

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

October 19, 2023

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers on Thursday, October 19, 2023. Commissioner Howie offered the Invocation. Commissioner Marchetti 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 and Finance Director Jennifer Rentfrow.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment occurred.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Chair Jones announced that a presentation would be added from Health Officer Danielle Persky.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Locke moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve the October 19, 2023, Cass County Committee of the Whole Agenda. Motion to approve the agenda carried by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

PRESENTATIONS

Executive Director John Ruddell relayed a report from the Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network.

Dr. Joyce DeJong, of Western Michigan University's Homer Stryker School of Medicine, presented the Annual Medical Examiner Report.

Chief Health Officer Daniell Persky shared the proposed FY 23-24 budget.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioners Barrera, Marchetti, Locke, Howie and Jones shared Committee Reports.

DISTRICT REPORTS

Commissioners Barrera, Marchetti, Lawrence and Jones 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

None.

COUNTY PARTNERS

Conservation District Representative Korie Blyvies shared an update that included the resignation of Executive Director Jake Young, the Annual Meeting on November 28, 2023, inadequate funding for the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Program from the county, and the Trunk or Treat at Lawless Park on Saturday, October 21, 2023.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Chief Judge Carol Bealor, Prosecutor Fitz, Treasurer Anderson and Sheriff Behnke shared updates.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointments

- i. Reappointment of Kevin Anderson to the Economic Development Corporation for a term expiring 09/30/2029.
- ii. Appointment of Sheryl DeLuca to the Economic Development Corporation for a term expiring 09/30/2029.
- iii. Appointment of Arrell Chapman to the Economic Development Corporation for a term expiring 09/30/2029.
- iv. Reappointment of Tom Miles to the Community Corrections Advisory Board for a term expiring 07/31/2027.
- v. Reappointment of Dianna McGrew to the Cass County Planning Commission for a term expiring 07/31/2026.
- vi. Reappointment of Annie File to the Cass County Planning Commission for a term expiring 07/31/2026.
- vii. Reappointment of Jayne Bailey to the Cass County Planning Commission for a term expiring 07/31/2026.
- viii. Appointment of Scott Swanson to the Veteran's Advisory Committee for a term expiring 09/30/2026.

The appointments moved forward to the next regular board meeting for approval.

B. FMLA Policy

As Chair of the Policy Committee, Commissioner Marchetti announced the FMLA Policy was discussed with the committee and distributed to all elected officials. Administrator Newton went on to explain that an FMLA Policy was necessary to address leave bank time as well as gray areas between FMLA and County Policy.

Commissioners agreed to move the FMLA Policy to the next regular board meeting for approval.

C. Brownfield Assessment Grant

Administrator Newton stated that Jeff Hawkins from environmental engineering firm Fishbeck contacted the county regarding an EPA grant to provide community-wide assessments of Brownfield sites. Due November 13th, the grant would provide up to \$300,000 with 100% funding and no local match required. Fishbeck offered to assist the county in the application process at no charge.

Commissioners agreed to move the item forward to the next regular board meeting for approval.

Chair Jones declared a break at 6:47 p.m. The meeting re-convened at 6:56 p.m.

D. District Court Collections Clerk

Chief Judge Carol Bealor informed board members that District Court had been without a collections clerk for several months. The court interviewed candidates in July; however, halted the hiring process when the budget eliminated several positions that included the Collections Clerk. Judge Bealor shared statistics that demonstrated how not filling the position had negatively affected financials.

Chair Jones informed board members that he chose to place the reinstatement of the position directly on the Committee of the Whole Agenda instead of the first going to the Salary Committee because of the revenue generated by the position. Commissioner Barrera suggested that all positions move directly to the COW. Discussion followed. Finance Director Rentfrow requested that the board approve budget adjustments in conjunction with the approval of positions.

Commissioners agreed to move the item to the next regular board meeting for approval.

E. Courts Fund Transfer - OnBase

Chief Judge Bealor requested the board transfer budgeted funds for FY 2024 in order to complete an OnBase Project that was planned to occur in FY 2023. The funds would be available in a wage line item due to the delay in hiring a Juvenile Probation Officer.

Commissioners agreed to move Item E to the next regular board meeting agenda.

F. RTA & CPLR Grant

Judge Bealor requested the board to approve the Raise the Age and Child and Parent Legal Representation grant funds for FY 2024. The grants would replace costs previously covered by the county.

Commissioners agreed to move item F to the next regular board meeting agenda.

G. PSC Budget

Chief Judge Bealor asked the board to formally receipt the monies for the FY 2024 Problem-Solving Courts.

Commissioners agreed to move item G to the next regular board meeting agenda.

H. Discussion – Ambulance Service

Commissioner Lawrence informed the board that local municipalities without ambulance coverage held discussion regarding a countywide millage for service. Administrator Newton suggested looking to neighboring Van Buren County who utilized a countywide millage. He went on to discuss placing a special assessment on tax bills versus a voted millage.

Representatives from Mason Township who were covered by SEPSA ambulance service spoke against a countywide ambulance service. They stated they were happy with SEPSA and wished to continue with their current agreement. Commissioner Lee, who represented Mason and Porter Townships covered by SEPSA, questioned if the county should take over the townships. Commissioner Barrera suggested the committee include representatives from SMCAS and SEPSA in their future discussions.

Judge Bealor urged the county to widely advertise meetings. She reminded commissioners that, in Michigan, townships held more power than counties. Local officials and residents were knowledgeable and would be a benefit to the ambulance meetings.

Administrator Newton stated that a countywide ambulance service would only work if everyone agreed. He and Commissioner Lawrence agreed to keep the board apprised of developments from the local ambulance meetings.

I. CCTA Funding Request

Cass County Transportation Authority Executive Director Gerry Bundle was present to answer questions regarding the CCTA request for \$254,034 in stopgap operating funding for FY 2024.

Director Bundle began by explaining the Transportation Authority voted to approve the sale of the property at 400 E. State Street, Cassopolis, to the County of Cass in exchange for the funding. Unfortunately, MDOT informed the CCTA that the sale required approval from the Federal Transit Administration and was dependent upon an appraisal and the depreciation of the property. Administrator Newton stated the board had been hopeful to have collateral or interest in exchange for the funding request.

Director Bundle stated that, if the CCTA ceased to exist, the Dowagiac Dart Transportation System would continue to function.

Director Bundle explained that, effective November 1, 2023, CCTA would not operate on Mondays in order to save money.

Questions followed including:

- If the requested millage was approved in February, would existing CCTA services change?
- Would CCTA purchase vehicles other than buses?
- Would micro transit be looked into as an option?
- Had CCTA looked at similar sized counties to see how they functioned?

Commissioner Barrera suggested holding a public hearing.

Commissioners agreed to move item H to the next regular board meeting agenda. They also agreed to hold a public hearing at the next regular board meeting.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Barrera moved, seconded by Commissioner Locke, to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Approved: _____
Date

Vice-Chair Ryan Laylin

Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register