

MONTCALM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting

Monday, August 14, 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 Sampson Coston from Pine Grove 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, Andrea Krause, Eric Smith, Clay Thomas, Candis Thomas, Danielle Ferguson, Chalice O'Green, JoAnne Vukin, Scott Vukin, Autumn Pumford, Doug Gietzen, Deb Ballard, Lisa Petersen, Armon Withey, Kim Kuhn, Cindy Christensen, Joyce Hackman, Stephan & Kim Croff, Mike Kalka and Elisabeth Waldon.

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

Public comments were offered. Clayton Thomas, Montcalm Township, addressed the Board and thanked the board members that reached out to his wife, Candis Thomas, today regarding a sexual harassment allegation she made regarding a local attorney. Mr. Thomas stated that his wife has repeatedly asked for progress from her boss, Kristen Millard, County Clerk, and has not received it. He stated that he is extremely disappointed in how the allegation was handled, with no support from her management or leader. He stated that the safety and security of employees is part of leadership, and he feels his wife has been failed. Mr. Thomas is asking that Clerk Millard step down immediately or the Board suspend her until the investigation is completed.

Deb Ballard, Equalization Director, presented the Board with the Professional Valuation Services Contract with CSZ Services, for field appraisals for the 325 commercial/industrial parcels in the amount of \$24,375, which will include the commercial/industrial land and ecf studies. According to the contract, agricultural parcels will be billed at a rate of \$52.50 per parcel. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Kohn to authorize the 2024-2026 Professional Valuation Services contract with CSZ Services in the amount of \$24,375 and allow for signatures. Motion carried.

Sheriff Mike Williams informed the Board the PA416 state allocation has increased since last year's budget. He is requesting the purchase of a speed trailer from All Traffic Solutions. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to amend the budget to reflect the new grant contract adjustments as presented and approve the purchase of a speed trailer from All Traffic Solutions in an amount not to exceed \$17,522. Motion carried.

A reclassification request was received from Brian Wagner, District Court Magistrate/Administrator, to fill a Probation Officer position that was reclassified in the 2024 from a Chief Probation Officer position. Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Painter to authorize District Court to fill the Chief Probation Officer vacancy as a Probation Officer. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Johnston to approve warrant report number 08142023 in the amount of \$1,211,770.65. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Kohn to approve consent agenda items

5 through 10 and move stated action:

Treasurer	2023 Unlicensed Dog Report	Place on file
Controller	Contract for Attorney Services	Place on file
Controller	Montcalm County Planning Commission Minutes	Place on file
Controller	Montcalm Solid Waste Management Minutes	Place on file
Controller	EGLE New Materials Management Plans	Place on file
Controller	FY2023 Budget Review	Place on file

Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Johnston to enter into a Public Hearing at 4:15 p.m. for the purpose of an appeal to the Construction Ordinance for property located at 10040 S. Cedar Lake Road, Fenwick, MI. Motion carried.

Stephan and Kim Croff, Fenwick, MI, were in attendance and provided the Board with drawings of the property in question. Mr. Croff explained he has 20 acres that currently has a single wide trailer on it that his brother lives in, and he would like to add a modular home to the property for him and his wife to live in so they can be near his impaired brother. Mr. Croff explained that his brother lived with his father, but their father passed away a couple of years ago and due to his brother's impairments, he needs to be near him to assist him.

Mike Kalka, Building Official, was in attendance and stated that there is plenty of land at the location to accommodate two dwellings on the same parcel. He does not have an objection to adding a double wide to the property.

Discussion took place on whether the land should be split instead of offering a variance. Deb Ballard, Equalization Director, explained that to split the parcel would be costly because a survey would be required.

Commissioner Petersen stated that he does not feel that the Croff's should be required to split the property and incur additional costs in order to move a double wide onto that property.

Moved by Commissioner Johnston, supported by Commissioner Mahar to close the Public Hearing at 4:22 p.m. Motion carried.

Moved by Commissioner Johnston, supported by Commissioner Mahar to approve the variance to the Construction Ordinance for Stephan and Kim Croff, for property located at 10040 S. Cedar Lake Road, Fenwick, MI, Bushnell Township. Motion carried.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, addressed the Board regarding the FY 2023/24 Child Care Fund budget on behalf of Judge Charles Simon, III and Kristi Jeffery, Juvenile Court Administrator.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Kohn to approve the FY2023/2024 Child Care Fund Budget and allow for signature. Motion carried.

