

**CASS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING**

March 17, 2022

The County Board of Commissioners met in regular session Thursday, March 17th, 2022 in the Board of Commissioners chambers. Due to COVID-19 concerns, public participation was offered via Zoom.

Chair Dyes called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Marchetti provided the Invocation. Commissioner Laylin led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Chief Deputy Clerk/Register Heather Harding called roll:

Commissioners Present (6): Annie File, Jeremiah Jones, Dwight Dyes, Ryan Laylin, Roseann Marchetti and Robert Benjamin.

Commissioners Absent (1): Michael Grice.

STAFF PRESENT: County Administrator Jeff Carmen, Deputy County Administrator Matt Newton, Finance Director Jennifer Rentfrow and Chief Deputy Clerk/Register Heather Harding.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Visitors introduced themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Middleton, Wayne Township resident, spoke regarding her support for the employees of Cass County and keeping their Defined Benefit pension plan.

Korie Blyveis, Cass County Conservation District Administrator, mentioned the Melting Man bike race taking place over the upcoming weekend.

Fern Smith, CCIEA Union President, spoke regarding the settlement of their contracts.

Jim Pederson, Village of Cassopolis resident, spoke regarding his support of the employees of Cass County and keeping their Defined Benefit pension plan.

Beth Pompey spoke in support of the Sheriff Deputies that put their lives on the line every day.

Naomi Ludman, City of Dowagiac resident, spoke regarding her support for the employees of Cass County and keeping their Defined Benefit pension plan.

Steve Carra, 59th District State Representative, spoke about fiscal responsibility and informed the attendees that he would be available after the meeting to speak.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Benjamin moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve the Cass County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Agenda for March 17th, 2022 with the following amendments:

Change M-59-22 to M-48-22.

M-66-22 Motion to appoint Naomi Ludman to a 2-year term on Solid Waste Planning Commission ending 6/1/2023.

M-67-22 Motion to appoint Amy Huser to a 2-year term on Solid Waste Planning Commission ending 6/1/2023.

M-68-22 Motion to appoint Nadzieja Pochecki to a 3-year term on the Woodlands Board ending 3/31/2025.

M-69-22 Motion to appoint Leslie Baker to a 3-year term on the Woodlands Board ending 3/1/2025.

R-70-22 Resolution to approve CBA agreement with CCIEA Court Unit.

R-71-22 Resolution to approve CBA agreement with CCIEA General Unit.

Remove M-65-22 Closed Session.

There was no discussion. Motion passed by voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Dyes called the public hearing to order at 5:19 pm.

Scott Wyman, Parks Director, stated that for as long as he has been here this is the most excitement he has seen over the parks. He showed a video of a drive through of T.K. Lawless Park showing where proposed improvements would be. Handouts were given to the board of the proposed changes. He then gave a power point presentation with specifics of the grants they want to apply for.

Jerry Marchetti asked how much money the county would be responsible for. Jennifer Rentfrow, Finance Director, informed him the total amount will be \$771,625.

Mary Middleton spoke in support of the parks as being outside is good for mental health.

Robert Parrish spoke regarding Astro-tourism and his support of the changes proposed. Korie Blyveis spoke of her excitement of the proposed nature center.

Jerry Marchetti asked if ARPA monies could be used. Scott Wyman indicated that ARPA funds could be used for the Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, but cannot be used for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant as it is also federal money, and federal money cannot be used to match federal funds.

There was no further discussion.

Chair Dyes announced the public hearing over at 5:50 pm.

Vice Chair Grice entered the meeting at 5:55 pm.

RECOGNITIONS

There were none.

PRESENTATIONS

Tim Smith, CEO of Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network, gave a power point presentation of services.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Chair Grice moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, that the following items be voted on at one time by roll call vote and be considered as a consent agenda by the Board of Commissioners:

M-57-22

Motion to approve Claims dated March 4, 2022.

M-58-22

Motion to approve the March 3, 2022 Cass County Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting minutes.

There was no discussion.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(7): Commissioners File, Jones, Grice, Dyes, Laylin, Marchetti and Benjamin.

No(0): None.

The consent agenda passed by roll call vote.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Commissioners Marchetti, Benjamin and Jones offered committee reports.

