



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

July 20, 2023

5:00 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – *Vice-Chair Laylin*
 2. **INVOCATION** – *Chair Jones*
 3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – *Commissioner Lee*
 4. **ROLL CALL** - *Clerk/Register Monica McMichael*
 5. **PUBLIC COMMENT** (limit 3 minutes/person)
 6. **ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA**
 7. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA** – *Commissioner Marchetti*
 8. **APPROVAL OF JUNE 15, 2023 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES** – *Commissioner Locke*
 9. **PRESENTATIONS** (Limit to 10 minutes)
 - A. Medical Assisted Treatment Program
 - B. MSU Extension – Annual Report
 10. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
 11. **DISTRICT REPORTS**
 - District 1** - Commissioner Laylin
 - District 2** - Commissioner Lawrence
 - District 3** - Commissioner Locke
 - District 4** - Commissioner Jones
 - District 5** - Commissioner Howie
 - District 6** - Commissioner Barrera
 - District 7** - Commissioner Marchetti
 - District 8** – Commissioner Lee
 12. **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**
 13. **FINANCE REPORT**
 14. **VETERAN'S REPORT**
 15. **COUNTY PARTNERS** (Limit to 5 minutes)
 16. **ELECTED OFFICIALS**
 17. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
-



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

18. NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointments

- i. Approval of Appointment of Bruce Stack to the Central Dispatch Authority as representative for Cass County Fire Chief's Association
- ii. Appointment of Barbara Belland to the Solid Waste Planning Committee to a term expiring June 30, 2025
- iii. Appointment of Mary Howie to Historic Commission to a term expiring July 1, 2026

B. Opioid Settlement Funds – Use and Planning

C. Blight Elimination Program – Round 3 & 4

D. MERS - DB/DC

E. FY 24 Budget

19. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

20. ADJOURNMENT

**CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

June 15, 2023

Commissioner Marchetti called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in Commission Chambers on Thursday, June 15, 2023. Commissioner Howie offered the Invocation. Chair Jones led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Clerk/Register Monica McMichael called roll:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: James Lawrence, Joyce Locke, Jeremiah Jones, Mary Howie, Samuel Barrera, Roseann Marchetti and RJ Lee.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Ryan Laylin.

STAFF PRESENT: Administrator Matthew Newton, Finance Director Jennifer Rentfrow and Deputy Finance Director James Tito.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment occurred.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Commissioner Lee moved, seconded by Chair Jones, to amend the agenda to add New Business item – J. FY 24-28 Cooperative Reimbursement Program Contracts (Title IV-D Funding). Motion to amend carried by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Lee moved, seconded by Chair Jones, to approve the June 15, 2023, Cass County Committee of the Whole Agenda as amended. Motion to approve the agenda carried by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Locke moved, seconded by Commissioner Barrera, to approve the May 18, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

PRESENTATIONS

Rose Street Advisors Relationship Manager Ben Cohen offered an overview of Michigan PA 152 which required the board to select an option to share the premium contributions for medical, dental and prescription insurance.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioners Locke, Howie and Lee shared a Committee Report.

DISTRICT REPORTS

Commissioners Jones, Marchetti and Barrera provided district reports.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Newton shared the Administrator's Report.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Director Jennifer Rentfrow offered the Finance Report.

VETERAN'S REPORT

Veteran's Services Officer Karee Krause shared the Veteran's Report.

COUNTY PARTNERS

Road Commission Manager Bob Thompson provided an update on Road Commission Operations.

Gerry Bundle, Transportation Authority Director, addressed the financial needs of the Transportation Authority. He informed commissioners that the Transportation Authority would request a countywide millage at the February 2024 Presidential Primary Election. Beginning in October of 2023, however, the authority would need financial assistance from the county.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Sheriff Behnke offered an update.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointments

- i. Reappoint Korie Blyveis to the Solid Waste Planning Committee for a term expiring June 1, 2025
- ii. Reappoint Naomi Ludman to the Solid Waste Planning Committee for a term expiring June 1, 2025
- iii. Reappoint Amy Huser to the Solid Waste Planning Committee for a term expiring June 1, 2025
- iv. Reappoint Nathan Robinson to the Historical Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2026
- v. Reappoint Amy Davidhizer to the Historical Commission for a term expiring July 1, 2026

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to move New Business item A. Appointments to the next regular board meeting.

B. Policy Revisions

- i. Paycheck – Rescind
- ii. Parking – Rescind
- iii. County Building Parking – Revised
- iv. Maintenance Supervisor Additional Compensation – Rescind
- v. MERS Purchase of Service – Rescind
- vi. Deferred Compensation Plan – Revised
- vii. Restroom – Rescind
- viii. Claims – Revised
- ix. Fraternization

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to move New Business item B. Policy Revisions to the next regular board meeting. Motion carried by voice vote.

C. Resolution – PA 152

Commissioner Marchetti stated that the resolution listed the county chose the 80/20 option in order to comply with PA 152.

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to move New Business item C. Resolution – PA 152 to the next regular board meeting. Motion carried by voice vote.

D. Silver Creek Police Services Contract

Chair Jones, seconded by Commissioner Howie, to move New Business Item D. Silver Creek Police Services Contract to the next regular board meeting. Motion carried by voice vote.

E. FY 24 Budget

Finance Director Jennifer Rentfrow distributed the budget while Administrator Matt Newton offered a narrative. Administrator Newton informed commissioners they did not expect a deep dive but wanted to provide commissioners time to review the budget. The budget presented had not been adjusted from the numbers entered by elected officials and department heads. The current numbers led to a projected shortfall of more than \$3 million.

Commissioners agreed to adjust the June 22, 2023, BOC Workshop Agenda to include budget discussions.

F. Budget Amendments

Commissioners agreed to move New Business item F. Budget Amendments to the next regular board meeting.

G. Spark Grant Resolution of Support

Parks Director Scott Wyman presented details on a \$ 1.2 million grant application that would provide an observatory, nature center and restroom upgrades at Lawless Park. The board agreed to approve a resolution of support for the grant application.

H. Resolution – Step Level Increases

Discussion occurred on allowing the County Administrator to approve step level increases for existing county employees. Chief Judge Bealor explained the request was to put a process in place. It did not mean that immediate step increases (raises) would occur.

Commissioners agreed to move New Business item H. Resolution – Step Level Increases to the next regular board meeting.

I. Master Plan Commitment Agreements

Commissioners agreed to move New Business item I. Master Plan Commitment Agreements to the next regular board meeting.

