

MONTCALM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting

Monday, May 8, 2023

4:00 PM

The regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Carr at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Pastor Paul Arnold from the First Baptist Church in Stanton offered invocation.

Members present at roll call: Commissioners Baker, Johnston, Petersen, Painter, Mahar, Carr and Kohn. Members absent: None.

Others present: Kristen Millard, Brenda Taeter, Michelle Becker, Deb Ballard, Stephanie Bracey, Kennedy Kohler, Candis Thomas, Eric Smith, Clayton Thomas, Lisa Petersen, Todd Sattler, Trevor Wright, Autumn Pumford, Kevin Everingham, Ryan Dreyer, Armon Withey and Elisabeth Waldon.

Moved by Commissioner Johnston, supported by Commissioner Petersen to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Johnston, supported by Commissioner Petersen to approve the April 23, 2023, regular meeting minutes as written. Motion carried.

Public comments were offered. Stephanie Bracey, Sheridan resident and Chief Deputy County Clerk, addressed the board regarding Commissioner Petersen's comments at the April 10<sup>th</sup> Board meeting about the staff of the Circuit Court Clerk's office and the last minute addition of an agenda item to combine the two Clerk's offices without any prior notice to the County Clerk. Mrs. Bracey stated that she and the staff of the Circuit Court Clerk's office have felt disrespected by Commissioner Petersen's comments and while not opposed to the combination of the two offices, she feels that the Clerk and her staff's needs need to be considered and the combination not be rushed.

Candis Thomas, Montcalm Township resident and Administrative Aide in the Circuit Court Clerk's Office addressed the board. Mrs. Thomas stated that comments made by Clay Thomas at a previous meeting were misconstrued as defending the County Clerk and her office and that was not the case. She stated that his comments and opinions are his own as a resident of Montcalm Township. Mrs. Thomas stated that it has become apparent that the plan to combine the Clerk's two offices has been something going on behind the scenes for some time between the Controller and at least a few commissioners. She stated that following the April 10<sup>th</sup> board meeting, the plan was continuing as rooms in retention were being cleaned out by the Controller and Maintenance Director without the combination even being voted on yet. She stated boxes were left in the hallway in front of doors the Clerk's Office needs to get into. Mrs. Thomas stated that there has been no transparency, questions have not been asked of the employees that work in the Clerk's offices 40+ hours per week on how a move would work or affect them, and employees are left feeling bullied. Mrs. Thomas commended Clerk Millard on how she has handled the entire situation.

Kennedy Kohler, Greenville City resident and Administrative Aide in the County Clerk's Vital Records and Elections office, addressed the Board regarding the possible combination of the two Clerk's offices. Ms. Kohler stated that she is not opposed to the combination of the offices, however she does not feel that something of this magnitude should be just added to an agenda with no notice to the County Clerk or staff. She stated that there are many possibilities of what could make this combination successful, however she doesn't feel that all possibilities have been explored. Ms. Kohler stated that she is in charge of keeping up with the retention schedule for the Vital Records and she does not feel there is

currently enough space in the Circuit Court Clerk's office for a successful combination. At the very least she feels the Board needs to meet with the various department heads to see what everyone's needs are. She stated that if a decision to combine is made, this is not something that can just be done in a week. There are many factors that need to be considered and it will take time to get them all done.

Clayton Thomas, Montcalm Township, addressed Commissioner Petersen's comments from the April 10, 2023, meeting that the Veteran's Affairs office is running out of space. Mr. Thomas stated that Veteran's Affairs never came before this Board to make a request for more space, so who requested it and why was the County Clerk's office targeted? He asked by the Board isn't focusing on the loss of county deputies and the Sheriff being left with only 5 deputies to do patrols. Mr. Thomas stated that personal agendas have no business in county government. The Board is tasked with running the County efficiently for the better good of the citizens but it appears the Board is more interested in personal agendas. He asked the Board to do better.

Annette Mitchell, Republican Precinct Delegate, addressed the Board and invited them to attend the Lincoln Day Dinner.

