

**CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

April 9, 2026

The Cass County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, April 9, 2026, in Commission Chambers.

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Lee provided the Invocation. Commissioner Lawrence 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 Grice moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the April 9, 2026, Cass County Board of Commissioner's Agenda. Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Langley, to amend the agenda to include New Business item #10 – to discuss the Prosecutor's retention and future of our lawyers in Cass County. Motion to amend carried by voice vote. Motion to approve the agenda as amended carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT (Agenda Items Only)

Public comment occurred.

PUBLIC HEARING

M-49-2026

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to open the public hearing for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Urgent Need application for Disaster Recovery – After the Storm. Motion carried by voice vote.

There was no public comment.

M-50-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to close the public hearing for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Need application for Disaster Recovery – After the Storm. Motion carried by voice vote.

RECOGNITIONS

R-10-2026

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

**RESOLUTION ENDORSING INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY AWARENESS WEEK IN
CASS COUNTY**

WHEREAS, the beauty of a dark sky night is part of our cultural and scientific heritage which should be protected and preserved; and

WHEREAS, the overuse of improperly designed outdoor lighting constitutes “light pollution” of the nighttime environment thereby masking the beauty of the night sky; and

WHEREAS, empirical evidence reveals the negative health effects of light pollution on human and environmental health; and

WHEREAS, attention to the problem of light pollution and its mitigation efforts will help ensure that the sky is preserved; and

WHEREAS, the economic benefits of dark sky astro-tourism are hereby recognized.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners endorses International Dark Sky Awareness Week from April 13-20, 2026 in Cass County.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

Resolution R-10-2026 carried by roll call vote.

R-11-2026

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

**RESOLUTION IN APPRECIATION OF
CASS COUNTY 911 TELECOMMUNICATORS**

WHEREAS, the week of April 13-19 2026, has been designated National Public Safety Telecommunicators week.

WHEREAS, the number 911 is universally recognized as being dedicated to report emergencies; and

WHEREAS, the telecommunicator response to calls for help gives the residents of Michigan a quick response to emergency calls for police, fire, or emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, the safety of police officers, fire fighters, and paramedics is dependent upon the actions of the telecommunicator, and the quality and accuracy of the information obtained from citizens who contact 911; and

WHEREAS, the telecommunicator serves as the first, first responder and the voice of help, providing direction and comfort for those in crisis to rely on when they call 911; and

WHEREAS, 911 telecommunicators play a critical role with their public safety partners, above and beyond the normal call of duty; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Cass County Board of Commissioners recognizes all Cass County 911 telecommunicators for the exceptional dedication and professionalism put forth in contributing to making Cass County a safer place to live, work and visit.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

Resolution R-11-2026 carried by roll call vote.

R-12-2026

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Langley, to approve the following resolution:

National County Government Month - April 2026

WHEREAS, the nation's 3,069 counties serving more than 330 million Americans provide essential services to create healthy, safe and vibrant communities; and

WHEREAS, counties fulfill a vast range of responsibilities and deliver services that touch nearly every aspect of our residents' lives; and

WHEREAS, counties as intergovernmental partners enact local, state and federal programs to address the needs of all residents; and

WHEREAS, Cass County and all counties take pride in our responsibility to protect and enhance the health, wellbeing and safety of our residents in efficient and cost-effective ways; and

WHEREAS, the nation is celebrating 250 years of independence this year, and counties have a long and rich history of serving residents; and

WHEREAS, each year since 1991 the National Association of Counties has encouraged counties across the country to elevate awareness of county responsibilities, programs and services; and
WHEREAS, Cass County was founded in 1829. As of the 2021 census, the county is home to 51,632 residents. Cass County currently has approximately 200 employees delivering services to our residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby proclaim April 2026 as National County Government Month and encourage all county officials, employees, schools and residents to participate in county government celebration activities.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

Resolution R-12-2026 carried by roll call vote.

PRESENTATIONS

Alan Panter of Yeo & Yeo presented the FY 2025 Audit. He informed board members the county had a clean audit with no findings.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, 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-51-2026) A motion to approve the March 19, 2026 meeting minutes

(M-52-2026) A motion to approve claims dated 3/01/2026 to 3/31/2026

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

The Consent Agenda carried by roll call vote.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioners Lawrence, Northrop and Marchetti offered committee reports.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Rentfrow presented the March 2026 Administrator's Report.

COUNTY PARTNERS

None.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Prosecutor Fitz addressed the commissioners.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

M-53-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the Cass County Conservation District SESC Cannabis Health By-law amendment. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-54-2026

Commissioner Lee moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve the Van Buren/Cass District Health Department Board of Health By-law Amendment. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-55-2026

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve rescheduling the April 23, 2026, Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting to April 16, 2026. Motion carried by voice vote.