J. FY 24-28 Cooperative Reimbursement Program Contracts (Title IV-D Funding)

Commissioners agreed to move New Business item J. FY 24-28 Cooperative Reimbursement Program Contracts (Title IV-D Funding) to the next regular board meeting.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners Barrera, Lawrence and Marchetti shared comments.

ADJOURNMENT

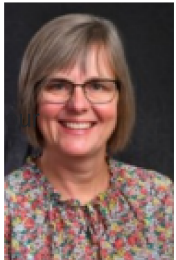
Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Approved: _____
Date

Chair Jeremiah Jones

Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register

Message from the District Director



Based on MSU Extension staff annual reporting and evaluation feedback, 2022 proved to be another good year leveraging resources provided by Cass County to help us do work in the community. Staff reports revealed working with schools, service organizations, local government, residents and youth to provide educational programs, and one-on-one consultation in Cass County. Indirect work was also strong in the county with outreach through newsletters, social and print media, educational articles for farmers and businesses and fact sheets on nutrition, immunizations, early childhood education, youth development and other important topics to help people make decisions and improve quality of life. In 2022, District 13 educators worked together with MSU researchers, federal and state agencies and non-profits to bring in nearly \$1 million in grant funding to expand their research and outreach efforts. This report provides a few statistics and sample stories as evidence of our work. We look forward to continuing our partnerships in Cass County and strengthening the community through quality research based information and educational programs.

Julie Pioch, District Director

272
EXTENSION PROGRAMS
INCLUDED CASS COUNTY
RESIDENTS

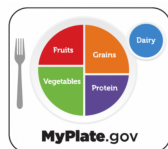
2182
CASS COUNTY
RESIDENTS ATTENDED
EXTENSION PROGRAMS

156
DIRECT CONSULTATIONS
REPORTED*

75
PROGRAMS HELD IN THE COUNTY

WEBSITE STATISTICS

3473
COUNTY VISITORS
13,002
PAGE VIEWS
17%
REGULAR CONSUMERS



Cass County Staff

Jon LaPorte - Farm Financial Management Educator
Nora Lee - Community Nutrition Instructor
Lorenne Witham - 4-H Program Coordinator
Patty Dohm - Secretary

Contact

120 N Broadway
Cassopolis MI 49031
269-445-4461
msue.cass@countymisu.edu
www.msue.msu.edu

Cass County General Fund Appropriations

2020-21	\$104,526
2021-22	\$121,460
2022-23	\$124,700

623 4-H Youth Enrolled
142 Adult Volunteers
25 Community Clubs
1624 Total Youth Reached

18 USC 707

KUDOS FOR NUTRITION PROGRAM

I am a substitute teacher and recently I had the awesome pleasure of being in a 2nd/3rd grade classroom when Ms. Lee appeared at our door. She was there to do a scheduled "Nutrition Program." As a former teacher and school administrator, I can't tell you how impressed I was with the entire lesson. Every student was fully engaged as she asked recall information from the previous lesson (and they did indeed have the answers), presented new information about healthy eating and food groups, discussed the importance of staying hydrated with water, and had the children move around the classroom. I was extremely impressed with her teaching style. Her enthusiasm and energy were contagious! What a wonderful way to get young children involved with their individual 'health journey' with information and facts that can last them a lifetime. The nutrition program that I observed appears extremely proactive and, in my humble opinion, is just what children need. Keep up the GREAT work, Ms. Lee!

Written by substitute teacher at Dowagiac School

On-farm Training Important for Dairy farms

Agriculture, like other industry sectors, faces issues with hiring and retaining employees. Employee training is an employee retention strategy. The MSU Extension Dairy team provides employee training tailored for a farm's specific needs in several management areas of the dairy farm. A 2022 training at the Sparks Cedarlee Organic Dairy Farm in Cass County is a successful example of Extension's work in providing training for employees.

The Sparks Cedarlee dairy requested an employee training on milking procedures and animal handling. The training was delivered in Spanish, with a section conducted in the farm's meeting room, followed by a hands-on demonstration. There was great engagement and interest by employees. They provided examples of situations in which they could implement what they were learning and what needed improvement in their current management practices. Based on employee feedback and interest, the farmer requested two additional hands-on trainings covering other important topics. Because the trainings were

conducted at the farm all the employees could attend all three sessions. All participants received a certificate after each training. After six months, feedback from the farmer included:

- Improvement in protocol compliance.
- Increased engagement on the job.
- Improved communication with the management team.

Additionally, the producer reported:

- A bulk tank somatic cell count reduction of 30,000. Such reduction is a result of improved udder health and lower mastitis infections for the whole herd.
- A decrease in clinical mastitis cases. Clinical mastitis is the most expensive disease that affects dairy cattle.
- Improved animal handling.

He also highlighted the importance of accommodating the needs of employees by delivering the training in Spanish, which he considers essential for the learning process.

Planning for Renewable Energy

A 2021 Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy study found Michigan communities unprepared for larger scale solar deployment. In response, MSU Extension collaborated with the University of Michigan to create a comprehensive resource, *Planning and Zoning for Solar Energy Systems: A Guidebook for Michigan Communities*. The Solar Guidebook was created to educate and enable thoughtful advancement of the deployment of solar energy in Michigan. A state-wide educational program followed to introduce the Solar Guidebook to planners, appointed and elected government officials. Six in-person programs and 2 webinars were held in 2022 with 373 participants (including leaders from Cass County) attending. Evaluations revealed that 93% of respondents increased their knowledge in the topic. In addition, participants said that they would:

"Update the zoning ordinance"

"Discuss importance of including alternative energy into the Master Plan with my board."

"Definitely will address renewable energy in our Master Plan and follow up with zoning ordinance changes. Also, since our master plan addresses Agricultural preservation I think we need to define what we mean by preservation."

I will help review Master Plan updates to incorporate defined sustainability goals so that future ordinance updates address solar."

Demand for Virtual Programs Continues

Every Thursday during the growing season, farmers and agribusiness professionals can access the most current information available for timely, relevant, in-season crop and weather information by tuning into the MSU Extension field crops team's Virtual Breakfast Series. Following topical presentations, participants interact with MSU specialists and educators in a question-and-answer period. This innovative program provides growers the opportunity to participate in a live webinar via their computer, laptop, cell phone or Facebook. Sessions are closed-captioned and recorded for later viewing on the MSUE website or as a podcast in Spotify, Apple, Audible, and Podvine.

