



# Minutes

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission  
FULL COMMISSION MEETING  
Tuesday, August 26, 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  
Freehling, Teri Sue, Berrien County Commissioner  
Gundersen, Kristen, Alternate Secretary, Berrien County Representative  
Hanson, Sandra, Alternate Treasurer, Van Buren County Representative  
Humphrey, John, Berrien County Representative  
Pantaleo, Paul, Berrien County Representative  
Patterson-Gladney, Gail, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Stauffer, Dick, Berrien County Representative  
Torzynski, Robert, Pokagon Band Representative  
Wuerfel, Julie, Berrien County Commissioner

## **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Fette, Dan, Berrien County Representative  
Klemesrud, Kathryn, Berrien County Representative  
Leary, Tina, Van Buren County Commissioner  
Multhauf, Katie, Van Buren County Economic Development Ex-Officio  
Northrop, Alan, Cass County Commissioner  
Tyler, Doug, Cass County Representative

## **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Vettraino, Maria, SWMPC Office Manager  
Burdue, Jerrid, SWMPC Senior Development Planner  
Happel, Jerry, Director, Digital Information Department -Van Buren County

## **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. Peg Cichon moved to **“ACCEPT THE CONSENT AGENDA.”** Rick Catherman 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.

Paul Pantaleo asked about the Planning & Zoning for Solar Energy Workshop. Senior Development Planner, Jerrid Burdue explained the scope of the workshop. Pantaleo voiced concerns on solar panel inefficiency and use of land. Discussion ensued on the fallbacks of solar farms, including the recycling difficulty of solar panels. Julie Wuerfel wondered why we would be involved in solar planning. Director Egelhaaf stated we want to be informed and build a process to understand the topic better.

Sandra Hanson asked if the Materials Management Plan will impact townships. Egelhaaf responded that it will impact townships down the line. Julie Wuerfel inquired into the sub-committees. Egelhaaf explained the purpose of the sub-committees and will send information on how to join.

Rick Catherman inquired about the Regional Housing Partnership Asset Mapping. Director Egelhaaf explained the need for completion of the Housing Asset Mapping Survey and identification of resources that support housing solutions.

James Dodd moved to **“ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT.”** Gail Patterson-Gladney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## **4. AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION**

Chair Doroh stated Vice Chair Curran is the head of the ad hoc committee for the Executive Director evaluation. Along with the executive committee, a member from each county will assist Curran in this evaluation. The members chosen were Don DeLong from Cass County, Gail Patterson-Gladney from Van Buren County, and Peg Cichon from Berrien County.

## **5. GRAHAM WOODHOUSE INTERGOVERNMENTAL EFFORT AWARD**

Director Egelhaaf went over the Graham Woodhouse Award including the internal process, past recipients, nomination form, and submission deadline of October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Nomination forms should be sent to Office Manager, Maria Vettraino.

## **6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

*Revision – Insertion in Part 2 of Financial Polices “Operating Reserve Fund”*

Director Egelhaaf presented the Operating Reserve Fund addition to the Financial Policies and Procedures. Peg Cichon moved to **“APPROVE OPERATING RESERVE FUND POLICY ADDITION.”** Gail Patterson-Gladney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## **7. DIGITAL INNOVATION & COLLABORATIVE EXCHANGE**

Jerry Happel presented on the Digital Innovation & Collaborative Exchange (DICE). He explained what DICE entails, including what it is, AI in action, microtool examples, early results, why counties should care, and current partnerships. Happel concluded the presentation by asking for more participating organizations.

## **8. PLANNER PRESENTATION**

*Why the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Matters*

Chair Doroh decided to move Jerrid Burdue’s presentation to the next Board meeting.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **10. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

Teri Sue Freehling suggested SWMPC add grant application policies and procedures to the Financial Policies and Procedures document.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

Marge Durm-Hiatt moved to adjourn the meeting. Linda Preston supported the motion. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 11:05 am.

Respectfully submitted by:



K. John Egelhaaf, AICP

Date: August 26, 2025