

**Cass County, Michigan
Board of Commissioners**

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



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FORWARD

Many dedicated people assist Cass County government by serving on Boards and Commissions. Each Board or Commission has specialized responsibilities to monitor County operations, advise the Board of Commissioners, or develop policy depending upon their legal authority.

The purpose of this document is to acquaint citizens with the functions and responsibilities of the Boards and Commissions which assist Cass County government. It includes the current meeting times of each Board while also providing general information.

This document is intended to be used as an educational reference for Cass County government, Board members and the public. Cass County welcomes the opportunity of supplying information and encourages citizens to participate in their county government.

MISSION STATEMENT

Cass County government exists to deliver fair, efficient and accessible service dedicated to the public good. As stewards of people and resources, we value communication, cooperation, consistency and vision. We provide leadership and facilitate development to enhance the quality of life.

Board of Commissioners

District 1	Terry Ausra
District 2	Annie File
District 3	Skip Dyes
District 4	Roseann Marchetti
District 5	Robert Benjamin
District 6	Michael Grice
District 7	E. Clark Cobb

County Administrator
Jeffrey Carmen

Deputy Administrator
Kerry Collins

Finance Director
Becky Moore

Administrative Specialist
Jackie Taylor

Executive Assistant/Human Resources
Beth Daly

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AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Term: 2 years Regular Meeting: 4th Monday, 9:00 a.m.

The Area Agency on Aging serves Berrien, Van Buren and Cass Counties by assisting senior citizens in the area. The agency is authorized by the State. The Board of Commissioners appoints two members. There is also an advisory council with at least half of the members being 60 years of age or older.

Responsibilities of the agency include receiving and disbursing federal funds for programs, developing contracts with local and private agencies that serve seniors, and developing data and information about senior residents. The Area Agency on Aging provides several assistance programs including the delivery of hot meals, transportation systems, and home health care.

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: Wednesday following second Monday of the month, at 7:30 p.m.

The Board of Public Works consists of seven persons appointed by the Board of Commissioners. One of these members is the County Drain Commissioner who serves as a permanent member of the board. A two-thirds vote can designate the County Road Commission or Drain Commissioner to function in the capacity of the Board of Public Works. Appointment of individual members requires only a majority vote.

The Board of Public Works services may include construction and operation of public sanitary sewer, water and refuse systems, lake improvements, and operation of an erosion control system. Any of these services is determined and approved by the Board of Commissioners. Commonly, the Board operates its systems on a contractual basis with the municipalities they serve.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 4th Wednesday every other month, at 11:30 a.m.

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority's function is to provide assistance in the redevelopment of contaminated property throughout the County through the use of State and local incentives. The Economic Development Corporation Board serves as the Board for the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority.

BUILDING AUTHORITY

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 2nd Tuesday, 1:30 p.m. (when project is underway), otherwise: Call of the Chair

The Building Authority acts to acquire, operate, and maintain buildings, parking lots or structures, recreational facilities, and the necessary building sites for the use of the County. They also authorize the execution of contracts and the issuance of bonds.

CANVASSING BOARD

Term: 4 years Regular Meeting: Day after Election, 1:30 p.m.

Consisting of four members, two from each political party, the Canvassing Board is responsible for the closure of the voting process after each election. They assure that the entire precinct voting returns have been made and the votes have been counted. The results become official and are filed with the state elections division upon their vote of approval and certification within a 14-day period of the election. The Canvassing Board may order a special election in cases of equipment malfunctions, recounts or tie breaking.

CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY BOARD

Term: 4 years Regular Meeting: 3rd Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.

The Cass District Library Board has a total of eight members. Four members are appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The Commissioners select one resident of Volinia, Penn or Newberg Townships, one resident of Milton, Jefferson, or Pokagon Townships, one resident of Ontwa, Calvin or Porter Townships, and one resident of these nine townships at large.

The board is authorized and empowered to establish, maintain, and operate public libraries for the district. They make decisions on distributing funding where necessary. Funding has been used to provide the District service area with information, culture, programs and recreation.

CENTRAL DISPATCH AUTHORITY

No Term of Office Regular Meeting: Quarterly, Wednesday @2:00 p.m. 2nd or 3rd Wednesday (January, April, July, October)

The Central Dispatch Authority has the responsibility to establish a centralized dispatch of emergency police, fire and ambulance services and make sure it is funded properly. The principle means of financing the system is by a surcharge on telephone installations.