"Thank you for providing this online format for discussion & knowledge! It's super convenient to listen to in the cab of a tractor during the busy seasons, and even at home on the couch during the less hectic times! Being a young farmer, a ton of this information is valuable and especially interesting to share with my parents as we continue to grow throughout the years! I look forward to tuning in for years to come!"

"This series provides much information about current issues and is a great tool for farmers to gain knowledge. It generates discussions between us farmers as well outside of the series airtime. You guys do a GREAT job with this and I thank you for providing this information and discussions."

First Impressions Tourism Assessment in Cassopolis Provides Evidence to Build On

MSU Extension's First Impressions: Tourism Assessment (FIT) is a comprehensive community assessment conducted by unannounced visitors that leads to new development based on program results. FIT involves developing community leadership, assessing the host community, sharing the results in a community forum and providing suggestions to drive community action. Overall, FIT helps communities learn about their strengths and weaknesses through the eyes of first-time visitors. Since inception in 2016, MSU Extension has continued to provide Michigan communities with a plethora of data and suggestions based off first-time visitor perspectives and experiences.

In early 2021, MSU Extension began a two-year partnership with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to offer the award-winning FIT assessment program to select Redevelopment Ready Certified (RRC) communities. The partnership selected four communities: Grayling (2021), Cassopolis (2021), Allegan (2022), and Hart (2022).

Communities were required to develop Community Leadership Teams made up of public, private, and non-profit leaders to manage the project and sponsor a public forum after the assessment report was completed. MSU Extension organized the assessment team, provided a written report of results and recommendations and facilitated the community forums.

The final report for Cassopolis included a general summary of raw data generated from visitor assessment surveys, photos, and discussions. The information provided in the report reflects the exclusive perspectives of five visitors to the Village of Cassopolis and surrounding region. The result of the Cassopolis FIT assessment and key findings were presented to the Village of Cassopolis in February 2022 and is available on the MSU Extension website.

The Cassopolis forum attracted nearly 100 participants. Evaluations revealed 88% thought the information shared will help strengthen collaboration within the community and 84% strongly agreed that the information from the assessment will be used to advance tourism in the community. Participants were also asked a series of qualitative questions after participating in their community forum. Qualitative responses garnered from participants at Cassopolis forum demonstrated the significance FIT carries after a pause in community activity due to covid-19 in 2020.

Long Term Work with Cassopolis Brings Results and Awards

The Village of Cassopolis partnered with MSU Extension, and several other organizations, over the past several years to engage in a robust community visioning and planning process to revitalize their downtown area as part of the *Imagine Cass - Embrace the Vision, Cassopolis Transformation Project*. Participation in MSU Extension's Sustainable Built Environment Initiative and the First Impressions for Tourism assessment over the last few years have been key parts of the Village's strategy to improve the quality of life for residents, visitors, and businesses alike.

In 2022, this work was recognized by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SMPC) via the Graham Woodhouse Award. This honor is given to community projects that exemplify intergovernmental cooperation. MSU Extension was one of 21 identified partners and 25 separate funders who contributed to the efforts in the Village.

Members of the SMPC highlighted the important role that MSU Extension's visioning process through SBEI played in helping launch future efforts and engaging the community through very well attended meetings. Leaders in the Village of Cassopolis continue to engage with MSU Extension to not only build their capacity but to also share lessons learned with other communities. For example, Village staff created and delivered a presentation at the 2022 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference in Alma Michigan.

Other partners recognized included Cassopolis Main Street, Midwest Energy & Communications, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, Community Economic Development Association of Michigan, Cass County and Cass Economic Development Corporation.

"The Imagine Cass Project sought to transform our entire community, stop the perpetual decline and unite, for the first time in decades, under the core principles of community vision, collaboration, citizen-led change and the premise that if you invest in yourself, others will invest in you. It has been our goal of the project to create a community that our residents can be proud of."

Emily LaGrow, Village of Cassopolis

Teaching Life Skills for a Lifetime

MSU Extension educators have developed a series of workshops designed to provide life skills education to assist young people in transitioning to adulthood. Under the title of *Adulting 101*, the series includes lessons in workforce preparation, financial literacy, communication, civics, and healthy living. Sixteen *Adulting 101* sessions were offered for free virtually in 2022, reaching a total of 830 participants across the state, including many young people from Cass County. Comments from young people following workshops on workplace professionalism included:

"I learned that if you have the right attitude you can be more successful and to say no when you need to."

"I learned that having good manners and being well dressed may help your employer to know that you are serious about your job."



"Do research before you believe everything coworkers say."

"I learned how time management is important and that dressing is big too."

To meet financial literacy goals, a program titled "Avoiding Money Mishaps" was offered to increase awareness and provide practical tips for youth to prevent identity theft, predatory lending, scams and fraud. After the class, 95% felt more confident in protecting their identity and in their ability to avoid scams and fraud. Comments from youth included:

"This class will help me avoid suspicious and unsafe scammers and people who steal identities."

"I will start shredding my mail and expired forms of identification before throwing them away."

"Thank you, this helps me very much. I can't wait for the next classes."

Based on feedback from participants, *Adulting 101* sessions will continue monthly throughout 2023 and several new topics have been added such as Medical Insurance 101, Cracking the Code to College, How to Buy a Car, Eating Healthy on a Budget, and Sew What! Clothing Care saves Cash.

In addition, the team has partnered with the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI), whose goal is to ensure that young people in foster care have successful outcomes in housing, education, employment, community engagement,

and specifically targeted to young people who are aging out of the foster care system with the hopes that the information learned in the program will help the young people be successful. Some of the session titles include Goal Setting, Informed Renter, Household tasks, Art of Time Management, Rockin' Resumes, Career Connections Through Volunteerism, and Changing the World with a Single Vote. In 2022, 61 sessions were provided to youth involved in MYOI, with 1545 participants with some from Cass County.

There are approximately 11,000 children in foster care in Michigan. Youth living in foster care are often subject to adverse childhood experiences (ACE's). Providing programs where youth feel welcome, have a sense of belonging, their voices are heard and their contributions matter is particularly important for youth in the foster care system. MSU Extension staff serve as positive and supportive adult role models in for youth.

