

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Virtual Board Meeting Minutes**  
**January 14, 2021**

**Staff Present:** County Administrator Brian Dissette  
Executive Assistant to the Administrator Annette Christie  
Chief Deputy Clerk Diane Mensinger  
Sheriff Paul Bailey  
Doug James, Director of Financial Services  
Don Meyer, Information Systems

**BOC Present:** Chairperson R. McKinley Elliott  
(in-person) Commissioner Curran  
Commissioner Vollrath  
Commissioner Wuerfel

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

Vice-Chair Ezra Scott called the virtual regular meeting to order at 10:33 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners' (BOC) room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

**INVOCATION:**

District 4 Commissioner Mamie Yarbrough gave the invocation.

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

District 9 Commissioner Ezra Scott led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

**ROLL CALL:**

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

11 PRESENT: Jim Curran, Teri Freehling (via Zoom in Baroda Township, MI), Robert Harrison (via Zoom in Lincoln Charter Township, MI), Jon Hinkelman (via Zoom in Watervliet, MI), Michael Majerek (via Zoom in Niles, MI), Don Meeks (via Zoom, Benton Charter Township, MI), Ezra Scott (via Zoom in New Buffalo Township, MI), David Vollrath, Julie Wuerfel, Mamie Yarbrough (via Zoom in Benton Harbor, MI) and R. McKinley Elliott (arrived at 10:39 A.M.).

1 ABSENT: Rayonte Bell

**APPROVE MINUTES OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING:**

Commissioner Freehling moved, seconded by Commissioner Harrison, to approve the BOC virtual organizational meeting minutes of January 7, 2021.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call the roll resulting as follows:

10 YEAS: Curran, Freehling, Harrison, Hinkelman, Majerek, Meeks, Scott, Vollrath, Wuerfel, and Yarbrough. Motion carried, no nays.

(Commissioner Elliott arrived at 10:39 A.M.)

**COMMUNICATION(S):**

Chief Deputy Clerk Diane Mensinger received and distributed the following communication:

- Gregory Offenback of Sodus, Michigan, email received January 13, 2021 requesting a resolution to Governor Whitmer regarding lockdowns and business closures.

**BROADBAND SURVEY UPDATE:** Broadband Committee (Curran, Freehling, Scott) John Egelhaff, Executive Director of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and Charlotte Berersdorff, Vice President for Community Engagement - Merit

Charlotte Beresdorff gave a brief review of Merit's work including:

- Data and Mapping
- Funding and Policy
- Education and Resources

John Egelhaff reviewed the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission's involvement in expanding broadband in Southwest Michigan.

- Berrien County passed the Broadband Torch to SWMPC in 2019 and have been building their capacity and partnerships since.
- Began meeting regularly with the BoC Broadband Committee since late 2019 to share the latest information on broadband.
- In October 2020, the BoC committee to work with Merit to build a comprehensive understanding of broadband coverage and gaps across the county.
- Community Engagement includes collaboration-building with Organizational partners and hosting a Community Organizational Partner Project Webinar in mid-January.
- Data Collection will include a postcard mailing and a Marketing Campaign Launch in mid-February.
- Outputs and Data Analysis will be done by Merit March 29 to April 29 and Community presentations in May and June.

Discussion was held.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

The Administration Committee, Personnel and Human Services Committee and Finance Committee presented their Committee Reports. 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 You Tube chat during public comments shall identify themselves by name (including last name) and city, township, or village:** None.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

Commissioner Vollrath moved, seconded by Commissioner Majerek, to approve today's Consent Calendar as presented.

<u>Resolutions #</u>	<u>Description</u>
F2101014	Weekly Bills
B2101060	Weekly Requisitions
F2101107	Road Payables
F2101149	Approve Broadband Survey Press Release
F2101150	Approve 2021 Mileage Reimbursement Rate

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

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

**ADDED RESOLUTION(S):** None

**BOARD APPOINTMENTS:**

**Finance Committee Recommendations**

Commissioner Yarbrough moved, seconded by Commissioner Harrison, to approve the Finance Committee’s recommendation for appointments:

- Appoint Peter Colovos to the Public Works Board to a three (3) year term expiring 12/31/2023;
- Re-appointment of David Colp to the Workforce Development Board to a three (3) year term expiring 12/31/2023;
- Appoint Paul Knopacki to the Workforce Development Board to fill the term of Tim Calhoun with a term expiring 12/31/2022.

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

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

**Administration Committee Recommendation**

Commissioner Curran moved, seconded by Commissioner Vollrath, to approve the Administration Committee’s recommendation for the following appointment:

- Appoint Steve Pierangeli to the Community Corrections Board to replace Mike Sepic in the Prosecutor position with a term expiring 12/31/2023.

