

**BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**January 13, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairperson Elliott called the regular meeting to order at 10:41 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:**

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

**ROLL CALL:**

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

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

0 ABSENT.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Scott moved, seconded by Commissioner Vollrath, to approve the Organizational Meeting minutes of January 6, 2022. Motion carried, no nays.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Chief Deputy Clerk Mensinger received and distributed the following communications:

- Rich McCoy, Stevensville – two emails dated 1/2/2022 – inquired about COVID guidance issued to Lakeshore School Superintendent.
- Lydia Dutton, St. Joseph – email received 1/12/2022 regarding grant opportunities for air quality programs.

**PRESENTATION: Berrien County Trails**

Marcy Hamilton, Deputy Executive Director of SWMPC and Board Advisor to Friends of Berrien County Trails gave a Power Point presentation.

Trails include: Shared Use Paths; Paved Shoulders/Bike Lanes/Sharrows; U.S. Bike Routes; Water Trails (canoe/kayak); and Trails in Parks (hiking, cross country skiing, fat tire mountain biking).

Why Invest in Trails? It retains and attracts businesses and residents; increases real estate values; promotes tourism; increases tax revenue; encourages physical activity (health); improves safety and reduces environmental impact.

Major Existing Trail Systems include: Red Arrow Linear Park (Union Pier / Harbert); IN MI River Valley Trail (Niles to Mishawaka), McCoy Creek Trail (Buchanan); Harbor Shores Trail (Benton

Harbor; John and Dede Howard Recreational Trail (St. Joseph); and Paw Paw Lake (Watervliet / Coloma).

Trail Priorities in Berrien County include: Marquette Greenway; Red Arrow Linear Park (US 12-Bridgman); IN MI River Valley Trail expansion / Lake Chapin Bridge; McCoy Creek expansion; Ox Creek Trail; Hickory Creek Trail and M-63 Pathway.

Water Trails include: Lake Michigan Water Trail (Berrien Co. / Van Buren Co); St. Joseph River (Berrien Co.); Dowagiac River (Cass Co. / Berrien Co.); Galien River (Berrien Co.); and Hickory Creek (Berrien Co.).

Friends of Berrien County Trails is a Michigan registered 501(c) (3) non-profit that supports the construction and maintenance of trails (pedestrian, bicycle and waterway) within Berrien County and connecting to adjacent counties. Their core values include: improve safety, connect communities, improve health and wellness; support economic development; and build world class trails. They are working on a Master Plan to promote trail connectivity, alternative transportation, the safety for all users, recreational opportunities and economic development. They plan to engage the entire County, local governments, community groups, and citizens in developing a robust trails master plan that will connect cities, villages, townships, parks and major destinations.

**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):**

- Tony Benhart, Sodus Township – Spoke about A2201168 - Approve Contract with Chris Cook for Consulting Services and purchases made by Road Department.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

Commissioner Scott moved, seconded by Commissioner Majerek, to approve the consent calendar as presented.

<u>Resolution #</u>	<u>Descriptions</u>
F2201014	Weekly Bills
B2201061	Weekly Requisitions
F2201162	Audit Services Agreement Rehmann Robson
B2201163	Express Opposition to Legislation Changing Mental Health Services
P2201165	Scrap Tire Collection Program Memo of Understanding
A2201167	Approve Grant Application for Mental Health Work with Juvenile Justice
A2201168	Approve Contract with Chris Cook for Consulting Services
A2201169	Approve Road Designation Changes for Alleys on Act 51 Maps
A2201170	Approve Road Designation Changes for Road on Act 51 Maps
A2201171	Approve Traffic Control Order for Three Oaks Road
A2201172	Approve Traffic Control Order for Maiden Lane
F2201173	Approve Mileage Reimbursement Rate for 2022

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

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

**ADDED RESOLUTIONS:** None.

**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 REPORT(S):**  
Commissioners gave their outside reports.

**ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:** None.

**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):

Tracy, Berrien County – spoke about school funding and COVID.

Christina Dahlquist, Coloma – spoke about mental health studies that show mental health disorders have increased in those 25 years old and younger and the lack of public trust in medical establishments.

Victory Woodall, Covert Township – thanked the Board of Commissioners for issuing a directive to Acting Director Miller to do a study including more metrics.

Chokwe Pitchford, Benton Harbor – spoke about the lack of police officers across the state and the public's distrust in police officers. In order to rebuild that trust, the relationship with police needs to be mended.

Michael Hoyh, Benton Harbor City – spoke about the Berrien County Historical Society hosting a mock trial for students on January 19, 2022 and the need for volunteers. He also spoke about Benton Harbor Strong having started a bike club and the importance of trails.

Tony Benhart, Sodus – spoke about the demolishing of the old Berrien General Hospital and relocating the Eau Claire Road Department to that property.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None.

**ANNOUNCEMENT/REMINDERS:**

- County Facilities will be closed on Monday, January 17, 2022 in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 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 BOC meeting.***