Clean Boats, Clean Water Supports Locals

The Michigan Clean Boats, Clean Waters (MCBCW) program funded 11 aquatic invasive species education projects across the state in 2022. Each organization received between \$1,000 - \$3,000. Over 2,500 boaters were contacted at 80 events and an estimated 2,900 educational materials were distributed by grantees. Awardees included the Donnell Lake Conservation Club in Cass County who hosted three educational booths at popular community events and tournaments throughout the summer. They also installed a Clean Boats, Clean Waters Boat Decontamination Station sign at their local boat launch.

Since 2006 MCBCW has educated recreational water users in behaviors that limit or prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species often spread unintentionally on boats and trailers, and once introduced, are extremely difficult and expensive to manage. Boater education is one tool of many used to address invasive species issues. This is the second year funds have been available through the program to support local organizations. MCBCW is a joint effort between MSU Extension and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy.

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Quentin Tyler, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824.



CASS COUNTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Matthew Newton, County Administrator

DATE: July 14, 2023

SUBJECT: July 2023 Administrator's Report

Historical Courthouse

We are still working through the Congressionally Directed Spending Grant with the USDA. As of July 14th, we received confirmation that the State-level review has been completed. As such, the next steps would be for the final application to be received, reviewed, and approved by the federal arm of the USDA. It has taken a long time-frame to get to this point than we had originally, hoped, but we are feeling confident that we are in the hope stretching of securing the funding necessary to have construction finally begin. With that in mind, we are anticipating construction to begin in mid-August, but will be prepared to initiate mobilization of work once approval of the grant is received. As we have awaited the final approval from USDA, we have continued working through the final planning stages encompassing finalizing the design elements, A/V technology, and furniture options. We have approached these elements from the perspective of trying to ensure that we have accomodated future needs of county operations, while also working to reduce potential costs where possible.

ROBIN Grant

I am pleased to announce that MEC was selected as a recipient of the ROBIN Grant. In fact, MEC was the largest recipient of funds and will be building our infastructure across Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County. Broadband in Cass County will be expanded across the following townships: Marcellus, Volinia, Wayne, Silver Creek, Pokagon, Mason, Howard, and Milton. Right now, we are in the middle of a 45-da public comment period regarding the award. Once that is completed, a final list of awarded locations will be released by the State. We would anticipate that to occur by the end of August. MEC has indicated that they are still working through the creation of a plan regarding construction and the timing for when each location would have broadband built out. However, with respect to the matching funds contribution from the County that was approved in March, they have indicated that their plan is to complete the construction first then look at billing those amounts once complete. They had expressed a willingness of flexibility during the discussion on this in the Spring, so we would anticipate that the matching contribution would not be due until FY 25 and may, in fact, be spread across both FY 25 and FY 26. We will provide additional information on the project itself and details on the plan for matching contributions once we have received that information. However, the key takeaway here is that we will see a significant increase in broadband capacity in several areas of the County.

ABM – Facilities Assessment

In the fall of 2021, the County embarked upon a project with TowerPinkster to complete an assessment of all County facilities to determine Capital Improvement Plan needs over the following 10 years. That report was received in the Spring of 2022. In the time since, the Capital Projects Committee and the Facilities Department has held discussions and completed some reviews on how to approach the improvements in the coming years. To that end, the County was approached by ABM regarding one possible pathway for facilitating some of these improvements. Essentially, ABM's primary focus is on looking for ways to improve efficiencies of mechanical equipment and other related items where there



CASS COUNTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

is the potential to realize a cost-neutral improvement. For example, replacing an aging appliance that draws a higher level of energy with a more efficient model where the savings in energy over time can offset the costs of the new equipment. Additionally, they assist in identifying possible avenues for grants designed to assist with facility improvements. Over the next 90 days, we will be working to provide them with necessary documentation and facilitate their own assessment of our facilities and equipment. Following that period, they will prepare a report that will summarize a plan they would recommend for the County to entertain that identifies possible avenues for improvements. There is no cost to the County to complete the initial assessment, so we are moving forward with that as of this week and the final report and recommendations will be brought to the BOC when finalized and ready.

Regional Housing Partnership

Treasurer Anderson and I both attended the Regional Housing Partnership meeting in Kalamazoo at the end of June. The goal of the partnership is to work with MSHDA and the new Statewide Housing Plan to identify how to approach addressing housing stock throughout the State and addressing key housing related concerns. The Statewide Housing Plan adopts a regional approach, with Cass County being in Region J that is comprised of Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, Calhoun, and Branch counties. I believe the regional approach can be helpful as it can help ensure that solutions are tailored to fit the specific needs of a particular geographic area and not trying to be too generic so as to apply statewide. However, even within the regional model, we still have concerns about ensuring that rural counties are fairly represented and solutions presented provide benefits to all. What may work in Kalamazoo County may be very different than what might work or be preferred in Cass County. So, I'm glad that Treasurer Anderson and I have been able to represent the County and do our part to ensure our voices are heard. Following the meeting, I am happy to report that I am the Co-chair of the Older Adult Housing Workgroup. With the focus we've had on exploring possible housing options adjacent to the Medical Care Facility and identifying that as a significant need in Cass County, I am happy to be working on this topic. We are still in the early stages of this process, but I will continue to provide updates as progress is made.

OnBase – Agendas/Resolutions

IT Director Nestich and Deputy IT Director Davis have been working with me on utilizing OnBase to facilitate the digitization of BOC minutes and associated resolutions. We met on July 7th to begin the planning process and working to identify the best course for the project. Ultimately, the goal is to create an online repository of all of our existing minutes and resolutions that is categorized and easily searchable for all. I will provide a further update as the project progresses.

Interagency Facilities/IT Services

On July 17th, we have a meeting scheduled to review our existing agreement for our Interagency Facilities Program. Overall, I believe the program has worked very well for the County and our County Partners. We will be exploring the addition of Woodlands to our agreement and discussing parameters for a renewed agreement. I would anticipate having a new agreement in place for the BOC to consider for the August Committee of the Whole Meeting. Additionally, we are continuing to work through the final stages of our IT Services Program with the Medical Care Facility. All necessary equipment has now been ordered. We are hoping to have everything in place by the end of August and then working with them to transition away from their existing IT Services Provider to the County. Overall, this has taken a longer timeframe than we had initially planned, but, much like the Interagency Facilities Program, it



CASS COUNTY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

allows us a fantastic opportunity to integrate various functions with our County Partners. The goal, of course, is to leverage these programs into improved efficiency and reduce costs for all parties involved. With both programs, we believe that this is just the beginning. As we continue to refine these programs, we hope to be able to expand them out to our local units of government as well and create something new that has the potential to illustrate what cooperation amongst local units of government and partners can achieve when we all work together. Expansion, of course, will take time. But, I'm pleased to see our progress thus far and look forward to the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew Newton
County Administrator

CASS COUNTY

FINANCE DIRECTOR

TO: CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FROM: JENNIFER RENTFROW / FINANCE DIRECTOR
DATE: JUNE 30, 2023
RE: FINANCIAL REPORT

GENERAL FUND BUDGET TO ACTUAL SUMMARY REPORT

Attached you will find the General Fund Budget to Actual Summary Report. The report reflects the fiscal year budget & year-to-date activity total from October 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, (FYE 9/30/23).

