



# Minutes

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING  
Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

Meeting held in person at Van Buren ISD Conference Center

## **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Doroh, Kurt, Chair, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Curran, Jim, Vice Chair, Berrien County Commissioner  
Sinclair, Kim, Treasurer, Van Buren County Representative  
Preston, Linda, Secretary, Cass County Representative  
Catherman, Rick, Van Buren County Representative  
Cichon, Peg, Berrien County Representative  
DeLong, Don, Cass County Representative  
Dodd, James, Cass County Representative  
Durm-Hiatt, Marge, Berrien County Representative  
Ellspermann, Tom, Berrien County Representative  
Engle, Roger, Van Buren County Representative  
Fette, Dan, Berrien County Representative  
Freehling, Teri Sue, Berrien County Commissioner  
Hanson, Sandra, Alternate Treasurer, Van Buren County Representative  
Humphrey, John, Berrien County Representative  
Klemesrud, Kathryn, Berrien County Representative  
Leary, Tina, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Multhauf, Katie, Van Buren County Economic Development Ex-Officio  
Pantaleo, Paul, Berrien County Representative  
Patterson-Gladney, Gail, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Stauffer, Dick, Berrien County Representative  
Torzynski, Robert, Pokagon Band Representative  
Tyler, Doug, Cass County Representative  
Wuerfel, Julie, Berrien County Commissioner

## **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Gundersen, Kristen, Alternate Secretary, Berrien County Representative  
Northrop, Alan, Cass County Commissioner

## **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Vettraino, Maria, SWMPC Office Manager  
Burdue, Jerriid, SWMPC Senior Development Planner

## **1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Kurt Doroh called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Office Manager, Maria Vettraino, took roll call, and a quorum was present.

## **2. ACCEPTANCE AND/OR REVISION OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Chair Doroh presented the Consent Agenda. Rick Catherman moved to **“ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA.”** Gail Patterson-Gladney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## **3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Egelhaaf opened the floor for any questions or comments on the Executive Director’s Report. Marge Durm-Hiatt inquired about why SWMPC is exploring other banking options. Egelhaaf explained we are looking into banking options that would offer a line of credit in the event of a prolonged government shutdown.

Gail Patterson-Gladney wondered about the SWMI Food is Heath Collaborative Kick-Off. Egelhaaf stated this collaborative wants to use food grown in our region to benefit economic development and community wellness.

Dan Fette wondered if there should be a budget revision since the EPA grant was revoked. Director Egelhaaf explained how this has been on our radar and a budget revision should be done.

Kim Sinclair moved to **“ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT.”** Doug Tyler seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## **4. CONTRACT INFO TRACKER**

Director Egelhaaf presented the contract info tracker that shows all the current projects and how they are funded.

## **5. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION: AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT**

Vice Chair, Jim Curran updated the Board on the Ad Hoc Committee’s report for the Executive Director Evaluation. He explained that the committee will figure out a date to meet after today’s meeting and will report at the December Board meeting.

## **6. TITLE VI NON-DISCRIMINATION PLAN**

Director Egelhaaf presented the Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan. He explained the purpose of the plan which is to ensure that SWMPC complies with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and how the plan outlines policies, procedures, and responsibilities to give everyone equal access to our programs, services, and activities.

## **7. RESOLUTION 2025-12 TITLE VI PLAN**

Doug Tyler moved to “**APPROVE RESOLUTION 2025-12 TITLE VI PLAN.**” Gail Patterson-Gladney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously by roll call vote.

## **8. COASTAL SOLUTIONS COMPENDIUM**

Director Egelhaaf talked about the Coastal Solutions Compendium collaborative project. He explained how the compendium is reframing the approach from Coastal Management to Coastal Resilience, aiming to help with useful information to make informed decisions. He shared the tools included, such as primary zoning tools, zoning districts, overlay zones, land divisions, non-conformity and variance standards.

## **9. GRAHAM WOODHOUSE INTERGOVERNMENTAL EFFORT AWARD UPDATE**

Director Egelhaaf updated the Board on the single Graham Woodhouse nomination received for the BCBIT-ARPA ROBIN Berrien County Broadband Project. He reminded the Board to send their vote to Office Manager, Maria Vettraino by October 28<sup>th</sup>.

## **10. PLANNER PRESENTATION**

*Why the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Matters*

Senior Development Planner, Jerrid Burdue presented on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), what it is and why it matters. Burdue got us on the same page with the definition of economic development as the process of creating the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by fostering regional collaboration, supporting job creation, diversifying local economies, and building resilient communities. He explained the CEDS is a federally recognized regional economic strategy built with public and private partners that is updated at least every five years. Burdue shared the goals from 2022 and some wins that included the MEC SMART Park, New Buffalo Municipal Marina, and Palisades Economic Recovery.

Burdue asked the Board for their input on what challenges or opportunities they see in their community in terms of economic development. Chair Doroh brought up transit and housing challenges. Doug Tyler said the US 12 Heritage Garage Sale could be an opportunity to be developed. He also brought up challenges with open pit gravel removal. Other topics discussed were infrastructure and housing development. Burdue then inquired about the Board’s thoughts on data centers. Dan Fette shared that companies are now moving towards internalizing the construction process, resulting in the requests for data center land assembly to decline. Katie Multauf with Market One spoke more on data centers saying they have not had any recent projects come through but workforce talent is needed. Kim Sinclair was interested in agricultural needs and ownership changes. Burdue stated they have

some members on the CEDS committee that are experts on agriculture that will help give us more knowledge and understanding of agricultural issues. Teri Sue Freehling shared how MI FarmLink is helping to connect farmers looking to transfer their land to other farmers to keep agricultural acres preserved and continued.

Burdue concluded that a full update for the CEDS will kick-off February of 2026.

#### **11. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

#### **12. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

None.

#### **13. ADJOURNMENT**

Marge Durm-Hiatt moved to adjourn the meeting. Linda Preston supported the motion. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 10:42 am.

Respectfully submitted by:



K. John Egelhaaf, AICP

Date: October 21, 2025