

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**April 13, 2023**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott called the Board of Commissioners' (BOC) regular meeting to order at 10:39 A.M. in the BOC's boardroom at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

**INVOCATION:**

Commissioner Chokwe Pitchford gave the invocation.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Commissioner Alex Ott 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, Jim Curran, Teri Sue Freehling, Robert Harrison, Jon Hinkelman, Michael Majerek, Alex Ott, Chokwe Pitchford, David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough and R. McKinley Elliott.

0 ABSENT.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 6, 2023 MEETING:**

Commissioner Pitchford moved and supported by Commissioner Harrison, to approve the BOC regular meeting minutes of April 6, 2023. Motion carried and no nays.

**COMMUNICATION(S):**

County Clerk Sharon Tyler received and distributed to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) the following communication:

- A resolution from Eaton County Board of Commissioners, honoring the Michigan Association of Counties on its 125th Anniversary, received on April 6, 2023.

**PRESENTATION – Trial Court Strategic Plan – Trial Court Administrator Carrie Smietanka-Haney:**

Trial Court Administrator Carrie Smietanka-Haney and Family Division Administrator Elvin Gonzalez were present, with Chief Judge Mabel Mayfield; Rebecca Rose, Rulo Strategies LLC; and Dr. Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey, PRAXIS Consulting, Inc.; were attending by zoom giving a PowerPoint presentation on "Strategic Plan for Improving the Juvenile Justice System in Berrien County." They discussed the following:

- Convening County, Court, and Justice Leaders: A Framework for Cross-System Collaboration
  - Model for a structured, multi-sector planning process.
  - Cross-sector teams are using the framework to:
    - Identify local justice challenges and opportunities;
    - Prioritize solutions grounded in evidence;
    - Align resources across agencies;
    - Build a structure to sustain efforts and monitor progress/successes.
- Strategic Planning Process – Berrien County
  1. Regular Planning Meetings – County and Court Leadership
  2. Juvenile Justice Planning Forums (w/Court, County, & JJ Partners/Stakeholders)
    - September 15 – 16, 2022
    - January 27, 2023
  3. Strategic Plan – "Our Path Forward"
- Stakeholder Recommendations: Goals, Strategies, and Priorities
  - Strategic Areas
    - Continuum of Programs and Services

- Suitable, Multi-Purpose Juvenile Justice Center
- Strategic Area 1: Continuum of Programs & Services - Goals and 2023 Priorities
  - Goals: Berrien County will:
    - Goal 1 – Keep lower risk juvenile offenders out of the juvenile justice system.
    - Goal 2 – Provide an expanded continuum of community and juvenile justice services and programs, including prevention, early intervention, and treatment that meet the needs of youth and families.
    - Goal 3 – Achieve improved outcomes/results with youth involved in the juvenile justice system, resulting in reduced recidivism.
  - 2023 Priorities –
    - Work with partners and/or with existing or new workgroups to make improvements in the following areas:
      - School Justice Initiative
      - Behavioral Health Services
      - Parental Engagement and Involvement
      - Recruitment and Retention for All Stakeholder Agencies
- Strategic Area 2: Suitable, Multi-Purpose Juvenile Justice Center - Goals and 2023 Priorities
  - Goals:
    - Goal 1 – The County will provide a suitable, multipurpose Juvenile Justice Center that is easily accessible and meets the needs of youth and families.
    - Goal 2 – Court, juvenile justice partner and community services/programs will be provided from a centralized hub/ location in Berrien County with additional services provided to other parts of the county virtually and via satellite offices.
  - 2023 Priorities:
    - Long term facilities planning
    - Short term/immediate facilities and staffing improvements
- Next Steps
  - Strategic Area 1 –
    - Convene updated juvenile justice stakeholder team with ongoing representation from critical community members and services.
    - Enhance recruitment opportunities for new staff while continuing to upskill existing staff.
  - Strategic Area 2 –
    - Continue site design efforts with Wightman/DLR Group for a new juvenile justice center.
    - Review immediate facilities needs at current site as required for operation of the facility until a new center is viable.
- County/Court Partnership
  - What we are asking from the Board of Commissioners:
    1. Continued collaboration regarding juvenile justice needs in the community
    2. Develop a long-term facilities strategy for a Juvenile Justice Center that will meet the needs of youth and families in Berrien County
    3. Assist in funding &/or pursue grant opportunities for high priority areas – services and facilities – that will increase the JJ system’s effectiveness and enhance public safety (e.g., prevention efforts, lower recidivism, etc.).

Discussion was held.

**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 during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name (including last name) and city, township, or village. (Article III, 3.9 B-C). The public should refer to the resolution # that they are commenting on as a part of their comments:**

Adolf Peltzer, Hagar Township, spoke about Resolution #F2394026 on road department expenses.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

Commissioner Pitchford moved and supported by Commissioner Majerek, to approve today’s consent calendar:

<u>Resolution(s) #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2304026	Weekly Bills & Road Payables
B2304073	Weekly Requisitions
A2304178	Apply for the OHSP grant for focused enforcement
A2304179	Approve MDOT Contract #23-5056 for Napier Avenue work
A2304180	Apply for MCOLES police academy reimbursement funds
A2304185	Approve contract with Eau Claire Schools for School Resource Officer

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

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

Motion carried, no nays.

**ADDED RESOLUTION(S):** None.

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

**Committees:**

The Administration, Finance and Personnel & Human Services (PHSC) Committees presented their Committee Reports. Parent Committee minutes are available at [www.berriencounty.org](http://www.berriencounty.org). Discussion was held.

**COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):**

The Commissioners presented their outside committee reports.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

Administrator Brian Dissette gave his Administrator’s Report.

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

Adolf Pelzer, Hagar Township, spoke about having a newsletter and meeting times.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:**

Chairperson Elliott announced the following:

- May 4, 2023 – BOC Night Meeting at New Buffalo Township Hall – 6:00 P.M.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 A.M.

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R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

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Sharon J. Tyler, County Clerk

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