**Please note this is a preliminary report and is subject to change as it continues to be reviewed in depth to prepare for closing year-end and audit preparations.*

DEPARTMENT BUDGETS:

Survey & Remonumentation – Most expenses occur in December & January to satisfy grant requirements.

Law & Courts Security – The wages and fringe benefits are trending a bit higher than budgeted.

Emergency Management – The wages and fringe benefits are trending a bit higher than budgeted.

Waste Collection/Disposal – Most of this budget was depleted during the first Household Hazardous Waste in April. There is another Household Hazardous Waste Collections on Sept 6, 2023. A budget adjustment will need to be brought forward in the future for this event.

Soil Conservation – 100% of expenditures have been paid for the year.

Medical Examiner – As Sheriff discussed previously, there have been a lot of autopsies so far this fiscal year. Budget adjustments are requested in the packed for your review.

Veterans Burial – Burial benefits trending a little higher than expected.

**GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET TO ACTUAL SUMMARY
AS OF 06/30/2023 (75% of Fiscal Year 2022-2023)**

	ACTUAL @ 06/30/2022	2022-2023 ORIGINAL	2022-2023 AMENDED	ACTIVITY FOR JUNE 2023	ACTUAL @ 06/30/2023	AVAILABLE BALANCE	% BDGT USED
REVENUE SOURCES LESS GRANT/REIMBURSEMENTS:							
FEES/SERVICES/PERMITS	1,239,071	2,100,572	2,150,572	139,646	1,176,146	974,426	54.69%
INTEREST & RENTS	91,873	143,500	283,500	(28,980)	224,933	58,567	79.34%
STATE FUNDING	1,621,994	2,690,504	2,952,995	337,982	1,983,679	969,316	67.18%
TRANSFERS IN	349,750	498,775	498,775	56,250	237,250	261,525	47.57%
TAXES	1,753,212	12,179,118	12,264,118	608	1,294,141	10,969,977	10.55%
SUB TOTAL	5,055,900	17,612,469	18,149,960	505,505	4,916,149	13,233,811	27.09%
GRANT/REIMBURSEMENTS:							
GRANTS	701,486	1,674,901	1,700,001	156,827	866,197	833,804	50.95%
LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS	163,132	423,475	448,475	45,937	228,032	220,443	50.85%
REIMBURSEMENTS/OTHER REVENUE	348,653	230,300	230,300	161,842	209,480	20,821	90.96%
FUND BALANCE ALLOCATION	0	1,849,469	1,998,769	0	0	1,998,769	0.00%
SUB TOTAL	1,213,271	4,178,145	4,377,545	364,606	1,303,708	3,073,837	29.78%
TOTAL REVENUES	6,269,171	21,790,614	22,527,505	870,111	6,219,857	16,307,648	27.61%
TOTAL EXPENSES (See Detail Below)	13,637,770	21,790,614	22,527,505	2,244,067	15,304,130	7,223,375	67.94%

