

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, January 13, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Human Resources (HR) Director Debbie Hill, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Supervisor Sorenson reported that the Cooper Township Board approved its five-year draft Master Plan for roads at its meeting the previous evening. He expressed enthusiasm about continued collaboration with the Road Commission on upcoming projects and noted that additional neighborhood road funding is anticipated next year. Supervisor Sorenson also thanked County Engineer Minkus for delivering a clear and effective presentation explaining the distinction between private and public roads, including why the Road Commission does not accept private roads and has not done so for many years. They discussed what could potentially be changed in the future. Approximately forty (40) residents attended the meeting, providing a strong turnout and a valuable opportunity for community discussion.

Mr. Dave Nobel, 10295 N. 19th Street, stated that the collapse of N. 19th Street is a known issue. He noted that the property directly across the street has been sold and is now owned by a company identified as BB Incorporated or BB Limited. The previous owner allowed buses to turn around in the driveway; however, Mr. Nobel is uncertain whether the new owner will continue to permit this use. He explained that buses, trucks, dump trucks, and plows currently use the driveway for turnarounds and observed that the dirt driveway is becoming increasingly rutted, raising concerns that vehicles could become stuck during frost conditions. Mr. Nobel requested that the Road Commission consider installing a hammerhead or other turnaround along N. 19th Street. He noted that his own property does not meet the criteria for such an installation but stated he would be willing to provide the necessary land if it did.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to correct the December 30, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented. During closing comments, Commissioner Stehouwer noted that the minutes should be corrected to reflect that he, along with Commissioner Thompson, Managing Director Bartholomew, and Public Relations Director Worden, attended the Township Supervisors' meeting rather than the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account: \$ 223,101.43

Vendor Account: \$ 693,883.28

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the expense reports of Commissioners Pawloski and Stehouwer as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

County Engineer Minkus presented a PowerPoint presentation titled “The Weight of the Seasons: Keeping Michigan Roads Alive.” He explained how potholes form and why Michigan implements spring seasonal weight restrictions, noting that these restrictions help preserve road infrastructure and save taxpayer dollars. He referenced the Michigan Vehicle Code (MVC), Act 300 of 1949, which governs seasonal weight restrictions, also known as Frost Laws. These restrictions reduce allowable axle weights by approximately 25–35 percent, with many farm-related activities exempt. He stated that the law does not require signs or maps to be posted; however, the Road Commission does post signage and maintains a weight restriction map on its website. The Road Commission is required to post the effective dates of restrictions and a list of affected roads. He noted that the Road Commission employs two permit agents, Brian Franklin and Jon Fitzsimmons, who patrol the county to enforce restrictions. Fines are assessed on a graduated scale based on the amount by which a vehicle exceeds the restricted weight limits. On average, weighmasters conduct over 100 stops during the seasonal weight restriction period, issue approximately five citations annually, and the average fine is \$1,200. He explained that several tools are used to determine when to implement weight restrictions, including staff experience; field observations from the City of Kalamazoo Water Department, utility contractors, and farmers; Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) frost tubes; the Minnesota Department of Transportation Freeze/Thaw Index; Michigan Thaw-caster (in use since 2018); and communication with neighboring road commissions and MDOT. He also provided a brief history of weight restrictions and noted that information regarding when restrictions are in effect is made available to the public through the RCKC website, social media, a dedicated phone line, and RCKC Connect notifications.

Commissioner Kennedy inquired about the distribution of fines. County Engineer Minkus explained that the funds are collected by the county in which the violation occurs and are therefore directed to Kalamazoo County. By statute, 25 percent of those funds must be allocated to libraries or law libraries within the county where the fines are collected.

Commissioner Davis asked about weighmaster safety protocols. County Engineer Minkus stated that the permit agents have not received specific safety training; however, both wear body armor when approaching vehicles. He noted that the Road Commission has fortunately not experienced any safety incidents. If a permit agent feels threatened, the vehicle is released and law enforcement is contacted.

Commissioner Pawloski asked whether seasonally restricted roads are being converted to all-season roads. County Engineer Minkus responded that the Road Commission is monitoring this and noted that state funding is available for such conversions. He explained that eligible roads must be shown on a state-accessible map. Typically, this map is updated every few years to reflect the current all-season network as well as future planned connections. As long as roads are identified on the map, the Road Commission may apply annual state funding toward those improvements.

Commissioner Davis also inquired about the cost difference between an all-season road and a vulnerable road. County Engineer Minkus explained that achieving all-season status typically requires an additional layer of asphalt, resulting in approximately a 30 percent increase in cost.

Managing Director Bartholomew expressed his appreciation to County Engineer Minkus for stepping in to assist the Permit Agents. He noted that five road commissions have implemented seasonal weight restrictions and asked what factors led those agencies to do so when the remainder of the state had not. County Engineer Minkus explained that the statute allows each road agency to independently implement seasonal weight restrictions, and that agencies may do so at different times. He stated that road commissions generally attempt to coordinate

regionally and take a countywide approach. The counties that enacted restrictions evaluated their road systems and made determinations based on weather forecasts and observed conditions on their county roads, concluding that it was necessary to implement restrictions. He also noted that implementation does not have to be a single on-and-off event, as agencies may enact restrictions more than once in a season, although efforts are made to avoid doing so.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the purchase of two (2) 2025 John Deere 644P Wheel Loaders, one (1) slide fork attachment, two (2) grapple buckets, two (2) 4.5-yard buckets, and extended warranties from AIS Construction Equipment Corporation utilizing the MIDEAL purchasing program which also includes a John Deere Customer Loyalty Discount and trade-in value for a total cost of \$590,020. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the 2026 Budget Capital Outlay includes the planned replacement of two (2) wheel loaders currently in service at RCKC. Both units have been in continuous service since November 2015 and have reached a point where increased depreciation, maintenance costs, and repair frequency are anticipated due to age and operating/physical condition. Wheel loaders are critical to RCKC operations and contractor support throughout the year. They are used daily to load trucks with salt, sand, aggregate, cold patch, topsoil, rip-rap, and other materials. These machines also play a key role in emergency response, including storm cleanup, debris removal, and support for snow operations at our facilities and clearing cul-de-sacs within residential areas.

RCKC solicited quotes from multiple vendors, including those participating in the Sourcwell and MiDEAL government purchasing programs, for the purchase of two (2) wheel loaders. Based on the submitted quotations and discussions with the vendors, RCKC has determined that procuring two (2) wheel loaders through the MiDEAL purchasing program represents the most cost-effective option.

All quotes include comparable machines with attachments, including: two (2) 4.5-yard buckets, one (1) fork attachment, two (2) grapple buckets, and trade-in values.

RCKC recommends the purchase for two (2) John Deere 644P Wheel Loaders from AIS Construction Equipment Corporation based on proven equipment performance, reliability, quality of maintenance, strong customer and parts support, long service life, and favorable trade-in or resale value. Replacing the existing wheel loaders with two new John Deere 644P units will improve reliability, safety, operational efficiency, and emergency response capability while reducing the risk of escalating maintenance costs and downtime. Based on RCKC's experience with the current John Deere 624K, the 644P offers similar operator comfort and visibility while providing increased lifting capacity, a larger engine, and improved attachment performance. These units are well-suited for road maintenance, construction support, and emergency operations and are expected to meet RCKC's operational needs for the next 10 years.

Commissioner Davis asked what would be done with the old units. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the purchase would include trading in the existing units. Commissioner Davis noted that the addition of heated mirrors would be a benefit. Commissioner Stehouwer asked when the new units would be available, and Assistant General Superintendent McClain responded that they are expected to be available around February. Commissioner Pawloski added that when equipment is not traded in, it is typically sold to other surrounding road commissions.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew reported that the Career Connect Campus at the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) requested that the Road Commission bring a plow truck to its facility for a class the following morning. Staff will provide an overview of the unit and explain its operation, including its role in winter maintenance. He announced several upcoming events, including the County Road Association (CRA) Highway Conference scheduled for March 24–27, the Township Supervisors' Meeting to be held January 21 at the Road Commission facility, the CRA "Commissioners in the Classroom" event on February 17 in Mount Pleasant, and the Southwest Council Meeting on February 9 in Barry County. He also shared that he contacted Oshtemo Township Supervisor Cheri Bell to discuss a potential joint meeting. The Road Commission offered to host, and staff are working through the details. Possible dates include March, April, or May, potentially in conjunction with a Board meeting. Oshtemo Township will provide agenda items and questions in advance to assist with preparation. He further reported that in April 2025, the Board approved the purchase of two international trucks scheduled for delivery in late 2025. While delivery has been delayed, the units have completed engineering review but do not yet

have a scheduled build date. Staff remain hopeful the trucks will be delivered before spring for use during the construction season as semi-tractors. He noted that the Western Star trucks approved by the Board in September 2025 were delivered ahead of schedule and are now available for Board viewing.

Commissioner Kennedy reported that she attended the Pavilion Township Board meeting, where township officials expressed satisfaction with the Road Commission's work. They also complimented the presentation provided by Public Relations Director Worden. She congratulated County Commissioner Jen Strebs on her re-election as County Commission Chair, County Commissioner John Taylor as Vice Chair, and County Commissioner Heppler as Pro Tem. She reminded attendees that park passes are available for veterans through the Veterans Services Office located off Alcott Street. She also noted that June 12 is Women Veterans Recognition Day and emphasized the importance of recognizing and celebrating veterans.

Commissioner Davis noted that, during these times of social strife, it is important to remember that Martin Luther King Jr. Day will be observed on Monday, January 19.

Commissioner Thompson attended the Cooper Township Board meeting last night. He complimented County Engineer Minkus on his presentation to the Board. The 19th Street turnaround was discussed. Both he and County Engineer Minkus met with Mr. Nobel who spoke today during public comments about the 19th Street situation and possible turnaround location. He had a couple citizens express concerns about plowing and their roads being "pretty messed up". He advised them to submit a service request. He also agreed to mention their concerns at the Road Commission meeting. He mentioned the next Board of Public Works meeting is scheduled for January 15th and he plans to attend the Schoolcraft Township Board meeting tonight.

Commissioner Stehouwer attended the Parks Commission meeting last Thursday and will be unable to attend the next meeting scheduled for February 5. He is hopeful that Commissioner Kennedy will be able to attend on his behalf. He also attended the Comstock Township Board meeting on January 5th. He drove through Ross Township, specifically the Gull Lake area, in response to service requests regarding slippery roads. While residents were advised to submit service requests, he personally reviewed the conditions and observed snowpack, hills, narrow roads, and garbage trucks experiencing difficulty on the hills. He stopped at the Township Hall, where he was provided with a resident call to follow up on. Otherwise, township staff reported no additional complaints. He may attend the Oshtemo Township Board meeting tonight and potentially the Ross Township Board meeting next week.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that he will attend the Township Supervisors' Meeting on January 21 at the Road Commission. He announced that he is not available to attend the Southwest Council Meeting. He also stated that he plans to attend the County Road Association (CRA) Highway Conference following the Board meeting. He thanked County Commissioner John Gisler for inviting the Road Commission to speak at a meeting of Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government, where Public Relations Director Worden and Managing Director Bartholomew provided a presentation. Topics included the Road Commission's future plans and anticipated funding for the coming year. He noted that County Commissioner Gisler complimented Administrative Assistant Rider on how she runs the Road Commission. He acknowledged that the first snowfall of the season was challenging and praised Road Commission crews for their hard work in clearing the roads, expressing appreciation for their efforts. He also informed Board members that anyone interested in riding in a snowplow may contact Managing Director Bartholomew.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

January 13, 2026 – Board Meeting

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, January 27, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Human Resources (HR) Director Debbie Hill, Assistant HR Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the January 13, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented. Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account: \$ 244,978.63

Vendor Account: \$ 1,005,908.50

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Ms. Jane Ghosh, President and CEO of Discover Kalamazoo, explained that Discover Kalamazoo serves as the Convention and Visitors Bureau for Kalamazoo County. Its mission is to attract out-of-town visitors whose spending supports local amenities such as restaurants, attractions, and performing arts venues. Discover Kalamazoo operates on behalf of Kalamazoo County under a management agreement.

A significant portion of visitors come for sports tournaments. Kalamazoo County currently hosts events in ice hockey, figure skating, wrestling, soccer, and tennis due to having appropriate facilities. While basketball and volleyball are popular locally, the county does not host tournaments for those sports because it lacks suitable facilities. To address this gap, Discover Kalamazoo worked with the county to develop an ordinance allowing hotels to impose an incremental assessment to fund a new sports facility. Hotels voted on a proposed 4% assessment on hotel stays, with one vote per room. The measure passed overwhelmingly, with 82% approval, and the assessment is now being collected.

A site selection process identified a location near the intersection of West Main Street and US-131, within the City of Kalamazoo and surrounded by Oshtemo Township. An ad hoc county committee selected the site, and the Kalamazoo County Event Center Assessment District was established by the county and city to collect and manage the revenue. The Assessment District Board has been working closely with the City of Kalamazoo and Oshtemo

Township to advance the project. County Engineer Minkus has been meeting biweekly with a cross-functional group to keep the project on track.

The project is now approaching the Road Commission to request approval for extending Maple Hill Drive north from West Main Street to serve the facility. Two exceptions will be requested:

1. **Safety accommodations**, including a safe road-crossing design and the extension of non-motorized paths from Croyden, as well as an additional non-motorized path on the west side of Maple Hill Drive.
2. **On-street parking**, due to insufficient parking on-site. The proposed design includes a 32-foot-wide roadway with two travel lanes and one on-street parking lane. As future development occurs, the on-street parking would be removed and replaced with a center turn lane.

Ms. Ghosh emphasized that safety is the first priority in all aspects of the road and facility design.

Public Relations Director Worden presented an overview of federal, state, and local road funding, recent legislative changes, and anticipated impacts to the Road Commission and township partners. He reviewed federal funding, noting that the federal gas tax of 18.4 cents per gallon generates approximately \$1.5 billion annually, with 75% distributed to MDOT and 25% to villages and county road commissions. He noted that while road commissions maintain approximately 66% of county road miles, they receive only a portion of the 25% allocation.

State funding through the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) was discussed. As of October 1, 2025, MTF revenues are derived from gas tax (40%), vehicle registrations (41%), general fund contributions (17%), marijuana revenue (1%), and interest (1%). He explained the conversion of the former 6% sales tax on fuel to a flat 21-cent-per-gallon gas tax, generating an estimated \$1.1 billion annually. MTF distributions allocate 39% to county road commissions, 39% to MDOT, and 22% to cities and villages, despite road commissions maintaining the majority of road mileage. He outlined the three components of the new road funding legislation:

- Gas tax conversion generates approximately \$1.1 billion annually.
- Corporate income tax revenue totaling \$688 million, with road funding prioritized after allocations to the state general fund and housing.
- A \$420 million marijuana wholesale tax, currently subject to legal challenge.

The Neighborhood Road Fund (NRF) was discussed, funded by combined corporate income and marijuana tax revenues totaling approximately \$1.1 billion. After statutory deductions for bridges, the Comprehensive Transportation Fund, and railroads, remaining funds are distributed as 52% to county road commissions, 20% to MDOT, and 28% to cities and villages. NRF funds do not require a township match.

Cash flow challenges were also reviewed. He reported that general fund support ended in October 2025, while gas tax collections did not begin until January 1, 2026, with revenues not reaching the Road Commission until March 2026. Corporate income tax revenues are not expected until September or October 2026, and marijuana tax revenue timing remains uncertain. These delays result in an estimated six-month cash shortfall of approximately \$1.2 million.

Impacts to townships were outlined. While townships lost revenue sharing due to the sales tax conversion, they are projected to receive net gains through NRF funding. An example was provided showing Brady Township losing \$10,188 in revenue sharing but gaining approximately \$141,000 in road funding. Staff proposed distributing \$2.5 million in NRF funds to townships based on local road mileage, with no match required. All townships have committed to continuing PAR fund matching.

Public Relations Director Worden noted that while the new funding is beneficial, MDOT estimates a \$4 billion annual statewide need, compared to the \$1.6 billion ultimately enacted. The County Road Association (CRA) recommends not adjusting budgets until funds are received due to ongoing uncertainty. Commissioner Davis confirmed all townships have committed to matching PAR funds for 2026. He responded to questions from the Board following the presentation.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to accept the extension of Cowley Court (358.87 feet or 0.07 miles) in the Gilmore Farms No. 2 – Phase 4B located in Section 15 of Richland Township into the public road system for certification. Managing Director Bartholomew shared on November 19, 2024, the Board approved the preliminary plans for the site condominium extension of Gilmore Farms No. 2 – Phase 4B. This development features 15 new condominium units and extension of 358.87' of Cowley Court, including a permanent cul-de-sac, within the development. The development is a site condominium located south of M-89, east of 30th Street in Richland

Township. It is made up of a mix of both public and private roadways. The Cowley Court extension is the only public roadway as part of the current phase; approximately 620 feet of private roadway were also built in Gilmore Farms No. 2. This section of Cowley Court was designed to be public because it extends an existing public road and terminates in a cul-de-sac. As part of the development, RCKC also issued a separate permit for the developer to install a roundabout at the nearby intersection of Banting Road and Strutevant Avenue. The roundabout was intended to help clearly communicate the transition from a public roadway to private roadways within the development. Similar situations have caused resident and motorist confusion in the past, and RCKC staff worked with the developer to implement this alternative approach. Construction plans were approved in March of 2025, and construction began shortly thereafter. The development utilizes a private drainage retention pond located immediately south of the site, which is maintained by the condo association. Storm and sanitary sewer infrastructure had been constructed during previous phases of this development, and the water main had previously been stubbed for future extension. During the construction of this phase, several failed sections of the existing storm sewer system were identified and required replacement. The development is now complete, and all final acceptance documentation has been submitted including, as-built drawings, benchmarks, and right-of-way and centerline survey documents. All punch list items have been completed.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether the new section of public road is adjacent to or connected to the existing public road system. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that Cowley Court extends off Banting Road. The road was originally stubbed to the north with a cul-de-sac, and the current project is simply an extension to the south that ties into the public road network. He noted that previous road construction primarily occurred west of Strutevant Road to complete a loop; however, those roads are private and not part of the public system.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether developers install signage for private roads. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra confirmed that signage is installed to designate private roads, though it can cause public confusion. A roundabout was constructed in part to help clarify which roads are public. Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether the roundabout is public, and Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra confirmed that it is. Commissioner Stehouwer also asked whether we snowplow private roads. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra stated we do not plow private roads.

Commissioner Davis inquired about the costs associated with extending a public roadway and asked what additional costs would be incurred for the 652-foot extension. County Engineer Minkus provided context, noting that a comparable 800-foot public road in Texas Township generates approximately \$800 per year in revenue, which does not fully offset maintenance costs. He explained that the shorter roadway would generate less revenue, though it would still receive some level of reimbursement.

Commissioner Davis also asked about the impact of the steep grade on roadway maintenance. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra confirmed that the roadway meets all applicable design standards and is not expected to create maintenance issues.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Oshtemo Township Public Works Director Anna Horner provided public comments regarding Public Relations Director Worden's presentation on road funding. She expressed appreciation for the Road Commission's cautious approach in navigating new funding sources, acknowledging the legal, logistical, and operational challenges, as well as the learning curve involved. She appreciated RCKC staff being careful not to commit to a specific funding formula until revenues and implications are better understood. She suggested broader engagement with townships to better understand roadway and non-motorized infrastructure priorities identified in township master plans. She also questioned whether neighborhood road funds could be used for non-motorized infrastructure and safety improvements, noting that such investments could provide a strong return on investment for communities. She expressed willingness to assist with the process, looked forward to continued discussion, and conveyed confidence that creative policy solutions could be developed to align funding with constituent needs and allow the funds to be used in multiple beneficial ways.

Managing Director Bartholomew provided an update on local road contracts, noting that staff worked closely with townships and that this year's contracts will differ from prior years. Contracts will no longer list individual projects; instead, they will reference each township's 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The goal is to

align township plans with the Road Commission's overall contracts to maximize work completed during each construction year and reduce the need for contingency contracts. He explained that contract language specifies the order of funding use: PAR funds with township match first, followed by additional township dollars, and then NRF dollars. Any unspent NRF funds will be carried forward to the following year, while any overages will be recaptured from the next year's NRF allocation. Contracts are currently being sent to townships, with several expected to be returned in time for the next Board meeting.

He also shared an update on a new solar farm project anticipated to move forward in Richland Township. The Liberty Farms Solar Project, is being developed in partnership with Consumers Energy, will include approximately 1,200 acres of solar panels and is expected to span two years. Staff are working with Consumers Energy to better understand construction needs in the area, particularly given the extensive road network that will be utilized. A land use agreement with Consumers Energy is being explored. A meeting scheduled for the following day has been postponed by two weeks. He noted coordination is ongoing with Richland Township, the Drain Office, MDOT—as the primary entrance is off M-43/M-89—and potentially Barry County, as one of the project entrances may be from the north.

He mentioned that he will be speaking at the Climax Rotary regarding the new road package, similar to the presentation referenced earlier by Public Relations Director Worden. He shared the Southwest Council meeting is scheduled for February 9, hosted by Barry County. The quarterly liaison meeting with County Board Representatives is scheduled for February 10. A joint meeting with Osthemo Township is scheduled for April 7, immediately following the regular Board meeting at the Road Commission. Osthemo Township will be providing questions in advance for staff review, and Board members were encouraged to submit any questions for Osthemo Township to Managing Director Bartholomew so they can be forwarded accordingly. He also reported that a letter was received from Osthemo Township thanking the Road Commission for its collaboration on the Fruit Belt Rail Trail.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked for an update on winter operations, including how the increased snow removal efforts are going and whether adequate salt and sand supplies remain. Managing Director Bartholomew reported that this has been a record year for winter maintenance, with approximately \$3.5 million spent last year, and winter operations continuing heavily into the current year. Crews have been working long hours. Colder temperatures have helped limit salt usage somewhat; however, more salt and sand has already been used this season than in a typical winter. Salt and sand piles have been replenished to levels anticipated to be sufficient for next year, but the department is already drawing from those reserves. While a fair amount of salt remains on hand, the decision was made to proceed with the order for next year, which is currently being delivered.

