-8-2026

Commissioner Lee moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve the following resolution:

SOLUTION TO REAUTHORIZE STEP LEVEL RETENTION INCREASES

WHEREAS, R-229-22 resolved that "the County Administrator is authorized to make 'full use' of the compensation schedule when a Department Head or Elected Official determines it is necessary and in the County's interest to attract and maintain an acceptable level of talent. Additionally, in every instance of such use, the County Administrator will notify the Board of Commissioners by providing a copy of the County Employee Status Change Form together with a Memorandum explaining the necessity; and

WHEREAS, the reasons given for adoption of R-229-22 were: (1) a number of recent cases have resulted in no qualified applicants for county positions either internally from county service or external from the community, or the applicants have been unwilling to accept midpoint range in the grade and step; and (2) economic conditions across the region continue to contribute to labor shortages forecasted to continue through 2023; and

WHEREAS, R-115-23 authorized step level retention increases through December 31, 2023; and

WHEREAS, R-202-23 authorized step level retention increases through December 31, 2024; and
WHEREAS, in order to maintain the high quality of service needed to properly deliver services to Cass County's citizens; retain existing employees given job opportunities in the current economic climate; and in recognition of the value of institutional and subject matter expertise acquired by existing employees as well as increased position demands and cross training required to high quality services to Cass County's citizens; and

WHEREAS, there are labor agreements in effect for a portion of Cass County's workforce and those labor agreements are controlling with respect to the wages paid, including step increases and how step increases are managed; and

WHEREAS, a portion of Cass County's workforce is not subject to labor agreements and are identified as non-union employees; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Cass County Board of Commissioners that through December 31, 2026, the County Administrator is authorized to approve step level retention increases of up to three steps within a position's compensation pay grade schedule for non-union employees (employees not subject to a labor agreement) when a Department Head or Elected Official submits a formal request using the Step Level Retention Increase Request Form to the County Administrator detailing why such action is necessary, including budgetary impact, and in the County's interest to retain and maintain an acceptable level of institutional and subject matter expertise. The County Administrator shall provide a written response approving or denying the request within ten (10) business days. The written response shall be provided to the requesting Department Head or Elected Official as well as a copy of that written decision to the full Board of Commissioners. If the County Administrator approves the requested step increase, a copy of the completed County Employee Status Change form, once completed, shall be provided to the Board of Commissioners. If the County Administrator denies the step increase, the Department Head or Elected Official may seek relief from that decision by bringing the matter before the Salary Committee of the Board of Commissioners, which shall review the request and make a recommendation to the full Board of Commissioners for final consideration.

Discussion followed.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (1): Commissioner Northrop.

No (7): Commissioners Marchetti, Langley, Lawrence, Jones, Barrera, Grice and Lee.

Resolution R-8-2026 failed by roll call vote.

M-44-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Langley, to appoint Matt Money to the Economic Development Corporation Board for a term ending 9/30/2032. Discussion followed. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-45-2026

Commissioner Grice moved, seconded by Commissioner Northrop, to reappoint Sheriff Clint Roach to the Woodlands Healthcare Network Board for a term ending 3/31/2029. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-46-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Langley, to approve the purchase of three Ford Explorer patrol vehicles and necessary equipment to outfit them. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-47-2026

Commissioner Lee moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve the amended MERS HCSP Plan Agreements. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-48-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve budget amendment – Funds for Historic Courthouse Window Blinds. Discussion followed. Motion carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment occurred.

CLOSED SESSION

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Barrera shared comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

Approved: ______________
Date

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Chair Jeremiah Jones

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Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register