**GENERAL FUND EXPENSE BUDGET TO ACTUAL SUMMARY
AS OF 06/30/2023 (75% of Fiscal Year 2022-2023)**

	ACTUAL @ 06/30/2022	2022-2023 ORIGINAL	2022-2023 AMENDED	ACTIVITY FOR JUNE 2023	ACTUAL @ 06/30/2023	AVAILABLE BALANCE	% BDGT USED
101 - BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS	124,424.85	202,033.00	256,533.00	20,346.79	178,919.48	77,613.52	69.75%
172 - ADMINISTRATOR	226,132.66	327,515.00	411,678.44	36,118.73	246,803.54	164,874.90	59.95%
191 - ACCOUNTING DEPT	232,767.74	466,112.00	466,112.00	57,000.33	342,312.55	123,799.45	73.44%
215 - CLERK/ROD	385,115.56	664,525.00	682,525.00	69,857.25	448,015.04	234,509.96	65.64%
228 - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	502,915.21	1,035,902.00	961,838.56	59,458.46	665,664.99	296,173.57	69.21%
233 - PURCHASING	102,734.76	155,000.00	175,000.00	3,302.18	124,904.72	50,095.28	71.37%
243 - PROPERTY DESCRIPTION DEPT	271,247.87	438,341.00	438,341.00	43,146.99	272,917.42	165,423.58	62.26%
245 - COUNTY SURVEY & REMONUMENTATION	37,956.69	46,917.00	54,079.00	0.00	45,614.14	8,464.86	84.35%
253 - TREASURER	287,964.40	433,265.00	468,265.00	50,734.64	347,224.74	121,040.26	74.15%
257 - ASSESSOR / EQUALIZATION DEPT	190,477.54	281,518.00	290,518.00	31,691.05	218,388.81	72,129.19	75.17%
262 - ELECTIONS	66,055.98	114,300.00	114,300.00	0.00	64,473.67	49,826.33	56.41%
265 - BUILDINGS & GROUNDS	743,007.67	1,118,886.00	1,118,886.00	88,875.68	815,460.98	303,425.02	72.88%
266 - ATTORNEY / CORP COUNSEL	78,105.80	100,000.00	100,000.00	4,505.00	35,783.00	64,217.00	35.78%
271 - INSURANCE / TAXES	189,831.75	531,147.00	531,147.00	0.00	208,985.25	322,161.75	39.35%
276 - COURT GRANTS	360,745.92	699,143.00	719,143.00	50,783.73	440,209.49	278,933.51	61.21%
279 - FAMILY / JUVENILE COURT	514,432.45	904,870.00	944,870.00	88,405.18	642,263.01	302,606.99	67.97%
283 - CIRCUIT COURT	220,542.29	340,800.00	353,800.00	28,540.28	242,276.37	111,523.63	68.48%
286 - DISTRICT COURT	638,509.99	997,021.00	997,021.00	109,664.81	707,753.28	289,267.72	70.99%
289 - FRIEND OF THE COURT	864,247.49	1,314,428.00	1,334,428.00	154,819.01	942,006.43	392,421.57	70.59%
294 - PROBATE COURT	331,491.85	502,959.00	510,959.00	55,907.87	383,144.60	127,814.40	74.99%
296 - PROSECUTING ATTORNEY	709,275.65	1,214,950.00	1,220,279.00	121,969.84	786,308.79	433,970.21	64.44%
301 - SHERIFF	1,873,713.27	2,907,363.00	3,007,363.00	318,365.29	2,219,082.90	788,280.10	73.79%
304 - LAW & COURTS SECURITY	118,439.47	157,905.00	157,905.00	24,721.87	132,505.59	25,399.41	83.91%
316 - SECONDARY ROAD PATROL	75,725.09	104,241.00	104,241.00	10,491.95	75,672.05	28,568.95	72.59%
331 - MARINE LAW ENFORCEMENT	7,808.26	55,070.00	265,070.00	18,084.61	114,725.51	150,344.49	43.28%
345 - PUBLIC SAFETY DEPT	181,985.49	369,573.00	369,573.00	29,119.05	207,455.34	162,117.66	56.13%
351 - JAIL OPERATION	2,145,162.05	3,292,748.00	3,292,748.00	327,468.18	2,355,800.58	936,947.42	71.55%
426 - EMERGENCY MGMT / HOMELAND SECURITY	75,148.45	91,175.00	99,975.00	11,147.42	77,839.11	22,135.89	77.86%
430 - ANIMAL CONTROL	276,341.39	414,605.00	426,605.00	43,818.99	321,450.93	105,154.07	75.35%
441 - PUBLIC WORKS	730.10	1,150.00	1,150.00	0.00	415.13	734.87	36.10%
442 - DRAIN COMMISSIONER	90,295.97	129,394.00	132,394.00	12,901.02	93,211.76	39,182.24	70.40%
528 - WASTE COLLECTION/DISPOSAL	22,890.10	26,356.00	26,356.00	0.00	25,460.15	895.85	96.60%
568 - SOIL CONSERVATION	5,000.00	5,000.00	5,000.00	0.00	5,000.00	0.00	100.00%
601 - HEALTH DEPARTMENT	279,566.00	293,544.00	293,544.00	0.00	0.00	293,544.00	0.00%
631 - SUBSTANCE ABUSE	42,776.42	75,305.00	75,305.00	0.00	37,101.17	38,203.83	49.27%
648 - MEDICAL EXAMINER	114,225.68	162,000.00	162,000.00	11,996.58	143,684.66	18,315.34	88.69%
649 - MENTAL HEALTH	85,500.00	114,000.00	114,000.00	0.00	85,500.00	28,500.00	75.00%
681 - VETERANS' BURIALS	6,052.20	10,000.00	10,000.00	1,391.00	7,957.20	2,042.80	79.57%
682 - VETERANS' COUNSELOR	81,157.13	115,842.00	129,342.00	11,359.51	93,041.92	36,300.08	71.93%
701 - PLANNING COMMISSION	473.66	25,956.00	25,956.00	421.34	12,999.72	12,956.28	50.08%
710 - COOPERATIVE EXTENSION	84,845.88	130,316.00	130,316.00	4,311.53	97,895.69	32,420.31	75.12%
751 - PARKS & RECREATION	151,839.09	234,665.00	240,665.00	25,257.34	163,055.07	77,609.93	67.75%

	ACTUAL @ 06/30/2022	2022-2023 ORIGINAL	2022-2023 AMENDED	ACTIVITY FOR JUNE 2023	ACTUAL @ 06/30/2023	AVAILABLE BALANCE	% BDGT USED
966 - TRANSFERS OUT	840,110.05	1,184,774.00	1,308,274.00	318,083.25	874,845.00	433,429.00	66.87%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	13,637,770	21,790,614	22,527,505	2,244,067	15,304,130	7,223,375	67.94%

FUND BALANCE ALLOCATION ANALYSIS

UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/15	5,126,404	PER 9/30/15 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/16	5,449,774	PER 9/30/16 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/17	6,011,346	PER 9/30/17 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/18	5,779,269	PER 9/30/18 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/19	6,073,472	PER 9/30/19 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/20	7,950,059	PER 9/30/20 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/21	8,704,098	PER 9/30/21 Comprehensive Financial Report
UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/22	9,018,784	PER 9/30/22 Comprehensive Financial Report
ADOPTED FUND BALANCE ALLOCATION	1,849,469	Original 2022-2023 Budget as adopted
	149,300	Adjustments to FY 23 Budget
	<u>1,998,769</u>	
EST. UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE 9/30/23	<u><u>7,020,015</u></u>	



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Appointments Committee

DATE: July 20, 2023

RE: Appointment Recommendationst

REQUEST:

Recommend approval of appointments be included for the August 10th Regular Meeting

BACKGROUND:

The Appointments Committee evaluated current and upcoming vacancies at its meeting on July 6th. The Committee recommends three appointments as follows: 1) Appointment of Barbara Belland to the Solid Waste Planning Committee to a term expiring June 30, 2025; 2) Appointment of Mary Howie to the Historic Commission to a term expiring July 1, 2026; and 3) Appointment of Fire Chief Bruce Stack to the Central Dispatch Authority Boad. A memo from Sheriff Behnke pertaining to the Central Dispatch Authority Board is attached for your review.

REVIEWS:

Prior to submitting this request, this agenda item was reviewed by all impacted departments noted below: (Ex: Administration, Maintenance, HR, and IT)

Appointments Committee, Sheriff, Administration

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve for appointments as recommended to be added to the Consent Agenda for the August 10th Regular Meeting.



CASS COUNTY OFFICE OF SHERIFF

321 M-62 North, Cassopolis, MI 49031 ♦ www.ccsso.info ♦ Administration: (269) 445-8644 ♦ Dispatch (269) 445-1560

RICHARD J. BEHNKE, Sheriff

CLINTON D. ROACH, Undersheriff

July 10, 2023

Matt Newton, County Administrator

Richard J. Behnke, Sheriff

RE: 9-1-1 Authority Board, Vacant Position: Fire Representative

With Frank Butts retirement from the Wayne Township Fire Department, it has created an opening on the 9-1-1 Authority Board. The Board asked the fire chiefs to pick a possible representative to fill the vacancy. Frank Butts will remain on the 9-1-1 Authority Board as representative of local government.