Commissioner Davis asked how the crews are holding up. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that staff are understandably ready for the snow season to end, having worked extended hours week after week, including weekends. Appreciation was expressed for the continued dedication and hard work of the crew.

Commissioner Kennedy stated that she appreciates Managing Director Bartholomew sharing with staff that the Board is aware of the long hours and hard work being done in the field and that their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Commissioner Davis had no report.

Commissioner Thompson attended the Schoolcraft Township Board meeting where they seemed to be happy with everything. He echoed earlier sentiments thanking staff for snowplowing efforts.

Commissioner Stehouwer shared that he will be away the following week and noted that Commissioner Kennedy will attend the Parks Commission meeting on Thursday in his absence. He mentioned that Managing Director Bartholomew has offered Commissioners the opportunity to ride along in a snowplow and strongly encouraged participation. He shared that he has ridden in a snowplow several times in the past and described it as a valuable experience that provides insight into winter operations. He reported that he attended the Osthemo Township Board meeting on January 13 and the Township Supervisors meeting on January 21, along with Public Relations Director Worden. He highlighted that the new Western Michigan University (WMU) President attended the Township Supervisors meeting and described the interaction as impressive, noting the mutual respect among participants. He expressed appreciation for hearing about township challenges, including solar fields, battery storage,

and data centers, and noted that the Township Supervisors meeting was valuable in broadening his understanding of the issues facing townships. He also shared that he was considering attending the Oshtemo Township Board meeting later that evening, weather permitting. He concluded by thanking Oshtemo Township for tuning in virtually to the Road Commission meeting.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that he will be absent from the February 24 meeting and that Commissioner Stehouwer will preside in his absence. He expressed appreciation to Road Commission crews for their continued hard work during the challenging winter season, noting that snow accumulations are increasing and temperatures are becoming colder. He encouraged crews to keep up the good work. He asked fellow Commissioners to email any questions or comments intended for the County Commissioners in advance of the February 10 liaison meeting. He emphasized that the intent of the legislation is that NRF funding should not require a township match, and that the funding is meant to be in addition to, not in place of, existing efforts. He noted that the overarching goal is to maintain the county road network, so it remains among the best in the state. He acknowledged Wakeshma Township Supervisor Jason Gatlin and Oshtemo Township Supervisor Cheri Bell, who joined the meeting virtually, and Cooper Township Supervisor Jeff Sorenson, who attended in person, expressing appreciation for their feedback and input. He also thanked the Western Michigan University President for attending the Township Supervisors meeting and noted the strong collaboration. He further thanked Discover Kalamazoo for their presentation and expressed anticipation for future collaboration with both organizations.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, February 10, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Assistant HR Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Project Superintendent John Schmitt, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Pledge of Allegiance

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Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the January 27, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$ 256,826.70
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Vendor Account:	\$ 687,075.71
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

County Commissioner Gisler reported that United Airlines will resume service at Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport (AZO) on April 30, offering four daily flights to Chicago O'Hare. He noted that when combined with American Airlines' existing four daily flights to O'Hare, AZO will have a total of eight daily flights to O'Hare. He also stated that Delta Air Lines will continue operating six daily flights to Detroit. He expressed hope that the expanded flight options will encourage residents to begin their trips locally rather than driving to Grand Rapids, South Bend, or Detroit. He shared that Dr. Kevin Catlin earned a PhD in Public Administration. He further stated that Gov Business Review magazine named Dr. Catlin one of the top 10 county administrators in the country, selected from more than 3,000 counties nationwide. He emphasized the importance of retaining Dr. Catlin given this recognition. He also announced that the Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government will meet on March 9 at 8:30 a.m. at Mark's Diner on Romence Road in Portage, and that Cooper Township Supervisor Jeff Sorensen will be the guest speaker.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the First Amendment to Vineyard Parkway Drainage Area Agreement, the Sidewalk Funded by Township Special Assessment District Umbrella Agreement, and the Non-Motorized Facility-Not Sidewalk Umbrella Agreement with Texas Township for the Chair

and Managing Director signatures. Managing Director Bartholomew shared Texas Township is seeking to build a new roadway called Longhorn Drive to connect Vineyard Parkway to 8th Street and 8th Street to Shooting Star Lane. The new roadway would be a private road similar to Shooting Star Lane. Both 8th Street and Vineyard Parkway are public roads under RCKC jurisdiction.

Texas Township has applied for a permit to construct Longhorn Drive and is working with their Engineer (VK Civil) to start construction for the roadway as soon as weather allows. To complete the project, Longhorn Drive is designed to have sidewalk and pathway which will tie into non-motorized facilities on 8th Street and Vineyard Parkway. Additionally, storm water from Longhorn Drive is designed to be directed to the privately owned drainage basin. This private drainage basin was developed when Vineyard Parkway was constructed and RCKC has a legal agreement with the owner to drain Vineyard Parkway to the basin.

The First Amendment to Vineyard Parkway Drainage Area Agreement allows Texas Township to drain Longhorn Drive to the private basin. Since RCKC had the prior agreement with the developer, RCKC is listed as a party on the Amendment and by approval, RCKC would consent to allowing the township to drain their road to the basin. All other terms of the agreement between RCKC and the property owner would still be in effect. The Township engineer has confirmed that the basin will hold all drainage from Longhorn Drive. Texas Township approved this amendment at their December 22, 2025, Board meeting.

The Sidewalk Funded by Township Special Assessment District Umbrella Agreement and the Non-Motorized Facility – Not Sidewalk Umbrella Agreement are necessary to allow the township to construct sidewalk and pathway which will connect within the right-of-way at 8th Street and Vineyard Parkway. The design of Longhorn Drive features proposed 5-foot sidewalk along the north side of the roadway and an 8-foot pathway along the south side of the roadway. Since these agreements are umbrella agreements, they may also be useful if the township wishes to consider similar installations elsewhere in the township in the future. Texas Township approved these agreements at their December 8, 2025, Board meeting.

All costs associated with design, construction, and maintenance of the non-motorized facilities will be at the expense of Texas Township per the agreements. Having these non-motorized umbrella agreements in place will streamline the approval process for sidewalk and pathway facilities in the township and reduce RCKC staff time in the overall review of such applications. Staff will only need to review applications and no longer need to review and prepare a Board memo for every proposed facility. It will also reduce the Boards' involvement in the approval of proposed facilities to the infrequent variance requests that may arise.

All costs related to the amendment to the drainage area agreement would be covered by the original agreement between RCKC and the property owner. Under the original agreement, the Condominium Association is responsible for maintenance and repair of the storm water retention area.

Commissioner Kennedy inquired whether the Drain Commission would be involved in any part of the agreement. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the matter involves an existing drainage agreement with a private developer and that the township is now permitted to drain into the same private basin. Commissioner Kennedy stated that she wanted to ensure the County is conducting thorough due diligence, noting that an additional entity will now be utilizing the drainage area and expressing concern that adequate provisions are in place. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra clarified that there is no interaction with the Drain Commission Office and that it is not a party to the agreement.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether the township, as a party to the agreement, would share in maintenance costs if needed. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra confirmed that this is correct and that the township would have a stake in any financial responsibilities related to maintenance or cleaning of the basin. Commissioner Stehouwer further noted that he understood the road in question is private and asked who would be permitted to travel it. County Engineer Hoekstra responded that the road will be accessible to the public.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to rescind the previously approved purchase of two (2) Western Star 49X cab and chassis trucks from D&K Truck Company utilizing the MiDeal purchasing program in the amount of \$370,104.00 and approve the same truck purchase with the addition of extended warranties (\$12,860.00) and specification changes (\$3,372.00) for a revised total of \$386,336.00. Managing Director Bartholomew shared The Board approved the purchase of the two Western Star 49X cab and chassis trucks in the amount of \$370,104.00 on

September 9, 2025. The Board Memo referenced the intent to purchase the extended warranties in the amount of \$12,860.00, however, specific Board approval was not requested since it was understood the Board only needed to approve the Capital Outlay Budget, and the extended warranties impact the Equipment Expenditures Budget. The extended warranties include:

- 5-year / 200,000-mile Cummins engine warranty.
- 5-year / 200,000-mile Cummins aftertreatment warranty.
- 5-year / unlimited-mile Eaton Endurant transmission warranty.

In addition, when the order was placed after Board approval, it was discovered critical specification changes were needed in the amount of \$3,372.00. These specification changes would have been required for the other four vendors who provided a quote and would not have impacted our award recommendation and decision. The critical specification changes are primarily due to the larger capacity truck, requiring additional suspension rating, steerable lift axles, and larger tires. The specification changes include:

Chassis and Performance Upgrades

- Suspension upgrade from 46,000 lbs. to 56,000 lbs. load capacity.
- Upgrade from Watson non-steer lift axle to a Hendrickson steerable pusher axle with non-steer tag axle.
- Drive axle lube pump option to provide positive lubrication to differential bearings.

Wheels and Tires

- Aluminum rims, at all wheel positions (in lieu of steel rims).
- Dura-Brite wheel polish protection for improved corrosion resistance.
- Tire upgrade from 11R22.5 to 385/65R22.5 on steer and lift axles.

Electrical and Body Integration

- 90-amp service distribution box for body builder electrical connections, improving installation efficiency and diagnostic accessibility.

D&K Truck Company has been paid \$370,104.00. The additional payment totaling \$16,232.00 has been included in the disbursements for approval, but this payment will be withheld if the Board does not approve the additional amount.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded, to approve the Cooper Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew stated this is the first local road contract for 2026 and includes revisions previously discussed. He explained that with Neighborhood Road Funds (NRF) potentially becoming available in the near future, this was a good opportunity to make contract adjustments. He noted that the bottom of the front page of the contract now clearly lists all funding sources and corresponding amounts. He further explained that estimates are no longer included with each contract. He added that if there is interest in adding additional projects, or if revisions are needed to projects within the 5-year plan, the contract would need to be brought back to both Boards for revision. Commissioner Stehouwer asked about chip seal trial projects. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that the chip seal trial refers specifically to the rubber modified chip seal trial projects, and that those are the projects receiving grant funding. He noted the grant dollars cover half the cost of those projects. Commissioner Davis stated that he is a resident of Cooper Township and is anxious to see the contract approved. Commissioner Stehouwer expressed appreciation for the organized layout. Commissioner Pawloski expressed appreciation for the township's additional funding contribution and stated that it's also a high priority for Cooper Township Supervisor Jeff Sorensen.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the Texas Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared this is a similar contract to Cooper Township but with significantly higher township contributions. Also, there is no grant funding for this contract. NRF would be added if available. The total township contribution demonstrates strong commitment to road improvements. The

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funding comes from a township wide special assessment. He expects other townships to make heavy contributions, anticipating a large construction season on the local road system.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to select Tom Donnellon, Huron County Road Commission, for the County Road Association (CRA) Board of Directors Ballot. Managing Director Bartholomew shared the Board is to choose one (1) vote for the open four-year seat on the CRA Board of Directors representing the Southern Section. This term begins April 1, 2026, and runs through March 31, 2030. Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew mentioned that he attended the Southwest Council meeting yesterday and would let Commissioner Stehouwer provide comments regarding the meeting. The County Road Association (CRA) "Commissioners in the Workshop" is scheduled for February 17th. The CRA Highway Conference is March 24-26 in Lansing where all Commissioners and numerous staff plan to attend. The Joint meeting with Oshtemo Township is April 7th immediately following our regular Board meeting. The quarterly meeting with County Board liaisons immediately follows this meeting. He shared season weight restrictions will go into effect at 6:00 a.m. on Monday, February 16th. He noted that we coordinated with area Road Commissions throughout the southwest region and beyond and that the RCKC aligned with regional implementation.

The Managing Director reported that the Road Commission is facing a significant procurement challenge related to the 2026 chip seal program. He shared that bid results came in with only two bidders, whereas three were expected. The low bidder's pricing was 13% higher than 2025, and the high bidder, Bitman (a longtime vendor), was 20% higher than 2025. He explained that the increased pricing and reduced bidder participation appear tied to performance issues with the 2025 chip seal work, including stone shedding, and failed specification tests from the prior year. He stated that one vendor misunderstood the quality control requirements and interpreted them as the Road Commission shifting liability to the contractor. He further noted that there is a testing lag of one to two weeks, meaning material may already be applied before test results are received. He identified a critical operational issue, stating that Bitman will not spray a competitor's material. He noted the Road Commission is dependent on equipment owned by Bitman's parent company, which has two asphalt distributors. The Road Commission currently has only one distributor, while the industry standard for an operation of this size is three units. He stated that several short-term options are being explored. These include piggybacking on Kent County's bid, which is expected to open in early March; re-bidding, though he noted this would be challenging because prices have already been revealed; renting or borrowing distributors from other agencies; contracting with other spray applicators; contracting out the entire chip seal program; expanding rubber-modified chip seal work; and applying grant dollars to cover a portion of the cost of rubber-modified chip seal projects. He shared that the long-term solution is to purchase additional equipment to eliminate dependency on outside vendors. He stated a budget amendment is forthcoming to purchase two additional distributors. He explained that one smaller unit would support fog seal operations in 2026 and is available now, while a full-size unit would be ordered in 2026 for delivery in 2027 due to a 12-month lead time. He also noted that current staffing levels, with 29 road maintenance operators compared to 15-16 previously, can support bringing more of this work in-house.

Commissioner Kennedy asked what the current recommendation is. Managing Director Bartholomew stated he is certain that owning the equipment is the right direction, but he is waiting to see the results of Kent County's bid. Commissioner Thompson commented that rebidding could potentially result in better pricing and asked whether staffing levels were adequate, which the Managing Director confirmed. Commissioner Davis clarified that the term "distributor" refers to the applicator used for the chip seal operation.

Commissioner Stehouwer requested that the Board hold a future discussion regarding the implications of the proposed solar farm project. Managing Director Bartholomew shared the Road Commission has been approached by Consumers Energy for a solar farm project called Liberty Farms Solar Project in Richland Township. He explained Consumers Energy is developing a 1,200-acre solar farm at the former Gilmore Farm property. He stated the project is generally located along 30th Street, which is a gravel road and expected to serve as the primary entrance. The project area also includes North M-89 and extends to 29th Street and AB Avenue. He noted the construction duration is expected to be approximately two years. He reported that the Road Commission is working

on a road use agreement for the project. He stated a meeting is scheduled for February 16 with Consumers Energy, attorney Adam Tountas with Smith Haughey Rice & Roegge, the Drain Office, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and Richland Township. He expressed concern regarding the anticipated construction traffic impacts on the gravel road network and the potential need for road upgrades, which would be expected to be completed at the developer's expense. He stated that the road use agreement will be brought to the Board for future approval.

Commissioner Kennedy provided several updates and reminders. She reminded members to ensure that veterans they work with are receiving appropriate assistance and encouraged anyone aware of veterans in need to contact the Veteran Service Office located on Alcott Street. She also reported that she attended a meeting of the 250th Anniversary Committee in Portage. She stated that the committee is planning special events during the week of July 1–8, including drone shows and other activities. She invited ideas and contributions for anniversary-related projects, noting that no idea is too small. She suggested contacting the Portage committee, the City Manager, the Veteran Service Office, or reaching out to her directly with suggestions. She mentioned that she served on the Parks Committee on behalf of Commissioner Stehouwer. She stated that everything is proceeding according to plan and highlighted that there are many positive developments taking place within the Kalamazoo parks system. She encouraged families and friends to take advantage of park facilities for outings this year and expressed that Kalamazoo will be a wonderful place for park activities, as it typically is.

Commissioner Davis reported that the Environmental Health and Advisory Council will meet tomorrow at 9:00 a.m., with agenda topics including data centers and battery storage. He commented that the meeting is expected to be interesting.

Commissioner Thompson reported that the Board of Public Works (BPW) meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 9:00 a.m. He also shared that he attended the Cooper Township Board meeting on February 9, where 19th Street was again discussed. He added that he planned to attend the Schoolcraft Township Board meeting later that evening.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked Commissioner Kennedy for attending the Parks Commission meeting on his behalf. He reported receiving one call last week regarding slick roads, which he conveyed to Managing Director Bartholomew. He also asked the caller to submit a service request, which has since been addressed. He shared that he attended the Southwest Council meeting on February 9 and provided extensive notes from the 2.5-hour meeting. He noted that representatives from road commissions in the southwest region were in attendance and that the meeting covered state-level and County Road Association (CRA) committee topics. Key topics included Wetland Banking, MDOT, and matters related to the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Updates were also provided from the CRA, the County Road Association Self-Insurance Fund (CRASIF), and the Michigan County Road Commission Self-Insurance Pool (MCRCSIP). He also reported that the liaison meeting with County Board representatives will be held immediately following this meeting. He stated that he will join the MDOT/CRA webinar on new road funding as his schedule allows, due to a conflict. He requested an overview of summer hours and staffing at a future board meeting for new Board members, and he also requested a future discussion regarding the implications of solar farm projects on roads.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that the recent YouTube video was very well done and expressed his appreciation for the crews' hard work throughout the winter season. He shared that he has a work conference in Grand Rapids and will not attend the February 24 Board meeting. He also reported attending the Brady Township Board meeting last week, where Public Relations Director Worden received a "thank you" from the Township Supervisor. As mentioned by Commissioner Stehouwer, he noted that CRA is hosting a webinar at 11:00 a.m. regarding new road funding from MDOT, which he planned to join. He expressed hope that the information presented would meet expectations. He thanked Managing Director Bartholomew for organizing the group photo, describing it as "wonderful" and stating that he will cherish it. He added that he plans to be included in next year's photo. He also noted that the liaison meeting with County Commissioners will be held immediately following this meeting.

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Vice Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Vice Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, February 24, 2026. Commissioner Stehouwer called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy
Absent: David C. Pawloski

Also attending: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Human Resources (HR) Director Debbie Hill, Assistant HR Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Stehouwer shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the February 10, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$ 190,190.67
Vendor Account:	\$ 444,661.21

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner John Gisler reported that the Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government meets on the second Monday of each month. The March presentation may need to be rescheduled due to a Board of Review conflict. He explained that Cooper Township Supervisor Jeff Sorensen is scheduled to present in March, and Mr. Derek Nofz of Consumers Energy, who is currently scheduled for April, is attempting to switch months due to the conflict. He further shared that future speakers include Dr. Kevin Catlin, County Administrator, in May, and Captain Jeff Baker of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office, who will present on scams in June. He also reported that the County Commission has begun discussions regarding a potential childcare millage estimated to generate \$4.5–\$5 million annually. He stated his opposition to the proposed millage, indicating that childcare funding should be addressed through reprioritization within the County's existing budget. He noted the County's \$100 million general fund and approximately \$500 million in total annual expenditures, including grants, and described the funding amount as manageable within the current budget. He acknowledged that his position represents a minority view but emphasized that residents should not be asked to support an additional tax increase.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the no-parking TCO P-39-001-26, KL Avenue from 9th Street to a point 3,500' east of 9th Street, Oshtemo Township for the Managing Director's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared RCKC does not often receive requests from townships to review no-parking controls. In October 2025, RCKC was informed that Oshtemo Township had approved a no-parking restriction on KL Avenue from 9th Street to 11th Street and intended to seek a permit to post signs accordingly. Typically, it is permissible for a vehicle to be parked outside the traveled way. In special cases, where parked vehicles may block vision or create an unsafe situation, it becomes necessary to restrict or prohibit parking within the right of way.

RCKC staff sought clarification on the concerns and shared the process to facilitate approval of a TCO for no parking in accordance with MSP and state law. After subsequent meetings with Oshtemo Township and MSP to understand the situation and confirm the appropriate process, RCKC received a service request on January 27, 2026. RCKC worked with MSP to investigate conditions and establish the no-parking TCO for KL Avenue.

The TCO before the Board is:

- P 39-001-26 KL Avenue from 9th Street to a point 3,500 feet east of 9th Street, Oshtemo Township

All traffic studies, analysis, reporting, and sign installation are absorbed by RCKC and are budgeted in the annual operational maintenance budget. Estimated costs from the RCKC staffing, traffic counts, and sign installation are approximately \$1,500 per study. This does not include MSP costs.

Commissioner Davis asked for further clarification on the need for the proposed Traffic Control Order (TCO). Managing Director Bartholomew explained that this segment of KL Avenue is a heavily traveled two-lane primary road with horizontal curves and multiple guardrail sections. A commercial business in the area had been parking delivery trucks on the shoulder and, at times, partially within the travel lane. This created a significant safety concern due to restricted sight distance, roadway curvature, and limited recovery area.

Commissioner Davis noted that parking off the road surface is generally allowable on most county roads and asked for clarification on how close vehicles may legally park to the roadway and what is considered safe. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that under Michigan State Police (MSP) law, vehicles may park outside the "track" or traveled way, meaning they must be outside the portion of the roadway intended for vehicular travel. This typically includes staying outside the paved shoulder where applicable. In this location, some vehicles had been infringing onto the paved shoulder, which may function as a bicycle accommodation area. Parking within the travel lane or obstructing a designated bike area is subject to citation and enforcement under current law. He further noted that, provided a vehicle is completely outside the traveled way, parking is technically legal. However, additional state law restrictions apply regarding proximity to hydrants, intersections, and driveways. Due to the heavily wooded terrain, narrow shoulders, guardrails, and adjacent ravines along this stretch of KL Avenue, available parking space outside the traveled way is extremely limited. These physical constraints increase the safety risks associated with roadside parking in this area and support the need for the TCO.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the Agricultural Property Lease Agreement with Mr. Larry Phelps for the Managing Director's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared RCKC has approximately 3 acres of vacant land at our 4th Street gravel pit property that has not been mined. This area (field) is tillable (agricultural) acreage, suitable for crop production. The field is adjacent to 4th Street and extends the entire length of our parcel.

Previously, RCKC leased its tillable property at the 4th Street location to Mr. Tom Byholt for the 2025 crop year. On February 2, 2026, Mr. Byholt submitted a written request to terminate the lease, citing rising costs and low crop prices as the reason for discontinuing his farming operation. Prior to Mr. Byholt, the property was leased to Mr. Dennis Hice, a local farmer in Prairie Ronde Township. That lease was terminated at Mr. Hice's request approximately seven years ago, and the field remained idle until it was leased to Mr. Byholt.