The Authority Board is composed of one representative from the Board of Commissioners, the Sheriff's Department, the Township Association, the Michigan State Police, the City of Dowagiac and the general public. The member from the general public serves a two year term and is appointed by other members of the Board.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS ADVISORY BOARD

Term: 4 years Regular Meeting: Quarterly, Wednesday @11:30 2nd or 3rd Wednesday (January, April, August November)

The Community Corrections Advisory Board consists of local criminal justice officials, county officials, social service agencies, citizens and the media. They are responsible for developing and submitting a comprehensive corrections plan to the Board of Commissioners for submission to the State. They also oversee the operation and progress of community programs and conduct annual management and fiscal audits of the programs. Public information and education is provided by the board to keep local officials informed about programs and also gain local support.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 4th Monday, 8:00 a.m.

The Department of Human Services Board oversees social welfare programs and monitors employment and work training programs for those in need of assistance. They also make recommendations for social service contracts between the state and local providers and review the contracts between them.

The Board consists of three residents of the County. The Board of Commissioners appoints two members and the State Director of Human Services selects one. County human service department employees are not eligible to be members on this Board.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BOARD

Term: 6 years Regular Meeting: 4th Wednesday 8:30 a.m.

The Economic Development Corporation Board consists of ten persons, of whom not more than three may be county elected officials or county employees.

This Board encourages business activity, industrial development, and job formation by a mixture of public and private organizations. They seek to identify strategies and techniques to attract new businesses and strengthen the economy of the County.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 2nd Thursday, 5:00 p.m.

The Historical Commission has nine members who are appointed by the Board of Commissioners. Their main purpose is to preserve the history of Cass County. They undertake historical projects including operating the Newton House and the Red Brick School Museum. The Commission also publishes books and historical guides.

JURY COMMISSION

Term: 6 years Regular Meeting: Meets as Necessary

Jury Commission members are appointed by the Board of Commissioners upon recommendation of the circuit court judge. In May of every year, the circuit court judge estimates the number of jurors that will likely be needed during the following year starting in September. In return, the Jury Commission mails a questionnaire to randomly selected residents of the County to make certain they qualify as jurors.

LAND BANK AUTHORITY

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: Meets as Necessary

The Land Bank Authority is chaired by the County Treasurer. It is a mechanism for returning tax reverted property to productive use through redevelopment, blight removal and improvement of existing structures.

LAND PRESERVATION BOARD

Term: 4 years

The Land Preservation Board provides procedures and guidelines for selecting farmland parcels that are eligible for the purchase of development rights. It will establish a comprehensive plan with local units of government that describes geographic areas where property should be protected and preserved.

LOCAL (DOWAGIAC) DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY

Term: 2 years Regular Meeting: Meets as Necessary

The Dowagiac Local Development Finance Authority was created by the City of Dowagiac to finance local development projects. Its members are appointed by the Mayor.

LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

**No Term of Office Regular Meeting: Quarterly (usually 3rd Wednesday)
at 3:00 p.m.**

The Local Emergency Planning Committee coordinates and develops plans to handle storms, floods and natural disasters. This committee has the authority to expend funds and distribute relief supplies, equipment, and materials. There are ten members.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 2nd Thursday, 7:00 p.m.

The Parks and Recreation Commission sets policy for the operation of the County park system.

PLANNING COMMISSION

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 4th Wednesday, 4:00 p.m.

The Cass County Planning Commission is composed of members whose main purpose is to regulate land use in the County. They formulate plans and make recommendations for the most effective economic, social and physical development of the County. Actions of these duties are based on the comprehensive master plan, which contains the entire

geographical area of the county and the physical structures and services such as roads and utilities relevant to physical development for the next 15 to 20 years. One of the nine members must be a member of a public school board or an administrative employee of a public school board or an administrative employee of a school district included, in whole or in part, within Cass County's boundaries.

ROAD COMMISSION

Term: 6 years Regular Meeting: 1st & 3rd Thursday, 9:00 a.m.

The Cass County Road Commission consists of five members who are appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The Road Commission adopts an annual budget for the maintenance and construction of County roads. A biennial primary and local road program is also developed, based on long-range plans, to be sure all roads are in reasonable repair, safe and convenient for public travel.

SOLID WASTE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Term: 2 years Regular Meeting: Call of the Chair

The Board of Commissioners appoints fourteen representatives to participate in the planning process from the following: four solid waste industry, three general public, one industrial waste generator, one County government, one city government, one township government, one regional planning agency and two environmental group representatives.