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

**Commissioner Appointment to Boards and Committees – Chairperson Elliott**

Chairperson Elliott made the following Board and Committee appointments:

Bell	Community Correction Advisory Board Twin Cities Area Transportation Study
Curran	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission Disaster Planning Committee Local Emergency Planning Committee (EOC) County Public Safety Communications Center Operation Committee/911 Technical 911 Quality Assurance Committee Berrien County Area Transportation Committee Broadband Committee
Elliott	Pokagon New Buffalo Area LSRB (Alternate) CEO Meeting (As Chair) Cornerstone Alliance Board (As Chair) Economic Development (As Chair)
Freehling	Southwest Michigan Planning Commission Brownfield Development Authority BC Planning Commission MSU Extension Advisory Board Housing Resource Network Pension Board (Finance Committee) Berrien County Area Transportation Committee Broadband Committee

	Economic Development Corporation (Finance Committee)
Harrison	Local Emergency Planning Commission (EOC) Disaster Planning Committee Brownfield Authority (until he can be replaced) Berrien County Area Transportation Committee Health Board Berrien County Human Services Council
Hinkelman	Pension Board (Finance Committee) Land Preservation Board
Majerek	Mental Health Authority Substance Abuse Oversight Policy Board Niles Area Transportation Brownfield Development Authority
Meeks	Brownfield Development Authority Public Works Southwest Michigan Planning Commission Substance Abuse Oversight Policy Board Land Bank Authority Mental Health Authority Workforce Development
Scott	Health Dept. Well and Septic Review Board Sewage Appeals Board Pokagon New Buffalo Area LRSB Southwest Michigan Solid Waste Consortium Solid Waste Planning Land Bank Authority Broadband Committee Pension Board (Finance Committee)
Vollrath	Area Agency on Aging County Public Safety Communications Center Operation Committee / 911 Technical Local Emergency Planning Commissioner (EOC) SMART Disaster Planning Commission 911 Advisory Board 911 Quality Assurance Committee MAC – Judiciary MAC – General Government / Finance
Yarbrough	Workforce Development Board Land Ban Authority Pension Board (Finance Committee) Michigan Works Improvement Committee Economic Development (Finance Chairperson) Parks and Recreation Commission
Wuerfel	Parks and Recreation Commission County Public Safety Communications Center Operations Committee

911 Technical  
Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency  
MAC – Agriculture and Tourism  
MAC – Health and Human Services

**COMMISSIONER CONFLICT WAIVER DISCUSSION:**

Elliott - no change from last year's waiver.

Curran - no change from last year's waiver.

Vollrath – he has no conflicts this year as his mother resigned as the Director of the Senior Citizens Center in Coloma.

Wuerfel – her brother works as an executive with Well Path and her daughter works for the company headquarters in Nashville.

Scott – no change from last year's waiver.

Yarbrough – no change from last year's waiver.

Freehling – no change from the updated waiver from October 2020.

Harrison – no change from last year's waiver.

Hinkelman - no change from last year's waiver.

Meeks – stated that he is now working for his son's business (Meek's Construction) that does the demolishing for the county.

Majerek - no change from last year's waiver.

**COMMISSIONER REPORT(S):**

The Commissioners presented their outside Commissioners' Reports.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

Administrator Brian Dissette gave his Administrator's Report.

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

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township – commented that the Road Department should consider the purchase of a used rather than a new loader.

Dr. Eric Lester, St. Joseph Charter Township – commented that the County should follow the COVID-19 guidelines set by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

- Administrator Dissette asked that the Administration Committee meet prior to next Thursday's BoC meeting to discuss the 911 Telerad Contract. It was decided to meet on Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 A.M.
- Commissioner Freehling stated that she serves on the Housing Network and that grant money is going to be available for emergency rental assistance. She further stated that the Community Development Department is working hard to utilize this grant possibility.

- Commissioner Freehling asked if there was an email address available to share with the community to participate in the Broadband webinar on January 25<sup>th</sup>. Administrator Dissette shared that it is [Meritsurvey@berriencounty.org](mailto:Meritsurvey@berriencounty.org).
- Commissioner Wuerfel suggested that a letter be sent to Governor Whitmer and our legislators regarding COVID-19 restrictions. Discussion followed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS/REMINDERS:**

- The Administration Committee will meet virtually today at 12:30 P.M.
- The Brownfield Authority will meet today at 1:30 P.M.
- County facilities will be closed on Monday, January 18th in recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
- The Administration Committee will meet virtually on Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 A.M.
- The EOC will meet virtually on Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 A.M.
- The Personnel and Human Services Committee will meet virtually on Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 8:00 A.M.
- The Finance Committee will meet virtually on Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 A.M.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 P.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 next BOC meeting.***