When the RCKC field is not actively farmed, our team maintains it by periodically mowing to prevent brush and weed overgrowth. This field serves as the visual frontage for our property and acts as a buffer to our former aggregate pit. The 4th Street gravel pit property does not have a perimeter fence. Leasing the field for crop production reduces our maintenance costs by eliminating the need for regular mowing, while also providing a growing-season buffer between the road and the mined area, helping to minimize both vehicular and pedestrian trespassing.

RCKC was approached by Mr. Larry Phelps, a local farmer in Prairie Ronde Township, inquiring about the possibility of leasing our tillable field for 2026. Since that time, RCKC staff have worked with Mr. Phelps to negotiate a lease agreement for the Board's consideration. Under the proposed agreement, the lease would automatically renew each January 1 unless either party provides written notice of termination at least 30 days in advance. RCKC would receive \$300 per year, with payment due by December 1 of the current crop year. The agreement also incorporates our standard indemnification requirements.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded, to award Bid #2026-02 Aggregate Materials – Seasonal to Aggregate Resources Inc., Verplank Trucking Company, Michigan Paving and Materials, Swarthout Excavating LLC, and Top Grade Aggregates LLC, based on haul distance for material loaded in RCKC trucks and by low bidder for material delivered to the RCKC yard which all may be extended for three (3) one (1) year extensions by the mutual agreement of both parties. Managing Director Bartholomew identified a correction to the written recommendation and shared Verplank Trucking Company was inadvertently omitted from the memo but should be included as an awarded vendor. He mentioned we recommend the Board award the Aggregates-Seasonal Requirements Bid to numerous vendors for the purchase of various aggregates loaded in RCKC trucks based on minimizing the haul distance to the job site. The minimal differential in price of the aggregates does not outweigh the cost of hauling the material from a single location. Haul distance and project locations also determine the quantity of material purchased from vendors throughout the construction season.

The aggregate seasonal bid identifies a bid amount for numerous types of aggregate delivered to the RCKC yard. This portion of the bid is recommended to be awarded by aggregate type to respective low bidders meeting specifications because of the common delivery point.

The aggregate seasonal bid was last bid in 2025 with the option to extend. Due to the unknown price of material and fuel, not all vendors extended. RCKC had some contractors extend pricing for the 2026 season on materials delivered to RCKC facility.

In addition to the various building industry associations, we sent out a public bid notice to contractors and construction/bidding entities, as well as the posting on our website. We had nine (9) downloads of the bid specifications and received six (6) bid proposals.

The expense incurred for the purchase of various aggregate types throughout the year is included in our 2026 Budget for Primary and Local Road Maintenance activities such as Gravel Road Maintenance, Gravel Resurfacing, Shoulder Maintenance, Storm Emergency Cleanup, Culvert Repair/Replacement, and Storm Sewer Maintenance. These materials may also be used on preventive and preservation projects.

Five aggregate types totaling 5,512 tons were used last year with expenditures totaling \$73,076.17. We are estimating we will use the same types of aggregates and same tonnage as last year. The average bid price for these five aggregates is 8% lower than last year, so costs are estimated to decrease by \$8,212.66.

Commissioner Davis noted that the 4th Street gravel pit is a known source of aggregate and asked what type of material is currently being extracted from that facility. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that no material is currently being extracted from the site. At this time, the property is primarily being utilized as a staging area. Commissioner Davis further inquired whether the site has potential for future aggregate extraction. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that there are a few acres adjacent to the roadway that could potentially be mined in the future. However, the cost of mobilizing a vendor to extract material from that site does not currently make financial sense when compared to purchasing aggregate from neighboring gravel pits.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the Charleston Township Local Road Contract for the Vice Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew reported that Charleston Township is matching Participation (PAR) funds, but they are also providing an additional \$41,348 on top of the match. He explained that the 38th Street project, extending from M-96 north to just short of G Avenue at the Township Line, has been a multi-year effort spanning approximately four (4) years and implemented in two (2) phases (two years per half). The

current contract represents the final phase of the 38th Street paving project that the Road Commission has been coordinating with Charleston Township for several years and we appreciate the partnership.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the Prairie Ronde Township Local Road Contract for the Vice Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared we appreciate the partnership with Prairie Ronde Township. The township is also matching PAR funds plus an additional \$76,455 on top of that match. He mentioned projects planned for the township this season are primarily chip seal along with a couple of ground resurfacing projects.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the Richland Township Local Road Contract for the Vice Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared Richland Township is matching PAR funds. Primarily their contract includes chip seal, fog seal type projects along with one gravel resurfacing project. We appreciate their partnership.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the Schoolcraft township Local Road Contract for the Vice Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew pointed out the partnership. They matched the PAR funds and overmatched with an additional \$160,904. Primarily these projects will be chip seals along with a few Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) projects.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the revised Vacation, Retirement Pension, and Tuition Reimbursement Personnel Policies as presented. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the RCKC Personnel Policies are periodically reviewed to ensure they remain current, clear, and aligned with applicable laws, operational needs, and organizational practices. Staff has conducted a review of the existing personnel policies and identified areas where updates were necessary to improve clarity, consistency, and administrative efficiency.

Vacation – to reinforce RCKC's commitment and long-term strategy of succession planning and organizational continuity, certain high-level, future critical leadership positions may require consideration of an experienced candidate to fill such positions. The proposed update to the policy would assist in the continuation of RCKC as the employer of choice and stay competitive in the market. As we look to RCKC's future and prepare the organization for success, the updated version will allow RCKC to move forward efficiently and in an operationally sound manner.

Retirement Pension – The update clarifies and standardizes the notice period for changes in employment status by establishing a reasonable timeframe aligned with position responsibilities and organizational planning needs. The Pension Policy update standardizes the notice period to align with our current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with Teamsters Local 214. We are committed to administering policies and agreements using a team-based approach, and updating the notice period supports that commitment. Additionally, we have determined that the non-exempt (hourly) position's responsibilities are consistent with a reasonable notice period.

Tuition Reimbursement – the update presented clarifies and standardizes the expectations of time and reimbursement expenses, while supporting professional development and growth.

The proposed updates reflect current operational practices and are intended to support effective personnel management while maintaining compliance with relevant regulations and standards.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew informed the Board that we received from the County Road Association (CRA) an estimated distribution schedule for Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) and for Neighborhood Roads Funding (NRF). He mentioned that the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County is estimated to receive \$29,349,491 in (MTF) revenue in 2026, representing approximately a \$2 million increase from 2025. The NRF is currently estimated at \$8,371,559, which is lower than the initially anticipated \$9 million. It was noted that no timeline has been provided for distribution of the NRF. While the funds are not expected to be available during the current construction season, there is hope they will be available next year. The first 2026 MTF payment for January is expected this week and should help confirm the accuracy of the projections. He mentioned that the CRA Annual Conference will be held March 24–26 in Lansing and that a dinner is scheduled for March 24 at 6:00 p.m. He thanked Communications Administrator Phillips for presenting a video highlighting the Road Commission's 2025 Year-in-Review. He also thanked her for her work in producing the video and expressed appreciation to the Board for supporting the communications position and the tools necessary to complete such projects. He informed the Board of the purchase of a used 14,500-gallon asphalt liquid tanker from Holland to be used as a mobile storage unit at chip seal job sites. He explained the unit will allow the Road Commission to receive vendor deliveries onsite and reduce costs. The budget allocated for the purchase was \$40,000. The negotiated purchase price was \$31,000, which is \$9,000 under budget. The offer has been accepted and is included in the current check run for Board approval. The tanker will be shown during the next road tour.

Commissioner Kennedy reported that she and Commissioner Thompson attended the County Road Association (CRA) Commissioners in the Classroom training. She described it as "wonderful training" that provided essential foundational information for a new Commissioner. Topics included budget, personnel, books and laws, policies, civics, and other pertinent information. She compared the format to "study hall" and "gym class," noting it was well structured and presented an appropriate amount of information. She stated the training provided a necessary foundation beyond learning from fellow Commissioners and offered the opportunity to receive resource books and ask questions in a structured environment. She thanked the staff for informing her of the opportunity and arranging attendance. She emphasized her appreciation for staff, stating they have done a tremendous job and that she cannot say that enough. She also shared information about an upcoming event on Friday, March 6, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 7956 in Augusta (on M-96), where dinner will be served from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The event is intended to connect veterans with available benefits, provide information, and offer a meet-and-greet opportunity. She noted the invitation is open to anyone wishing to learn more or attend. She also thanked staff for the excellent 2025 year-in-review video presentation.

Commissioner Davis reported on the recent Environmental Health Advisory Council (EHAC) meeting. He noted that Cooper Township Supervisor Sorensen was re-elected to preside over the organization for another year. Commissioner Davis was elected Vice Chair and humorously remarked that they "made the mistake of giving me advice as the vice chair." He stated that the primary discussion topic was battery storage facilities and their potential impacts on the community. He described the discussion as "very enlightening," noted growing community interest in the topic, and characterized it as a productive discussion. He further shared that he used the opportunity to remind EHAC members of the Road Commission's environmental stewardship efforts, specifically highlighting salt reduction initiatives. He emphasized the Commission's ongoing efforts to reduce sodium chloride application on roads and discussed the seasonally appropriate nature of the topic, given the challenging winter conditions. He reiterated the Commission's policy of applying the minimal amount of salt necessary while ensuring it is placed where needed, describing it as responsible stewardship of the local ecology. Additionally, he shared a personal historical note, referencing a 125-year-old letter written in 1901 by his great-great-grandfather as a high school student regarding proposed road funding legislation in Illinois, which would have split funding 50/50 between the state and townships. He noted that his ancestor later became a county engineer in Illinois. Commissioner Davis expressed appreciation for the continuity of road work across generations and stated he was glad to be part of that legacy.

Commissioner Thompson shared that we have a great team and strong leadership, and he expressed his hope to continue the good work being done. He also attended the Commissioners in the Classroom training, which he found very informative. A consistent theme across road commissions, he noted, was the ongoing difficulty in recruiting, particularly engineers.

Commissioner Stehouwer noted that the upcoming conference falls on a regular Board meeting day (March 24) and indicated that timing will be reviewed to ensure quorum attendance. He acknowledged Managing Director Bartholomew's 31 years of distinguished service and inquired whether he was the longest-serving employee, noting that Director of Human Resources (HR) Hill has more years of service. He thanked the staff members recognized in the weekly report for their service anniversaries and specifically recognized the extra hours worked by field staff during the heavy winter season. He shared that he attended the Comstock Township meeting the previous evening and encouraged fellow Commissioners to visit their liaison townships on a quarterly basis. He thanked audience members in attendance, including two County Commissioners, a township supervisor, and staff. He also thanked staff for the 2025 Year-in-Review video and expressed appreciation for the team's diligent work. He acknowledged townships participating online, specifically noting Oshtemo Township and potentially others.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, March 10, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Human Resources (HR) Director Debbie Hill, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Road Maintenance Superintendents Bill Oxx and Joe Peck, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the February 24, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as corrected. Commissioner Stehouwer noticed a typo in the first paragraph on page 1. The date of the regular meeting was corrected from February 10 to February 24.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$ 209,261.43
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Vendor Account:	\$ 549,135.48
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner John Gisler informed the Board of upcoming emergency management training sessions for elected and appointed officials, including trustees and road commissioners. The training will focus on emergency response topics and may include lessons learned from recent tornado events in Union City and Three Rivers. Two sessions are scheduled: April 1 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Oshtemo Fire Department on 6th Street, and April 15 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center. Officials are welcome to attend either or both sessions. He also shared that the National Weather Service will host a two-hour Skywarn volunteer training session on April 18 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Red Cross office. The training is intended to recruit volunteers who assist during severe weather events by reporting ground-level weather conditions, such as tornado activity, to supplement radar information. The Skywarn program includes more than 400,000 trained volunteers nationwide and is currently seeking additional volunteers, particularly in rural areas. This will be the only training session offered locally for approximately one year. Participation is free; however, the work is volunteer and unpaid. He expressed opposition to a proposed childcare millage that may appear on either the August or November ballot. He stated that, given the county's approximately \$500 million annual spending through various grants and budget allocations, he believes \$4–5 million for childcare could be identified within existing resources rather than through the creation of a

new millage. He acknowledged that his position may be in the minority but indicated he intends to continue advocating against the proposal.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to award the Traffic Signal Communication and Mast Arm Installation Bid #2026-03 to Severance Electric Co., Inc. sole bidder, meeting specifications for a total of \$212,326.00. Managing Director Bartholomew shared the RCKC presently has 49 traffic signals under our jurisdiction. On August 17, 2025, a crash occurred at our traffic signal at 9th Street at Stadium Drive. The mast arm traffic signal pole on the southeast corner of the intersection was damaged beyond repair, along with all attached equipment, including pedestrian signals and pushbuttons, traffic signal heads, and video detection cameras. Maintenance crews responded promptly to the scene, completed debris removal, and installed a temporary traffic signal to restore operations at the intersection. Severance Electric has assisted by providing the temporary traffic signal equipment, which we are currently renting until the permanent mast arm and associated signal equipment can be fully replaced. The work included in this bid will replace the material and equipment that was damaged beyond repair and restore full permanent operations to the traffic signal.

This bid also includes pricing to relocate a traffic signal pole at the intersection of N Avenue at Sprinkle Road. Following a road project at this location in 2023, heavy truck traffic making eastbound right turns has resulted in our traffic signal handhole, located behind the concrete curb radius, frequently being run over and damaged. This work would relocate it further away from the roadway, reducing the chance of damage. The traffic signal pole at this location would also be relocated so that it is less likely to be damaged in the future. No additional right-of-way (ROW) is needed for the traffic signal pole or the hand hole relocation.

We have worked with Severance Electric Co., Inc. in the past. In 2022, they performed similar repairs due to a vehicle crash and damage at the traffic signal at 9th Street at Seeco Drive in Oshtemo Township. Severance Electric has also performed the installation of the mast arm pole at our facility driveway in 2023. In accordance with the bid documents, all work is anticipated to be completed by October 15, 2026. Severance Electric Co., Inc. has indicated they have availability to start work as soon as March 2026, if desired, to complete the project prior to the completion date. In addition to the various building industry associations, we sent out a public bid notice to contractors and construction/bidding entities, as well as the posting on our website. We had six (6) downloads of the bid specifications, including two (2) downloads from qualified contractors. We received one (1) bid proposal. Staff reached out to the second qualified contractor following the bid opening; however, no response was received regarding their decision not to submit a bid proposal. The 9th Street Traffic Signal Replacement project is budgeted in the Primary Road Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in the amount of \$212,400.00. The bid for this project is \$175,342.00, which is \$37,058.00 less than budget. The N Avenue at Sprinkle Road traffic signal maintenance cost of \$36,984.00 is budgeted in the Routine Maintenance budget.

Commissioner Thompson asked about recovering costs from the at-fault driver's insurance. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed they are attempting recovery through their liability pool and have hired assistance, recovering a small portion for the temporary signal so far, but full recovery is not guaranteed.

Commissioner Davis inquired about the track record for recovering costs. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that historically, they recover between 50-80% of costs in such incidents, which occur approximately once every 3 years. He noted these are major maintenance items as mast arms are highly specific to locations and not kept in inventory.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked about recovery on minor sign damage. Assistant Engineer Hoekstra indicated that we do not pursue recovery on minor signs (costing \$150-\$200) due to the administrative effort required and challenges in obtaining police reports with insurance information.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the purchase of (1) one Etnyre, Blacktopper 2000-gallon Asphalt Distributor from AIS Construction Equipment Corporation utilizing the MiDeal purchasing program for \$358,147.00, to be delivered and paid for in May 2026, and the purchase of (1) one Etnyre, Centennial II 3500-gallon Asphalt Distributor from AIS Construction Equipment Corporation through the MiDeal purchasing program for \$495,128.00, to be delivered and paid for in March 2027. Managing Director Bartholomew shared RCKC manages an aggressive chip seal and fog seal program as a critical component of its road preservation strategy. A key

element of this program is the use of asphalt distributors—specialized vehicles that directly apply asphalt emulsion to the roadway during chip seal operations and to completed chip seal surfaces for fog seal applications. For a program of this scale, RCKC requires three asphalt distributors: two for chip seal operations to maintain desired production rates and quality, and one for fog seal applications, reflecting the lower application rates. Historically, RCKC has supplemented its own equipment and personnel with contractor-provided distributors. In 2025, contractors supplied two distributors—one for chip seal and one for fog seal—allowing RCKC to meet operational schedules.

As reported to the Board on February 10, 2026, RCKC is facing procurement and operational challenges for the 2026 chip seal program. Initial bid results for asphalt emulsion yielded only two bidders instead of the anticipated three. The low bid was approximately 13% higher than 2025 pricing, while the high bid—submitted by Bit Mat Products of Michigan Inc., a long-term vendor, was approximately 20% higher. Follow-up discussions determined that the higher pricing resulted from vendor misinterpretations of quality control requirements, which was perceived as shifting liability to the vendor. RCKC has readvertised the asphalt emulsion bid to clarify quality control standards and responsibilities to potentially secure more competitive pricing, also considering recent lower asphalt emulsion bids from neighboring road agencies. In addition to procurement challenges, RCKC is dependent on contractor-owned equipment for key portions of the chip seal program. Currently, RCKC owns only one asphalt distributor, whereas industry standards for an operation of this scale recommend three units. This dependency creates operational constraints and scheduling conflicts, particularly because some contractors will not spray emulsion supplied by a competitor.

Staff has evaluated several short-term options for the 2026 program, including piggybacking on other agencies' bids, rebidding, renting or borrowing asphalt distributors, contracting spray applications, outsourcing portions of the program, or expanding the use of rubber-modified chip seals. While these strategies may provide temporary relief, the long-term solution is to increase internal equipment capacity, reduce reliance on outside vendors, and ensure operational control.

To address this need, staff recommends the purchase of two asphalt distributors:

1. Etnyre Blacktopper 2000-gallon distributor – Available May 2026, this unit is ideally suited for fog seal operations with its 18' variable width spray bar, while also capable of chip seal applications. Acquiring this unit will reduce reliance on contractors for fog seal work, which in 2025 cost approximately \$80,125 for 121,474 gallons applied at \$250 per hour.

2. Etnyre 3500-gallon Centennial II distributor – To be ordered in March 2026 with anticipated delivery in March 2027. This full-size distributor includes a 24' variable width spray bar, mounted on a Peterbilt 548 chassis with Allison automatic transmission. The model and capacity of this unit are consistent with our current asphalt distributor. This distributor would also be equipped with GreenStar-ready wiring for GPS-based automated section control, a technology developed in partnership with RCKC in 2023. This technology automatically controls spray bar sections (1-foot increments) to reduce overlap, improve coverage accuracy, and enhance efficiency of asphalt emulsion applications. Additional features include heated pumps and drop tubes, front and rear tank suction, self-flushing system, hose reel, nozzle range indicators, electric tank heat strips, and a wet storage box. The larger distributor supports full-scale chip seal operations, allowing RCKC to perform in-house applications of 711,810 gallons of emulsion, previously costing \$142,915 when applied by contractors.

Acquiring both units will strengthen RCKC's operational capacity, ensure continuity of the chip seal and fog seal program, reduce dependency on contractors, and improve production efficiency. Our budgeted staffing level of 30 road maintenance operators is sufficient to manage these additional operations. Securing the Etnyre Centennial II Asphalt Distributor in 2026 is critical to maintain the upcoming 2027 production schedule, as delaying the order could result in a 12-month lead time and operational delays. Approval of these purchases represents a strategic investment in RCKC's road preservation program, providing the equipment and flexibility necessary to meet production goals, maintain quality standards, and reduce long-term costs.

Commissioner Kennedy inquired whether there would be additional costs associated with training staff to operate the equipment. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that training is an ongoing effort. He noted that three (3) Road Maintenance Operators (RMOs) and one Superintendent are scheduled to attend training at the Etnyre factory later this month, which is a program the Road Commission typically participates in annually. He explained that chip seal operations represent a significant portion of the summer program and require a high level of skill due to the complexity of operating the equipment and associated technology. He further noted that, as part of

the collective bargaining agreement, a new classification was established at the beginning of the year to include the operation of this equipment. He confirmed that there are currently sufficient trained staff to operate the equipment; however, the Road Commission continues to prioritize training to ensure adequate backup coverage.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded, to approve the Kalamazoo Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the contract includes a specific project on Westwood Drive to address drainage issues. This project came about due to commissioner involvement and a service request related to drainage concerns. The work involves lining an existing culvert - specifically a storm sewer pipe that is located in the Road Commission's easement but runs underneath a garage.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the Ross Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew noted that Ross Township has had a township-wide special assessment in recent years, which has now expired. This special assessment represented a significant investment in the township's road system. A lot of these projects are primarily preventive type projects with crack fill and chip seal applications.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the Wakeshma Local Road Contracts for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared Wakeshma Township currently has a road millage of 2 mills.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew reported that the County Road Association (CRA) Annual Conference will be held March 24–26. The regular Board meeting is also scheduled for March 24, requiring coordination. He noted that a Joint Meeting with Oshtemo Township is scheduled for April 7, immediately following the regular Board meeting at the Road Commission. The Road Tour with Commissioners is planned for Friday, April 17. Commissioners were asked to confirm their availability, which will determine whether the tour must be posted as an official meeting. He also reported that the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) removed Seasonal Weight Restrictions from I-94 South earlier this week. Cass and Branch Counties have lifted their restrictions, and St. Joseph County is expected to do so shortly. While frost is largely out of the ground, he explained that roads still require time to stabilize. As such, restrictions will not be lifted this week but may be lifted sometime next week or by the end of next week, in coordination with neighboring road commissions. Additionally, he shared that the Office of Emergency Management contacted the Road Commission following the tornado in Three Rivers to request assistance with moving a hospital supply trailer. Staff were prepared to assist; however, Emergency Management secured closer resources. He emphasized the importance of partnership and readiness in emergency situations and confirmed that mutual aid agreements are in place with neighboring counties through emergency management channels.

