

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Virtual Board Meeting Minutes**  
**June 17, 2021**

**Staff Present:** County Administrator Brian Dissette  
(In-person at County Clerk Sharon Tyler  
Adm. Center) Executive Assistant to the Administrator Annette Christie

**CHAIRMAN TO CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:**

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the Board of Commissioners' (BOC) virtual regular meeting to order at 10:33 A.M. in the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

**INVOCATION:**

Commissioner Yarbrough gave the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

Commissioner Wuerfel led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

**ROLL CALL:**

The Chair instructed the Clerk to take a roll call with the following results:

12 PRESENT: Rayonte Bell (via Zoom in St. Joseph City, MI), Jim Curran (via Zoom in Niles Charter Township, MI), Teri Sue Freehling (via Zoom in Ashland, NE), Robert Harrison (via Zoom in Lincoln Charter Township, MI), Jon Hinkelman (via Zoom in Watervliet, MI), Michael Majerek (via Zoom in Niles City, MI), Don Meeks (via Zoom in Benton Charter Township, MI), Ezra Scott (via Zoom in New Buffalo Township, MI), David Vollrath (via Zoom in Coloma Charter Township, MI), Julie Wuerfel (via Zoom in Royalton Township, MI), Mamie Yarbrough (via Zoom in Benton Harbor City, MI) and R. McKinley Elliott (via Zoom in Buchanan, MI).

0 ABSENT.

**APPROVE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 10, 2021 MEETING:**

Commissioner Wuerfel moved and supported by Commissioner Freehling, to approve the BOC virtual regular meeting minutes of June 10, 2021.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll with the following results:

11 YEAS: Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Majerek, Scott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough, Bell and Elliott.

1 ABSTAIN: Meeks. (Due to being absent from the BOC meeting held on June 10, 2021).

Motion carried, no nays.

**COMMUNICATION(S):**

County Clerk Sharon Tyler received and distributed to the Board the following communication(s):

- Roscommon County Board of Commissioners, a resolution opposing Michigan Secretary of State "By Appointment Only", received on June 10, 2021.
- Oceana County Board of Commissioners, a resolution opposing COVID-19 passports, received on June 11, 2021.
- Lenawee County Board of Commissioners, a resolution in opposition to gearing towards integration proposal, received on June 11, 2021.

- David Neckolaishen, Coloma, MI, an email regarding constitutional counties, received on June 14, 2021.

**PARENT COMMITTEE REPORT(S) – Personnel & Human Services and Administration**

**Committees:**

The Personnel & Human Services and Administration Committees presented their Committee Reports. Commissioner Curran requested to amend the Agenda to include Resolution #A2106254 to the Consent Calendar. Discussion was held. Parent Committee minutes are available at [www.berriencounty.org](http://www.berriencounty.org).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING RESOLUTIONS** - Public comments at this portion of the meeting must be related to resolutions listed on today’s agenda only. Those speaking through the YouTube chat during public comments shall identify themselves by name (including last name) and city, township, or village. The public should refer to the resolution # that they are commenting on as a part of their comments: **None.**

**AGENDA AMENDMENT:**

Commissioner Curran moved and seconded by Commissioner Scott, to amend the Agenda to include Resolution #A2106254 – Trial Court Grant to the Consent Calendar.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll with the following results:

12 YEAS: Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Majerek, Meeks, Scott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough, Bell, Curran and Elliott.

Motion carried, no nays.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

Commissioner Curran moved and supported by Commissioner Scott, to pull Resolution #A2106251 - Contract with State for Road Project from the Consent Calendar for further discussion and to be presented separately, to add Resolution #A2106254 to the Consent Calendar, and to approve today’s Consent Calendar as presented:

| <u>Resolutions #</u> | <u>Description</u>                            |
|----------------------|---|
| P2106006             | Per Diems                                     |
| F2106035             | Weekly Bills                                  |
| B2106082             | Weekly Requisitions                           |
| B2106234             | Honorary Resolution                           |
| A2106245             | Authorize Van Buren County as Grant Fiduciary |
| A2106246             | Mental Health Court Grant Program             |
| A2106247             | Swift & Sure Grant Program                    |
| A2106248             | Drug Court Grant Program                      |
| A2106249             | Contract with State for Road Project          |
| A2106250             | Contract with State for Road Project          |
| A2106252             | Contract with State for (2) Bridge Projects   |
| P2106253             | Commissioner 4-year Term                      |
| A2106254             | Trial Court Grant                             |

Commissioner Freehling spoke on Resolution #B2106234 honoring Baroda Fire Department Chief Larry Klug for his 45 years of service to the community of Baroda.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll with the following results:

12 YEAS: Harrison, Hinkelman, Majerek, Meeks, Scott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough, Bell, Curran, Freehling and Elliott.

Motion carried, no nays.

Resolution #A2106251 - Contract with State for Road Project:

Commissioner Curran moved and seconded by Commissioner Scott, to adopt Resolution #A2106251.

Commissioner Scott reviewed the history of the road improvement project along Red Arrow Highway in Chikaming Township. A lengthy discussion was held regarding four lanes versus three on Red Arrow Highway; the risk of delaying the approval of the resolution regarding grant funding, contractors and engineering; a lack of consensus on the project; lack of County involvement; and protocol on the project.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll with the following results:

10 YEAS: Hinkelman, Majerek, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough, Bell, Curran, Freehling, Harrison and Elliott.

2 NAYS: Meeks and Scott.

Motion carried.

**COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):**

The Commissioners presented their outside Commissioners' Reports.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

Administrator Brian Dissette gave his Administrator's Report. Discussion was held on the following:

- Governor Whitmer is planning to ease more restrictions in the coming days. The County plans to proceed with ending the BOC's State of Emergency Declaration as of July 1<sup>st</sup> and return to normal County business operations. Normal operations would include in-person public meetings.
- House Bill 4722 – Letter to Senator LaSata and Representatives Wendzel and Paquette in opposition of House Bill 4722 regarding restrictions regulating short term rental properties. Discussion was held on House Bill 4722, a counter bill to House Bill 4723.
- Administrative Committee had a general consensus of continuing the use of YouTube streaming for BOC and Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings, but not committee meetings due to a lack of technical ability. A resolution would need to be adopted and discussion of the additional work load on staff members regarding virtual meetings. The general public would need to be present in the BOC board room for public comment and this would not be available thru virtual chat.
- Spectrum Health is expected to be merged with Beaumont Hospital.
- Local unit of governments, if they would decide an emergency declaration after the County's declaration has expired would be a high bar to achieve being granted.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS – Those speaking through the YouTube chat during public comments shall identify themselves by name (including last name) and city, township, or village:**

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township, commented about epoxy coating on the Napier Avenue Bridge and said if you downsize road lanes you may lose funding.

Eric Lester, St. Joseph Township, asked about the COW being on YouTube.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Other Business discussion was included in the Administrator Report.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:**

Chairperson Elliott announced the following:

- Today at 1:30 P.M. – Economic Development virtual meeting.
- Today at 2:30 P.M. – EOC meeting.

- Finance Committee meeting will be held virtually at 9:00 A.M., Thursday, June 24, 2021.
- Board of Commissioners meeting will be held virtually at 10:30 A.M., Thursday, June 24, 2021.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:51 A.M.

---

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

---

Sharon J. Tyler, County Clerk

***Minutes are to be approved at the next BOC meeting.***