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE REPORT

Commissioner Marchetti reported the committee is getting excellent applicants.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Deputy County Administrator Matt Newton offered the Administrator's Report.

FINANCE REPORT

Finance Director Jennifer Rentfrow offered the Finance Report.

PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE

Sheriff Behnke spoke about the Medical Examiner. He offered a handout with YTD death investigations and reports to the Medical Examiner. There was no discussion.

COUNTY PARTNERS

Korie Blyveis, Cass County Conservation District Administrator, offered an update from the board meeting Monday.

ELECTED OFFICIALS UPDATE

There was none.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

M-48-22

Commissioner Jones moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to approve the Household Hazardous Waste Proposal from ERG Environmental Services. Chair Dyes offered information about the upcoming collection. Motion passed by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

R-60-22

Commissioner File moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to approve resolution R-60-22:

RESOLUTION COMMITTING LOCAL MATCH AND APPROVING THE SUBMISSION OF A MICHIGAN NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND GRANT APPLICATION FOR DR. LAWLESS DARK SKY NATURE CENTER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Cass County Board of Commissioners and the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission are dedicated to the improvement of parks, tourism, and recreation facilities in Cass County; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park has shown great potential for recreation development in Cass County throughout its existence; and

WHEREAS, recent dark sky designation has reinforced the mission of leading by example as stewards of the land, water, and sky; and

WHEREAS, dark sky designation along with the development of a nature center will encourage growth and revenue potential through year around use from diverse user groups within Cass County and beyond; and

WHEREAS, funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund has in the past and will continue to be, a proven method of funding facility improvements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Cass County Board of Commissioners, in cooperation with the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission, pledge their support in the funding effort for the Dr. Lawless Dark Sky Nature Center Development Project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby authorize submission of a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund application for \$300,000.00 and further resolves to make available its financial obligation amount of \$343,500.00 (53%) of a total \$643,500.00 project cost, during the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Discussion followed.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(7): Commissioners Jones, Grice, Dyes, Laylin, Marchetti, Benjamin and File.

No(0): None.

Resolution R-60-22 passed by roll call vote.

R-61-22

Commissioner Laylin moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve resolution R-61-22:

RESOLUTION COMMITTING LOCAL MATCH AND APPROVING THE SUBMISSION OF A LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND GRANT APPLICATION FOR DR. LAWLESS INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK RENOVATION PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Cass County Board of Commissioners and the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission are dedicated to the improvement of parks, tourism, and recreation facilities in Cass County; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park has shown great potential for recreation development in Cass County throughout its existence; and

WHEREAS, recent dark sky designation has reinforced the mission of leading by example as stewards of the land, water, and sky; and

WHEREAS, dark sky designation along with proposed improvements including the renovation of the gatehouse, Schug Pavilion and entrance and parking area and the construction of a splash pad will encourage growth and revenue potential through year around use from diverse user groups within Cass County and beyond; and

WHEREAS, funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund has in the past and will continue to be, a proven method of funding facility improvements.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners, in cooperation with the Cass County Parks and Recreation Commission, pledge their support in the funding effort for the Dr. Lawless International Dark Sky Park Renovation Project, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners hereby authorize submission of a Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Application for \$428,625.00 and further resolves to make available its financial obligation amount of \$428,625.00 (50%) of a total \$857,250.00 project cost, during the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

Discussion followed.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(7): Commissioners Grice, Dyes, Laylin, Marchetti, Benjamin, File and Jones.

No(0): None.

Resolution R-61-22 passed by roll call vote.

R-62-22

Commissioner File moved, seconded by Commissioner Jones, to approve resolution R-62-22:

RESOLUTION ENDORSING INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY AWARENESS WEEK IN CASS COUNTY

WHEREAS, the beauty of a dark sky night is part of our cultural and scientific heritage which should be protected and preserved; and

WHEREAS, the overuse of improperly designed outdoor lighting constitutes "light pollution" of the nighttime environment thereby masking the beauty of the night sky; and

WHEREAS, Empirical evidence reveals the negative health effects of light pollution on human and environmental health; and

WHEREAS, attention to the problem of light pollution and its mitigation efforts will help ensure that the sky is preserved; and

WHEREAS, the economic benefits of dark sky astro-tourism are hereby recognized.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cass County Board of Commissioners endorse International Dark Sky Awareness Week from April 22 - April 30, 2022 in Cass County.