County Engineer Ryan Minkus provided an update on the Maple Hill Drive Extension project. He explained that a youth sports complex is being developed on property north of the current Maple Hill Drive terminus. While the property is located within the City of Kalamazoo, the proposed road extension will pass through Oshtemo Township, requiring coordination and approvals from multiple entities. He noted that Discover Kalamazoo, represented by Ms. Jane Gosh, previously presented two potential exception requests. The design team has since worked to reduce these to a single request. The remaining exception pertains to on-street parking requirements. The previously requested exception for a mid-block pedestrian crossing has been eliminated, as it has been addressed through alternative design measures. He reported that we are moving forward with their design team and anticipate that, at the next Board Meeting, we will bring the preliminary layout to the Board for review.

Commissioner Kennedy had no report.

Commissioner Davis had no report.

Commissioner Thompson had no report.

Commissioner Stehouwer reported that he attended a County Parks meeting where routine business was discussed. He noted that a portion of the meeting focused on trail maintenance, with parks officials planning increased maintenance on several trails this year. He also shared that an additional phase of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT) is planned for construction in the Galesburg–Augusta area. He indicated that the project will involve the Road Commission and that the Board will receive further information as appropriate. He recognized several employee service anniversaries, ranging from one year to 30 years of service. He expressed appreciation for the dedication of staff at all levels of tenure. He stated that he did not attend any other township meetings during the past two weeks but plans to attend the Oshtemo Township meeting later that evening and welcomed any input from staff in advance. He also acknowledged the upcoming road tour scheduled for April 17 and expressed appreciation for these opportunities, noting that they have been valuable for observing field operations and addressing roadway issues.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that the Board will hold its next regular meeting on March 24, after which commissioners will travel to Lansing to attend the County Road Association (CRA) Annual Highway Conference. He noted that dinner is planned in Lansing that evening. He reminded the Board that a joint meeting with Oshtemo Township is scheduled for April 7, immediately following the regular board meeting. He also announced that he will be absent from the September 8 board meeting and that Commissioner Stehouwer will preside in his absence. He also reported that he attended the Kalamazoo County Conservation District Annual Dinner for the first time. He congratulated Commissioner Gisler on receiving an award at the event and commented that it was an excellent program that he looks forward to attending again in the future. He strongly encouraged all road commissioners to contribute to the Roads Plus PAC while attending the Highway Conference in Lansing. He noted that the suggested annual contribution is \$50 per road commissioner and shared that he personally submitted a \$100 contribution approximately two weeks prior. He emphasized the importance of supporting the political action committee.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Finance Director Kim Bodnar, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Project Superintendents Jacob Kape and John Schmitt, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the March 10, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$	206,967.78
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Vendor Account:	\$	532,839.03
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Brady Township Supervisor Randy Smith commended the Road Commission for excellent customer service. While working on a land agreement for a new fire station, he needed approvals for field access and driveways related to a land division and boundary adjustment. With a purchase agreement set to expire in 48 hours and unfamiliar with the process, he contacted Public Relations Director Worden, who completed the necessary forms and worked with Permit Agent John Fitzsimmons to expedite the request. All approvals were received the next morning, enabling the township to meet its deadline.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the preliminary plan for the Maple Hill Drive extension, located in Section 12 of Oshtemo Township. County Engineer Minkus shared at the January 27, 2026, RCKC Board meeting, Jane Ghosh, CEO of Discover Kalamazoo, gave an update on the project. Discover Kalamazoo is the county's tourism organization, and its job is to bring visitors to the area, which helps fund local amenities. Many visitors come for sports events, and Kalamazoo already has strong facilities for hockey, figure skating, wrestling, soccer, and tennis, but it lacks the space to host basketball and volleyball tournaments. To fix this, Discover Kalamazoo worked with the County to allow hotels to add a small fee to guest stays, with the funds collected going toward building a new sports facility. With a funding source secured, possible locations were reviewed, and a site was chosen near the corner of West Main Street and US-131, inside the City of Kalamazoo but

surrounded by Oshtemo Township. The County created a board, KCECAD, which is responsible for collecting and managing the funds.

The project is moving forward thanks to the collaboration between the City of Kalamazoo (City), Oshtemo Township (Township), the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and Consumers Energy. Several public meetings have been held, including sessions with nearby residents identifying concerns raised by neighbors about safety, traffic speeds, and how the roads in the area connect. With the potential for future development, the RCKC, City, and Township saw value in planning for a continued extension of Maple Hill Drive north to H Avenue.

The project only needed one special approval from the RCKC staff, down from two, thanks to the addition of a southern roundabout that also provides a safe pedestrian crossing. The main goal is road safety while also meeting the needs of the RCKC, nearby residents, hotels, and facility visitors. Because the site does not have sufficient parking, the project sought to allow street parking on part of Maple Hill Drive. As nearby properties develop over time, shared parking options are expected to eliminate the need for street parking. This road design would provide a center turn lane with updated lane markings, while also accommodating current needs. While the street parking would provide some traffic calming effects when in use, it will not be as effective as street features such as additional roundabouts at access points for the property to the south.

Stormwater for the roadway is planned to be managed by private ponds located outside of the ROW. Before final acceptance of the road, a drainage agreement will be in place to allow the RCKC to use these ponds.

A traffic study is underway to measure the facility's impact on the surrounding roads. The results are not expected for another 4 weeks, nor to change the current design of the Maple Hill Drive extension. However, should the study find that additional safety or traffic improvements are needed, those changes will be required before a final permit for construction is issued.

Commissioner Davis asked if it would be curved throughout that stretch of Maple Hill Drive. County Engineer Minkus said yes it will be curved. Commissioner Davis inquired about on-street parking control along Maple Hill Drive. County Engineer Minkus explained that this topic was discussed during the design phase and noted that curb and gutter will be installed along this section to help address related concerns.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether parking would be located on the same side of the road as the youth center. County Engineer Minkus confirmed that parking will be on the west side of the road, consistent with the location of the non-motorized facility. This design allows users to access the facility without crossing the street and provides a direct walking route back to the youth center. Discussion continued...

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson award the Asphalt Emulsion Bid #2026-04, to Asphalt Materials Inc., and Bit-Mat Products of Indiana for the purchase of various asphalt emulsions, low bidders, meeting specifications with an option to extend for three (3) one (1) year extensions by mutual agreement of both parties. Project Superintendent Kape shared as of 2025, RCKC's primary road network is rated in "Fair" condition and has an average Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) of 6.232. Our Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) goal is to have 10% or less of our paved primary roads in the poor category (PASER 4 or below). RCKC's local road network is also rated in "Fair" condition and has an average PASER rating of 6.054. Our Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) goal is to have 10% or less of our paved local roads in the poor category (PASER 4 or below). Currently, RCKC's paved primary road network meets our TAMP goal with only 7% in the "Poor" category. RCKC's paved local road network is short of the TAMP goal by 13%. Staff continues to promote asset management principles to stretch funds as far as possible. The new Neighborhood Road Fund (NRF) revenue, once established and available, will move our local road network closer to the TAMP goal of 10% or less in the "Poor" category over the next several years.

In previous years, RCKC used our team and equipment to apply chip-seal treatments, with assistance from two additional asphalt distributors and operators provided by a contractor. RCKC's program is very efficient with the use of variable width equipment capable of applying emulsion and aggregate in one (1) foot increments up to 24' wide in a single pass. Because of our 24' capability, we apply chip seal on roads without paved shoulders in a single pass. The single-pass operation reduces project cost and improves overall job quality since traffic regulating is reduced and there is no center line joint.

For the 2026 season, RCKC will continue using our asphalt distributor. This unit incorporates GPS technology to improve the application consistency of emulsion by significantly reducing overlap (double coverage) in irregular

areas such as intersections and cul-de-sacs. This technology is new to asphalt distributors and is another innovative concept our team has been continuously developing. RCKC staff have worked with Etnyre, the asphalt distributor manufacturer, and GreenMark Equipment, our local John Deere dealership, to engineer and custom-build this technology. RCKC has produced positive outcomes since utilizing this technology. On March 10, 2026, the Board approved the purchase of an additional asphalt distributor to be utilized during the 2027 construction season, which will incorporate this same technology. Our chip spreader has also been custom modified by our team, with the assistance of GreenMark Equipment, to utilize GPS technology for aggregate applications as part of our chip seal program. GPS technology essentially maps locations/boundaries and automatically controls the individual sections of the chip spreader. RCKC has produced positive outcomes since utilizing this technology.

On February 10, 2026, RCKC advertised a public bid for asphalt emulsion and received two responses: Bit-Mat Products of Indiana and Michigan Paving and Materials Company. The submitted bids reflected an approximate 20 percent increase compared to pricing from the 2025 construction season. Upon further review, it was determined that the previously awarded vendor, Bit-Mat Products of Indiana, noted in their bid proposal that they would not apply asphalt emulsion sourced from an alternative supplier using their equipment. In response, RCKC conducted a comparative review of pricing from neighboring agencies. This review found that Allegan, Barry, Kent, St. Joseph, and Van Buren counties had secured significantly lower pricing and/or more favorable contract extensions than those received through RCKC's bid process. Based on these findings, RCKC determined it was in RCKC's best interest to re-advertise the bid and evaluate options for procuring additional asphalt distributors. This strategy supports transitioning application services to an in-house operation utilizing RCKC staff.

On March 10, 2026, the Board approved the purchase of a 2,000-gallon asphalt distributor available for the upcoming 2026 construction season, as well as the procurement of a 3,500-gallon asphalt distributor scheduled for delivery and service for the 2027 construction season. In addition to these Board-approved acquisitions, RCKC has secured two (2) 2,000-gallon asphalt distributors through a seasonal rental agreement from Swanston Equipment Company, located out of Fargo, North Dakota for the 2026 construction season to support operations while awaiting delivery of the newly ordered unit. Accordingly, RCKC elected to rebid asphalt emulsion materials to pursue more competitive pricing while enhancing operational flexibility and long-term efficiency.

RCKC is projecting to chip seal more than 140 miles of primary and local roads during the 2026 season. To meet this production level, RCKC estimates a total requirement of approximately 800,000 gallons of asphalt emulsion. To ensure the delivery of a high-quality finished product, RCKC recommends the Board award the Asphalt Emulsion Bid to the two (2) lowest bidders, with primary procurement being from Asphalt Materials, Inc., as the lowest bidder meeting all required specifications. Should additional material be needed, or if availability and/or specification compliance becomes constrained, RCKC would utilize the second-lowest bidder, Bit-Mat Products of Indiana. With Asphalt Materials Inc. being a new vendor for RCKC, neighboring counties and contractor references were contacted for feedback. RCKC found that all parties had a positive relationship and a quality product supplied by Asphalt Materials Inc.

In addition to outreach through various building industry associations, a public bid notice was sent out to contractors and construction/bidding entities and posted on our website. We had four (4) downloads of the bid specifications and received three (3) bid proposals.

Commissioner Stehouwer referenced the memo indicating that approximately 140 miles of primary and local roads are planned for chip seal treatment and inquired whether this is comparable to the previous year. Project Superintendent Kape responded that the planned mileage is slightly lower than last year.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded, to approve the Kalamazoo County Drain Office Letter of Support for the Chair's signature. County Engineer Minkus shared that the Drain Office was previously petitioned regarding work needed on the Parker Drain, which the Board of Determination found the petition necessary. However, the project failed to come to fruition due to funding constraints. Currently, there is an opportunity to apply for funding through the 2026 Congressionally Directed Spending program, and they are seeking a letter of support for their application.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the City of Kalamazoo Letter of Support for the Chair's signature. County Engineer Minkus shared the City of Kalamazoo requested a letter of support for their Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's (EGLE) State High Water Infrastructure (SHWI) Grant application. They are seeking funding to conduct a Citywide Existing Stormwater Capacity Analysis to improve accuracy in understanding stormwater capacity and needs. The project will help the city understand the current stormwater infrastructure, modernize and digitize its assets as part of the city's GIS system, and detail what additional stormwater capacity is needed.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the City of Portage Letter of Support. County Engineer Minkus shared back in February 2026 the City of Portage requested a letter of support for the Lake Center Corridor Improvements BUILD Grant Application. They are now applying for Congressionally Directed Spending for the same project and are requesting an additional letter of support. The Lake Center District is a vital part of the city, located in a unique commercial corridor situated between West Lake and Austin Lake. This corridor is a prime area for revitalization which will make the district more pedestrian-friendly, encourage tourism and commercial activity, reduce traffic hazards, and enhance the beloved Lakeview Park.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the Alamo Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Public Relations Director Worden shared that the unique aspect of this contract is that it utilizes leftover ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds from the previous year. Approximately \$100,000 remained from ARPA funds that were originally allocated for reconstructing 8th Street last year. The Road Commission requested and received permission from the county board to use the remaining funds for projects in the current year. As a result, the contract includes a significant amount of grant money. The total contract amount for Alamo Township is \$279,925.20.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the Brady Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Public Relations Director Worden noted that the contract includes an Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) grant-funded project, which is a carryover from the previous year. Commissioner Stehouwer stated that the total contract amount for Brady Township is \$376,622.16. Commissioner Pawloski expressed appreciation to Brady Township Supervisor Smith, noting his efforts on police and fire initiatives and commenting that funds not allocated to those projects will be directed toward road improvements.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the Climax Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Public Relations Director Worden shared that the contract includes an EGLE grant project, which is a carryover from last year. The total contract amount for Climax Township is \$328,000.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the Comstock Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Public Relations Director Worden shared the Township has been administering a township wide millage for a number of years and it's been successful. It's a compliment to the project team that they continue to maintain that level and actually push to increase the road funding year after year. Their total contribution is \$1.2 million on this contract plus participation (PAR) funds of \$289,996. This is one of the largest local road contracts we have seen. The total contract amount for Comstock Township is \$1,489,996.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the Oshtemo Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Public Relations Director Worden reported that this contract includes a small EGLE project. The township is also contributing through its road millage, and staff have been working closely with the township due to challenges in coordinating project locations. These challenges stem from aligning preventive maintenance work with the ongoing sewer project to avoid completing road work that may be disturbed in the near future. Oshtemo Township is contributing \$400,000 for a total contract amount of \$728,213.05.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the Pavilion Township Local Road Contracts for the Chair's signature. Public Relations Director Worden reported that there are two contracts for Pavilion Township. The first contract is for the removal of a bridge on TS Avenue. Design work must be completed approximately one year in advance of the bridge removal, and the project will also include construction of turnarounds. The bridge has been closed for six (6) years. The second contract includes EGLE grant funding in the amount of \$65,000. Pavilion Township will contribute \$221,000 toward local roads outside of the bridge project, and \$122,000 in PAR funds will also be applied, bringing the total for the second local road contract to \$408,000. Commissioner Stehouwer noted his understanding that local road contracts have included future years of anticipated projects. Public Relations Director Worden confirmed that staff have developed five-year plans, which have been attached to each local road contract this year. These plans allow flexibility to advance future projects into the current year if funding becomes available, without requiring additional Board approval. Commissioner Stehouwer further noted that townships are able to assist in prioritizing projects within the five-year plan, which Public Relations Director Worden confirmed.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy had no report.

Commissioner Davis had no report.

Commissioner Thompson reported that the Board of Public Works (BPW) met last week. The agenda included one item, which was the approval of a bond issue for Oshtemo Township related to its sewer project; the item was approved. He further noted that, due to damage at the County building, the BPW has experienced difficulty securing a meeting location. The Board had previously met at the Health Department on Alcott Street. He expressed appreciation to the Road Commission for accommodating the BPW by providing meeting space at its facility.

Commissioner Stehouwer shared that he attended the Ross Township Board meeting and received positive feedback from residents. Citizens expressed appreciation for the work of Road Commission staff. One individual spoke with him directly, and he forwarded those comments to Managing Director Bartholomew for distribution to the appropriate staff. Both he and Commissioner Pawloski attended the Township Supervisors meeting. He described the meeting as informative and helpful in understanding the broader county context. Attendance was strong, with numerous township supervisors and municipal officials present. He attended a presentation by Road Commission staff at the Vicksburg Rotary Club along with County Engineer Minkus, Public Relations Director Worden, and Communications Administrator Phillips. He noted the presentation was well done and well received and highlighted the value of engaging with civic organizations. He also connected with a former Road Commissioner Mr. Rick Anderson from St. Joseph County Road Commission and a former board member named Dana. He confirmed that Oshtemo Township will participate in the Road Commission's April meeting and noted that both parties are looking forward to the joint session.

Commissioner Pawloski attended the Texas Township meeting the previous evening, where Trustee Don Boven inquired about O Avenue. He indicated he would follow up regarding plans for the roadway, noting its importance as a primary gateway into the township and the desire to maintain it in good condition. He attended the Kalamazoo Township Board meeting, where much of the discussion focused on the new building under construction on Douglas Avenue. There was also a concern regarding Nazareth Road south of Gull Road, which he noted for follow-up. He attended a meeting of the Westwood Neighborhood Association, where residents expressed interest in the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. He clarified the distinction between the Road Commission's program and the City's program, which places greater emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. He offered to have staff provide additional information if needed; attendees appeared satisfied with the explanation. He received a call from a resident expressing concern about a proposed gas station on Millham Avenue. The individual was invited to attend the current meeting but was not present. He attended the Township Supervisors meeting along with Commissioner Stehouwer. He noted the meeting was well attended and expressed appreciation to those involved in organizing the event. He also attended a meeting of the South County Sewer and Water Authority earlier in the day and found it informative regarding activities in that area. He also spoke with a Village of Schoolcraft official about our chip seal program and encouraged them to contact Road Commission staff for additional information. He noted the upcoming Highway Conference in Lansing, scheduled to begin following the meeting. He described it as a valuable opportunity for networking and learning about best practices and current issues affecting road commissions. He also noted that the Governor is scheduled to address attendees at Thursday morning breakfast.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

March 24 – 26, 2026
County Road Association Annual Highway Conference

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

The Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo attended the County Road Association (CRA) of Michigan Annual Highway Conference in Lansing, Michigan, on March 24 – March 26, 2026.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Project Superintendents Jake Kape and John Schmitt, and Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips.

The Commissioners and staff attended various functions, educational sessions, activities, and meetings in association with the CRA annual conference.

The meeting adjourned on March 26, 2026, at approximately 10:37 a.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By: _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, April 7, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Absent: Larry Stehouwer

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Project Superintendent John Schmitt, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines.

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the March 24, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes and the March 24, 2026 County Road Association (CRA) Highway Conference minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account: \$ 217,625.42

Vendor Account: \$ 3, 261,480.31

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

County Commissioner John Gisler reported that he attended an emergency management training on April 1, sponsored by the Office of Emergency Management and conducted by the Michigan State Police. He noted that the training provided valuable information and would be beneficial even for experienced officials. A second session of this training is scheduled for April 15 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Expo Center, and he encouraged all elected and appointed officials to attend. He shared that Skywarn Spotter Training will be held on April 18 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Red Cross building west of US-131. The training, conducted by the National Weather Service in Grand Rapids, prepares volunteers to observe and report weather conditions during severe events to supplement radar data. The training is free, and volunteers serve in an unpaid capacity. Additionally, he announced that the Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government will meet next Monday at 8:30 a.m. at Mark's Diner on Romance Road in Portage. The guest speaker will be Jeff Sorensen, Cooper Township Supervisor, marking the first time in approximately 8 to 10 years that a township supervisor has addressed the group. The meeting is open to the public.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to award the Crack Fill – Various locations Bid #2026-05 to Scodeller Construction Inc. for the projects to be completed by June 1, 2026, in the amount of \$361,800.00, and to

Asphalt Restoration Inc. for the projects to be completed by July 1, 2026, in the amount of \$329,867.80. Both contractors are the respective low bidders meeting specifications. Managing Director Bartholomew shared A crack fill treatment is a hot joint sealant composed of polymer-modified asphalt cement. The over band crack fill treatment is a very cost-effective means of maintaining the surface condition of our roads. The crack fill material is capable of filling and bridging large, open transverse and longitudinal cracks that our chip seal treatment is unable to achieve. The life expectancy of a crack fill, if applied in conjunction with a chip seal treatment, is 5 to 8 years. We are very satisfied with the performance of the crack fill/chip seal treatment combination. Together, they offer a very effective means of sealing the road surface, eliminating infiltration of water, which in turn protects the road base from saturation and extends the life of our roads.

RCKC estimates crack fill material quantities for both primary and local road projects. The estimated crack fill quantity is included in our project estimates. If our estimating differs significantly from the actual product applied, our estimating methods are re-evaluated for future estimating accuracy. Our overall estimated quantity for this 2026 bid is 235,946 lbs. of crack fill material.

The Crack Fill Bid specification typically requires contractors to provide a “by the project” price and a “per pound” price. The “by the project” price refers to the total cost to crack fill a specific project. Inspectors monitor quality to ensure cracks are filled adequately and per specifications. The “per pound” price allows projects to be added throughout the construction season which are not known at the time of bid, providing the opportunity for a bid extension. The contractor is paid based on the total pounds applied for the project.

Asphalt Restoration has extended their per-pound price from 2025. The 2025-09 Crack Fill Bid includes a per-pound bid award, including the option to extend for three (3), one (1) year extensions by mutual agreement of both parties. The per-pound price for 2026 is \$1.39, approved as part of Crack Fill Bid #2025- 09.

We had a total of three (3) bidders for our #2026-05 Crack Fill Bid including:

Scodeller Construction Inc.

Scodeller Construction Inc. submitted a bid estimating a total quantity of 451,900 pounds of crack fill material for all projects combined, with a total bid price of \$749,625.00 for both phases of the schedule. Scodeller has previously completed work for RCKC; however, it has been several years since their last engagement. Reference checks conducted as part of this review yielded positive feedback regarding the quality of their past work and overall performance.

Asphalt Restoration Inc.

Asphalt Restoration Inc. submitted a bid estimating a total quantity of 246,170 pounds of crack fill material, with a total bid price of \$329,867.80 for Phase II only. Asphalt Restoration has previously performed work for RCKC with a strong track record of quality and communication. Any concerns or issues identified during inspection were addressed promptly, often within the same day, demonstrating a high level of responsiveness and professionalism.

Thompson Asphalt Products LLC

Thompson Asphalt Products LLC submitted a bid estimating a total quantity of 249,200 pounds of crack fill material for all projects combined, with a total bid price of \$560,520.00 covering both phases of the schedule.

After careful evaluation, we recommend not awarding the bid to Thompson Asphalt Products LLC, despite being the low bidder. The firm did not demonstrate sufficient experience to complete the full scope of work, nor did it provide adequate evidence of the operational capacity required to meet project deadlines. Additionally, the contractor indicated an inability to commence work upon award, increasing the potential of their inability to meet our timelines.