At 4:10 p.m. Joe Verlin, Gabridge & Company, was in attendance to present the Board with the 2022 County Audit Report. Mr. Verlin went through the report with the board and stated that it was a clean audit process. A copy of the Audit Report is on file in the County Clerk's Office.

Lisa Petersen, Deputy Friend of the Court, was in attendance to request that Angie Sattler's title be changed to from Domestic Relations Mediator to Family Counselor. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to authorize the Montcalm County Friend of the Court to change Angie Sattler's job title from Domestic Relation Mediator to Family Counselor. Motion carried.

Autumn Pumford, Animal Control Director, was in attendance to request that shipping costs be paid for a cat tower and cat enclosures obtained with a grant. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to approve the shipping costs of \$428.87 & \$1,650 for a cat tower and cat enclosures for Animal Control. Motion carried.

Mrs. Pumford also requested that a ballistic vest be purchased for the new Animal Control Officer. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to approve the purchase of a ballistic vest for the new Animal Control Officer in the amount of \$874.00. Motion carried.

Mrs. Pumford is also resting the purchase of a shelter software called Pet Point. This software will log complaints, animal bites and animal intakes. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to approve the purchase of Pen Point software in the amount of \$1,500. Motion carried.

Kevin Everingham, Community Corrections, presented the board with the FY2024 Community Corrections Grant. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to approve the Community Corrections Plan and Grant Application for FY2024. Motion carried.

Ryan Dreyer, Commission on Aging Director, was in attendance to request approval of the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan (AAAWM) Older Americans Act Continuation of Funding Request for FY24. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to approve for signature the proposed AAWM FY2023 Older Americans Act Continuation of Funding Request. Motion carried.

Mr. Dreyer also requested that a part-time Support Services Coordinator be hired for up to 29 hours per week. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to allow the Commission

on Aging to hire a part-time Support Services Coordinator for up to 29 hours per week at the current wage scale for the position. Motion carried.

Kim Kuhn, Register of Deeds, was in attendance to request the two Chief Deputy positions in the Register of Deeds office be combined into one and be paid at the Deputy Commission on Aging Director, 3-year wage and to promote the Administrative Aide, Breanna Hendrick to an Administrative Assistant at the 1-year wage. Mrs. Kuhn stated that this will be a cost savings as she will not be filling a currently authorized position in the office.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Kohn to combine the two Chief Deputy positions in the Register of Deeds office into 1 Chief Deputy Register of Deeds/Abstractor at the same wage classification as the Deputy Commission on Aging Director 3-year wage. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to reclassify the Administrative Aide position in the Register of Deeds office to an Administrative Assistant at the 1-year wage. Motion carried.

Trevor Wright, Veteran's Affairs Director, was in attendance to request the approval of the 2024 County Veteran's Service Fund request. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to accept finds from the 2024 MVAA CVSF Grant in the amount of \$85,601.00 and allow for signatures. Motion carried.

Eric Smith, Emergency Services Director, informed the board that the Montcalm County Hazard Mitigation Plan has been approved by FEMA. This will be the first time that Montcalm County has a fully approved Hazard Mitigation Plan once it is approved by MSP. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Baker to approve the Montcalm County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Motion carried.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, provided the board with a request from the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council for support in their endeavor to secure an EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to place the correspondence from Grand Valley Metropolitan Council on file. Motion carried.

Ms. Taeter also provided the Board with a request from the Montcalm County Planning Commission to reappoint a County Commissioner to the Planning Commission as soon as possible, as the current Commissioner appointed to this role has not attended any of their meetings thus far this year. During discussion Chairman Carr asked if the Board feels that the Planning Commission is even needed at this point. The consensus was to ask the Planning Commission members to attend the next Board of Commissioners meeting to discuss the future of the Planning Commission. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to table this issue. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to approve warrant number 05082023 in the amount of \$376,230.83. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to approve consent agenda items 14 through 17 and move stated action:

Controller	Resolution 2023-06, County Equalization Report	Place on file
Controller	2023 Equalization Report, L-4024	Place on file
Controller	2023 List of Properties for Public Auction	Place on file
Controller	FY2023 Budget Review	Place on file

Motion carried.

