

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL WORKSHOP ON  
AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT**

May 28, 2021

**1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

The Special Workshop on the American Rescue Plan Act of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners convened at 8:32 a.m., Friday, May 28, 2021 via Zoom Meeting and aired live on YouTube.

Chair Frisbie called the meeting to order, requested the Deputy Clerk call the roll and requested that all commissioners note their physical location for the current Board of Commissioners meeting in accordance with the Amended Open Meetings Act. All members indicated they were in Calhoun County, MI.

Present: Comrs. Kathy-Sue Vette, Rochelle Hatcher, Jake Smith, Steve Frisbie, Derek King, Tommy Miller, and Gary Tompkins.

Staff Present: Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott, Corporation Counsel Jim Dyer, Assistant Administrator Brad Wilcox, HR/Labor Relations Director Kim Archambault, Communications Manager Lucy Blair, and Deputy Clerk Susan Connolly.

**2 and 3. MOMENT OF SILENCE/INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

After a moment of silence, Comr. Tompkins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Res. 090-2021

"Moved Comr. Vette, second by Comr. Hatcher to approve the May 28, 2021 Board of Commissioners' Special Workshop on American Rescue Plan Act agenda as presented."

On a voice call vote, Yes – 7. Motion **CARRIED**.

**5. SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS: WORKSHOP ON AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT**

- a. *8:45) American Rescue Plan Act--Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CLFRF): Overview and Initial County Strategy  
--Kelli Scott, Administrator/Controller and Megan Banning, Deputy Controller*

Comr. Hatcher questioned if there are categories for future pandemic training.

Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott replied that training for various purposes would qualify as an eligible use of the funds.

Comr. Frisbie asked about what types of investments might bring long-term tax benefits for taxpayers including facilities maintenance to lower costs. Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott replied that examples of projects with long-term return on investment might include ways to improve the County's balance sheet position, such as accelerating capital improvements that would lower deferred maintenance needs; strategies related to retiree health benefits and their associated unfunded liabilities, and upgrades to information technology and facilities infrastructure that would increase energy efficiency and safety.

*b. 9:30) ALICE Report: Households Facing Financial Hardships in Calhoun County*

*--Chris Sargent, President & CEO, United Way of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region*

Kelli Scott noted that overall improvements in the County's average household income and poverty percentages would also produce long-term benefits to the County and its taxpayers because these economic indicators are a factor in the County's bond credit rating and resulting interest rates on financing projects .

*c. 10:00) Potential Investment Areas--Presentations and Discussion:  
10:00) Addressing Economic and Tourism Impacts*

*--Linda Freybler, CEO, Calhoun County Visitors Bureau (CVB)  
--Joe Sobieralski, CEO, Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU)*

Kelli Scott noted that one tool to assist with economic development projects is the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program set forth by the Board of Commissioners and managed through the Treasurer's office, noting that this tool was helpful a few years ago to the YMCA's capital upgrade project.

Kelli Scott asked Linda Freybler if she considered the renovations to the former McCamly Plaza/Hotel and Kellogg Arena as the highest priority for reviving the County's capacity for tourism. Freybler responded that she did consider this project at the top of the list.

Scott mentioned that another potential investment that would aid the recovery of hardest-hit tourism industry would be assistance to the Calhoun County

Fair Board and their need to create a master plan and upgrade facilities and infrastructure. After some discussion noted that this item would require further discussion after receiving information about such needs from the Fair Board.

*10:20) Return to Full Capacity and Better*

*--Calhoun County Courts*

Chief Judge Mike Jaconette highlighted Courts' memo requesting ARPA funds for various projects, and added that he would also support funding to improve the Juvenile Home. Court Administrators Kris Getting and Kate Ambrose offered some detail about the Courts' funding requests.

Comr. Frisbie noted that the Courts' request included the need for a visiting judge to assist with backlog of cases.

Ms. Scott asked if there was also the need for ARPA funding to specialty courts. Judge Jaconette replied that there might be such a need as funding plans continue to be developed.

*10:40) Financial Assistance to Households and Businesses*

*--Brian Wensauer, Treasurer, Calhoun County*

*--Melinda Weaver, Deputy Treasurer, Calhoun County*

Comr. Tompkins questioned how much funding would be requested for the property tax relief program and how it might be sustained long term. Melinda Weaver replied that the estimate for ARPA funds for this program is \$1.5 million.

Comr. King asked about how the funds could be equitably and fairly appropriated to citizens given that many individuals and businesses have continued to stay current on taxes throughout the pandemic.

*11:00) Housing and Workforce Development Initiatives*

*--Krista Trout-Edwards, Executive Director, Calhoun County Land Bank Authority*

Administrator/Controller Kelli Scott noted that these initiatives would be a great example of collaborative opportunities with Cities within Calhoun County.

## **6. CITIZENS' TIME**

Kathy Szenda Wilson, resident of Battle Creek, informed the Board of the need for early childhood care support, including financial support of childcare workers that maintain essential services.

*From Contact Us Form at 11:20 a.m. from Linda Pell: This message is regarding ARPA funds Board of Commissioners workshop. Excellent information provided by the participants that provided a good baseline to understand both how the funds can be used and summarizing some of the needs across the county. I look forward to continuing to monitor and provide feedback. Two thoughts: 1. Coordination and collaboration among county, cities, townships, school districts who are receiving ARPA funds on allocating funds will give our citizens and taxpayers the best bang for the buck. 2. Promoting these meetings earlier and across more outlets will allow for greater public participation. Let's encourage folks to participate in the education process to prepare them for giving input grounded in facts and knowledge. Having all of us pulling in the same direction in support of our greater Calhoun County Community would be powerful.*

## **7. COMMISSIONERS' DISCUSSION ON PRIORITIES**

Comr. Smith and Comr. Miller expressed their support for partnerships with local municipalities. Smith noted that he would support investments in workforce development and in upgrading the Road Department facilities.

Comr. Hatcher expressed appreciation for the workshop presentations.

Comr. King added his support for the funds to be applied toward mental health serviced and echoed the support for collaboration with municipalities and organizations.

Comr. Tompkins noted that he looks forward to further discussion and stressed the need for projects with county-wide impact.

Comr. Frisbie reminded the Board of the meeting with the Road Department and township supervisors scheduled for June 15.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57am at the call of the Chair.

smc

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Susan M. Connolly  
Deputy Clerk to the Board