

BERRIEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of January 16, 2020

Present: Jim Curran, Chair
Michael Majerek, Vice Chair
Chris Heugel
Don Meeks Sr.

Absent:

Scheduled: Jason Latham, Road Department
Bill Wolf, County Administration
Mac Elliott, BOC Chair

Others: Tony Benhart, Public
Darren Schaer, Public
Mike Haskins, Public
Jerry Sirk, Public
Dick Bertog, Public

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 9:24 am.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Majerek, supported by Meeks, to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2020 meeting.
Motion Carried.

Road Department Update

Latham described the issue with the Snow Road closure. The Drain Office just had a pre-bid meeting. Work should start in the spring and finish in the fall. He discussed the MDOT meeting regarding the Empire Avenue bridge. MDOT will need to pave the local roads that will be used as detour routes. Discussions ensued regarding cost and public safety response times. The Asset Management Plan for culverts is due October. He is working with GIS to locate and rate them. After the culverts have been identified, then he will work on an Asset Management Plan for all the signs. Latham is working on integrating the Road policies with County policies specific to transfer and disposal of property. Act 51 requires any property sold must be at fair market value and returned to the Road Department fund. As of now, it looks like the County form just needs to be updated to include the Road Department options.

Q & A with Bill Wolf and BOC Chair Elliott

Elliott verified the consent calendar. Meeks inquired if closing the Empire Avenue bridge will affect the 911 center. Elliott stated there are no physical vehicles located there and that it is all electronic dispatching. Several other routes can be used. Curran asked Wolf if this committee needs to approve the Road Department transfer policy. Wolf stated policy changes do go through this committee, but the updated of forms do not. He stated they are currently working on integrating the policies.

Resolutions

The following Resolution was approved and signed:

A2001151 – Authorize intergovernmental agreement between the Counties of Berrien and Van Buren for the Homeland Security Grant.

Public Comment

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township – he doesn't like calling people liars, but the comments by Jason at last night's meeting on the Empire bridge are not correct. Empire is the only road that goes from the west side of the County to the east side. This will cut access for police and fire. The Township police and fire were not happy. MDOT is taking money from Berrien County and giving it to Detroit. Benton Harbor Schools has property out there and this will prevent them from building a new High School.

Darren Schaer, Pipestone Township – Road Department is making signs cheaper than a business can because the County doesn't pay taxes. Years ago, there was talk of regionalizing 911. Berrien County can't afford the towers. The dump site is the highest elevation instead of the hospital.

Mike Haskins, Pipestone Township – Part of the Empire detour would be Britain and Crystal, which is not a good place for school busses. Jason's idea is good as long as the bridge gets rebuilt.

Jerry Sirk, Benton Charter Township – Empire ends at M140. It doesn't go into Van Buren. It's a narrow, two lane road and he doesn't think two busses could pass each other with the lane sizes. It would need major construction for larger vehicles.

Dick Bertog, Benton Charter Township – Hopes the commission responds to the letter he provided.

Curran commented that if the fire and police do not like the plan for Empire, they need to let the County know.

Meeting adjourned at 10:24 am.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jennifer Arent