A site visit was conducted to evaluate equipment condition, production capacity, traffic control experience, and staffing resources. Thompson Asphalt Products LLC’s equipment was determined to be in marginal condition with limited production capacity. Historical production levels were approximately 10,000 pounds annually, which is significantly below the 249,200 pounds required to complete the 93 projects included in this bid. To meet these demands, the contractor would need to substantially increase both staffing levels and training. Additionally, the contractor has limited experience with traffic control, as their prior work has primarily involved parking lot projects rather than roadway operations, raising concerns about their ability to safely and effectively manage traffic in more complex work zones.

We tentatively plan to start our 2026 chip seal program immediately following Board approval, with 93 local and primary road projects requiring a Crack Fill treatment prior to chip seal. Scodeller Construction Inc. is the only qualified contractor for the first phase of the bid. Asphalt Restoration Inc is the low-qualified bidder for the second

phase of the bid. Asphalt Restoration Inc. is a local contractor who has done an excellent job for RCKC in the past recent years. Asphalt Restoration performed crack fill work for RCKC in 2011 and 2015 through 2025.

Scodeller Construction would be required to complete the projects outlined within the bid specification by June 1, 2026, and Asphalt Restoration would be required to complete the projects outlined within the bid specification by July 1, 2026. There will be no price adjustments for material overruns.

We sent out a public bid notice to contractors and construction/bidding entities, as well as the posting on our website through Bid Express. In addition to the various building industry associations, we had nine (9) downloads of the bid and received three (3) bid proposals.

Commissioner Davis inquired whether the project involved a heated slurry wand application. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that it did.

Commissioner Davis then raised a broader question regarding the organization's policy and philosophy on creating opportunities for small businesses. He emphasized the importance of encouraging new bidders to participate, fostering a more competitive bidding environment rather than relying on only one or two familiar contractors. He also commended Thompson Asphalt Products LLC for pursuing work outside of their typical scope, noting from personal experience the challenge of competing against larger, established companies for a limited share of work. He asked whether it might be possible to structure projects in a way that allows smaller companies to participate—perhaps by breaking out portions of the work into more manageable segments. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that he agreed in principle, as increasing the number of vendors is beneficial. However, in this particular case, the project timeline and overall quantity made it impractical to divide the work. He noted that staff had considered awarding a portion—potentially half—of the crack fill contract to a smaller contractor. If the evaluation of the company's qualifications had been more favorable, that approach might have been pursued. Looking ahead, he acknowledged that while dividing projects into smaller components could provide opportunities for emerging contractors, it may also result in higher pricing. He suggested that smaller-scale projects, such as parking lot work, could serve as a practical starting point for onboarding and evaluating new vendors.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved and it was seconded to amend the 2026 Adopted Budget Resolution (Amendment 1) as presented. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that at our December 16, 2025, Board meeting, the 2026 Original Budget Resolution was adopted. The RCKC team developed the 2026 Budget based on information available at the time. Since then, the 2025 financial year has been audited and closed, the 2025/2026 winter maintenance season has been completed, and the local and primary road project costs have been finalized. In addition, the Team regularly reviews business needs and will adjust expenditures by area or cost category while continuing to meet the organizational goal of maintaining the unassigned fund balance as a percentage of Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) revenue within the range of 20%-25%.

2025 Financial Results

The 2025 fiscal year ended with a higher Fund Balance than budgeted (\$2.5 million). Approximately \$1.0 million of this favorable increase was due to timing, which is now expected in 2026. The remaining \$1.5 million favorable increase was primarily due to lower project expenditures as compared to estimates, lower administrative and equipment costs, and higher interest and permit revenue.

2026 Budget Amendment 1

The current unassigned fund balance for the 2026 Budget is 21%, and the proposed Budget Amendment 1 is also 21%. The 2026 Budget Amendment 1 includes increases totaling \$959,533 for the following expenditures approved in 2025, not occurring until 2026:

Primary CIP project expenditures \$501,000

- Two Cab & Chassis Trucks \$373,476
- Vehicle Storage concrete repairs \$ 52,265
- IT system implementation (Acumatica) \$ 32,792

The 2026 Budget Amendment 1 also includes increases totaling \$1,530,922 for the following:

Project Expenditures

We are reinvesting the savings in 2025 by advancing Primary Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) paving projects from 2027 (\$550,000). The 2027 projects approved in the Primary Road CIP are:

- Sprinkle Road, 975' South of Gull Road to 750' North of Gull Road, Comstock Township
- W. Michigan Avenue, Venture Park Road to Drake Road, Oshtemo Township

Also, the 8th Street, KL Avenue to West Main Street project in Oshtemo Township, planned for 2026, is unlikely to be constructed this year. This allows us to pull up another 2027 project already approved in the Primary Road CIP:

- Drake Road from Grand Prairie Road to Squires Drive, Kalamazoo Township

We are also repairing some of the 2025 chip seal projects this year, estimated to be \$300,000. Favorable bid results when compared to estimates so far this year total \$300,000, which will offset a portion of the increased project expenditures.

Capital Outlay

The Budget has been amended to include an Asphalt Distributor approved by the Board on March 10, 2026, in the amount of \$358,147. Also, lower costs on previously approved items will be used to purchase a hitch mounted heated blower for the fog seal operations for \$18,000, and an underbody plow assembly replacement will be purchased for \$10,000.

Winter Maintenance Expenditures

As in prior years, we allocate 70% of winter expenditures for the first half of the year (January – March), and 30% for the second half of the year (November-December). Winter maintenance was higher in January through March, so we are increasing the Budget by \$234,000 to reserve 30% for the remainder of the year.

Equipment Expenditures

We are amending the budget to assume fuel usage will increase by 20% (\$123,600). We also had unplanned repairs for the chip seal spreader (\$100,000).

Non-spendable Fund Balance

We have ordered an additional 2,000 tons of salt, so we amended the Budget to assume this inventory would be unused at the end of the year (\$145,160).

We will continue to monitor revenue, expenses, and business needs as we progress through the year and will request another Budget Amendment if needed.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew presented the 2025 Annual Report and recognized the communications team, including Public Relations Director Worden and Communications Administrator Phillips. He said that the report will be posted on the website and presented at the County Committee of the Whole meeting on June 16. He shared that the Road Commission received awards at the County Road Association Highway Conference, including one for RCKC Chats (which also earned the People's Choice Award), another for our fall open house. We also received an award from the Asphalt Paving Association of Michigan (APAM) for our Sprinkle Road project. All awards will be displayed and shared with the County Board. He said our joint meeting with Oshtemo Township will be held at approximately 4:00 p.m. Also, the Road Commissioners' quarterly tour is scheduled for April 17 from 9:00 a.m. to noon, with a northwest route planned. He invited Commissioners to suggest tour stops or topics of interest.

Commissioner Kennedy expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend the County Road Association conference. While noting that conferences can often be meeting-heavy, she found this event particularly valuable due to its educational components. As the newest member of the Board, she thanked the Managing Director and staff for taking the time to guide her through the exhibits, including demonstrations of new trucks and equipment previously discussed. She emphasized the importance of fully understanding items brought before the Board for consideration. She reported attending the Wakeshma Township meeting the previous evening, where township officials expressed appreciation for the Road Commission's continued support and communication regarding projects, regardless of township size. She also commended Commissioner Gisler for encouraging public engagement with the Road Commission's website, noting it as a comprehensive and informative resource. She further shared that Wakeshma Township has implemented new burn permit requirements and advised residents to contact the township for additional information. She reported attending an Emergency Management System training on April 1, describing it as highly informative, particularly in outlining emergency procedures and key points of contact. In light of recent unpredictable weather, she encouraged elected officials, board members, and community members to attend the upcoming session scheduled for April 15 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Expo Center to better

understand emergency protocols and the chain of command. In her role supporting veterans' affairs, she announced several upcoming events, including a Women's Conference scheduled for June 8–10, an Augusta VFW event on May 23, and a countywide fishing event for veterans on June 27. She concluded by highlighting the importance of supporting local veterans, noting that current global events and related news may be distressing for those who have served. She encouraged community members to remain mindful of veteran neighbors, offer support when needed, and connect individuals with available resources, including the County Veteran Service Office.

Commissioner Davis shared that the Environmental Health Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for tomorrow at 9:00 a.m.

Commissioner Thompson congratulated staff on their outstanding work, noting that the Road Commission's ability to receive the awards discussed earlier in the meeting is a direct result of staff performing their duties at a high level. He shared that he is unable to attend the April 21 Board meeting.

Commissioner Pawloski congratulated the entire team on their performance and echoed the sentiments of other commissioners regarding staff accomplishments. He expressed appreciation for the Highway Conference, noting that he always looks forward to attending it each year and found this year's conference great as well. He announced plans to attend the Commissioners' road tour and encouraged other Commissioners to participate as well, confirming his attendance. He mentioned he was planning to attend the Office of Emergency Management Training on April 15. He thanked Commissioner Gisler for bringing the training opportunities to everyone's attention. He reminded Commissioners about the joint meeting with the county scheduled for June 16th and asked everyone to put it on their calendars. He thanked Wakeshma Township Supervisor Jason Gatlin and Mr. Tim Culver from Speaker Hall's office for joining the meeting. He acknowledged Commissioner Thompson's notification that he would miss the next meeting due to attending the Michigan Township Association (MTA) conference.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

A joint meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo and the Oshtemo Township Board of Trustees was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County, 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, April 7, 2026. The joint meeting began at 3:58 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Absent: Larry Stehouwer

Also present: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, John Schmidt Project Superintendent, Administrative Assistant Selena Rider, Township Supervisor Cheri Bell, Planning Director, Jodi Stefforia, Trustees Neil Sikora, Kristin Cole, Zak Ford, Public Works Director Anna Horner, Treasurer Clare Buszka, Clerk Dusty Farmer, Project Manager, Zach Pearson, and Operations Coordinator David Kobb.

Commissioner Pawloski amended the agenda to add public comment after introductions.

Commissioner Pawloski opened the meeting by inviting public comments; none were offered.

Supervisor Bell stated that she hoped to establish a tone of mutual understanding, emphasizing the importance of sharing differing perspectives and recognizing where each party is coming from. She noted that Oshtemo Township has been discussing several of the items included on the agenda for some time and felt it was appropriate to bring them forward to a joint meeting so that policymakers could engage in discussion and hear directly about the Township's position. She further shared that, from her perspective, Managing Director Bartholomew has been a positive addition in terms of collaboration and communication, and that meaningful progress has been made. She also expressed that Public Relations Director Worden has been highly accountable and responsive in providing requested information to the Township. She emphasized that any differences in opinion are related to policy matters and are not a reflection on staff.

Managing Director Bartholomew expressed his appreciation for everyone coming together and acknowledged that there have been differences along the way. He noted that he and Supervisor Bell have had numerous discussions focused on identifying ways to collaborate and partner more effectively. He emphasized the importance of moving forward together in order to achieve shared success, stating that this is accomplished by coming together, openly sharing concerns, listening to one another, and working collectively to develop solutions.

Public Works Director Horner shared reported that the Township has experienced significant growth in recent years, creating both opportunities and challenges, particularly in coordinating infrastructure and ensuring effective long-term planning. Increased development activity, including a record number of recent submittals, reflects continued growth, especially in housing, with several large undeveloped areas anticipated to be developed comprehensively.

It was noted that both new road construction and the retrofitting of existing roads present unique challenges, particularly in coordinating utilities, managing right-of-way constraints, and balancing cost with long-term infrastructure needs. The Township's Master Plan, developed in accordance with the Planning Enabling Act, includes a Master Streets Plan guided by principles of connectivity, complete streets, economic vitality, and safety. The Township's location along major highway corridors continues to make it attractive for development.

The Township has implemented a "place types" approach to land use planning, aligning roadway design with surrounding land uses to enhance community character and quality of life. Emphasis was placed on the importance of flexibility in applying design standards to avoid overbuilding infrastructure and incurring unnecessary long-term costs, while still ensuring safety and durability. Challenges related to differing

interpretations of zoning classifications and corresponding road standards were discussed, highlighting the need for clearer processes, improved communication, and potential policy refinements.

Discussion also included the need for greater flexibility in roadway design to better reflect varying densities, land uses, and community goals, particularly in more urbanized areas of the Township. Concerns were raised that strict adherence to existing standards in some cases may result in overbuilt roads and increased costs, and that a collaborative process for evaluating alternative design approaches would be beneficial.

A major driver of growth has been the Township's neighborhood sanitary sewer program, initiated in 2011 to replace aging septic systems. The program includes approximately 900 new sewer connections across five neighborhoods and requires significant infrastructure work, including reconstruction of approximately 10.5 miles of roadway. Additional improvements include drainage enhancements and streetlighting upgrades. The total investment is estimated at approximately \$50 million, supported in part by a low-interest USDA loan and other funding sources.

Supervisor Bell noted that the sewer project, the selected neighborhoods, and existing road conditions have been intentionally aligned so that roadway reconstruction occurs concurrently with sewer expansion. She emphasized that the neighborhoods included in the sewer program contain some of the poorest road conditions within the Township.

Managing Director Bartholomew inquired whether the Township anticipated utilizing Participation (PAR) funds for road resurfacing. Public Works Director Horner explained that, to her understanding, PAR funds are not intended for that use. She stated that the Township is instead focusing on utilizing PAR funds, along with required matching funds, for preventative maintenance activities throughout the Township.

Public Works Director Horn discussed construction challenges, including contractor availability, bonding capacity limitations, and scheduling constraints.

Supervisor Bell noted the Road Commission's strict policy regarding pavement thickness and acknowledged that it reflects their current position. However, she expressed concern that strict adherence to this policy may result in higher costs in certain situations where alternative, acceptable design standards could be considered. She indicated that exploring such alternatives could lead to potential policy changes that may be beneficial more broadly.

Commissioner Davis asked what procedural changes Supervisor Bell was suggesting for the adoption or consideration of new policies. Supervisor Bell responded that, through work with their Master Plan consultants, the Township is aware that other road commissions across the state utilize varying design guidelines, and she suggested that similar flexibility could be considered. Discussion continued...

Additional discussion focused on balancing infrastructure investment with long-term maintenance responsibilities, including stormwater management. The need to account for increased runoff from new improvements, such as sidewalks, and to equitably share associated maintenance costs was noted, reflecting evolving regulatory requirements and environmental considerations.

Finance Director Bodnar explained that the overhead rate is calculated based on distributive overhead and total road expenditures. Concerns were raised by the Township regarding the application of overhead and administrative fees, expressing interest in exploring more proportional or activity-based approaches that better reflect the level of effort associated with specific projects, while maintaining fairness and consistency across jurisdictions.

Managing Director Bartholomew stated that the Road Commission is reviewing practices from neighboring agencies, consulting with labor counsel and auditors, and exploring alternative approaches to determine what is fair and reasonable. He acknowledged that revisions may be needed and noted that staff are actively evaluating options. He further recognized that Oshtemo Township has projects that have started and stated that efforts will be made to expedite this review process so that any changes can be applied accordingly.

Both Public Works Director Horner and County Engineer Minkus highlighted ongoing collaboration efforts, including regular coordination meetings, participation in planning and development discussions, and successful joint projects such as roadway improvements, non-motorized facilities, and infrastructure coordination. Recent policy updates, including traffic calming measures and design flexibility in certain areas, were noted as positive steps toward improved partnership.

Supervisor Bell expressed her appreciation for the opportunity for all parties to share their viewpoints and perspectives and stated her hope that this level of dialogue will continue. She noted that Managing Director Bartholomew brings a strong focus on collaboration and cooperation, which she described as a positive change from past experiences and one that makes it easier to communicate and reach out with questions. She emphasized that all parties share the common goal of fostering a strong community that reflects the needs and character of its residents and expressed her desire to continue working together toward that goal.

Managing Director Bartholomew thanked everyone for attending and noted that the meeting provided valuable dialogue and discussion. He emphasized that all parties share common goals and are moving in the same direction, highlighting the importance of continued collaboration. He also recognized Public Works Director Horner and her team, noting the challenges associated with implementing trail projects along roadways with existing utilities. He stated that, despite these challenges, providing these systems is important for the public, and emphasized the need to work together to find solutions. He added that Public Works Director Horner has significant responsibilities and is doing an excellent job.

Commissioner Pawloski proposed holding a future joint meeting at Oshtemo Township and encouraged continued collaboration between Road Commission and Township staff.

Commissioner Pawloski closed the meeting by inviting public comments; none were offered.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

Chair _____, Deputy Clerk _____

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, April 21, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy
Absent: Randy Thompson

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Assistant General Superintendent Rusty McClain, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.
Carried by the following vote:
Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the April 7, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes and the April 7, 2026, Oshtemo Township Joint Meeting minutes as presented.
Carried by the following vote:
Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$	199,207.77
Vendor Account:	\$	755,514.71

Carried by the following vote:
Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve Commissioners Pawloski, Thompson, and Kennedy's expense reports for the Chair's signature. Commissioner Pawloski announced that his expense report totaled \$240.25, Commissioner Thompson's totaled \$313.22, and Commissioner Kennedy's totaled \$308.85.
Carried by the following vote:
Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

County Commissioner John Gisler reported that the next Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government (KCRG) meeting will be held on Monday, May 11th, at 8:30 a.m. at Mark's Diner on Romence Road in Portage. The speaker for this meeting will be County Administrator Kevin Catlin, who will share information about what is happening at the county administrator level. He emphasized that the meeting is open to anyone interested, not just KCRG regulars or elected or appointed officials.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the Public Act 51 Financial Report for the Finance Director and Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared Public Act 51 of 1951 (Act 51), as

amended, governs the created Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) into which specific transportation taxes are deposited and prescribes how these revenues are to be distributed and the purposes for which they can be spent. Failure to comply can result in withholding of MTF distributions until compliance is achieved. To document compliance with Act 51, an annual financial report is submitted to the Michigan Department of Treasury (MDOT) by May 1. The financial report must accurately reflect the Revenues, Expenditures, and Funds of all road work and must align with the RCKC's audited financial statements.

RCKC's 2025 Act 51 Financial Report supports key compliance areas as follows:

- Up to 30% of MTF received for the primary road system can be transferred to the local road system and an additional 20% may be transferred for emergencies; RCKC transferred 27% (page 7).
- 90% of MTF after deductions for administrative expense, capital outlay, and debt principal and interest is required to be spent on preserving the roads, excluding Federal Aid received; RCKC spent 135% of the minimum requirement (page 14).
- Non-Motorized improvement expenditures over the last 10 years must exceed 1% of MTF multiplied by 10; RCKC spent \$8.9 million, and the minimum requirement is \$2.7 million (page 15).
- Administrative expenses are limited to 10% of the current year's MTF; RCKC's administrative expenses were 8% (page 17).

The Act 51 report will be made publicly available on RCKC's website.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked what qualifies as emergencies for the 20% transfer of primary road can be transferred too local. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that large windstorms, tornadoes, and winter maintenance operations are eligible emergencies.

Commissioner Davis questioned the non-motorized language about "1% of MTF multiplied by 10" versus simply stating 10%. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified it represents a 1% average over the 10-year period.

Commissioner Stehouwer requested examples of non-motorized infrastructure. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that any hard-surfaced area outside the white line qualifies, including paved shoulders. Commissioner Stehouwer also inquired about pedestrian ramps and sidewalk interconnections, questioning whether they fall under the Road Commission's responsibility. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that the Road Commission includes these transitions when they are part of its projects; however, they are not required to install them outside of Road Commission projects.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the Safety Program Project Resolutions for the V Avenue at Sprinkle Road and E. Michigan Avenue projects. Managing Director Bartholomew shared currently, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is soliciting project applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2028 HSIP and HRRR programs. The MDOT FY 2028 budget for this program is estimated to be \$16,953,000 for HSIP and \$6,000,000 for HRRR in federal funds. MDOT reviews applications and proposed projects based upon crash history, the number of serious and fatal crashes, and the time of return on investment of the project. Annually, RCKC reviews crashes on our network to identify safety improvements and to find proposed projects for these funds. We provide a place holder in our Primary Road Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Safety Project countywide as areas are reviewed annually for submittal. Both proposed projects would be submitted for 2028 HSIP funding. While reviewing our network, these projects appeared to be some of the most competitive and had the greatest impact on improving safety. We are not applying for HRRR funds because the HRRR projects evaluated did not show as much improvement to safety and thus were less competitive than the proposed projects funded by HSIP. Each agency is capped at the total (both HSIP and HRRR combined) amount of safety funds they may be awarded in a given year at \$1,500,000 and these projects represent our best candidates for the program.

RCKC successfully applied for these funds in the past. In 2025, RCKC applied for and was awarded FY 2027 funding for the Sprinkle Road at TU Avenue roundabout project. The HSIP program funds are specifically targeted to reduce accident injury levels on urban roadways. Federal funds are capped at \$750,000 per project and can be funded at a minimum match of 90 percent federal funds to 10 percent local matching funds split. Selection is competitive and our applications will be competing with others from across the state.

The project would be included in the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS); Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and our Primary Road CIP only after it is selected. Historically, safety projects have reduced crashes by 32% at project locations.

The RCKC Transportation Safety Action Plan, developed in 2023, was instrumental in development of these projects. Furthermore, these projects should align with other safety improvements being considered for the RCKC roadway system including those in the Safe Streets Initiative: Enhancing Road Safety in Kalamazoo County project which was awarded funds from the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program.

The projects we are recommending based on program criteria and research are:

V Avenue at Sprinkle Road, Brady Township

The proposed project for V Avenue at Sprinkle Road would feature the construction of a roundabout at the intersection. Centerline rumble strips and tree removal from the clear zone (complete right-of-way (ROW)) would be part of this project on V Avenue and Richardson Street between Sprinkle Road and Spruce Street where the road curves to the south. A roundabout at V Avenue at Sprinkle Road would be beneficial for reducing angle type crashes and the rumble strips will assist with lane departure crashes in the curve. According to the RCKC Transportation Safety Action Plan, this intersection is listed in the top 50 due to the occurrence of fatal and serious injury crashes. The Plan also reviewed crash patterns for this intersection and recommended the roundabout treatment as a possible mitigation strategy.

