

The regular meeting of the Mason County Board of Commissioners was held at 9:00 a.m. in the conference room located at the Mason County Airport terminal, 5300 W. US 10 Ludington, MI.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Andersen.

Roll call was taken. Present: Krieger, Johnson, Hartley, Squires, Hull, Andersen, Bacon

Absent: None

The invocation was given by Hartley and the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Motion by Bacon and seconded by Hull to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Motion by Bacon and seconded by Hull to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2024 regular meeting. Motion carried.

Correspondence: none.

Public comments: none.

Erin Kuhn, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission Executive Director presented the 2023 annual report.

James Kelly, Michigan State University-MSUE Director, provided the 2023 MSUE Annual Report.

Mason County Promise Zone Director Jody Maloney provided the Mason County promise report to the Board. The 2023-2024 academic year welcome scholars to qualify for a new educational supplies award. 128 first year and returning scholars qualified and were awarded \$63,500.00 to help defray the costs of books and other educational supplies required for courses at WSCC.

Motion by Squires and seconded by Hull to leave regular session and move into public hearing for input regarding the submission of a Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant Application. Motion carried.

Chair Andersen read an email sent by Steve Begnoche, Chair, Mason County Parks Commission regarding the request of the Board to approve them submitting a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Application for \$400,000.00 to construct a 10 foot-wide, paved, universal access trail from the west edge of the Mason County Campground to Lake Michigan and the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant reservoir overlooks. The distance is about 1.1 miles with an estimated cost of \$1.1 million.

Jeff Schwass, member of the Parks Commission, noted that he would answer any questions. Administrator Knizacky informed the Board that the Parks Commission has \$500,000.00 of the match funding needed and that should they need more, that the Board had the authority to consider giving an advancement on the project that could be paid back in the future should they successfully receive the grant. Discussion will need to be done with the Board to see how they want to proceed.

Commissioner Squires felt this is most needed in the community and questioned if there was planned expansion for the future and was informed yes.

Commissioner Krieger noted that Steve Begnoche presented to the Building, Planning, Drains, & Airport Committee meetings previously noting that there is available monies in the State for trails but that the entity has to take the first step to show that they are working towards improvement/expansion of the trail and that we have to start somewhere to build upon.

Ms. Joan Arnold, Ludington, encouraged the community support of this request noting that a bike trail from Hamlin and throughout the County would allow people, like herself, to not ride their bikes on the roads where it has become too dangerous and challenging to ride. She further noted that it has become a challenge for her to put her bike in her car and travel to Oceana County to utilize the trails down there. As a resident and bike club member, she agrees with the approval of the request.

Kathy McClean, Ludington Chamber of Commerce, thanked Administrator Knizacky and Chair Andersen for the support of this project. She noted that in 2018, there previously had been a plan to connect trails from the State Park to Countyline and to Pentwater. Having the County do the first part sends a good message to the Community. She, too, encourages the support of the trails.

Steve Wessels, Mason County Road Commission, noted that he had previously sent a letter of support for the established trail. He noted that this location is a good location and would use the trail himself and is in support that this is a good starting point.

Commissioner Hartley noted that he agrees with Ms. Joan Arnold. Biking 5,000 miles **over the past two years** on trails, he is an advocate to provide more trail systems and encourage more individuals to go outside. He is strongly in support of this request.

Motion by Bacon and seconded by Krieger to leave the public hearing and move back into regular session. Motion carried.

Motion by Krieger and seconded by Hartley to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Mason County Board of Commissioners supports the submission of an application titled, “Mason County Campground and Picnic Area Trail” to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for the development of a trail which includes trailhead with parking, trailhead signage, 10’ wide trail, marked trail crossing with signage, and trail amenities such as, signage, benches, etc.; and,

WHEREAS, these improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Mason County Five Year Park and Recreation Plan, and

WHEREAS, a public comment session was held on March 12, 2024 at 9 a.m. at Mason County Airport terminal, 5300 W. US 10, Ludington MI 49431, to provide an opportunity for citizens to comment on the proposed trail development, and

WHEREAS, Mason County is hereby making a financial commitment to the project in the amount of \$700,000.00 matching funds, in cash and/or force account, and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Mason County hereby authorizes the submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Application for \$400,000.00, and further resolves to make available its financial obligation amount of \$700,000.00 (64%) of a total \$1,100,000.00 project cost, during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Yeas: Krieger, Johnson, Hartley, Squires, Hull, Bacon, Andersen
Nays: None
Absent: None

I, HEREBY CERTIFY, that the foregoing is a Resolution duly made and passed by the Mason County Board of Commissioners at their regular meeting held on March 12, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. with a quorum present.

