

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

September 21, 2023

Vice Chair Ryan Laylin called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers on Thursday, September 21, 2023. Chair Jeremiah Jones offered the invocation. Commissioner Mary Howie let the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Chief Deputy Clerk/Register Heather Harding called roll:

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Joyce Locke.

STAFF PRESENT: County Administrator Matthew Newton

Commissioner Joyce Locke arrived at 5:03 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment occurred.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the September 21, 2023, Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda. Motion carried by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Barrera moved, seconded by Chair Jones, to approve the August 17, 2023, Committee of the Whole minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.

PRESENTATIONS

Marcy Hamilton from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission presented on Materials Management. The Solid Waste Management Plan has been replaced with Materials Management. Ms. Hamilton went on to explain the goals and timelines for the new plan. The

State will be providing funding for the plans with additional funds if the County partners with other counties. Ms. Hamilton indicated that the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission would like to partner with Cass County to assist with writing the plan. She went on to mention that Van Buren and Berrien may possibly want to partner with Cass County. The commissioners asked if Ms. Hamilton would send them the slideshow presentation for them to look over.

Chief Judge Carol Bealor presented a grants overview. Judge Bealor presented a slideshow of the important points in grant writing. She went on to explain that there are times when the deadlines do not always allow for these to appear at a regular board meeting. It may be necessary to call a special meeting to allow departments to apply for the grant or accept funds from the grant.

Commissioner Barrera stated that he would like to see a grant calendar. This would allow the commissioners to be able to see what has been applied for and what the timeline would be for the grant. Discussion followed. The commissioners agreed that the grant policy needs to go to the policy board to come up with policy changes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioners Marchetti, Lee, Jones and Howie provided committee reports.

DISTRICT REPORTS

Commissioners Laylin, Lawrence, Locke, Barrera, Marchetti and Lee provided district reports.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Matthew Newton shared the Administrator's Report. Commissioner Barrera indicated that he would like to see Administrator Newton discuss all items in the report. He went on to ask about the key milestones regarding the Historic Courthouse. Administrator Newton said there will be seven to eight major milestones. One of them being the footings for the stairs which will be happening soon. The rest of the dates are still being finalized and will be posted on the website.

Commissioner Barrera asked for more information on the interagency agreements. Administrator Newton went on to give the benefits of the interagency agreement with Cass County Facilities Department, COA, Woodlands, Cass County Medical Care Facility and Cass County Road Commission. The main benefit is less reliance on vendors and is a big cost savings for the county.

FINANCE REPORT

The Finance Report was in the packet.

VETERAN'S REPORT

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

COUNTY PARTNERS

Transportation Director Gerry Bundle informed the board that the Transportation Authority has no money. He asked the board for three installments of \$50,000. The first installment is needed in October and two more in January and April. The board asked Mr. Bundle to forward a formal request with supporting documents to Administrator Newton.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz, Chief Judge Carol Bealor and Drain Commissioner Jeff VanBelle offered updates.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointment of Michael O'Rourke to the Solid Waste Planning Committee as Industry Representative to a term ending 6/1/2025

Commissioners agreed to move item A to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

B. Board of Canvassers Reappointment

Commissioners agreed to move item B to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

C. Board of Commissioners Bylaws

Commissioner Marchetti mentioned page 4, 5.3 Order of Business. She would like to go back to two public comments. One toward the beginning of the meeting and one towards the end. We currently do not have two public comments, but if we are going to have two, the first should be agenda items only and the second should be what the public wishes to comment upon.

Commissioner Howie proposed holding a workshop to go over the rules of procedure line by line. Commissioner Barrera agreed that he would like to have a workshop to look further at the rules of procedure. Administrator Newton agreed with the workshop and the board agreed to move this item to a workshop that will be scheduled at a later date.

D. Operation Green Light

Commissioners agreed to move item D to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

E. Discussion-Budget Committee

Commissioner Lee asked the board how they felt the budget process went. He would like to see a budget committee be formed to work closely with elected officials, department heads and administration. Vice-Chair Laylin mentioned workshops for budget planning. Commissioner Lawrence suggested quarterly meetings. Chief Deputy Clerk/Register Heather Harding reminded the board that next year will be a very busy election year. Having more meetings would be a hardship for the Clerk's office as well as other offices.

Administrator Matt Newton would like meetings that are goal oriented so that there is not wasted time for anyone involved. Chief Judge Carol Bealor agreed that adding more meetings would be difficult for most offices to attend. Commissioner Lee liked the idea of a workshop with the budget as a focus.

Commissioners agreed to add the budget process to the workshop mentioned earlier.

Vice-Chair Laylin took a 5-minute break at 7:01 pm.

Committee of the Whole resumed at 7:06 pm.

F. Congressionally Directed Spending/USDA Grant-Historical Courthouse

Administrator Newton indicated that the process has been a long one. There may need to be a special board meeting once the administration office gets the "okay" to approve funding. Commissioner Barrera asked if the board will be provided more documentation regarding the Historic Courthouse project and Administrator Newton informed them that there will be a project overview at the next meeting.

G. Interagency Facilities Agreement

Commissioner Barrera asked about the increases to mileage. Administrator Newton indicated that in the case of emergencies Facilities Director Dave Reiff is traveling further distances to get parts for the emergency.

Facilities Director Dave Reiff gave a brief history of his background. He gave the board a handout. He has been keeping track of all the calls he has taken. He did a side-by-side comparison of what he charged and what would have been charged had a vendor been called out to the repair. The cost savings in handling them is over \$50,000.

Commissioners agreed to move item G to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

H. Interagency Marketing Agreement

Administrator Newton informed the board that other Cass County agencies are using marketing vendors, and this will be a way to save money for all parties involved. There will be a flat fee and if the agency goes over a certain number of hours, they will be charged an hourly rate.

Commissioners agreed to move item H to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

I. Remonumentation Contract Revision

Administrator Newton indicated that the revision was very small. One of the surveyors switched firms and it needed to be updated in the contract.

Commissioners agreed to move item I to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

J. Solar & Wind Siting

Commissioner Marchetti asked that this resolution be forwarded to the Governor, State Representatives and State Senator so they are aware of the board's position.

Commissioners agreed to move item J to the October 5, 2023, Regular Board Meeting agenda.

K. Sheriff Department Wages

Sheriff Richard Behnke spoke regarding the recruitment and retention of deputies. The Cass County Sheriff's Department is the second lowest paid in the county. He did offer that a contract can be opened outside of the end date. He went on to say that his department recently lost a deputy to St Joseph County due to wages. Vice-Chair Laylin asked the board if this should move to the salary committee to consider. Discussion followed about whether the salary committee is the appropriate next step.

Prosecutor Victor Fitz spoke up from the public area asking when he would get resolution for his office from the salary committee. Chief Judge Carol Bealor went to the podium and asked for consistency. She went on to say that this issue is a "need", and she supports the Sheriff completely. She would like to see future discussions for all departments regarding salary and wages. As well as a plan that all departments can follow to have these things considered.

There was discussion about the role of the salary committee. Administrator Newton advised that a resolution was passed creating the salary committee and the board should look at the resolution and decide if changes need to be made.

Commissioners agreed to move item K to the Salary Committee for discussion.

L. Discussion-MIDC/Grants

The board thanked Chief Judge Carol Bealor for her presentation earlier in the meeting.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lawrence moved, seconded by Commissioner Howie, to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Approved: _____
Date

Ryan Laylin, Vice-Chair

Heather Harding, Chief Deputy Clerk/Register