

**CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
WORKSHOP  
April 30, 2021**

Chair Dyes called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. in the West Room of the Fred Mathews Conference Room at Southwestern Michigan College in Dowagiac Michigan.

Commissioner Jones provided the invocation. Commissioner Laylin led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Ryan Laylin, Annie File, Dwight Dyes, Roseann Marchetti, Robert Benjamin, Mike Grice and Jeremiah Jones.

OTHERS PRESENT: Treasurer Hope Anderson, Prosecutor Victor Fitz, Sheriff Richard Behnke, Judge Susan L. Dobrich, County Administrator Jeff Carmen, Finance Director Becky Moore, Court Administrator Carol Bealor, Administrative Specialist Jackie Taylor, Information Systems Director Jodi Nestich and Clerk/Register Monica McMichael.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**PRESENTATION**

Information Systems Director Jodi Nestich offered a State of County Technology Presentation.

**CLOSED SESSION**

**M-74-21**

Commissioner Grice moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to approve a motion to enter Closed Session to discuss Compensation and Labor Negotiations and include Treasurer Hope Anderson, Sheriff Richard Behnke, Judge Susan L. Dobrich, Prosecutor Victor Fitz, Clerk/Register Monica McMichael, Court Administrator Carol Bealor, County Administrator Jeff Carmen and Finance Director Becky Moore.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes (7): Commissioners Laylin, File, Dyes, Marchetti, Benjamin, Grice and Jones.

No (0): None.

The meeting entered closed session at 9:40 a.m.

The meeting returned to open session at 12:00 p.m.

## **DISCUSSION**

Intersect Studio representatives led the commissioners in a discussion regarding the restoration of the Historic Courthouse. Commissioners answered questions pertaining to board member needs that included board room setup, commissioner workspace, storage and technology needs.

## **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

Commissioner Compensation: Commissioner Jones opened discussion regarding board members receiving an annual dollar amount for meetings attended instead of being paid a per diem and mileage for each meeting. He informed commissioners that Finance Director Moore analyzed the average rate paid to each commissioner over a one-year period. She calculated that all seven commissioners received approximately \$1,750 (\$250 per commissioner) per quarter. The policy committee agreed to research increasing the annual salary and removing the per diem. The policy committee will also review the cell phone reimbursement policy for commissioners.

MSUE: Administrator Carmen stated that County Administration recommended fully funding MSUE and the Parks Department for FY2022. Discussion continued regarding the county receiving more 4-H support and less assessment services. MSUE stated that they would not provide 4-H services without assessment (other services). Commissioners expressed concern over the fact that MSU employees had not been allowed to leave their homes for work duties in over a year.

Broadband: Commissioner Laylin informed board members that the county contracted with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC), to survey residents and map out services areas. Commissioners Dyes and Laylin, along with Administrator Carmen, also met with Midwest Energy to discuss broadband. Midwest stated that underground was extremely expensive; however, they hoped to meet with AEP to discuss using electric poles to run wire for broadband. Commissioners then discussed the county and townships working with Midwest to provide affordable broadband countywide. The county asked Midwest to provide costs. Midwest Energy requested the county to identify areas in need of service.

Real Estate: Commissioner Laylin provided an update from the Surplus Property Committee (Commissioners Laylin, Grice and Dyes). The committee had been working to examine property owned by the county regarding use, future use or to place on the market for sale.

County Administrator: Commissioner Benjamin asked for the long-term strategy regarding a County Administrator. Administrator Carmen stated that the current contract had no expiration date; however, it could not be extended longer than three years. Administrator Carmen stated that he was committed to staying on to complete several large projects and to assist the county as long as the board agreed. Administrator Carmen then provided an update on the search for a Deputy County Administrator and Deputy Finance Director.

Discussion followed regarding an update on the Classification and Compensation Study.

Commissioners also discussed CARES Act Funding.

Commissioner Jones commented on commissioner relationships. He also stated that several motions that he brought to the board were at the request of his constituents.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Benjamin moved, seconded by Commissioner Grice, to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Dwight Dyes, Chairperson

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Monica McMichael, Clerk/Register