Doug Gietzen, Maintenance Director, addressed the Board regarding the drain field issue at the Animal Control Building. He stated that the septic has failed and has to be pumped every 7 – 8 days. Mr. Gietzen stated that the old system wasn't a drain field, but more of a dry well. Bids were requested and were received from 4 companies. Mr. Gietzen recommends accepting the bid from Powell's Excavating & Septic, Inc.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to hire Powell's Excavating & Septic, Inc. for the amount of \$14,850.00 to build a new septic field for Animal Control, per Montcalm County Health Department regulations and drawings. Motion carried.

Mr. Gietzen also addressed the need for a new play set at Ford Lincoln Park. This is the only park that does not have a play set and is a money-making park.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Mahar to accept a bid from Playground Boss for \$27,875 for a playground set to be installed complete at Ford Lincoln Park. Motion carried.

At 4:35 p.m. JoAnne Vukin, County Treasurer, was in attendance to inform the Board that her Chief Deputy Treasurer, Angela Gonzalez, will be retiring on September 15, 2023. Mrs. Gonzalez has agreed to assist in training her replacement, therefore Mrs. Vukin would like to hire a new Chief Deputy immediately so there is two weeks of overlap for training.

Commissioner Petersen asked Ms. Vukin why she terminated an employee last week if she is short staffed. Mrs. Vukin stated that she is not comfortable discussing personnel issues in a public meeting. Commissioner Petersen expressed his concern that in the Controller's Office there is a very thick file of mistakes that have been made by the Treasurer's Office in the past 3 weeks.

Chairman Carr stated that the Treasurer's request to overlap employees for training purposes is consistent with what has been done in the past in other departments.

Moved by Commissioner Baker, supported by Commissioner Kohn to post and hire a Chief Deputy Treasurer before the current Chief Deputy retires, applications due by August 25, 2023.

Under discussion Commissioner Mahar stated that he feels that there seems to be reasons to be concerned as Mrs. Vukin has make conflicting statements to the Board regarding her staffing needs.

Chairman Carr stated that the Treasurer has the ability to fill the position without any action by the Board. The only control the Board has over the position is whether or not the hire can take place prior to the current Chief Deputy leaving.

Commissioner Petersen stated that his concern is that employees are being hired that do not have any type of accounting background. He believes that to work in the Treasurer's Office employees should have accounting degrees.

Motion carried with Commissioner Petersen voted no.

Mrs. Vukin thanked the Board and invited each of them to come down to her office and meet with her one on one to discuss any issues or concerns.

Autumn Pumford, Animal Control Director, was in attendance to present the Board with the Animal Control/Shelter updates. She also presented the Board with new/updated policies and procedures and gave them states from January – July 2023. Mrs. Pumford stated that intakes are up due to a lot of surrenders. While the surrender rate is up, she stated that she doesn't think that number is higher than anywhere else in the state as the surrender rate is up statewide.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Baker to accept the Montcalm County Animal Control, Animal Control policy & Procedures on file. Motion carried.

Deb Ballard, Equalization Director, presented the Board with the 2023 Tax Rate Request, L-4029.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Johnston to approve the 2023 Tax Rate Request as presented and obtain the appropriate signatures. Motion carried.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, presented the Board with an ARPA approved projects tracking update.

Discussion took place on the City of Stanton, DDA & TIPPA fees, the County “opted out” of something but nothing has been able to be located. There’s some confusion at the City of Stanton because leadership has changed. Something was done in April 2015 but more research will need to be done.

Brenda Taeter, Controller/Administrator, stated that she will present the final budget document at the next Board meeting. The notice will be published for the Public Hearing this Friday.

Public comments were offered. Clayton Thomas addressed the Board again and apologized to Brenda Taeter for snapping at her earlier in the meeting. He stated that this is an emotional situation and he feels his wife’s feelings have been dismissed. Mr. Thomas stated that he wanted it put on record that per their attorney’s request they will be issuing a FOIA for a lot of information in the next day or so.

Moved by Commissioner Petersen, supported by Commissioner Johnston to adjourn at 5:21 p.m. Motion carried.

Kristen Millard, County Clerk

Patrick Q. Carr, Chairman