

**BERRIEN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
VIA ZOOM
Minutes of May 27, 2021**

Roll Call Present: Jim Curran, Chairperson, via Zoom in Niles Charter Township
Don Meeks Sr., Vice Chair via Zoom in Benton Charter Township
David Vollrath, via Zoom in Coloma Charter Township
Julie Wuerfel, via Zoom in Royalton Township

Absent:

Scheduled: Brian Dissette, County Administrator
Chris Cook, Abonmarche Consultant
Kevin Stack, Road Department
Undersheriff Chuck Heit, BCSD

Others: Annette Christie, County Administration
Dan Fette, Community Development Director
Sheriff Paul Bailey, BCSD
Frank DeFrancesco, Attorney for Erin Lehmann
Jennifer Arent, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 9:17 am. Roll Call as follows: 4 PRESENT: Curran, Meeks, Vollrath, Wuerfel.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Vollrath, supported by Meeks, to approve the minutes of the May 13, 2021 meeting. Roll Call Vote as follows: 4 YEAS: Curran, Meeks, Vollrath, Wuerfel. Motion Carried.

Resolutions

A2105232 – Road Abandonment Request

Stack discussed the timeline and process. This is Oak Lane in Shoreham, which has been affected by erosion. The road has been stabilized by the residents. They are requesting it to be abandoned to prevent continual public use which is contributing to the issue. The Road Department would maintain 30ft in for a turnaround for equipment. The remaining 215' would become a private drive for the parcel owners. Land Description would adjust the property lines. DeFrancesco addressed the Committee and confirmed his client, Erin Lehmann, has requested this and no one else has objected. The Committee concurred to move the Resolution forward to the full Board.

A2106239 – Contract with New Buffalo Township for office space (Sheriff)

Bailey discussed the new public safety facility that New Buffalo Township has built on Red Arrow Highway. He currently has 5 deputies assigned to the current substation. This would be a lease for \$15,000 per year for 10 years then \$1,000 per year thereafter for maintenance. It is a 99 year lease. Dissette noted they had been using space at a single family home just outside of the casino, but the building is not adequate. The Committee concurred to move the Resolution forward to the full Board.

Public Meeting Status Discussion

Dissette and Fette discussed Fette's memo previously sent regarding the new orders by MDHHS and MIOSHA regarding masks and employee safety. For the month of June, there can be up to 25 people in the Board of Commissioners room, however, this would limit the number of public that could attend. There is also the issue of verifying employees and visitors that have received the vaccine. The governor has announced that on July 1st all orders will be rescinded and masks, spacing and vaccine verification will be a nonissue. Also, the Courthouse employees are under different orders and must continue to wear masks and observe social distancing requirements through June regardless of vaccine status. Therefore, it is their recommendation to keep the status quo through June 30th, which will keep all employees equal. Wuerfel suggested holding a night meeting in the South County area at a park. Meeks suggested keeping the meetings streaming live via YouTube. Dissette stated the State of Emergency ends June 30th and the required video streaming will end. Christie recommended sending out a news release and providing it to all municipalities.

Strategic Planning Discussion

Dissette stated the last Strategic Planning was in 2017 and was conducted in-house. It is believed the last one performed by an outside contractor was around 2002. Jim Hettinger, former interim CEO of Cornerstone, has been informally putting together information. He would like to have a formal contract to present to the Finance Committee at their next meeting. This would be for a 5 to 10 year Strategic Plan.

Sheriff Funds Distribution

Chairman Curran noted that he has approved Berrien Community Foundation funding for the Sheriff's Department to use funds donated by Ashley and David Warren to purchase an Aquaeye handheld sonar device for the dive team for \$4,800.

Dissette stated the Finance Committee has questioned the lack of bidding process. The question is if the money is being donated for a specific item, does it still need to go through bidding? The Finance Committee would like to introduce a waiver of the bidding process for when all private, donated funds are being used. Curran stated this does not fall under the Finance Committee as the funds are for the Sheriff's Department, coordinated with the Berrien Community Foundation, and the Sheriff reports to the Administration Committee. Donation of funds are not subject to any bidding requirements. Discussions ensued and the remaining Committee members concurred with Curran.

Public Comment

Tony Benhart, Sodus Township – I agree that the meetings go back to live in July and still have a live Zoom connection if possible for people that cannot attend in person. After a period of time, if the Zoom loses attendance, then do away with it. It may take a while for people to feel comfortable to return to meeting in a confined room.

Miscellaneous

Dissette stated the Friend of the Court remodel is complete and Tom Watson will be retiring soon. He would like to coordinate a tour of the remodel for the Committee. The Public Defender's office is also complete and that could be worked in to the tour, too. He would like to set it up for next Thursday and will provide details later.

Chairman Curran adjourned the meeting at 10:11 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

J Arent

Jennifer Arent
Recording Secretary