This proposed project is estimated to have a construction cost of \$1,036,000. This section of V Avenue has a pavement surface evaluation and rating (PASER) rating of 6 and was last paved in 2018.

E Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo & Comstock Townships

The proposed project for E Michigan Avenue would feature paving, centerline and shoulder rumble strips, and tree removal from the clear zone (complete right-of-way (ROW)) from the city limits to Leenhouts Street. Throughout this segment, the road has many curves, and crash data indicates a concentration of run-off the road type crashes. According to the RCKC Transportation Safety Action Plan, this segment of road is listed in the top 50 due to the occurrence of fatal and serious injury crashes.

This proposed project is estimated to have a construction cost of \$843,000. This section of E Michigan Avenue has a pavement surface evaluation and rating (PASER) rating of 6 and was last paved in 2014.

The local safety program's maximum funds available are \$750,000 per project for construction costs only with a total limit of \$1,500,000 per agency. Estimated project costs are shown below for each project. Federal funds are only eligible for the construction cost. Design and construction engineering costs are estimated and would be the responsibility of the RCKC and included in the RCKC funds estimate column.

Project	Estimated Cost (incl. engineering)	Federal Funds (requested)	RCKC Responsibility
V Avenue at Sprinkle Road (Spruce Street to Sprinkle Road)	\$1,191,400.00	\$750,000.00	\$441,400.00
E Michigan Avenue (Wallace Ave to Leenhouts St)	\$969,450.00	\$750,000.00	\$219,450.00
Total	\$2,160,850.00	\$1,500,000.00	\$660,850.00

If awarded, design engineering is anticipated to start in 2026 with construction in 2028. The Primary Road CIP (CIP) would be adjusted accordingly.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked where the top 50 list could be found on the website. Managing Director Bartholomew shared in the [SS4A](#) tab on our website.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to rescind the previous and approve the revised Prairie Ronde Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the funding source within this contract has been updated. Prairie Ronde Township has increased its contribution from \$76,455.10 to \$107,455.10. We appreciate their continued partnership.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Gisler complimented the Road Commission for their recent work on R Avenue between 24th Street and 25th Street. He noted that the road condition had been deteriorating, but the Road Commission had patched it up well within the last week to 10 days. He acknowledged it was a significant improvement over its previous condition and expressed his thanks to Managing Director Bartholomew and the Road Commission for the work completed. He mentioned he was unsure if there were plans for more extensive repairs on that section in the future.

Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the Southwest Council meeting is scheduled for May 11th at the Berrien County Road Department. He asked Commissioners to RSVP by May 1 if interested in attending. The annual joint meeting with the County Board of Commissioners is scheduled for June 16th to review the annual report. He mentioned that National Work Zone Awareness Week is being observed this week, and he encouraged everyone to wear orange. He shared that construction season is well underway, with paving currently happening in Midlink. He announced that several project informational meetings are scheduled, including:

- 9th Street – KL Avenue to M-43 on April 30th at 5:30 PM at Oshtemo Township Hall
- Comstock Avenue - Sprinkle Road to River Street on April 29th at 4:30 PM at Comstock Township Hall
- Sprinkle Road at TU Avenue roundabout project on May 20th at 5:30 PM at Brady Township

Commissioner Davis asked about coordinating assistance with Allegan County following a recent storm that severely damaged the Plainwell area. He noted that both he and another commissioner live near the county line and experienced the storm at 1 AM, describing it as sounding like a train. The damage was localized to a 100-yard-wide track extending through Hickory Corners along the Allegan and Barry County lines. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that Allegan County has not requested assistance, and while Kalamazoo County had minor damage in small areas, it was nothing compared to what Allegan and Barry Counties experienced. He confirmed that mutual assistance agreements are in place and that counties would reach out if help was needed.

Commissioner Stehouwer shared that a road tour was anticipated last week, and he is looking forward to rescheduling, as he appreciates those opportunities.

Commissioner Kennedy had no report.

Commissioner Davis shared that he attended the Environmental Health Advisory Committee meeting, where a United States Geological Survey (USGS) representative attended to discuss groundwater and Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) issues. He did not bring his notes to the meeting and indicated he would provide a full update at the next meeting.

Commissioner Stehouwer shared that he has been able to observe the traffic signal system in operation and provided a video to County Engineer Minkus and Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra. He noted the system's performance, including its operation along Wealthy Street. He also commended Road Maintenance Superintendent Bill Oxx and Project Superintendent John Schmidt for completing the three-year Michigan Public Service Institute (MPSI) program. He expressed appreciation for staff who pursue continued training and professional development.

Commissioner Pawloski noted that the road tour had been postponed and stated he looks forward to the rescheduled tour, encouraging fellow Commissioners to attend. He also announced that he will be out of town from May 9 through May 18 and, therefore, unable to attend the Southwest Council meeting in Berrien County. He encouraged other Commissioners to attend if available.

Commissioner Stehouwer shared that Commissioner Kennedy attended the Pa Commission meeting on his behalf last week and asked her to anticipate doing the same in May.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

April 21, 2026 – Board Meeting

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, May 5, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Project Engineer Kirstin Finnilla, Road Maintenance Operator Nathan Beam, Communications Administrator Sarah Phillips, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the April 21, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$	204,968.96
Vendor Account:	\$	1, 279,538.62

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Ms. Rhonda Walters, of 12480 South 18th Street and owns property on U Avenue provided public comment expressing her dissatisfaction with the large number of trees marked with yellow X's along U Avenue for removal. She estimates hundreds of trees are marked. She offered several alternatives to tree removal, including: more signage at the S-curves, rumble strips, and flashing lights. She argued that accidents at the S-curves are caused by drivers going too fast or being impaired, not by the trees themselves. She raised concerns about aesthetics and environmental impact, referencing the Road Commission's mission statement about environmental preservation. She criticized the practice of leaving tree trunks beside the road after cutting, describing it as "disgusting." While she acknowledged that some trees slated for removal are in poor condition and should be removed, she objected to the extensive scale of the planned tree removal along U Avenue.

Ms. Georgia Evans, of 830 East U Avenue in Vicksburg, provided public comments expressing strong opposition to the removal of trees marked with yellow X's on U Avenue. She described U Avenue as one of the most scenic streets in Vicksburg, emphasizing the calming effect the tree-lined road has on residents. She explained how the trees provide beauty throughout the seasons - with lush leaves in spring and summer that create a peaceful

country road atmosphere, and vibrant fall colors in yellow, orange, and red that help relieve daily stress. She acknowledged that road safety is the number one priority but urged the board to reconsider removing some of the marked trees. She expressed concern that the aesthetic impact on the neighborhood would be devastating and argued that there must be alternatives to tree removal. She highlighted several functional benefits of the trees: they naturally slow traffic down, which is important given the mix of semis, motorcycles, and young drivers on the road. She noted the presence of deer and wildlife in the area. In winter, she explained, the trees serve as important wind barriers against strong winds coming across the fields. She supported her neighbor, Ms. Walters' suggestions for alternatives, including rumble strips and curve signs. She mentioned hearing that barriers are required before trees, and referenced a statistic about 55% of deaths related to departures, but noted that, to her knowledge, there have been no deaths on that particular road. She concluded by passionately asking the board to reconsider their plans, emphasizing that the trees serve environmental, aesthetic, and practical purposes beyond just being potential hazards.

Mr. Wade Adams, of 15124 East MN Avenue in Charleston Township, shared that there have been red crosses marked on his trees on 44th Street and MN Avenue. He planted these trees more than 25 years ago, at least 33 feet from the center of the road. He measured them today and stated they are more than 44 feet from the center of the road. He believes the marked trees are on his property, not within the right-of-way. He contacted Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra multiple times and received a message that this was being done under a federal grant called "Safe Roads". He questioned whether federal or state policy is being followed and expressed concern about why the federal government is funding tree cutting given the \$40 trillion debt. He noted that Road Commission liability is on the traveled surface of the road. He mentioned that different Michigan counties have different tree policies.

Ms. Paula Taylor, of 1016 Ira Avenue in Kalamazoo Township, shared that she has been fighting for 4 years about the drains in front of her house that require regular cleaning. Last year, she had to contact Channel 3 news to get the Road Commission to come clean the drains. Most recently, she called repeatedly over a month and a half (7 times) before someone finally came out to clean the drains last week. After the cleaning was completed, the workers left large piles of debris and mess from the excavation without proper cleanup. There are 3 drains in one large spot and 1 drain in a piece of concrete on the other end. She referenced a previous incident where two young workers cleaned the drains but used a high-powered hose to spray all the debris onto her yard, which she found unacceptable. She stated that Road Commission staff repeatedly told her the drain maintenance was her responsibility, which she disputes. She requested that the Road Commission take responsibility for properly maintaining the drains. She also commented about inadequate street sweeping services. In 12 years in the neighborhood, she has only seen one street sweeper, which only went down the center of the road and never cleaned the sides. She noted debris remains uncleared on East Michigan and Main Street.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the Comstock Township Fire Department's Letter of Support. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the Comstock Township Fire Department requested a letter of support for their application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All program. This request seeks funding for the acquisition of a Mobile Barrier System and chassis, dedicated staffing for their traffic management safety unit, and a drone for incident surveying. As traffic safety professionals committed to reducing fatal and serious injury crashes and advancing Michigan's Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) initiative, we fully support the Comstock Township Fire Department's SS4A grant application. This investment will meaningfully improve responder safety, reduce the likelihood of secondary crashes, and strengthen the overall safety and reliability of our regional transportation network. Commissioner Stehouwer shared that helping emergency response is beneficial.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the permanent easements for Oshtemo Township sanitary sewer across RCKC owned parcels on Saybrook Drive and Bunker Hill Drive for the Managing Director's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared Oshtemo Township is seeking to build new sanitary

sewer infrastructure in the Westport platted neighborhood. For the operation of the sanitary sewer, permanent easements are needed on two RCKC owned parcels which are currently used for stormwater drainage basins. These permanent easements are described as follows:

Permanent Easement on Parcel 05-11-402-915 Saybrook Drive:

This parcel is 0.60 acres and currently features a drainage basin owned by the RCKC. Oshtemo Township is seeking a permanent easement of 777 square feet (0.017 acres) for the purposes of a sanitary sewer lift station to be constructed.

Permanent Easement on Parcel 05-14-230-030 Bunker Hill Drive:

This parcel is 0.67 acres and currently features a drainage basin owned by RCKC. Oshtemo Township is seeking a 30-foot-wide permanent easement (0.1 acres) along the alignment for the sanitary sewer over the parcel.

In order for Oshtemo Township to construct the portion of the sanitary sewer in 2026, these permanent easements are needed to comply with requirements of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) bond closing which is set for May 14, 2026.

RCKC has been involved with the Oshtemo Township Sewer project since 2023 when it was designed. The RCKC Team has already permitted and approved construction of the north half of the sewer project (including the work on the parcel at Saybrook Drive) for 2026. Construction of the sewer in the southern half of the project (including work on the parcel at Bunker Hill Drive) is anticipated for 2027. This securing of the easements represents the last step of approval by RCKC.

Commissioner Stehouwer expressed support for collaborative work with other municipalities and hoped the sanitary project would go well.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to award the Culvert Materials – Corrugated Steel Pipe Bid #2026-06 to Jensen Bridge and Supply Company, low bidder meeting specifications with the option to extend for three (3) one (1) year extensions by mutual agreement of both parties. Managing Director Bartholomew shared RCKC utilizes Corrugated Steel Pipe (CSP) as a conduit to convey water beneath roadways or driveways adjacent to roads. Culverts are essential for managing water flow in areas such as rivers, streams, county drainage ditches, and road ditches. Proper installation of culverts allows for the flow of “Waters of the State” and stormwater under roadways, helping to prevent flooding and saturation of the road base. Saturation of the road base compromises its structural integrity, reducing the road's load-bearing capacity and lifespan. Culverts are also crucial for connecting and conveying water through ditches, particularly under driveways.

The CSP recommended for purchase will be added to RCKC's inventory for use on primary and local road projects, including culvert replacements and routine maintenance for culvert failures. Historically, RCKC has solicited quotes multiple times per year for CSP purchases. However, the quote process can cause delays due to vendor response times and extended manufacturing and delivery timelines, especially during the construction season. A formal CSP bid will allow RCKC to maintain a steady inventory, streamline the purchasing process, and ensure the availability of materials for routine maintenance, repairs, extensions, and replacements.

The Culvert Materials – Corrugated Steel Pipe Bid #2026-06 includes various diameters of CSP, ranging from 12” to 24” in diameter, with lengths up to 50’. The bid also includes bands used to connect multiple sections of culvert. We require the use of 24” wide bands for enhanced stability and long-term joint integrity.

Culvert End Sections are also included in the bid, which are installed at both openings of the culvert. These ends help to channel water into the culvert and diffuse the flow as it exits. By directing water into the culvert rather than the surrounding aggregate around the corrugated steel pipe (CSP), they reduce erosion and help decrease the velocity of water at the outlet.

Cadillac Culvert, Inc. submitted a bid with an unusually low cost per unit. RCKC contacted Cadillac Culvert, Inc. to confirm that the pricing was accurate. In response, Cadillac Culvert, Inc. clarified that the quoted cost was calculated on a “per foot” basis rather than per unit, as required in the specifications. Although Cadillac Culvert, Inc. would have initially been awarded the contract based on the submitted pricing, recalculating the bid on a per-unit basis shows that Cadillac Culvert, Inc. is not the lowest bidder meeting the CSP specifications.

RCKC has previously worked with Jensen Bridge & Supply Company on several occasions and values their expertise in product recommendations. Jensen Bridge & Supply has indicated that their normal delivery time is

approximately two to four weeks from the date of order. Staff will ensure that the purchase order is completed and ready for approval, contingent on Board authorization.

RCKC is confident that Jensen Bridge & Supply Company can meet the demands for culvert materials outlined in this bid.

In addition to the various building industry associations, we sent out a public bid notice to contractors and construction/bidding entities, as well as posted it on our website. We had five (5) downloads of the bid specifications and received three (3) bid proposals.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the Village of Climax Local Municipality Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that this is the first such contract for the year, and no additional contracts are anticipated at this time. The Village of Climax regularly partners with the Road Commission on projects. The contract covers 4 projects involving crack fill, chip seal, and fog seal work within the Village of Climax. The total estimated project cost is \$21,222 (combined for all 4 projects), and the Road Commission will only bill actual costs incurred. The Village of Climax will pay 100% of the actual costs with no contribution from the Road Commission. The Road Commission offers this assistance to local partners when time and resources are available.

- a. South Church Street – East Hancock Street to East Maple Street; Crack Fill, Chip Seal, Fog Seal
- b. East Hancock Street – South Main Street to South Church Street; Crack Fill, Chip Seal, Fog Seal
- c. Cherry Street – North Main Street to Sheldon Street; Crack Fill, Chip Seal, Fog Seal
- d. Sheldon Street – East Maple Street to Cherry Street; Crack Fill, Chip Seal, Fog Seal

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Oshtemo Township Supervisor Cheri Bell thanked the Road Commissioners for approving the easements for Oshtemo Township on Bunker Hill Drive and Saybrook Drive for the sanitary sewer project. She also thanked Road Commission staff for working with Oshtemo Township to prepare the materials and present them to the Board in what she described as an expedited fashion. She emphasized that this approval was significant because it completes the final details between the Road Commission and the sewer expansion project, and it fulfills the requirements needed for the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) bond closing. She expressed her appreciation and is looking forward to extending sanitary sewer and water service in the area, noting that water service may already be available in that location.

Mr. Wade Adams of 15124 East MN Avenue in Charleston Township requested a private, face-to-face meeting with the engineering manager. He also asked the board to hold a public hearing to review roadside management policies. He provided historical context from the 1980s when there was significant controversy in Kalamazoo County about roadside management. He emphasized that the Road Commission's main responsibility and liability is for the travel surface of the road, not trees beyond that area. He recommended the board look at Michigan Compiled Laws regarding this matter.

Ms. Rhonda Walters of 12480 South 18th Street raised concerns about the cost of tree removal on U Avenue. She suggested that instead of spending money on removing trees, the Road Commission should consider installing a roundabout at the corner of U Avenue and Portage Road. She emphasized that there must be many other ways that the money could be spent more effectively. Commissioner Pawloski acknowledged her comment and responded that they are always considering roundabouts.

Managing Director Bartholomew introduced several new staff members, including Road Maintenance Operator Nathan Beam, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, and Project Engineer Kirstin Finalla. He also addressed recent service requests and public concerns related to the SS4A (Safe Streets for All) project and associated clear zone improvements. He announced that staff will provide a brief presentation at the May 19 Board meeting to

explain the SS4A project, including the reasons for the work being performed and the anticipated project timeline. He emphasized that the presentation will take place during the regular Board meeting and will be open to the public. \In addition, he announced that the financial audit presentation to the Board is scheduled for June 2. He also noted that the joint meeting with the County to review the annual report is scheduled for June 16 immediately following the regular Board meeting.

Commissioner Kennedy asked whether the upcoming SS4A presentation would address concerns raised by residents during public comment. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that the presentation would explain the rationale behind the Road Commission's current approach. He noted that staff had already spoken with all of the residents present at the meeting, so portions of the presentation may be repetitive for them; however, he encouraged them to attend as they may still learn additional information. He also acknowledged that some follow-up work with residents remains to be completed.

Commissioner Kennedy reminded those in attendance that Memorial Day is approaching and encouraged the community to support families who have lost loved ones who served in the military, particularly in situations where the veteran had been the family's primary breadwinner. She noted that anyone in need of assistance may contact her or the Veteran Service Office in Kalamazoo. She also discussed upcoming Memorial Day parades and events, stating that she hopes to have a list of local parades available at the next Board meeting. She specifically mentioned that the City of Kalamazoo will hold a Memorial Day parade and memorial service at Riverside Cemetery on Gull Road. She expressed her hope that community members will attend these memorial events and services in support of veterans and their families who have lost loved ones in military service.

Commissioner Davis expressed sympathy for the residents who spoke earlier regarding the loss of trees in their neighborhoods. He acknowledged that trees help define neighborhoods and that residents often form strong connections to them, making them an important part of the community. He stated that decisions to remove trees for the safety and benefit of the traveling public are very difficult and are not taken lightly by the Commission. He emphasized that many of those trees are meaningful to him as well. He also shared a personal experience from the 1980s, when he was on the opposite side of a similar issue and participated in efforts to protect trees along Portage Road near the former Upjohn Company. He reflected that, as a younger man, he believed he was participating in an important cause and noted that the experience taught him a great deal about road commissions and their responsibilities. Now serving as a commissioner himself and faced with making similar difficult decisions, he acknowledged that the process is not as simple as he may have once believed. He concluded by expressing appreciation to the residents who attended the meeting and shared their perspectives with the Board.

Commissioner Thompson had no report.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked Commissioner Kennedy for attending County Parks meetings on his behalf both last month and for the upcoming meeting on Thursday, as well as potentially additional future meetings. He echoed Commissioner Davis's earlier comments regarding trees and tree management. He noted that, although he did not personally experience the tree-cutting controversies of the past, he recalled hearing about them on the radio during his commute to Holland during his working years. He acknowledged that tree management decisions involve trade-offs and alternatives, requiring sound judgment and careful consideration. He further commented that human negligence is often a significant contributing factor in accidents. He expressed appreciation for the diligent work staff has done in collaboration with consultants and stated that he values both the consultants' expertise and the input received from citizens.

Commissioner Pawloski inquired about storm drain cleaning procedures, specifically for drains located in Kalamazoo Township. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that storm sewer cleaning services are contracted out, while Road Commission staff are responsible for inspecting drains and determining the level of need and urgency for cleaning. Commissioner Pawloski also asked about service lag times and was informed that contractors are currently beginning early-season operations following the winter months. Due to a backlog of service requests, it typically takes several months to address outstanding needs before routine summer maintenance operations can begin.

Commissioner Pawloski shared an update from County Commissioner John Gisler. He reported that ground was broken on April 27 for a 450-foot extension of the south end of the main runway at Kalamazoo Airport. The project is intended to improve landing safety during inclement weather conditions, including rain, snow, and ice. He also noted that United Airlines service to Chicago, consisting of four daily flights, has been postponed until June 1. In addition, he shared that Dr. Kevin Catlin, County Administrator, will be speaking to the Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government on Monday, May 11, at 8:30 a.m. at Mark's Diner on Romance Road, and that all are welcome to attend.

Commissioner Pawloski acknowledged that Communications Administrator Phillips, referenced in the previous week's report, will be leaving her position. He stated that it has been a pleasure working with her, that she will be greatly missed, and thanked her for being a tremendous asset to the team. He further announced that he will be out of town from May 9 through May 18.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, May 19, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, Engineering Intern Jacob Welch, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner David moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the May 5, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented. Commissioner Davis asked whether the large balances reflected on vendor accounts represent the amount of work currently being performed in the field. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that they do. Current work activities include street sweeping and storm sewer maintenance. Roadside mowing is expected to begin within the next two weeks, and pavement marking operations are scheduled to begin by June 1. He noted the numbers will be high for the entire summer.

Payroll Account:	\$	226,026.70
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Vendor Account:	\$	1, 578,124.10
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve Commissioner Stehouwer's expense report as presented. Commissioner Pawloski noted that the total expense report amounted to \$375.83.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra presented an update on the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) project, formally titled "[Safe Streets Initiative, Enhancing Road Safety in Kalamazoo County](#)." SS4A is a federal grant program allocated at \$5 billion by the USDOT. The goal of the program is to achieve zero deaths on roadways. Kalamazoo County participated in a Transportation Safety Action Plan in 2023, and in 2024 was awarded \$25 million, which was noted as the largest grant in the state of Michigan at the time.

The action plan covered all road users, including bikes, pedestrians, vehicles, trucks, and motorcycles. Data showed approximately 15 fatal crashes per year on county roads, 61 serious injury crashes per year, and about 1,700 total crashes per year. While total crashes were below the statewide average and declining, fatalities and serious injury crashes were above the statewide average and increasing. About 50% of fatalities and serious injury crashes were due to lane departure, and 60% of those involved trees. About 31% of crashes involved single vehicles, and 80% of serious crashes occurred on primary roads.

Public engagement included 324 survey responses and 184 map location-specific inputs. General themes from responses included congestion, delineation, speeding, curves, shoulders, signals, visibility, and non-motorized concerns. Most respondents felt fairly safe on Road Commission roads overall.