There was no discussion.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(7): Commissioners Dyes, Laylin, Marchetti, Benjamin, Files, Jones and Grice.

No(0): None.

Resolution R-62-22 passed by roll call vote.

M-63-22

Commissioner Laylin moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to approve revision to Dues & Membership Policy. Discussion followed. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-64-22

Commissioner Jones moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to approve Sheriff Department vehicle purchase. Discussion followed. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-66-22

Commissioner Benjamin moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to appoint Naomi Ludman to a 2-year term on the Solid Waste Planning Commission ending 6/1/2023. There was no discussion. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-67-22

Commissioner Benjamin moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to appoint Amy Huser to a 2-year term on the Solid Waste Planning Commission ending 6/1/2023. There was no discussion. Motion carried by voice vote.

M-68-22

Commissioner Benjamin indicated that he had questions for the board before he would make the motion. Commissioner Marchetti indicated that the motion needs to be made and seconded before discussion should happen. Commissioner Benjamin then asked for M-68-22 and M-69-22 be abandoned until he could talk to the Appointment Committee. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to appoint Nadzieja Pochecki to a 3-year term on the Woodlands Board ending 3/31/2025. There was no further discussion. Motion carried by voice vote.

Commissioner Benjamin then informed Chair Dyes he had asked for a roll call vote.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(6): Commissioners Laylin, Marchetti, File, Jones, Grice and Dyes.

No(1): Commissioner Benjamin.

Motion M-68-22 carried by roll call vote.

M-69-22

Commissioner Marchetti moved, seconded by Commissioner Laylin, to appoint Leslie Baker to a 3-year term on the Woodlands Board ending 3/31/2025. Discussion followed. Motion carried by voice vote.

R-70-22

A RESOLUTION APPROVING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE CASS COUNTY INDEPENDENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION COURT UNIT

WHEREAS, the County Negotiating Team, in good faith, have negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with the Cass County Independent Employees Association Court Unit, concerning wages, hours, terms, and other conditions of employment; and

WHEREAS, the Agreement have been lawfully and properly ratified by the membership of the Cass County Independent Employees Association Court Unit; and

WHEREAS, the County Labor Attorney has reviewed and approved the agreement in form and substance; and

WHEREAS, The Cass County Board of Commissioners find that the best interests of the County are served by executing the Agreement.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Cass County Board of Commissioners as follows:

1. The collective bargaining agreement between Cass County and the Cass County Independent Employees Association Court Unit is hereby authorized and approved.
2. The Chairperson of the Cass County Board of Commissioners is hereby authorized to execute said agreement on behalf of Cass County.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(5): Commissioners Marchetti, Benjamin, File, Dyes and Laylin.

No(2): Commissioners Jones and Grice.

Resolution R-70-22 carried by roll call vote.

R-71-22

A RESOLUTION APPROVING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE CASS COUNTY INDEPENDENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION GENERAL UNIT

WHEREAS, the County Negotiating Team, in good faith, have negotiated a collective bargaining agreement with the Cass County Independent Employees Association General Unit, concerning wages, hours, terms, and other conditions of employment; and

WHEREAS, the Agreement have been lawfully and properly ratified by the membership of the Cass County Independent Employees Association General Unit; and

WHEREAS, the County Labor Attorney has reviewed and approved the agreement in form and substance; and

WHEREAS, The Cass County Board of Commissioners find that the best interests of the County are served by executing the Agreement.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Cass County Board of Commissioners as follows:

1. The collective bargaining agreement between Cass County and the Cass County Independent Employees Association General Unit is hereby authorized and approved.
2. The Chairperson of the Cass County Board of Commissioners is hereby authorized to execute said agreement on behalf of Cass County.

The Chair instructed the Clerk to call roll:

Yes(5): Commissioners Benjamin, File, Dyes, Laylin and Marchetti.

No(2): Commissioners Jones and Grice.

Resolution R-71-22 carried by roll call vote.

CLOSED SESSION

There was none.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Laylin moved, seconded by Commissioner Marchetti, to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Approved: _____
Date

Dwight Dyes, Chair

Heather Harding, Chief Deputy Clerk