

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**August 26, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairperson Elliott called the regular meeting to order at 10:39 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners' (BOC) Room at the Berrien County Administration Center in St. Joseph, Michigan.

**INVOCATION:**

Commissioner Rayonte Bell gave the invocation.

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

Special guest Tymella Holloway led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

**PRESENTATION:**

Caitlin Sampsell, Director of 911 shared how Tymella Holloway (7 years old) exhibited bravery and composure while making a 911 call as her mother was having a medical emergency. Director Sampsell presented Tymella with a gift from the 911 Dispatchers, Medic 1, Berrien County Parks Department and Michigan State Police.

A Certificate of Bravery Award was also presented to Tymella Holloway by Board Chairperson Elliott.

**ROLL CALL:**

Chairperson Elliott instructed the Clerk to take roll call with the following results:

11 PRESENT: Rayonte Bell, Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Bob Harrison, Michael Majerek, Don Meeks, Ezra Scott, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough and R. McKinley Elliott.

1 ABSENT: Jon Hinkelman.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Chief Deputy Clerk Mensinger received and distributed the following communications:

Emails received 8/19/2021:

- Gabriella Meredith, Sawyer – stated that she is in support of the planned linear park.
- Jackie Harasewicz, Watervliet – stated that she urges the BOC to deny support to the Berrien County Health Department and deny any mandates they propose.
- Allen Ales, Bridgman – stated support of freedom of choice is the only safe and reasonable answer to wearing masks in schools.
- Jamie Hall, St. Joseph – stated opposition to mandating masks be worn in schools.
- Jerry and Maggie Olson, Harbert – stated support and approval of the Red Arrow Highway reconstruction project currently underway.

Emails received on 8/20/2021:

- Lisa Checkley Needham, Niles – stated support of wearing masks in the schools.
- Erica Walsh, St. Joseph – stated support of mandating masks be worn in the schools.
- Leigh Schoettinger, St. Joseph – stated support of mandating masks be worn in St. Joseph Schools.

Email received on 8/21/2021:

- Melissa Lapekas, St. Joseph – stated support of wearing masks in the schools.

Emails received on 8/23/2021:

- Jeanette Van Nice, Lakeside – stated support of the planned linear park.
- Petra Martinez, Benton Harbor – stated support of mandating masks be worn in Berrien County.
- Casey Smith, Royalton Township – stated support of mandating masks be worn in schools.
- Sue VanderVeen, St. Joseph – stated support of mandating masks be worn in schools.

Emails received on 8/24/2021:

- Lilly DiMaggio, Lincoln Charter Township – stated support of mandating masks be worn at Lakeshore Schools.
- Deanna Chorny, Stevensville – stated support of mandating masks be worn in schools by unvaccinated students.
- Jeremy Prong, Benton Harbor - stated opposition to mandating masks be worn in schools.
- Rose Strother, New Buffalo – stated opposition to mandating masks be worn in schools.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Scott moved, seconded by Commissioner Wuerfel, to approve the regular meeting minutes of August 19, 2021. Motion carried, no nays.

**PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING RESOLUTIONS: Public comments at this portion of the meeting must be related to resolutions listed on today’s agenda only. Those speaking during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name and city, township, or village (Article III, 3.9B-C):**

Darrin Schaer, Pipestone Township – spoke about Resolution # A2108303 – Amendment to Title IV-D Contract Friend of the Court.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

Commissioner Curran moved, seconded by Commissioner Vollrath, to approve the consent calendar as presented.

<u>Resolution #</u>	<u>Descriptions</u>
F2108044	Weekly Bills
B2108091	Weekly Requisitions
A2108302	Secondary Road Patrol Grant Acceptance for Sheriff
A2108303	Amendment to Title IV-D Contract Friend of the Court
A2108304	School Resource Officer Contract Brandywine Schools
A2108305	FY21-22 Snowmobile Grant Application for Sheriff

Chairperson Elliott instructed the Clerk to take roll call with the following results:

11 YEAS: Bell, Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Majerek, Meeks, Scott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, Yarbrough and Elliott. Motion carried, no nays.