The project covers 130 miles of road and includes four treatment categories shown on a color-coded map. The green roads, covering 66 miles at approximately \$4.6 million, receive clear zone improvements, rumble strips, pavement markings, and signage. The blue roads, covering 53 miles at approximately \$20.2 million, receive those same treatments plus a new layer of asphalt. The orange roads, covering 4 miles at approximately \$3.5 million, receive paving plus shoulder widening, along with the standard treatments. The red roads, covering about 7 miles at approximately \$7.1 million, receive road reconstruction, shoulder widening, clear zone improvements, rumble strips, pavement markings, and signage. Also included are 7 locations for left-turn lanes.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the safety improvements on Sprinkle Road were combined with other roadway improvements or whether the observed results were attributable solely to the rumble strips. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra responded that rumble strips were installed in concrete on Sprinkle Road, which may have provided an additional benefit due to the color contrast with the pavement. However, he noted that on 12th Street, where only rumble strips were ground into the pavement, there was still a significant reduction in crashes.

Commissioner Davis also asked whether the monarch butterfly habitat initiative would only be effective if mowing were discontinued in those areas. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that the intent is to leave the back portion of the right-of-way unmowed in order to help replenish monarch habitat.

Commissioner Davis further inquired whether utilities were exempt from clear zone fixed-object removal efforts. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that utility poles are not fully under the Road Commission's control. The Road Commission attempts to keep poles at least six feet behind the back edge of the roadway, although in some cases utilities may need to be relocated closer to the road.

Commissioner Davis asked what type of information would be collected as part of the tree survey. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra stated that the forester is collecting data on trees located within the right-of-way, including tree size, diameter at breast height, tree species, whether the tree is located in a yard area requiring stump grinding, and estimated removal costs.

Commissioner Davis also requested a copy of the tree notification letter. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra confirmed that a copy would be provided once finalized, noting that the Road Commission was still awaiting federal approvals.

Commissioner Kennedy asked for clarification regarding the term "single crash." Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that a single crash refers to an incident involving only one vehicle, such as a vehicle leaving the roadway and striking a tree or entering a ditch, rather than a multi-vehicle collision such as a T-bone crash at an intersection.

Commissioner Kennedy also asked who participated in the public engagement survey process. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra responded that the Road Commission reached out to township partners, posted information on its website, contacted agencies such as Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS), villages, and cities, utilized social media, attended township meetings, and attempted to publicize the survey as broadly as possible. Commissioner Kennedy asked whether social media was used to distribute the survey, and Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra confirmed that the survey was web-based and promoted through all available communication channels, including social media.

Commissioner Kennedy then asked for clarification regarding clear zone improvements. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that clear zone improvements involve addressing fixed objects within the right-of-way (ROW) that may present safety hazards, such as trees, boulders, or old sign foundations protruding above grade. He stated that the Road Commission intends to address fixed objects within the right-of-way that could potentially pose a safety risk.

Commissioner Kennedy noted that rumble strips are intended to help prevent vehicles from leaving the roadway and asked whether data supported their effectiveness. Staff confirmed that crash reduction data supports their use. Commissioner Kennedy also asked about shoulder rumble strips. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that shoulder rumble strips are not installed in areas where bicycle traffic commonly uses the shoulder.

Commissioner Kennedy further asked how the Road Commission identified that approximately 60 percent of fatal crashes involved trees. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that police crash reports contain hazardous action checkboxes and sequence data. If any of the hazardous action categories reference a tree, that information can be used to identify tree-related crashes. Based on that analysis, approximately 60 percent of fatal crashes in the county over the past five to six years involved trees.

Commissioner Kennedy noted that approximately 8,000 trees were currently included in the review process. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that, as environmental planning progresses, the Road Commission is working to estimate how many trees within the right-of-way could potentially be removed. He added that there would be flexibility and case-by-case consideration as the process moves forward.

Commissioner Kennedy also asked who would receive the tree notification letters and whether residents would still have an opportunity to request a second review. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that the Road Commission would respond to concerns and re-evaluate trees when requested. He stated that the letters are intended to notify residents about the number and type of trees identified, as well as the corresponding tree numbers marked in the field. The letters also ask property owners how they would like the wood handled if removal occurs. Discussion continued.

Commissioner Kennedy asked whether the trees being discussed were part of Phase I. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that Phase I corresponds to the green roads shown on the map.

Commissioner Kennedy then asked whether a tree identified for removal could potentially remain marked for an entire year before being removed. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra responded that, once letters are sent to residents, the intent is to remove the identified trees during that same winter season. He noted that the Road Commission does not plan to send letters for Phase III trees in 2026 because those removals would not occur for several years. He explained that letters would be mailed in July for trees scheduled to be removed between October and April.

Commissioner Kennedy also asked what "FHWA" stands for. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that it refers to the Federal Highway Administration, the agency responsible for overseeing the grant and its requirements. He noted that while the U.S. Department of Transportation is providing the funding, the FHWA is responsible for reviewing and approving the project as it advances from preliminary design into final design and construction.

Commissioner Kennedy further asked whether the Road Commission was thoughtfully considering community concerns regarding the trees identified as part of the project funding request. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra responded that the Road Commission is attempting to consider residents and homeowners throughout the process while recognizing that it may not be possible to satisfy everyone.

Commissioner Davis asked when the public survey was conducted. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra stated that the survey took place in 2023.

Commissioner Thompson noted that trees had been marked in Cooper Township, but no further action had occurred, and he asked whether there had been a delay. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra explained that there had been a delay due to winter weather conditions. He stated that tree marking began in the fall, but snow along the roadways created safety concerns for the forester, resulting in a pause in field work from December through February before work resumed in March.

Commissioner Pawloski asked Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra to repeat the crash reduction data from the Sprinkle Road project. Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra stated that the rumble strip improvements on Sprinkle Road resulted in a 72 percent reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes per year, a 42 percent reduction in total crashes per year, and approximately 17 fewer fatal and serious injury crashes after the improvements were implemented.

Commissioner Stehouwer commented that many value judgments are involved in roadway safety decisions. He stated that the ultimate goal is to provide drivers with an opportunity to take corrective action. He explained that rumble strips may alert a driver who is drifting from their lane, allowing them to regain attention and recover before leaving the roadway. He added that roadside conditions, such as ditches or open green space, may further improve a

driver's opportunity to reduce harm to themselves. Commissioner Stehouwer stated that along the approximately 130 miles being reviewed, the objective is to reduce the likelihood that drivers encounter trees within the right-of-way clear zone, thereby improving safety and reducing crash severity. Discussion continued...

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the Licensed Professional Engineer Reimbursement for the Chair's signature and two other Board members. Managing Director Bartholomew shared annually, and in accordance with Section 12(2) of Act 51 as amended, RCKC requests reimbursement in the amount of \$10,000 for a licensed professional engineer retained by the commission. We thank County Engineer Ryan Minkus, who currently serves in this capacity.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the preliminary plan for the Prairie Glenn Site Condominiums, located in Section 5 of Schoolcraft Township. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that Prairie Edge Estates is an existing residential neighborhood located off U Avenue, between 14th Street and Oakland Drive, within Schoolcraft Township. The proposed Prairie Glenn Site Condominium development will add eight (8) lots to the west of the current neighborhood. Each proposed lot will be between one (1) and two (2) acres in size. A separation between lots on the west side has been incorporated to allow for potential ROW extension for future public road extension. RCKC has collected the submittal and found it to comply with RCKC Policy. RCKC has collected the required preliminary plan review fee. RCKC will collect the required construction inspection fee of 3% of the estimated construction costs once construction drawings are approved by staff. Commissioner Davis sought clarification, confirming that this development was strictly to support eight residential lot units, which was confirmed by staff. Commissioner Stehouwer noted the presence of a cul-de-sac but acknowledged the potential for the road to extend in the future, adding that while residents tend to enjoy living on cul-de-sacs, a through road would be more practical for snowplow drivers.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Mr. Wade Adams of 15124 East MN Avenue began by thanking the Road Commission for sending a representative to speak with him regarding the marked trees along his property frontage near 44th Street on MN Avenue. He expressed concern about trees located on 44th Street that he personally planted as a windbreak, explaining that the surrounding prairie landscape experiences severe winds and that the trees help reduce soil erosion. He noted that the trees were planted at their current distance from the roadway by his own design. He also raised concerns regarding trees marked along MN Avenue, stating that he believed those trees were located on his private property and not within the 33-foot right-of-way measured from the roadway centerline. He strongly requested that the red X markings be removed from the trees, expressing concern that the trees could potentially be removed in October based on information presented during the meeting. Additionally, he commented on what he perceived to be inconsistencies in how trees were being marked along MN Avenue and Mercury Drive within the right-of-way. He questioned whether the Road Commission was following federal or state law regarding tree removal. He referenced a conversation with attorney Tom Huff, a former Road Commission representative, who he stated believed state law should be followed regardless of the federal grant involvement. He requested copies of the proposal and approval documents for his review. He also expressed skepticism regarding federal government involvement in local county road matters, stating that he did not believe the federal government should dictate what occurs on county roads and within local townships. He further inquired whether the survey referenced during the presentation was specific to Kalamazoo County, which staff confirmed. He then asked whether similar surveys had been conducted statewide and published, to which staff responded that they had not. He also sought clarification on whether the Road Commission had been solicited by the federal government or had proactively applied for the grant opportunity, and staff confirmed that the Road Commission submitted an application through a nationwide grant program. He concluded his comments by expressing concern about the need for federal funding, given existing local taxes, and referenced concerns regarding the increasing national debt.

Managing Director Bartholomew reported that a Township Supervisors meeting was scheduled for the following morning and that the Road Commission was on the agenda to present the same SS4A presentation to township partners and other participating agencies. He also shared that the chip seal crew was out that day, conducting what they referred to as a “test and tune,” which involves ensuring all equipment is prepared for the upcoming chip seal season. Park Circle at Midlink was chip sealed that morning as part of the testing process. The full chip seal program was scheduled to officially begin on Monday, June 1, following the Memorial Day holiday. He further noted that the financial audit presentation would take place at the next Board meeting scheduled for June 2.

Commissioner Kennedy shared that she attended the Park Commission meeting on behalf of Commissioner Stehouwer. The main discussion there was about playground equipment, specifically regarding sensory equipment for parks that received funding. She noted that while some parks would have sensory equipment, many would not due to the high cost. She also reminded everyone about the upcoming Memorial Day weekend, emphasizing that it is a time to remember fallen military members and encouraged people to look out for their neighbors, particularly veterans. She mentioned the veteran service office in Kalamazoo off Alcott as a resource.

Commissioner Davis reported that, in his role as a member of the Environmental Health Advisory Council (EHAC), he wanted to remind everyone — especially staff working in the field — to remain alert for ticks. He noted that there has been a significant increase in the tick population and that a substantial percentage are carrying infectious diseases. He encouraged everyone to take appropriate precautions while working outdoors.

Commissioner Thompson reported that he attended three township board meetings during the previous week. He noted that two of the townships had numerous questions regarding the tree work and the SS4A project. He commented that he believed the presentation given during the meeting was excellent and hoped that some residents had the opportunity to view it. He also shared that the topic would be discussed again at the Township Supervisors’ meeting the following day and acknowledged the team’s continued efforts to provide as much information to the public as possible.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked Commissioner Kennedy for attending the Parks Commission meeting on his behalf. He mentioned that, if Commissioner Kennedy was available, he might ask her to attend the June 4 meeting as well due to another scheduling conflict and suggested they discuss it further at a later time. He also noted that he had not attended any township meetings during the past couple of weeks because of scheduling conflicts. He expressed appreciation for the SS4A presentation presented during the meeting and commended staff for their engagement and efforts, encouraging them to continue the good work.

Commissioner Pawloski thanked staff for the presentation and stated that the Road Commission’s highest priority is ensuring that people make it home safely each night to be with their families. He also reported that the Road Commission would be receiving a refund in the amount of \$21,004.36 from the County Road Association Self-Insurance Fund (CRASIF).

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, June 2, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Accountant Steve Olson, Accounting Clerk Katie Howell, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the May 5, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented. Commissioner Davis noted the vendor accounts were significantly lower than last month and asked why. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that we are in between seasons, but construction season invoices would be rolling in soon, and chip seal material had already been purchased.

Payroll Account:	\$	217,739.47
Vendor Account:	\$	791,317.01

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Ms. Suzie Fitzgibbon, 15651 Portage Road, addressed the Board regarding the planned tree removal project in her area. She expressed concern that some of the trees proposed for removal may be as much as 200 years old and opposed what she characterized as the clear-cutting of mature, aesthetically valuable trees. She noted that the current speed limit on Portage Road is 55 mph, which she believes is already unsafe given the level of development along the corridor, including residential roads and a public boat landing. She stated that removing the roadside trees could encourage higher vehicle speeds, potentially decreasing rather than improving roadway safety. She also raised concerns about the broader environmental impact of removing a significant number of trees throughout Kalamazoo County. She urged each commissioner to personally travel the roads where tree removals are proposed and evaluate conditions on a case-by-case basis before approving the work. Drawing on her experience with grant administration, she questioned whether the grant funding supporting the project could be modified or redirected, particularly if sufficient community support were generated within Schoolcraft Township.

Ms. Mariann Barnard of 15634 Portage Road addressed the Board regarding the RCKC Transportation Safety Action Plan. Specifically, she had been reviewing the plan's infographic and noticed that the public involvement section indicated that 324 survey responses were received. Her main concern was how many surveys were originally distributed so she could calculate the response rate. She also noted that she personally never received a survey and was uncertain whether the survey had been distributed to the entire Kalamazoo County population. She further mentioned that, to her knowledge, none of her neighbors appeared to have received a survey either, which raised concerns for her, particularly given that her neighborhood is being affected by changes to the streets. Her primary question was how she could find out the total number of surveys that were sent out.

County Commissioner John Gisler reported that a childcare millage will appear on the August 4 ballot. While acknowledging the importance of childcare services, he expressed opposition to placing an additional millage before voters. Commissioner Gisler stated that he believes funding should come from the County's existing \$325 million budget rather than through a new tax levy and indicated that he would oppose the millage's passage. He emphasized, however, that his position should not be interpreted as opposition to childcare services themselves. He also raised concerns regarding an individual who had been exposed to Ebola while in Africa and was believed to be somewhere within the county. He stated that communicable disease personnel from Health and Community Services had attempted to locate the individual for several days without success and had subsequently ended their search efforts. He further noted that both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) had closed the case. He advised residents to remain aware of the situation. Additionally, he warned residents about an algae bloom in Austin Lake and advised them to watch for a greenish tint in the water. He recommended that both people and pets rinse off thoroughly after contact with the lake water. He announced that Captain Jeff Baker of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office will be the guest speaker at an informal community meeting on Monday, June 8, at 8:30 a.m. at Mark's Diner on Romence Road in Portage. The presentation will focus on scams and fraud prevention, and the public is welcome to attend.

Plante Moran Partner Jean Young began by explaining the purpose and scope of the audit. She noted that the Road Commission received an unmodified or clean opinion, which is the highest level of assurance that can be provided on financial statements, meaning the numbers as presented are materially correct. She also confirmed that no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were found in internal controls. There were no difficulties, no disagreements, and no corrected or uncorrected misstatements, which she described as a very clean letter. She mentioned a new GASB standard, GASB 102, was in effect, but the Road Commission had no items that rose to the reporting level under that standard. She also explained that accounting estimates, particularly for pension and OPEB obligations, involve actuarial assumptions such as discount rates, mortality rates, and healthcare trends, and that these numbers can fluctuate year to year.

Plante Moran Manager Jesse Klitz walked through several slides covering the financial details, which are posted to the [financial tab](#) of our website. Numerous questions were asked by Commissioners and answered by staff.

Ms. Suzie Fitzgibbon, 15651 Portage Road, asked how she is going to get her questions answered. Commissioner Pawloski stated that someone would talk to her after the meeting. If she were unable to stay, then someone would correspond with her via email or phone. Ms. Fitzgibbon inquired about the criteria used to select roads for the project, the plans for replacing removed trees, and the parties responsible for overseeing and managing the project. She asked if residents could opt out of the grant and if the grant could be amended or changed. She also asked if the Road Commissioners drove down the roads where these 8000 trees will be removed.

County Commissioner Gisler congratulated the Road Commission on the clean audit. He sits in on audits from various governmental bodies, including townships, to know that a completely clean audit is something to be proud of. Since the Road Commission has had a shuffle of financial people in the ranks, that is extra specially good.

Mr. Wade Adams of 15124 East MN Avenue questioned whether the Safe Road Initiative Program had been submitted to legal counsel. He also asked who the legal counsel was.

Managing Director Bartholomew reported that, in connection with the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) project, the Road Commission has a significant number of tree removals planned. He explained that staff is reviewing previous policies and examining practices used by other agencies to develop a draft tree replacement policy. He noted that the Road Commission already removes between 1,000 and 2,000 trees annually, and with the SS4A program potentially adding up to 8,000 additional tree removals, he believes it is an appropriate time to bring a draft policy before the Board for discussion. The item will be placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting. He also informed the Board that the annual meeting with the County Board is scheduled for June 16, immediately following the Road Commission Board meeting. He stated that he will coordinate with the County Administrator to obtain the County Board's agenda. The planned presentation will include a review of the Road Commission's annual report, accomplishments, and awards, with time reserved for questions from County Board members. Additionally, he reported that the Road Commission experienced a difficult start to the year, with revenues coming in below budget. He explained that the first increase in Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) revenue was received in April, followed by a reduction in May. However, the most recent distribution increased again, bringing revenue to slightly more than 1.5 percent above the budgeted monthly amount. He stated that if this trend continues, the Road Commission should remain on track with its current budget and may have the opportunity to add several late-season projects.

Commissioner Kennedy asked for clarification regarding the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) project and the proposed tree replacement policy. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the current SS4A project includes tree removals and clear-zone improvements along approximately 130 miles of roadway. He noted that the proposed tree replacement policy would provide an opportunity for affected residents to participate in a program to replace trees removed as part of the project.

Commissioner Pawloski addressed questions regarding whether townships could opt out of the SS4A program, stating that opting out is not an option under the grant requirements. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the only opportunities to preserve trees would be in cases where staff determines that marked trees are outside the road right-of-way (ROW), in which case they would not be removed. He also noted that ongoing reviews related to historic preservation, Tribal consultation, and other regulatory requirements could identify additional trees eligible for preservation. However, trees that do not qualify under those exceptions must be removed in accordance with the grant requirements. He emphasized that the Road Commission cannot selectively choose which areas or townships participate, as the grant applies to all locations included in the approved application. Failure to comply with the project requirements could jeopardize the grant funding.

Commissioner Pawloski noted that the Road Commission received more than 300 survey responses regarding the project. Commissioner Stehouwer added that the survey was made available countywide and promoted numerous times through social media, township meetings, and other public outreach efforts. He stated that public engagement began in 2023 and has included extensive educational opportunities and opportunities for public comment. He also noted that the Board minutes serve as a valuable resource for residents seeking information about the project.

Commissioner Kennedy asked about the amount of funding that could be forfeited if the project requirements were not met. Managing Director Bartholomew stated that the grant award totals approximately \$25 million, with the total project cost, including the Road Commission's contribution, estimated at approximately \$33 million.

Commissioner Thompson asked for confirmation that the Road Commission is required to follow the grant requirements. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that if the project is initiated and the required tree removals are not completed, the grant funding could be forfeited and previously received funds may need to be repaid.

Commissioner Pawloski asked whether the SS4A grant had been reviewed by legal counsel. Managing Director Bartholomew stated that the federal grant was reviewed internally but was not submitted to outside legal counsel for review. Commissioner Stehouwer added that state and federal transportation agencies have reviewed the project plans and supporting data, and that the project is also subject to historic preservation, Tribal consultation, and other regulatory review processes. He noted that these reviews involve legal requirements and that any compliance concerns would be identified through those processes. He emphasized that the project has undergone extensive review over several years and that many regulatory requirements are being addressed behind the scenes.

Commissioner Kennedy asked whether staff are continuing to explore solutions in response to questions and concerns raised by the community. Commissioner Pawloski responded that the Board will be discussing a tree replacement policy at its next meeting and that staff continues to gather feedback from county officials, township officials, and residents in an effort to identify the best path forward.

Commissioner Kennedy congratulated staff on receiving a clean audit, noting that the accomplishment reflects a strong team effort across the organization. She also shared information about an upcoming veterans conference. She explained that the event is not only for women veterans, but also for individuals and organizations that serve veterans. The conference provides an opportunity for community members to gain a better understanding of how to work with and support veterans. She encouraged those interested in assisting veterans to reach out for additional information.

Commissioner Davis had no report.

Commissioner Thompson gave kudos to the staff.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked Commissioner Kennedy for attending the Parks Commission meeting on his behalf and noted that he has another scheduling conflict this Thursday. He expressed appreciation for Commissioner Kennedy's willingness to attend again on his behalf. He reported receiving emails regarding the KL Avenue closure, noting that the road has been closed for two years. He stated that the length of the closure is unacceptable and that he would be at a loss if his own road had been closed for that long. He added that, if the Road Commission has any leverage with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), it may help the affected businesses. He also noted that he walked the area before the Board meeting and observed no construction activity. He also reported receiving a call from a resident regarding driveway splits, which he referred to staff. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the work being done by staff.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that Roads+ will host a special event in Lansing on Tuesday, June 30, which will include a lunch with legislators. He encouraged fellow Road Commissioners who are members or donors to attend. He noted that the event is expected to conclude around noon, allowing attendees sufficient time to return for the Board meeting scheduled at 3:00 p.m. He also reported that he and Commissioner Thompson attended the Township Supervisor's meeting, where they received feedback from township and county officials regarding the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. Additionally, he agreed to contact the Kalamazoo Conservation District to explore potential partnership opportunities and investigate Arbor Day Foundation grant programs for tree replacement efforts. He shared five key benefits of the SS4A program:

1. Reduce the number of deer/car collisions
2. Reduces power and telecommunication outages.
3. Reduce the amount of money from the nearly \$1 million a year we currently spend on trees. Redirecting to the roads instead.
4. Improve and create more habitat for the monarch butterfly, by re-seeding with milkweed.
5. Most importantly, helps reduce serious injuries and fatalities by the motoring public, allowing people to get home every day safely.