The Cass County Fire Association Chiefs have issued support for Edwardsburg Fire Chief Bruce Stack to fill the position on the 9-1-1 Authority Board. We would like to Cass County Board of Commissioners to approve this placement of the Chief Stack to the 9-1-1 Authority Board.

If there are any questions or concerns please feel free in contacting me.



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Matthew Newton, County Administrator

DATE: July 20, 2023

RE: Opioid Settlement Funds - Funding for Event and Advisory Panel Creation

REQUEST:

Approve for two items to be added to the August 10th Regular Meeting as follows: 1) Obligate up to \$3,500.00 in Opioid Settlement funds to be utilized to fund a Sobriety Month Event sponsored by Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network, the County, and the Courts and 2) Establish an ad-hoc Advisory Panel to evaluate options and formulate recommendations for the use of all remaining Opioid Settlement funding.

BACKGROUND:

In December of 2021 and April of 2023 the Board of Commissioners approved for the County to enter into Settlement Agreements with Distributors and the Janseen Settlement regarding Opioids. To date, the County has received \$246,849.47 in proceeds from the settlement and anticipates estimates proceed through 2031 of an additional \$978,425.05. To that end, it is incumbent upon the County to determine an effective use for these proceeds that aligns with the required uses of said funds.

With that in mind, there are 2 items we'd propose for consideration. First, Sobriety Month will occur in September. As part of Sobriety Month an event is being planned. It was requested that the County consider appropriating a small portion of the existing funds received for the Opioid Settlement towards the event. The plan would be to offer a family night that would include the rental of the drive-in theater and food and would be open to all families in Cass County. A family-friendly movie would be shown and it would be a great avenue of supporting sober family fun. This event would also be sponsored by Woodlands. We believe that the proposed use fits squarely within the requirements for the use of funds and is a great first step in allocating the funds for a positive function. The projected costs would be approximately \$2,500.00 to \$3,500.00, so we would request an approval be given for up to \$3,500.00 of funds to be expended. If that total comes in lower than \$3,500.00, then the remaining portion would remain in the Opioid Settlement Fund.

Additionally, we need to begin planning what is to be done with the remaining portion of the Opioid Settlement Fund. In order to effectively evaluate the potential uses of the funds, most Counties have looked at creating a Task Force comprised of representatives from the County as well as Community Partners and Organizations. We have had some initial conversations regarding the makeup of the Committee. We would propose this be established either as a task force or ad-hoc committee and have the makeup comprised of 2 Commissioners, the Chief Judge, the Sheriff, a representative from Woodland Behavioral Healthcare Network, a representative from the VBCD Health Department, a representative from the Cass Family Clinic, the Finance Director, and the County Administrator. This Opioid Settlement Advisory Panel would then be tasked with evaluating the permitted uses of said funds and establishing recommendation(s) that would be brought back to the entire BOC for consideration. We would encourage the BOC to review the proposed composition of the committee to determine if there are any additional members that should be added. If the Advisory Panel, as proposed, is deemed sufficient, we would recommend a motion be added to the August Regular Meeting to formally create the Opioid Advisory Panel.



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

REVIEWS:

Prior to submitting this request, this agenda item was reviewed by all impacted departments noted below: (Ex: Administration, Maintenance, HR, and IT)

Administration, Courts

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

Approve for up to \$3,500.00 be appropriated for the Sobriety Event of the \$247,000.00 received thus far in the settlement proceeds. The remaining funds and approximately \$978,425.05 of remaining funding over the next 8 years would be evaluated by the proposed Advisory Panel and recommendations would be evaluated and brought to the BOC for final consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve for both 1) Obligation of \$3,500 in Opioid Settlement funding to support Sobriety Month Event and 2) Establishment of an Opioid Settlement Advisory Panel be added to the Consent Agenda of the August 10th Regular Meeting.



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Matthew Newton, County Administrator

DATE: July 20, 2023

RE: Blight Elimination Program - Round 3 & 4

REQUEST:

Approve for Resolution Authorizing Engagement Regarding Blight Elimination RFP Round 3 & 4 be added to the August 10th Regular Meeting.

BACKGROUND:

The Cass County Land Bank has previously participated in both Round 1 and Round 2 of the Blight Elimination Program. Rounds 3 & 4 are approaching and Treasurer Anderson has indicated that the Land Bank will be seeking funding for Rounds 3 & 4. Round 3 funding includes a guaranteed amount of \$500,000.00, which will be allocated towards vital initiatives such as demolition, stabilization, environmental match/gap funding, and rehabilitation. All Round 4 dollars will be competitive for the same vital initiatives.

The attached resolution would authorize engagement for the Blight Elimination Program by the Cass County Land Bank Authority. When received, the formal agreement would also be approved by the Board of Commissioners. We would anticipate that to occur in September. and would be required for approval and execution prior to September 30th.

Treasurer Anderson also noted that Rounds 3 and 4 will be different than the first 2 rounds. Namely, these later rounds will utilize ARPA funding at the state level, so there are different criteria and requirements that will be utilized for Round 3 and 4. However, this program would still involve a full reimbursement grant, so the net costs to the County would still remain at \$0.00 upon reimbursement for each project that would be selected.

REVIEWS:

Prior to submitting this request, this agenda item was reviewed by all impacted departments noted below: (Ex: Administration, Maintenance, HR, and IT)

Treasurer, Administration

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

As this is a full reimbursement grant, there would be no net costs to the County. The Land Bank Authority would be responsible for the initial outlay, but would receive full reimbursement for all approved projects.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve for Resolution Authorizing Engagement Regarding Blight Elimination RFP Rounds 3 & 4 to be added to the Consent Agenda of the August 10th Regular Meeting.

CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

R-###-23

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ENGAGEMENT OF THE STATE LAND BANK AUTHORITY OF MICHIGAN'S BLIGHT ELIMINATION PROGRAM ROUND 3 AND 4 BY THE CASS COUNTY LAND BANK AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, The Cass County Treasurer acquires properties through foreclosure processes;

WHEREAS, there needed to be a means to dispose of said properties and to assist our local jurisdictions in development, redevelopment, and removal of blight;

WHEREAS, the Cass County Board of Commissioners created the Cass County Land Bank Authority on October 16, 2008 as a separate legal entity and as a public body corporate under Public Act 258 of 2003;

WHEREAS, the Michigan legislature allocated \$75 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to expand the State's Blight Elimination Program. These funds are to be distributed by the State Land Bank Authority to revitalize communities and grow the economy;

WHEREAS, county land banks are guaranteed a \$500,000 allocation to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in their communities. In areas served by a land bank authority, the land bank authority must serve as the lead applicant for grants within its jurisdiction;

WHEREAS, county land banks may apply for grants above the guaranteed minimum of \$500,000; and

WHEREAS, the Cass County Land Bank will receive a Letter of Acceptance of Grant Funds by July 10, 2023 with a response due August 1, 2023. The Grant Agreement will be sent by August 31, 2023 with approval and execution required by September 20, 2023. The proposals will be due for pre-approval by March 31, 2024.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Cass County Board of Commissioners authorizes engagement of the State Land Bank Authority of Michigan's Blight Elimination Program Round 3 and 4 by the Cass County Land Bank Authority.