Deb Ballard, Equalization Director, presented the Board with the 2023 L-4029, Tax Rate Request. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to approve the 2023 L-4029, Tax Rate Request and allow for signatures. Motion carried.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, presented the Board with a request from a department head in the court complex to allow food trucks to park in the court complex parking lot once a week. Commissioner Baker stated that Howard City has allowed food trucks on the Library property for some time and it has gone over very well. Commissioners Petersen and Carr both stated that they just see too many issues and problems could arise by allowing this to take place and it should just be left up to private enterprise to host food trucks.

Discussion took place on the proposed combination of the County Clerk's Vital Records/Elections Office with the Circuit Court Clerk's Office in the Court Complex. Clerk Millard presented each Board member with a packet of information regarding the 2017 memo Commissioner Petersen reference at the April 10<sup>th</sup> board meeting and explained that the proposal for the imaging and microfilming of the vital records was not approved, therefore the combination of offices never took place. She stated that she does not feel that the combination at this point in time is in the best interest for constituents but fully understand the Board has the authority to provide adequate space and funding for the office.

Commissioner Petersen stated that he doesn't believe this move will be as painful as it has been made out to be. He stated that he has been accused of having an ax to grind and disrespecting the Clerk and staff and stated that couldn't be further from the truth. He stated that this is a lateral move that is strictly based on space. He said he has been told that Equalization is cramped in the space they have and he has been told the Veteran's Affairs doesn't need more space but they need more privacy to meet with veteran's. Commissioner Petersen stated that he was never invited to tour the Court Complex. He did state that it is a shame that none of the vital records have been imaged or microfilmed.

Commissioner Petersen stated that the Law Library has already been approved to be designated to the Clerk. Ms. Millard stated that she would also need the mail room to be designated as her space and she would like a committee appointed to explore the space in the court complex to see if space can be carved out for a meeting room off of the public hallway. Ms. Millard also stated that the electrical service in the court office would need to be looked at as it was a problem when the court staff moved into that building and now even more equipment will be in that same space. Chairman Carr stated that he is not willing to guarantee to any of the details the clerk has brought before the Board.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to move the Vital Records/Elections office out to the Court Complex and combine the offices.

Under discussion:

Commissioner Johnston asked if a timeframe was being tied to the motion. He stated that time is needed to make the move and have it done right. Additionally, he stated that the retention building is not in the great shape that he was led to believe it was in. Ceiling tiles are missing and there are water stains in the hallway. Commissioner Johnston also stated that he is concerned about security of having employees out in retention alone and wonders about having the retention building attached to the court complex.

Discussion took place on attaching the retention building to the back of the court complex. Commissioner Painter feels the two buildings should be attached if we are sending employees out there

work. Commissioner Petersen stated that there is money to make modification to the Court Complex and attach retention to the court complex.

Commissioner Baker stated that he feels the Clerk's Office could be easier to run having all of the staff in one location. However, he stated that the way things are now it is going to be impossible and very expensive to work through combining the two offices. The court complex was built for just the Clerk of the Court and now the Board is trying to force the entire Clerk operation into the same space. He stated that he feels this is going to be very challenging.

Roll call vote on moving the Clerk's Vital Records/Elections Office to the Court Complex: Ayes: Commissioners Kohn, Mahar, Painter, Petersen and Carr. Nays: Commissioners Baker and Johnston. Motion carried.

Public comments were offered. Clayton Thomas, Montcalm Township, addressed the Board regarding attaching the retention building to the back of the court complex and feels that is a good solution. He stated that within the last month, an inmate was loitering in the back parking lot. Inmates are released from the jail daily and that exit is directly across from the back parking lot.

Commissioner Mahar commended the board members before him to get this county to a place of financial soundness. Additionally, he is hopeful that the board will work with the Clerk to make this move successful and as painless as possible.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to adjourn at 6:58 p.m. Motion carried.

---

Kristen Millard, County Clerk

---

Patrick Q. Carr, Chairman