



July 2023 Board of Commissioners Activity Report

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Proclamation – Eleanor Dunlop 100th Birthday** – Longevity of life is a blessing for an individual and for a community which benefits from the knowledge, creativity, and experiences this individual brings to all. The County of Van Buren recognizes with respect and admiration the contribution of senior citizens to our community. Eleanor Elkins joined the Army after Pearl Harbor and became an Army Nurse in World War II. She was a Lieutenant stationed in Europe, where she met her late husband and the father of her children, Veteran PFC Army Corpsman David Dunlop. Eleanor Elkins and David Dunlop. Eleanor Dunlop raised five children while working full time as a Surgical Nurse at Lake View Community Hospital, in Paw Paw. Her career there spanned 31 years and Eleanor touched many lives. Eleanor continues to be a leader in Trinity Lutheran Church, where she participates in Bible studies and reads the Bible from the lectern. She also collects clothing for seminary students at Lutheran Church Fort Wayne Seminary, among many other charitable acts. Eleanor contributed many resources to Habitat for Humanity, not the least of which was helping to build a house in Southwestern Michigan alongside former President Jimmy Carter. She continues to give of herself at Eleanor's Pantry in and enjoys gardening, baking, spending time with loved ones and caring for the birds and cats that reside at her country home. Eleanor is a blessing to all she meets. The Board of Commissioners recognizes and thanks Ms. Eleanor Dunlop for her dedication to her community. The Board honors Ms. Eleanor Dunlop for her long life and prosperity and wish her many more!
- 2. Proclamation – Carl Davis Retirement** – The Office of the Municipal Clerk provides the professional link between the citizens, the local governing bodies, and agencies of government at other levels. Municipal clerks have pledged to be ever mindful of their neutrality and impartiality, rendering equal service to all. The municipal clerk serves as the information center on functions of local government and community. The Keeler township clerk, Carl Davis, has served as the Keeler Treasurer from 1972 to 1980. He then served as the Keeler Township Clerk from 1986 to present. Dedicating eight years as the township's Treasurer and thirty-seven years as the townships Clerk. It is most appropriate that we recognize that accomplishments and years of services from the Keeler Township Clerk, Carl Davis. The Board of Commissioners further extends their appreciation to Carl Davis for his many years of service to Keeler township and for the vital services that he performed, along with the exemplary dedication to the community he represented.
- 3. June 2023 Claims** – Claims in the amount of \$13,645,050.09 for June 2023 were submitted, reviewed, and approved by the Board during the July 25th Board of Commissioners meeting.
- 4. Computer Replacement Program** - The Board of Commissioners discussed the 2023 PC refresh purchase. Every year IT purchases ~50 end-user computers to replace aged and outdated devices deployed across the County. After soliciting prices from three sources, the IT department suggests that we use the quote that is the most cost effective. This is a planned, budgeted expense that occurs annually. Costs are within those budgeted and will be absorbed from the Technology Improvement Fund – 636.0- 228.00-752.005. Due to the overall cost, this purchase requires Board approval to comply with purchasing policies. The total amount is \$17,662.02. The Board approved the request of the 2023 PC Refresh purchase.

5. **Purchase of Sheriff's Office K9** – There was a request to approve the purchase of a new K9, equipment and a basic 6-week training course for a new handler from F.M K9 located in Berrien Center, Michigan for a total price of \$13,565.00 dollars. The Board approved of the purchase of the Sheriff's office K9.

6. **Target Market Analysis & Housing Strategic Plan** – There was a request to approve a \$50,000 match for a Michigan Department of Rural Readiness (MDARD) grant that will fund a residential Target Market Analysis (TMA), which will support our ongoing efforts to develop a County-wide Housing Strategic Plan. The TMA will identify the market potential for new and rehabbed housing units, migration patterns, target markets, and other data necessary to understand the gap between housing stock and demand. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to effectively address the ongoing, county wide housing shortage. The Strategic Plan will build upon the TMA by reviewing existing planning, zoning, and housing tools and policies throughout the County to determine if current practices are aligned, consistent, contemporary, and substantiated by the results of the TMA. The Strategic Plan will also include an Action Plan that details key tasks, strategies, project champions, and estimated costs to address housing and developer recruitment, relationship building, and community marketing. The Board of Commissioners approved a \$50,000 match for a Michigan Department of Rural Readiness (MDARD) grant that will fund a residential Target Market Analysis, which will support our ongoing efforts to develop a County-wide Housing Strategic Plan. The match is subject to the awarding of the grant.

7. **Specialty Court Peer Recovery Specialist** – There was a request to approve the move of the current contractual position, Peer Recovery Specialist, away from contractual and into a full-time position with the Specialty Courts. Currently, the budget for this position is a little over \$50,000/year. As a fulltime county position, it would be classified as an R 25 position, starting at \$22.26 per hour, or \$43,409.73 per year. With fringes added, we estimate the full cost of the position to be around \$75,000 total cost for the first year. The Peer Recovery Specialist position, like all positions in Specialty Courts, would be grant-dependent. There is \$18,300 available in state grants and \$240,000 in federal grants which would fund this position. The Board approved the Peer Recovery Specialist position to become a full-time County position, funded through Specialty Court state and federal grants.

Appointment/Reappointment Requests

1. **Land Preservation Board – Christopher Rickli** – There was a request to approve the appointment of Christopher Rickli to the Land Preservation Board for a term set to expire on March 1st, 2025. His appointment will fill the Farmer Representative vacancy. All Board terms are set to expire March 1st, 2025. The Board of Commissioners approved of Mr. Rickli’s appointment to the Land Preservation Board.

2. **Land Preservation Board – Michael Matheny** – There was a request to approve the appointment of Michael Matheny to the Land Preservation Board for a term set to expire on March 1st, 2025. His appointment will fill the Elected Official vacancy. All Board terms are set to expire March 1st, 2025. The Board of Commissioners approved of Mr. Matheny’s appointment to the Land Preservation Board.

3. **Kinexus Group Workforce Development Board – Tom Stanek** – The Board of Commissioners is responsible for making appointments to the Kinexus Board. Tom Stanek was seeking approval from the Board of Commissioners for reappointment. The recommendation was to appoint him for a three-year term which will expire on June 30, 2026. The Board approved the appointment of Tom Stanek to the Kinexus Group Workforce Development Board at the July 11th Board meeting.

4. **Palisades Community Advisory Panel – Bill Van Tassel** – There was a request to approve the appointment of Bill Van Tassel to the Palisades Community Advisory Panel. The Board of Commissioners previously selected Gary Stock to serve on the PCAP as the citizen representative of the county at large. The role of whoever holds this position is to represent the questions and concerns of residents from the east side of Van Buren County. Gary sadly passed away earlier this year, which created a vacancy on the PCAP. Bill Van Tassel has been identified as a suitable candidate to fill this position given his role as a leader in Almena Township and his involvement with local groups like the Van Buren Conservation District. While certain types of PCAP members do not need the approval of the Board of Commissioners to hold a seat on the panel, appointment of "citizen representatives from Covert Township, South Haven Township, the City of South Haven, Lake Michigan Homeowners Association, and the County-At-Large" must be approved by the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners approved the appointment of Bill Van Tassel to the Palisades Community Advisory Panel.

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All board meeting agendas and minutes can be found on the county website:

<https://www.vanburencountymi.gov/129/Agendas-Minutes>