Date

Cheryl Kelly, Clerk

Moved for your approval. Roll Call vote was requested:

Yeas: Krieger, Johnson, Hartley, Squires, Hull, Bacon, Andersen
Nays: None
Absent: None

Chair Andersen further noted that she has met with the trails group and the community wants more trails and this is a wonderful step in doing the first leg to offer trails. Commissioner Krieger noted that an annual payment already exists from Consumers and funding is available. He appreciated the work of Steve Begnoche and the Park Commission with regards to the route they have outlined avoiding the wetlands and special habitat areas.

Motion carried. (Signed) Krieger.

Motion by Johnson and seconded by Krieger to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, Mason County Sheriff Cole is seeking approval of a contract with FirstNet for enhancing connectivity in the Sheriff’s office; and

WHEREAS, the Public Safety and Courts Committee is recommending approval of this contract request.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Mason approves the contract with FirstNet and directs the Board Chair to sign said contract.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Johnson.

Commissioner Hartley noted that he had one agency issue to report regarding 911 and the request of 911 proposal to request a millage & Public Safety Technologies Millage. He provided information and a handout that was prepared by 911. He encouraged Commissioners to speak to their Townships and Communities regarding this request for further input.

Motion by Hartley and seconded by Bacon to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, severe weather, in the form of thunderstorms, windstorms, heavy rain, flooding, and tornados, are a threat to the safety and welfare of all Michigan citizens; and

WHEREAS, each year, flooding and rising waters kill more people in the United States than any other thunderstorm related hazard; and

WHEREAS, over the weekend of January 12, 2024, a winter storm occurred making some roadways impassable and travel nearly impossible in some areas for several days; and

WHEREAS, all individuals are encouraged to be aware of the warning signs of severe weather and follow proper safety and emergency procedures; and

WHEREAS, Mason County is fortunate to have many natural resources for our citizens and visitors to enjoy, but all should be aware of the warning signs of severe weather and proper safety and emergency procedures since there can be 25 – 40 days of thunderstorm activity each year; and

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division is promoting a Severe Weather Awareness Week to educate the public about the dangers of severe weather events and the precautions that can be taken to save lives and protect families.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Mason County urges all county residents to educate themselves and prepare for severe weather and declares March 17 – March 23, 2024 as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Mason County.

Moved for your approval.

Commissioner Squires inquired if we didn't have a Emergency Management Director, who takes the responsibility for severe weather incidents and was informed by the Administrator that that responsibility would fall to the Board Chair.

Motion carried. (Signed) Hartley.

Motion by Hartley and seconded by Squires to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, Mason County, Michigan has experienced natural and man-made disasters that have damaged commercial, residential and public properties, displaced citizens and businesses, and presented general public health and safety concerns; and

WHEREAS, Mason County has prepared a Hazard Mitigation Plan under the guidance of the Mason County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), which describes known disasters and impacts, potential hazards, and strategies to reduce overall damage and impact from hazards; and

WHEREAS, the Hazard Mitigation Plan has been reviewed by countywide residents, business owners, and federal, state and local agencies, and has been revised to reflect their concerns;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Mason County Hazard Mitigation Plan is hereby adopted as an official plan of Mason County.
2. The Mason County Emergency Management director is charged with supervising implementation and monitoring progress of the Plan's recommendations within the funding limitations as provided by Mason County Board of Commissioners or other sources.
3. The Mason County LEPC shall provide oversight and guidance toward implementation of the Plan.
4. The Mason County Emergency Management director shall provide an annual progress report to Mason County, including:
 - a. A review of any disasters or emergencies that occurred during the previous calendar year.
 - b. A review of mitigation actions taken, including accomplishments and limitations encountered during the previous year.
 - c. A proposed outline of mitigation projects and activities for the following calendar year.

Moved for your approval.

Passed this day of March 12, 2024.

Signed _____

Motion carried. (Signed) Hartley.

Motion by Public Safety and Courts Committee Chair Squires and seconded by Hartley to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, Dr. Patrick Hansma is recommending the appointment of a Deputy Medical Examiner; and

WHEREAS, he is recommending the appointment of Dr. Christine James as a Deputy Medical Examiner.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Mason approves the appointment of Dr. Christine James as a Deputy Medical Examiner for Mason County.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Squires.

Motion by Buildings, Planning, Drains, and Airport Committee Chair Hull and seconded by Bacon to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, Probate Court Judge Nellis is recommending that the Board approve the attached agreement with Staircase Youth Services.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Mason approves the attached agreement with Staircase Youth Services and further directs the Board Chair to sign said agreement.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Hull.