ADOPTED THIS 10th DAY OF AUGUST 2023

ATTEST:

Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register
COUNTY OF CASS

Jeremiah Jones, Chair
CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

July 12, 2023

Dear Esteemed Colleagues:

As you are aware, Cass County froze the non-union employees defined benefit plan (herein after referred to DB) on 09/30/2022 and enrolled that group into a mandatory defined contribution plan (herein after referred to DC).

Numerous employees spoke out against this change at BOC meetings, at employee meetings, to supervisors and elected officials, in written letters and via email. The predominant feeling from non-union employees was that the change from a DB to a DC would have a devastating impact on non-union employees' lives and retirement well-being.

We have met with non-union employees to discuss this issue and were left with the impression that the forced transition to a DC plan lacked fairness and foresight. The non-union employees had limited options in fighting to retain the DB plan. The non-union employees considered unionizing to protect their interests but chose not to do so. The union employees had the protection of their unions, which participated in negotiations, and everyone had a vote in the process. Those employees' voices and votes were heard, and they kept their DB plans.

The non-union employees' other option was to leave employment at the County of Cass. Numerous long term, valuable employees left county employment because of this forced transition, and many other employees are considering this option.

Clearly, this process has been detrimental to some employees and ultimately the County. The workforce has dramatically declined and may continue to dwindle based on our next steps as a Board. We propose that the Board of Commissioners take steps to reassess the decision to freeze the non-union DB plan. We feel that there are other viable options that will be mutually beneficial to the county and the non-union employees that should be considered. The non-union employees were the only group that was restricted from the negotiation process and the only group that was forced into the DC plan. The elected officials were given the option to switch from the pension plan to the DC plan. Sheriff Behnke opted to switch from the DB to DC. The other elected officials kept their DB plans. Additionally, each union that voted to keep their DB plans kept their DB plans. The Judges have DB plans which are maintained through the State of Michigan; therefore, their retirement benefits are not at issue.

This decision will impact between 20-25 employees and will not require amending any contracts. It will also provide reassurance to the unions and elected officials who kept their DB plans that the County is invested in their workforce. Many union employees have left the county in fear that they will eventually suffer the same fate as the non-union employees.

The first step in this process will be to engage a financial expert to assess the county's current retirement benefits. MERS needs to be part of the process as they run the county's retirement

plans and have the knowledge to provide so the BOC can make a fully informed decision. The recent minutes from the June 22, 2023, BOC Workshop indicated that the MERS switch has increased county costs by \$900,000.00. That cost will continually increase over the next four years.

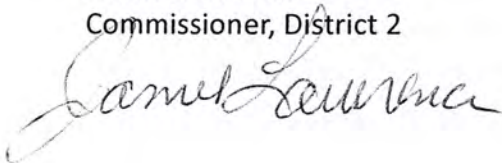
We feel that Cass County is in an entirely different position than when this process started in 2020. According to Public Act 202 of 2017, each government entity must report to the State of Michigan their pension fund status. The County of Cass is 79.4% funded; therefore, are not underfunded as defined by the State of Michigan. These are extremely encouraging numbers that reflect the health of the county's pension fund.

We ask that you support the initiative to take the next steps to explore reestablishing the DB plan for those non-union employees that wish to have it reinstated. By taking this step, we can help mend a fractured employer-employee relationship, create a more positive work environment, and explore whether taking this step on behalf of a small number of non-union employees is fiscally feasible for Cass County.

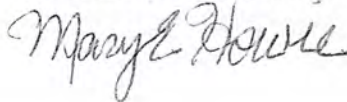
Thank you for your time and consideration. We welcome and appreciate your input and collaboration.

Sincerely,

James Lawrence
Commissioner, District 2

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James Lawrence", written in dark ink.

Mary Howie
Commissioner, District 5

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary Howie", written in dark ink.



CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Matthew Newton, County Administrator

DATE: July 20, 2023

RE: FY 24 Budget Planning

REQUEST:

Review the revised FY 24 Preliminary Budget as was requested at the June 22nd BOC Workshop. Provide direction with respect to the expectations of the BOC regarding the final draft budget to be prepared.

BACKGROUND:

A preliminary budget was prepared and presented at the June 15th Committee of the Whole Meeting. It was noted at that time that the preliminary budget presented consisted solely of the requests that were submitted by each County Office/Department as entered. Further, it was noted that further refinement would be necessary. Following that discussion, it was requested for the FY 24 Budget to be discussed during the June 22nd BOC Workshop. At the workshop, the BOC requested that all County Offices/Departments review their respective requested budgets, determine any cost-saving measures that could be implemented or revenue increases that could be realized, and to submit revised projections by July 14th. The preliminary budget presented here contains all revisions that were submitted through July 14th.

It should be noted that the FY 24 Budget must be adopted before the end of September. Additionally, a Public Hearing must also be held regarding the proposed budget appropriation. As such, while revisions and refinements can still be completed, time is beginning to run short on the timeline necessary to ensure we meet the deadlines required. As such, any directives or guidance from the BOC on the expectations for the FY 24 Budget need to be articulated now in order to ensure everyone has enough time to prepare a final draft in accordance with said expectations.

REVIEWS:

Prior to submitting this request, this agenda item was reviewed by all impacted departments noted below: (Ex: Administration, Maintenance, HR, and IT)

Administration

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS:

The FY 24 Budget will provide for all County operations for the year. The County must adopt a budget before the end of the current fiscal year in September, so it is imperative that any directives or expectations on the part of the BOC be clearly articulated to allow for Administration to craft a final draft budget in line with those expectations.

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the revised FY 24 Preliminary Budget that will be presented and determine any further guidance or expectations from the Board of Commissioners to Administration on the path forward toward a final Draft Budget.