

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
August 26, 2021

CHAIRMAN TO CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairperson Elliott called the regular meeting to order at 8:37 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners' (BOC) room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

ROLL CALL:

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

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

1 ABSENT: Jon Hinkelman

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 12, 2021 MEETING:

Commissioner Meeks moved, seconded by Commissioner Majerek, to approve the Committee of the Whole minutes from August 12, 2021. Motion carried, no nays.

REQUISITION REVIEW:

Executive Administrative Assistant Annette Christie presented the requisitions for the Board's review.

SCHEDULED DISCUSSION:

Graham Woodhouse Award Presentation – Kristopher Martin, Associate Planner at SWMPC

This award is presented annually by the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission for projects exemplifying intergovernmental cooperation by local units of government.

The 2020 award goes to the Paw Paw River Water Trail Project. This project includes 68 miles of the Paw Paw River in Van Buren and Berrien Counties. It involved nine (9) Townships, seven (7) Cities/Villages and one (1) federal recognized Tribe.

Special projects like signage along the route was funded by diverse philanthropy and made possible by the Van Buren and Berrien Road Departments. This signage has been invaluable in assisting with rescue efforts on the water trail way.

COVID-19 Update – Health Officer Courtney Davis and Dr. Rex Cabaltica, MD, MPH

Health Officer Davis presented a PowerPoint presentation:

- Communities and organizations should update COVID-19 prevention strategies based on: community spread; health system capacity; vaccination coverage; early detection of COVID-19 increases; and populations at risk.
- Transmission of COVID-19 has increased over the past five (5) to seven (7) weeks.
- Over the last six (6) week's, COVID-19 testing percent positivity among Berrien County residents was at 11.52%.

- Vaccination Updates: 12 to 19 years is at 34% and 12 Years and older is at 55.6%. Approximately 73,275 people in Berrien County have initiated their COVID-19 vaccine (as of 8/16/21).
- Delta Variant – It is present in Berrien County.
 - The Delta Variant is more contagious.
 - Vaccinations work to protect against Delta, but more importantly, protect against severe illness, hospitalization and death.
 - If you had the original strain of COVID-19 and are not vaccinated, you are at a heightened risk of getting Delta.
 - Vaccination and Masking are the best lines of defense to slow the spread.
- Public Health Recommendations, Berrien:
 - All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a face covering when indoors and when in crowded spaces.
 - Receive the COVID-19 vaccine, if eligible.
 - Wash your hands frequently.
 - Stay home when sick and get tested for COVID-19.
 - Adhere to isolation if you test positive for COVID19 or quarantine if considered a close contact.
 - Maintain a physical distance as is feasible.
- The above listed actions matter as we prioritize in-person learning and social connections.
- Modeling: Masks can substantially reduce transmission in school settings, even with the Delta Variant. If one infectious child attends a class of 25 students, how long does it take for there to be a >50% chance of transmission occurring?
 - In Elementary Schools: without masks – three (3) hours, imperfect masking – 24 hours and with complete masking 120 hours.
 - In High Schools: without masks – two (2) hours, imperfect masking – 18 hours and complete masking – 89 hours.

This report is available to view at www.berriencounty.org in the Agenda Center for the Committee of the Whole.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Per the Berrien County Board of Commissioners’ Bylaws, 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):

- Melissa Clapper, St. Joseph Charter Township – thanked the Board and Health Department for today’s presentation and stated her support for wearing masks in the schools.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Diane Mensinger, Chief Deputy Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.