

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' COMMUNICATION WITH THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE

June 12, 2020

Board of Commissioners
County of Berrien, Michigan
St. Joseph, Michigan

We have audited the financial statements of the governmental activities, the business-type activities, the aggregate discretely presented component units, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the *County of Berrien, Michigan* (the "County") as of and for the year ended December 31, 2019, and have issued our report thereon dated June 12, 2020. Our report includes a reference to other auditors who audited the financial statements of the Berrien Mental Health Authority, as described in our report on the County's financial statements. Professional standards require that we advise you of the following matters relating to our audit.

Our Responsibility in Relation to the Financial Statement Audit

As communicated in our engagement letter dated February 19, 2020, our responsibility, as described by professional standards, is to form and express opinions about whether the financial statements that have been prepared by management with your oversight are fairly presented, in all material respects, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Our audit of the financial statements does not relieve you or management of your respective responsibilities.

Our responsibility, as prescribed by professional standards, is to plan and perform our audit to obtain reasonable, rather than absolute, assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit of financial statements includes consideration of internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, as part of our audit, we considered the internal control of the County solely for the purpose of determining our audit procedures and not to provide any assurance concerning such internal control.

We are also responsible for communicating significant matters related to the audit that are, in our professional judgment, relevant to your responsibilities in overseeing the financial reporting process. However, we are not required to design procedures for the purpose of identifying other matters to communicate to you.

We have provided our findings regarding internal control over financial reporting and compliance noted during our audit in a separate letter to you dated June 12, 2020.

Planned Scope and Timing of the Audit

We performed the audit according to the planned scope and timing previously communicated to you in our engagement letter and in our meeting about planning matters on April 13, 2020.

Compliance with All Ethics Requirements Regarding Independence

The engagement team, others in our firm, as appropriate, and our firm has complied with all relevant ethical requirements regarding independence.

Qualitative Aspects of the County's Significant Accounting Practices

Significant Accounting Policies

Management has the responsibility to select and use appropriate accounting policies. A summary of the significant accounting policies adopted by the County is included in Note 1 to the financial statements.

There have been no initial selections of accounting policies and no changes in significant accounting policies or their application during the year.

No matters have come to our attention that would require us, under professional standards, to inform you about (1) the methods used to account for significant unusual transactions and (2) the effect of significant accounting policies in controversial or emerging areas for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus.

Significant Accounting Estimates

Accounting estimates are an integral part of the financial statements prepared by management and are based on management's current judgments. Those judgments are normally based on knowledge and experience about past and current events and assumptions about future events. Certain accounting estimates are particularly sensitive because of their significance to the financial statements and because of the possibility that future events affecting them may differ markedly from management's current judgments.

The most sensitive accounting estimates affecting the financial statements were:

- Management's estimate of the useful lives of depreciable capital assets is based on the length of time it is believed that those assets will provide some economic benefit in the future.
- Management's estimate of the accrued compensated absences is based on current hourly rates and policies regarding payment of sick and vacation banks.
- Management's estimate of the allowance for uncollectible receivable balances is based on past experience and future expectation for collection of various account balances.

- Management's estimate of the insurance claims incurred but not reported is based on information provided by the entity's third party administrators and subsequent claims activity.
- The assumptions used in the actuarial valuations of the pension and other postemployment benefits plans are based on historical trends and industry standards.

We evaluated the key factors and assumptions used to develop these estimates and determined that they are reasonable in relation to the basic financial statements taken as a whole and in relation to the applicable opinion units.

Significant Difficulties Encountered During the Audit

We encountered no significant difficulties in dealing with management relating to the performance of the audit.

Uncorrected and Corrected Misstatements

For purposes of this communication, professional standards require us to accumulate all known and likely misstatements identified during the audit, other than those that we believe are trivial, and communicate them to the appropriate level of management. Further, professional standards require us to also communicate the effect of uncorrected misstatements related to prior periods on the relevant classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures, and the financial statements as a whole and each applicable opinion unit. In addition, professional standards require us to communicate to you all material, corrected misstatements that were brought to the attention of management as a result of our audit procedures. None of the misstatements detected as a result of audit procedures and corrected by management were material, either individually or in the aggregate, to the financial statements taken as a whole.

Disagreements with Management

For purposes of this letter, professional standards define a disagreement with management as a matter, whether or not resolved to our satisfaction, concerning a financial accounting, reporting, or auditing matter, which could be significant to the County's financial statements or the auditors' report. No such disagreements arose during the course of the audit.

Representations Requested from Management

We have requested certain written representations from management, which are included in Attachment B to this letter.

Management's Consultations with Other Accountants

In some cases, management may decide to consult with other accountants about auditing and accounting matters. Management informed us that, and to our knowledge, there were no consultations with other accountants regarding auditing and accounting matters.