Motion by Buildings, Planning, Drains, and Airport Committee Chair Hull and seconded by Bacon to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan is currently offering grant opportunities to counties for the operation of a Veteran’s Affairs Office; and

WHEREAS, the Finance, Personnel, and Rules Committee is recommending that the county authorize the submittal of a letter of intent and application for grant funding for the operation of the Veteran’s Affairs Office.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Mason authorizes the submittal of a letter of intent and application for grant funding for the operation of the Veteran’s Affairs Office; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners authorizes Chairwoman Andersen to sign any necessary documents.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Hull.

Motion by Bacon and seconded by Hull to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, the Finance, Personnel, & Rules Committee has reviewed the transfers for March 12, 2024.

THEREFORE, we, your Finance, Personnel, & Rules Committee, request your approval of the following transfers:

Road Patrol	\$213,525.00
Jail Operations	\$168,250.00

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Bacon, Hull, Andersen.

Motion by Bacon and seconded Hull to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

The Finance, Personnel, and Rules Committee has audited the County’s claims dated February 13, 2024 totaling \$558,479.52; and February 27, 2024 totaling \$421,215.75.

The Finance, Personnel, and Rules Committee found these claims to be in order and asks the Board to approve these claims.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Andersen, Bacon, Hull.

Motion by Board Chair Andersen and seconded by Krieger to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, the State of Michigan has approved a 2024 Survey and Remonumentation Grant for the County of Mason; and

WHEREAS, the Finance, Personnel, & Rules Committee is recommending approval of this grant.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Mason approves the 2024 Survey and Remonumentation Grant Agreement with the State of Michigan and directs the County Administrator to sign said agreement.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Andersen.

Motion by Board Chair Andersen and seconded by Bacon to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, there are two positions on the West Michigan Community Mental Health System Board with terms that expire on March 31, 2024; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Pat Bettin and Mr. Todd Dancz have indicated a desire to continue to represent the County on the Board.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Ms. Pat Bettin and Mr. Todd Dancz be appointed to the two positions on the West Michigan Community Mental Health System Board for terms expiring March 31, 2027.

Moved for your approval.

Motion carried. (Signed) Andersen.

Motion by Board Chair Andersen and seconded by Hull to approve the following resolution:

HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS

WHEREAS, Senior Services Coordinator Evans is requesting authorization to hold a Senior Summit; and

WHEREAS, the Finance, Personnel, and Rules Committee is recommending the approval of this request and the attached budget amendment.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the County of Mason approves the request to hold a Senior Summit and the related budget amendment.

Moved for your approval.

Commissioner Squires inquired if this was the first time for a Senior Summit and was informed yes by Chair Andersen, who further noted that Senior Services Director Evans is doing a wonderful job connecting organizations to provide services to our seniors.

Motion carried. (Signed) Andersen.

Treasurer Kmetz emailed the report. The Treasurer’s office is currently settling with all the local units for the 2023 tax collection cycle and we have three units yet to meet with. Once those are received, we will begin compiling the amounts owed and be paying out the taxing jurisdictions in late March or early April. The amounts are coming in similar to previous settlements, but we will need to settle with all local units before making that comparison. They are making progress with parcels at risk of foreclosure, and we are in the mid 40’s for parcels that remain. He informed the Board that the Land Bank Authority will be meeting March 15, 2024 @ 9am for the purpose of approving grant applications for the Round Three Blight Elimination Grant.

Clerk Kelly noted that she had emailed the report. The Board was informed that the office was finishing up the February 27, 2024 Presidential Primary Election noting that the nine days of Early Voting went well having had 208 voters vote at the EV site. There will be a May Election for two jurisdictions, but the precincts were consolidated to Oceana County. The local Clerks have an Association meeting Wednesday, March 13, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. at Amber Townhall to review the 9-day of early voting and look into future plans. Costs associated with the Early Vote site are being gathered and are not ready at this time. Individuals interested in running for any County Office or for Township offices can obtain packets from the County or local clerk. The deadline to apply is April 23, 2024 at 4 p.m.

Administrator Knizacky informed the Board that his office is in the process of starting the 2025 Preliminary Budget. If Commissioner’s had a request, please inform him or the Finance, Personnel & Rules Committee members.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Squires thanked the Administrator and Deputy Administrator for their work on the grant application for the trails. Commissioner Krieger further elaborated, thanking them for their successful work on the CHILL grant.

With no other business the meeting was adjourned at 10:25 A.M.

CHERYL KELLY, COUNTY CLERK

JANET S. ANDERSEN, BOARD CHAIR