This committee assesses present and projected conditions regarding waste disposal, including recycling and composting of yard wastes and other biodegradable materials. The County's solid waste plan must be updated every five years in order to protect public health and the environment.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Term: 1 year Regular Meeting: 3rd Wednesday, 6:30 p.m.

The Board of Commissioners appoints two Commissioners to serve on this Board. They, along with members from Van Buren County and Berrien County, assist people in economic need. The Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency Board works on policy, budgets, programs and services.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN PLANNING COMMISSION

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: Six times per year, 3rd Tuesday of every other month beginning in February, at 9:30 a.m.

The Southwest Michigan Commission is one of fourteen Planning and Development Regions in the State of Michigan. This Commission is a voluntary organization of local governments formed to foster cooperative efforts in resolving problems, policies and plans that are common and regional. They provided outreach activities which continually build awareness of planning and development related issues, serve as a vehicle for the collection and exchange of information of regional interest and provide assistance in securing state and federal funding.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN SOLID WASTE CONSORTIUM

Term: Chair Appointment Regular Meeting: 3rd Wednesday of odd months, at 7:00 p.m.

Formed in 1992, the Southwest Michigan Solid Waste Consortium fosters inter-county cooperation to address solid waste management issues. They promote recycled markets, offer workshops on management of yard waste, organic waste and household hazardous waste and develop and distribute information on proper waste management.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN SUBSTANCE ABUSE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 3rd Thursday at 10:00 a.m.

Substance abuse services in Cass County are coordinated through the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Service (KCMHSAS) organization. The Advisory Council has representatives from Allegan, Cass, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph Counties. They insure that service providers assist individuals with a mental health or substance abuse problem.

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN TOURIST COUNCIL

Term: 1 year, Chair Appointment Regular Meeting: 2nd Wednesday, 5 months/year

The purpose of the Council is to publicize the attractions of Southwest Michigan. They publish a calendar of events to increase the number of visitors and conventions in the area. The Council receives funding from individuals, business firms, organizations and State government.

TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Term: None Specified Regular Meeting: 2nd Wednesday, 8:00 a.m.

The Transportation Authority provides public transportation in Cass County. They

coordinate with other agencies to provide services to senior citizens, students, persons with special needs and the general public.

The Transportation Authority consists of: the Mayor of Dowagiac, the Chair of the Southwestern Michigan College Board, the Chair of the Mental Health Board, the Chair of the Council on Aging Board, the Chair of the Department of Human Services Board, the Chair of the Board of Commissioners and a member-at-large or their designees.

VAN BUREN-CASS DISTRICT BOARD OF HEALTH

**Terms: Public Representative – 3 years Regular Meeting: 2nd Wednesday,
Commissioners – 1 year at 4:00 p.m.**

The Board of Commissioners appoints two County Commissioners and one citizen to serve on the Board of Health. This Board has the duty to promote public health policies, prevent disease and prolong life through organized programs, health care facilities and health services delivery systems. They must identify public health problems, establish priorities and inform the community to create public awareness and acceptance of the need for planned action.

VETERANS’ ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Term: 4 years Regular Meeting: Quarterly, every 4th Thursday, at 7:30 p.m. (January, April, July, October)

The Veterans Advisory Committee works with the Veterans Agent in overseeing the County-funded program that provides relief or assistance to veterans. Some of the services are burial allowances, disability compensation, education assistance, medical treatment and counseling.

VETERANS TRUST FUND BOARD

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 3rd Monday of September, 10:00 a.m. and as called by the chair

The Veterans Trust is a State funded board in which a committee in each county is appointed to administer program benefits at the county level. The fund earnings are allocated to county committees on the basis of need and the veteran population.

WOODLANDS BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE NETWORK BOARD

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: 4th Tuesday, 5:00 p.m.

The Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network Board provides care for those with mental illness and developmental disabilities. They have the authority to establish and administer mental health programs within the County. They are responsible for the general policy and approval of contracts for mental health services.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Term: 3 years Regular Meeting: Six times per year, first Friday of the month beginning in February, 8:00 a.m.

The primary function of the Workforce Development Board is oversight, including direction and evaluation of the strategic planning process for workforce issues within Berrien, Van Buren and Cass Counties. They monitor and review the need for employment and training services, oversee and guide policy, and coordinate interest to develop and retain a productive workforce.