**ADDED RESOLUTIONS:** Resolution C2108307 – COVID-19 Committee Recommendation  
Commissioner Yarbrough moved, seconded by Commissioner Vollrath, to approve Resolution #C2108307 – COVID-19 Committee Recommendations.

Commissioner Vollrath read into record Resolution # C2108307 - COVID-19 Committee Recommendation:

**THE HONORABLE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN:** *Your COVID-19 COMMITTEE respectfully recommends adoption of the following:*

**WHEREAS,** *it is the mission of Berrien County to provide leadership, cooperation with all units of government, sound fiscal management, and planning, thereby promoting public safety, health, well-being and prosperity in order to improve the quality of life for present and future generations; and*

**WHEREAS,** *the goal of the Berrien County Health Department is to prevent disease, protect health, and promote an optimal quality of life for all residents; and*

**WHEREAS,** *the Michigan Public Health Code charges local public health departments and officials with certain duties, including prevention and control of infectious and communicable diseases such as COVID-19; and*

**WHEREAS,** *Berrien County public health officials and staff have worked tirelessly over the past 18 months to protect community health through the interpretation and sharing of health data, promoting accurate health information, and coordination of response needs in service to Berrien County residents; and*

**WHEREAS,** *local, regional and state-wide data surveillance show that COVID-19 continues to pose a health risk to residents through continued evolution of the virus and the impact of new variant strains and unvaccinated populations; and*

**WHEREAS,** *the Berrien County Health Department urges all residents 12 and over to be vaccinated, to stay home when sick, to practice good hand hygiene and cough & sneeze etiquette, and to wear face masks when appropriate.*

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED** *that the Berrien County Board of Commissioners supports the Berrien County Health Department and our local public health officials in their continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in protecting the health and well-being of the residents of Berrien County.*

Chairperson Elliott called for voice vote. Motion carried, no nays.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:** The Administration, Finance and Personnel and Human Services Committees presented their committee reports. Committee minutes are available at [www.berriencounty.org](http://www.berriencounty.org).

**COMMISSIONER REPORTS:**  
Commissioners gave their outside reports.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

Administrator Dissette thanked the Board for going to Chikaming Township for last week’s Board of Commissioners meeting. Chikaming Township Supervisor Bunte and his staff did an excellent job of hosting and providing facilities and equipment for the meeting. He also thanked Kevin Stack from the Road Department for leading the tour of the Red Arrow Highway Project and to the Transit Team for providing the transportation. He also thanked Annette Christie for her work on behalf of the Board.

**GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS: Those speaking during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name and city, township, or village. (Article III. 3.9B-C):**

Jerry Sirk, Benton Charter Township – shared information regarding grants through the Mason Lodges in Michigan for non-profit organizations.

Tony Bennett, Sodus Township – spoke about the possibility of connecting to broadband through the new I & M electric towers.

Darrin Schaer, Pipestone Township – spoke about whose responsibility is it to mow road right-of-way.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

Commissioner Scott reported that he has had the same mowing issues in his district as Mr. Schaer is experiencing. Commissioner Scott spoke with Kevin Stack at the Road Department and was told that as soon as they finish the chip and seal projects they would get back to mowing.

Commissioner Scott reported that grants for broadband are going quickly. The County does not have a grant writer on staff and suggested that the County contact the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission about writing broadband grants for the County.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:**

- No meetings will be held Thursday, September 2, 2021.
- County facilities will be closed Monday, September 6, 2021 – Labor Day.
- Board of Commissioner Meetings will resume on Thursday, September 9, 2021.
- Chairperson Elliott reported that there have been suicide bombings at the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan and asked for prayers for our Troops and the citizens of Afghanistan.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 A.M.

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R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

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Diane Mensinger, Chief Deputy Clerk

***Minutes are to be approved at the full board meeting on September 9, 2021.***