R-9-2026

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

RESOLUTION ADOPTING TENTATIVE PLAN FOR 911 SERVICE DISTRICT

WHEREAS, the applicable Act (the “Act”) authorizes the establishment of a Service District within Cass County; and

WHEREAS, the Act requires the Cass County Board of Commissioners (“County Board”) to adopt, by resolution, a Tentative Plan establishing such a Service District; and

WHEREAS, the County Board has reviewed and desires to adopt the Tentative Plan for the proposed Service District; and

WHEREAS, the Act further requires that the resolution adopting the Tentative Plan set a date, time, and place for a public hearing on the Final Service Plan, which shall occur not less than ninety (90) days following adoption of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the Act requires the County Clerk to provide notice of the public hearing by publishing notice twice in a newspaper of general circulation within Cass County, with the first publication occurring at least thirty (30) days prior to the hearing and the second publication occurring within thirty (30) days of the hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Act requires the County Clerk to forward a copy of this resolution, together with the Tentative Plan, to the clerk of each community located within the proposed Service District; and

WHEREAS, each community shall have forty-five (45) days from receipt of this resolution to file a notice of exclusion with the County Clerk (see Appendix #1), and failure to do so shall result in inclusion in the Service Plan and Service District; and

WHEREAS, the Cass County Sheriff's Office shall serve as a primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for Cass County, and any other agency wishing to function as a primary or secondary PSAP shall have forty-five (45) days from receipt of this resolution to file a notice of intent (see Appendix #2); and

WHEREAS, the Act requires the County Board to adopt the Tentative Plan as the Final Plan, subject to any modifications resulting from properly filed Plan Exclusions and PSAP Notices;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the Tentative Plan establishing a Service District, as attached hereto.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a public hearing on the proposed Final Service Plan shall be held on:

Date: May 7, 2026

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Location: Cass County Administration Building, Commissioners Chambers, 120 N. Broadway, Cassopolis, MI 49031

said date being not less than ninety (90) days from the adoption of this resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Clerk is hereby directed to publish notice of the public hearing in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the County Clerk is hereby directed to forward a copy of this resolution, together with the Tentative Plan, to the clerk of each community within the proposed Service District.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that communities and agencies shall comply with the timelines and requirements set forth herein and in the Act regarding notices of exclusion and PSAP participation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that following the public hearing, the County Board shall consider adoption of the Final Plan, incorporating any valid exclusions or PSAP notices received in accordance with the Act.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

Resolution R-9-2026 carried by roll call vote.

M-56-2026

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve the FY 2025 Audit. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-57-2026

Commissioner Grice moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve a budget adjustment – MCOLES Narcotics Task Force Grant (\$60,000). Motion carried by voice vote.

M-58-2026

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Barrera, to approve the use of \$249,192 from the Bombardie bequest to partially offset the funding shortfall for the Lawless Park Project, as previously considered at the March 19, 2026 meeting. Discussion followed. A roll call vote was requested.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes: Commissioners Lee, Marchetti, Langley, Jones and Barrera.

No: Commissioners Northrop, Grice and Lawrence.

Motion M-58-2026 carried by roll call vote.

R-13-2026

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

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT CASS COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION FUND
DEFICIT ELIMINATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, Cass County's Historical Commission Fund has a \$440 deficit fund balance on September 30, 2025;

WHEREAS, the Michigan Uniform Budgeting Act (Public Act 621 of 1978) requires that a Deficit Elimination Plan be formulated by the local unit of government and filed with the Michigan Department of Treasury; and

WHEREAS, the deficit is minimal in nature and does not represent a structural imbalance in the fund;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners adopts the following as the Historical Commission Fund Deficit Elimination Plan:

Explanation: The deficit was the result of expenditures exceeding revenues during the fiscal year. The County will eliminate the deficit through current year revenues and normal operational activity, and the deficit is expected to be fully eliminated during fiscal year 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Cass County Administrator submits the Deficit Elimination Plan to the Michigan Department of Treasury for certification.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

Resolution R-13-2026 carried by roll call vote.

R-14-2026

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

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF CDBG URGENT NEED APPLICATION AND DESIGNATION OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

WHEREAS, the Michigan Strategic Fund has invited Units of General Local Government to apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Urgent Need funding to address emergency conditions that pose a serious and immediate threat to the health and welfare of residents; and

WHEREAS, Cass County, in coordination with Branch County and St. Joseph County, seeks to apply for up to \$400,000 in CDBG Urgent Need funds to support disaster recovery efforts following the March 6, 2026 tornado and severe storm event; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project will provide disaster case management services through a partnership with After the Storm to assist affected residents across Cass, Branch, and St. Joseph Counties with recovery needs including housing stabilization, access to services, and long-term recovery planning; and

WHEREAS, Cass County will serve as the lead applicant and fiduciary for the project, administering the grant on behalf of the participating counties; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project is consistent with the County's community development objectives and is designed to benefit residents, particularly low- and moderate-income households impacted by the disaster; and

WHEREAS, no local funds are required to be committed prior to grant award, and all activities will comply with applicable federal and state requirements, including completion of the environmental review process;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes submission of a CDBG Urgent Need application to the Michigan Strategic Fund in an amount not to exceed \$400,000 for the disaster recovery project described above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Cass County Board of Commissioners designates the County Administrator as the Authorized Official and Environmental Review Certifying Officer for this project, with authority to submit the application, execute the grant agreement, sign payment requests, and execute any additional documents required to implement and complete the project.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

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

No (0): None.

Resolution R-14-2026 carried by roll call vote.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Lawrence opened discussion on the Prosecutor's retention and future of lawyers in Cass County. Commissioners discussed the requests from Prosecutor Fitz, issues that may arise if the Prosecutor's Office was not fully staffed, asked what would retain attorneys after they stated it was not about money, informed the public of what the county had done to help the Prosecutor's Office and shared information on staffing and salaries of Prosecutor's Offices from comparable counties.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment occurred.

CLOSED SESSION

None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners Langley, Lawrence, Barrera and Marchetti shared comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Approved: _____
Date

Chair Jeremiah Jones

Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register