Other Significant Matters, Findings, or Issues

In the normal course of our professional association with the County, we generally discuss a variety of matters, including the application of accounting principles and auditing standards, operating and regulatory conditions affecting the entity, and operational plans and strategies that may affect the risks of material misstatement. None of the matters discussed resulted in a condition to our retention as the County's auditors.

Other Information in Documents Containing Audited Financial Statements

Our responsibility for the supplementary information accompanying the financial statements, as described by professional standards, is to evaluate the presentation of the supplementary information in relation to the financial statements as a whole and to report on whether the supplementary information is fairly stated, in all material respects, in relation to the financial statements as a whole. We made certain inquiries of management and evaluated the form, content, and methods of preparing the information to determine that the information complies with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, the method of preparing it has not changed from the prior period, and the information is appropriate and complete in relation to our audit of the financial statements. We compared and reconciled the supplementary information to the underlying accounting records used to prepare the financial statements or to the financial statements themselves.

Upcoming Changes in Accounting Standards

Generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) are continually changing in order to promote the usability and enhance the applicability of information included in external financial reporting. While it would not be practical to include an in-depth discussion of every upcoming change in professional standards, Attachment A to this letter contains a brief overview of recent pronouncements of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and their related effective dates. Management is responsible for reviewing these standards, determining their applicability, and implementing them in future accounting periods.

This information is intended solely for the use of the governing body and management of the *County of Berrien, Michigan*, and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than these specified parties.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lehmann Lohman LLC". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

COUNTY OF BERRIEN, MICHIGAN

Attachment A - Upcoming Changes in Accounting Standards / Regulations

For the December 31, 2019 Audit

The following pronouncements of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) have been released recently and may be applicable to the County in the near future. We encourage management to review the following information and determine which standard(s) may be applicable to the County. For the complete text of these and other GASB standards, visit www.gasb.org and click on the "Standards & Guidance" tab. If you have questions regarding the applicability, timing, or implementation approach for any of these standards, please contact your audit team.

GASB 83 ■ Certain Asset Retirement Obligations

Effective 06/15/2020 (your FY 2020)

This standard addresses accounting and financial reporting for certain asset retirement obligations--legally enforceable liabilities associated with the retirement of a tangible capital asset. We do not expect this standard to have any significant effect on the County.

GASB 84 ■ Fiduciary Activities

Effective 12/15/2020 (your FY 2020)

This standard establishes new criteria for determining how to report fiduciary activities in governmental financial statements. The focus is on whether the government is controlling the assets, and who the beneficiaries are. Under this revised standard, certain activities previously reported in agency funds may be reclassified in future periods.

GASB 87 ■ Leases

Effective 06/15/2022 (your FY 2022)

This standard establishes a single model for reporting all leases (including those previously classified as operating and capital). Lessees will now report offsetting intangible lease assets and lease liabilities equal to the present value of future lease payments. Lessors will report offsetting lease receivables and deferred inflows of resources.

GASB 89 ■ Accounting for Interest Cost Incurred before the End of a Construction Period

Effective 12/15/2021 (your FY 2021)

This standard eliminates the requirement for governments to capitalize interest during the construction period for business-type activities. As this simplifies the accounting for interest, early implementation is encouraged. We do not expect this standard to have any significant effect on the County.

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GASB 91 ■ Conduit Debt Obligations

Effective 12/15/2022 (your FY 2022)

This standard defines "conduit debt obligations", where a government issues debt whose proceeds are received and repaid by a third-party obligor without the issuer being primarily liable. The standard requires issuers to disclose conduit debt obligations, but not to record a liability unless it is more likely than not that a commitment made by the issuer will require it to support one or more debt payments for a conduit debt obligation. We do not expect this standard to have any significant effect on the County.

GASB 92 ■ Omnibus 2020

Effective 06/15/2022 (your FY 2022)

This standard includes a variety of small technical revisions to previously issued GASB statements. We do not expect this standard to have any significant effect on the County.

GASB 93 ■ Replacement of Interbank Offered Rates

Effective 06/15/2022 (your FY 2022)

This standard provides guidance to governments with agreements with variable payments tied to LIBOR, and how to transition them to a new reference rate. We do not expect this standard to have any significant effect on the County.

GASB 94 ■ Public-Private and Public-Public Partnerships and Availability Payment Arrangements

Effective 06/15/2023 (your FY 2023)

This standard addresses accounting and financial reporting for arrangements in which a government contracts with an operator to provide public services by conveying control of the right to operate or use a capital asset for a period of time in an exchange or exchange-like transaction. We do not expect this standard to have any significant effect on the County.



COUNTY OF BERRIEN, MICHIGAN

Attachment B - Management Representations

For the December 31, 2019 Audit

The following pages contain the written representations that we requested from management.