Commissioner Pawloski stated that he would distribute these talking points to the Board via email.

Commissioner Kennedy reminded the community that it is really important to call 269-381-3171 or [submit a service request](#) online about issues with roads. Commissioner Pawloski added or an email can be sent to info@kalamazooountyroads.com.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

June 2, 2026 – Board Meeting

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, June 16, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:11 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Kennedy suggested moving Item B: Request Discussion of the draft Tree Replacement Policy to the last Item on the agenda to allow time for discussion.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the June 2, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented. Commissioner Stehouwer requested a high-level overview of the accounts payable totaling approximately \$1.6 million and asked whether the amount was primarily driven by construction activities. Managing Director Bartholomew reported that significant expenditures included \$358,147 for the Road Commission's new asphalt distributor, \$348,250 for Phase 1 crack-filling operations, \$177,146 for aggregate materials used in chip seal operations, and \$125,287 for road maintenance support services and project preparation work.

Payroll Account:	\$	243,913.18
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Vendor Account:	\$	1,673,682.26
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Dr. Miranda Vinden, 10963 W M Avenue, addressed the Board regarding roadside tree removal. She advocated for the selective removal of only dead, dying, or diseased trees rather than widespread clearing. She emphasized the benefits of trees, including providing shade for pedestrians, supporting wildlife habitat, enhancing community beauty and character, and preserving natural resources for future generations. She noted that some oak trees can live for hundreds of years and expressed concern that mature trees removed today would take generations to replace. She encouraged the Board to consider the long-term legacy of roadside trees and prioritize their preservation whenever possible.

Ms. Marilyn Branch, 9085 North Riverview Drive, expressed concern about the loss of mature trees and the impact it would have on the character of the community. She stated that residents were not provided an opportunity

for public input before the grant application was developed and that no public hearing was held regarding the project. She also expressed concern that no environmental impact study had been conducted, emphasizing the environmental benefits of mature trees, including oxygen production and carbon dioxide absorption. She noted that shade trees help reduce residential energy consumption and argued that their removal could increase cooling costs for homeowners. She further explained that she has spent many years developing a wildlife habitat on her property that depends on the existing tree canopy and expressed concern that tree removal would negatively affect that habitat. Additionally, she stated that roadside trees can serve as a buffer between roadways and nearby homes, particularly where houses are located close to the road, and suggested that their removal could reduce protection from errant vehicles. She urged the Board to consider these environmental, community, and safety concerns before proceeding with the project.

Ms. Joan Uhley, 15423 S Barton Lake Drive, presented a petition on behalf of several individuals who were unable to attend the meeting and requested that the Board reconsider the implementation approach for the roadside tree removal grant. She urged the Board to replace a broad, clear-cutting strategy with a more selective approach focused on safety and tree health. She recommended removing only diseased or hazardous trees and suggested that tree clearing at intersections be a more targeted method of addressing visibility and safety concerns. She also stated that roadside trees can provide protection by acting as a barrier when distracted drivers leave the roadway. She further noted that trees serve as weather and noise buffers during the winter months and provide valuable shade during the summer. As a regular walker, she emphasized the importance of shaded roadways, particularly as summers become hotter and longer. She submitted the petition to Managing Director Bartholomew for the Board's consideration.

Ms. Michelle Smith, 9650 North Riverview Drive, expressed strong opposition to the removal of one of her walnut trees that had been marked for cutting. She stated that the tree is located approximately 29 feet within the right-of-way (ROW) and is more than 100 years old. She explained that timber companies had approached her over the years with offers to purchase her walnut trees, but she consistently declined, even during periods of significant financial hardship. She stated that the tree in question is healthy and, according to her family, has never been struck by a vehicle or caused issues for roadway users. She noted that her property is located along a straight section of road and expressed concern about drivers who use the roadway unsafely to pass other vehicles. She stated that the tree serves as a barrier between the roadway and her home and worried that its removal could increase the risk of vehicles leaving the road and striking her property. She also expressed concerns about the loss of shade provided by the tree, the potential for increased energy costs, and the impact on local wildlife and pollinators that benefit from the flowers and landscaping on her property. She urged the Board to limit tree removal to trees that are dead, diseased, dying, or infested, rather than removing healthy trees that have not presented safety concerns.

Ms. Deborah Harsha, 520 South Kalamazoo Street, recalled previous tree-cutting activities by the Road Commission along Portage Road and TU Avenue near her property and stated that those experiences left her feeling powerless. She expressed concern that the Road Commission has a reputation for removing trees in a broad or wholesale manner. While acknowledging the importance of roadway safety, she voiced strong opposition to the current tree removal efforts, describing the loss of mature trees as devastating to residents and the community. She urged the Board to consider community concerns and to seek a more balanced approach to tree management. She referenced a letter submitted by Mr. Brad Sadowski, stating that it reflected the feelings of many residents and served as a passionate request for the Board to improve its practices and preserve trees that do not need to be removed. She suggested that modifying the grant implementation appeared to be a reasonable option. She concluded by encouraging the Board to listen to the concerns of residents and make decisions that best serve the community.

Ms. Sandra Adkins, 6274 South 32nd Street, requested greater transparency about the grant associated with the work. She asked that the portions of the grant related to tree removal be made publicly available so residents could better understand the scope of the project, the flexibility of its requirements, and what options may exist for modifying its implementation. She emphasized the environmental value of trees, noting that many communities are encouraging tree planting to address climate-related challenges. She stated that trees help cool roadways, reduce

heat island effects, absorb carbon dioxide, improve air quality, and assist with stormwater management. She also questioned what she viewed as an inconsistency between the Road Commission's proposed tree removal efforts and its support of the Natural Beauty Roads program, which seeks to preserve roads characterized by native vegetation and scenic qualities. She expressed concern about the removal of a large number of roadside trees and the potential impact on the county's natural character. She further raised questions regarding roadway safety practices, noting that crops are often planted near intersections, which can affect motorists' sight distance, while trees are being removed for safety-related reasons. She suggested that the Road Commission focus on maintaining and addressing hazardous trees on a case-by-case basis rather than broadly removing healthy trees. She encouraged the Board to consider alternatives that emphasize tree maintenance and preservation while addressing legitimate safety concerns.

Mr. Bob Sacksteder, 15423 S Barton Lake Dr, began by referencing the Road Commission's mission and guiding principles, noting that while the Board and staff provide expertise and leadership, the Road Commission's work is funded by taxpayers throughout the community. He acknowledged that maintaining safe and efficient roads is the Road Commission's primary responsibility. However, he emphasized that the agency's mission also includes supporting economic development, quality of life, and stewardship of the roadside environment. He stated that the large number of residents speaking on the issue demonstrated the importance of mature trees to the community's quality of life. He also referenced the Road Commission's commitment to preserving the roadside environment and noted that, although replacement trees may be planted, it would take many years for them to provide the same benefits as existing mature trees. He stated that wildlife and mature trees are part of the character of the area and contribute to the community's identity. He thanked the Board for listening to residents' concerns and encouraged them to pursue a selective approach to tree removal, limiting removals to locations where they are truly necessary.

Ms. Tiffany Sadowski, 1963 E Y Avenue, began by stating that she is in favor of the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant and believes it will be beneficial for the community. However, she expressed strong opposition to one specific component of the grant, which involves the removal of 8,000 roadside trees. She acknowledged that some trees do need to be removed, particularly dead and dying ones, and suggested that the extra funds allocated for tree removal could instead be used to hire a qualified arborist to assess and selectively remove only those trees that are truly problematic. She also raised a winter safety concern, noting that she personally goes out of her way to drive on tree-lined roads during winter because roads without trees are significantly more hazardous due to blowing and drifting snow. She specifically cited the stretch of Portage Road from U Avenue to UV Avenue, where trees have already been removed, as one of the most dangerous road sections in the county during winter conditions. She emphasized that trees serve as natural barriers, provide snow coverage, and help control the drifting of dirt and snow, all of which contribute to road safety. As an educator and grant writer herself, she concluded by urging the Road Commission to amend the grant to reduce the scope of tree removal while keeping the other beneficial aspects of the SS4A program intact.

Ms. Cheryl Ulsh, 12044 Oakland Drive, began by noting that her house is almost 200 years old and that there is also a nearly 200-year-old oak tree nearby, which fortunately does not have an X mark on it. She pointed out that south of her location on Oakland Drive, there are many trees with overhanging branches, and she knows people who specifically avoid that stretch of road on windy days due to the danger posed by those branches. She encouraged the Road Commission to focus its efforts on removing trees that present an actual hazard, rather than broad removal. She expressed that during her daily 16-mile round-trip commute on U Avenue and 8th Street, the number of X's marked on trees along that route was gut-wrenching to her, both because of how it would change the beauty and landscape of the roads she travels, and because of the winter safety concerns related to wind and ice on roads without tree coverage. She also raised questions about the availability of traffic statistics showing the number or percentage of vehicle-tree collisions on the affected roads, and whether an impact study had been conducted regarding the effects of tree removal on road conditions, such as ice and erosion. She requested that this information be made available on the Road Commission's website to help justify the decisions being made.

Ms. Cindy Johnson, 12568 South 18th Street, presented pictures to the board and raised several concerns during her public comment. First, she addressed the issue of tree trunks left lying horizontally along U Avenue after

recent road reconstruction. She argued that these large horizontal trunks are just as dangerous as standing trees, as a car leaving the road could still collide with them. She noted that these trunks are scattered throughout South County, including on W Avenue and S Avenue. Second, she referenced the grant's accident map, pointing out that the stretch of U Avenue from 23rd Street to Portage Road has a significant U-shaped curve with a 20-mph speed limit and is a known accident site. She noted that the intersection of Portage Road and U Avenue is a primary accident location. Third, she highlighted the S-curves between Portage Road and Oakland as particularly dangerous areas, noting that she frequently hears sirens related to accidents there. She suggested that adding a blinking yellow caution light to the S-curve warning signs could improve safety and make the curves more visible to drivers. Finally, she mentioned that she visited the Sheriff's Department that morning to gather more data on accident locations, questioning whether the reported accidents are truly related to standing trees or are instead concentrated at specific dangerous curves and intersections.

Ms. Joddi Witt, 10518 Riverview Drive, argued that trees are not simply roadside obstacles, but rather vital pieces of public infrastructure that serve multiple important functions. Specifically, she highlighted that trees prevent soil erosion, manage stormwater runoff, and provide a natural cooling effect that helps lower energy costs for nearby residents. She further stated that the proposed mass tree removal directly contradicts any environmental sustainability and climate resilience goals the commission may have. She emphasized that at a time when investment in green infrastructure and preservation of natural beauty should be a priority, the commission is instead proposing to spend millions of taxpayer dollars to strip them away. While she acknowledged that roadside safety and clear zones are important considerations, she firmly argued that a blanket removal of 8,000 trees represents an extreme approach to solving the problem. She advocated targeted maintenance rather than what she described as mass deforestation. She urged the commission to immediately pause the project, reevaluate its environmental impact, and consider more sustainable and cost-effective alternatives before moving forward.

Mr. Francis Bilancio, 7416 S 4th Street, highlighted that the main focus of the grant includes adding rumble strips to center lines and improving the right-of-way through hazards, specifically tree removal. He also pointed out that \$8 million of the total grant is designated for tree removal. He proposed several alternative uses for the grant funding rather than spending it on tree removal. First, he suggested diverting funds to extend rumble strips to the full 130 miles of road rather than just 74 miles, citing the Road Commission's own statistics showing a 72% reduction in fatal and serious injury crashes resulting from rumble strip projects. Second, he recommended investing in additional driver education and signage to raise awareness about the dangers of inattentive and distracted driving. Third, he suggested using funds for driver education about driving while impaired by prescription or over-the-counter drugs. Finally, he referenced a Congressional Report on Alcohol Use in America, pointing out that even one drink doubles the probability of a driver being involved in a single car crash, even when below the legal blood alcohol limit. He emphasized this point by noting that 31.4% of lane departure crashes are single-vehicle crashes, making alcohol awareness education a significant priority.

Ms. Kim Sandelin, 155 West U Avenue, began by expressing her love for her township and its roads. She referenced a 2008 master planning process that her township undertook in response to growing housing developments nearby. During that process, the township board sent surveys to all residents, held public meetings with strong community participation, and developed a master plan focused on preserving the rural character of the area, including its rivers, streams, parks, lakes, small neighborhoods, and farming. She then described attending a Schoolcraft Township board meeting the previous week, along with other community members present at the Road Commission meeting, where they discussed the SS4A grant and the desire to see amendments made to better serve the entire community, balancing road safety with the preservation of the rural landscape and trees that residents value. She also noted that the township supervisor, Don Ulsh, shared that the topic of the SS4A grant had come up among the 15 township supervisors in the county, and that 14 out of 15 supervisors were opposed to the grant as currently written. She concluded by expressing appreciation for the Road Commissioners' public service, while urging them to listen to the community and work collaboratively toward a solution that improves road safety while also respecting and preserving the natural beauty and quality of life that residents cherish.

Ms. Julie Richardson, 44667 27th Street, stated that while she supports efforts to improve roadway safety, she strongly opposes the planned removal of approximately 8,000 trees, many of which she described as mature and longstanding features of the community. She argued that trees are not the primary cause of serious traffic crashes, citing factors such as excessive speed, distracted driving, and impaired driving as the more significant contributors to roadway tragedies. She shared her experience of traveling a roadway she referred to as “Snake Hill” on Almena Drive for nearly 60 years without witnessing an accident and remarked that she was recently distracted by the large number of trees marked for removal along that route. She described the scenic character of the roadway, including seasonal dogwood blooms, and expressed concern that the removal of mature trees would diminish the natural beauty of the area. Ms. Richardson also emphasized the environmental benefits of trees, noting their role in improving air quality and supporting the natural environment. She questioned the process used to identify trees for removal, asking whether hazardous trees had been evaluated prior to obtaining the grant funding or whether the grant requirements were driving the scope of the project. She expressed skepticism that the number of trees identified for removal represented only hazardous conditions. She concluded by stating that she supports the removal of trees that present legitimate safety risks but opposed the removal of healthy trees, which she believes would negatively affect current residents and future generations.

Mr. Jerry Schuring, 16479 S 21st Street, acknowledged that Portage Road has many dead or dying trees between W Avenue and the end of Portage Road, noting that while there are decent trees, many have reached or are near the end of their life. He also mentioned XY Avenue in this context. He recognized that roads have historically been improved over time as traffic and population needs increase, and that issues like distracted driving and addiction are problems that road authorities cannot fully control, but that it is still their job to make roads as safe as possible. While he personally does not favor removing all the trees, he admitted that he has removed trees from his own property due to safety concerns from storms, even when those trees were approaching 100 years old. He also pushed back on the suggestion of redirecting grant funds to rumble strips, stating that rumble strips do not cost millions of dollars and would not generate significant savings. He emphasized that the \$25 million grant cannot simply be changed, and that rejecting or altering it would mean losing the entire amount, which he viewed as a significant loss for the county.

Ms. Sheila Polkowski from Dexter, Michigan, referred to herself as “the Lorax,” speaking on behalf of the trees. She drew a direct parallel to Washtenaw County Road Commission, which had received the same federal safety grant years prior and began cutting hundreds of roadside trees. She explained that residents in Washtenaw County became outraged, started a petition, and began attending road commission meetings, but the cutting continued. As a result, the Washtenaw County Road Commission gained a poor reputation for not listening to its community. She then escalated her point by noting that residents took their concerns to county commissioner meetings, highlighting that county commissioners have the authority to dissolve road commission departments and absorb them as public works departments under county oversight. She cited Jackson, Wayne, and Macomb counties as examples where this has happened due to abuse of power and failure to listen to residents. She stated that ultimately, under this public pressure, Washtenaw County Road Commission made the right decision and returned a significant portion of the safety grant, emphasizing that returning part of the grant is indeed possible. She then argued that trees are not dangerous, but rather cars and distracted drivers are. She compared trees to streetlights, telephone poles, and mailboxes lining roads, questioning why those are not removed for safety reasons as well. She also pointed out that trees existed long before automobiles. She concluded by stating that every resident she had spoken to on the affected roads did not want their trees removed, and reminded the board that they work for the residents and that the residents want their trees preserved.

Mr. Chad Souke, 104 East XY Avenue, focused his comments on the specific stretch of XY Avenue from 18th Street to Portage Road, which features a gorgeous tree canopy. He highlighted that the tree-lined stretch of XY Avenue from 18th Street to Portage Road has recorded no accidents over approximately 17 years, based on the Road Commission's own data. He used this as evidence that trees do not necessarily contribute to road danger. He contrasted this with the stretch of XY Avenue from 18th Street to 131, which has been largely clear-cut and has significantly higher accident levels, and is more dangerous in winter due to large snowdrifts. He noted that, based on his conversation with Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, the stumps of the removed trees in his area would not

be ground down, meaning the safety improvement would be minimal, essentially making the tree removal an answer in search of a problem. While he acknowledged that pursuing the grant was a good initiative, he stated he would prefer the Road Commission not to take the money if it meant cutting down the trees. He also addressed the argument about farmers needing more room for agricultural equipment, noting that no one has ever claimed they cannot get equipment down XY Avenue, and that the area is designated as rural residential, implying a compromise already exists.

Ms. Georgia Evans, 830 E U Avenue, expressed appreciation for the strong community turnout and shared a personal observation about the value of trees as natural windbreaks. She described watching a severe rainstorm from her deck and noted that areas protected by trees experienced minimal soil movement, while an adjacent open field without trees had significant blowing dirt. She argued that trees help reduce blowing dirt and snow and contribute to safer road conditions. She also noted that she had provided a poster depicting the mature trees along U Avenue and encouraged the board to consider their aesthetic and environmental value. While acknowledging the importance of roadway safety, she stated that unsafe behavior cannot always be eliminated through roadway modifications, citing an example of a pedestrian pushing a stroller in the roadway despite the presence of a nearby sidewalk. She urged the board to amend the SS4A project plans to avoid widespread tree removal, recommending instead that efforts focus on removing dead trees, trimming hazardous limbs, and addressing sight-distance concerns only where necessary.

Ms. Kristen Glerum, 6137 Clovermeadows Ave, emphasized the importance of seeking input from those most directly affected by proposed projects. Drawing on her experience in education, she stated that meaningful stakeholder engagement should include the residents who live, work, and travel in the impacted areas. She echoed concerns raised by previous speakers regarding roadway safety, particularly on S-curves. She referenced areas such as Sprinkle Road and Portage Road, noting that local residents often associate emergency sirens with crashes occurring on these types of road segments. She also expressed concern about winter driving conditions on Portage Road, where extensive tree removal has already occurred, stating that the loss of trees has contributed to drifting snow and has prompted some farmers to install fencing to mitigate those effects. She shared comments from community members who were unable to attend the meeting. These comments included concerns about increased snow drifting due to the loss of tree windbreaks along open agricultural fields, dissatisfaction with the level of communication provided to residents regarding planned tree removals and worries about the impact that widespread tree removal could have on the character of the landscape and roadway conditions. She concluded by acknowledging the value of grant funding but stressed that funding should be used thoughtfully and in a manner that reflects community needs and priorities. She expressed support for exploring amendments to the SS4A grant that would reduce or avoid unnecessary tree removal.

Mr. Adam Tavernier, 1600 Sarasota Trail, stated that he was speaking in part on behalf of younger and working-age residents of the community. He expressed concern that the meeting was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on a weekday, making it difficult for many residents to attend, and characterized this as a transparency and public participation issue. His primary concern was the lack of transparency surrounding the SS4A grant and the associated tree removal project. He stated that he was unaware of any previous public meetings on the matter and only learned of the project after noticing orange markings on trees along local roadways. He described himself as a frequent traveler on Portage Road and XY Avenue and voiced strong opposition to the removal of mature roadside trees, which he described as an important and attractive feature of the area. He noted that some newer homes along Portage Road rely on these trees as a primary source of shade and expressed concern about the impacts their removal could have on residents. He also questioned whether board members would support similar tree removal efforts on their own properties, suggesting there may be a disconnect between decision-makers and the residents directly affected by the project. He concluded by urging the Road Commission to provide clearer information regarding which elements of the grant are required and which are discretionary and encouraged the board to hold future public meetings at times that would allow greater participation from working members of the community.

Dr. Carol Friesen, 482 E XY Avenue, noted that her husband was unable to attend because he was working. She shared that he would have wanted to emphasize the value of the mature maple trees near their home, which

had produced an exceptional amount of sap for syrup that spring. She stated that she did not intend to repeat the concerns already expressed by her neighbors but instead wished to contribute her professional expertise. She explained that she holds a Ph.D. in education, taught at the university level for approximately 30 years, and has worked for both state and county health departments. She also noted her extensive experience in grant writing, having authored and managed more than \$28 million in grant funding throughout her career. Drawing on that experience, Dr. Friesen offered to volunteer her assistance in helping develop amendments to the SS4A grant. She expressed a desire to help identify solutions that would balance roadway safety objectives with the preservation of trees and community character, stating that she hoped to find an approach that would satisfy both residents and the Road Commission. She also complimented a memorandum that had been provided to the board, stating that it effectively reflected the community's shared goals of safety, tree preservation, and maintaining the beauty of the area. She concluded by commending residents for their participation in the meeting and engagement in the democratic process. She acknowledged that serving on a public board can be a difficult and often thankless responsibility and expressed appreciation to the commission for providing an opportunity for public comment.

Mr. Rodney French, 8505 Almena Drive, mentioned that he read a book to 5-year-old twins the night before called "The Great Me and the Little Me". He explained the concept of "the great me" as being strong, loving, kind, careful, and sensitive, while "the little me" represented selfishness, greed, and unkindness. He used this analogy to encourage the board to tap into their better nature when making decisions about the tree removal. He also mentioned that he was a business owner for 38 years and acknowledged that laws can be difficult to work with, but encouraged the board to be creative in finding solutions. He praised the community for showing up and urged the board to be transparent and to work with the experienced residents who had offered their help. He closed by encouraging the board to tap into the wisdom of the elders present at the meeting.

Mr. Brad Sadowski, 1963 East Y Avenue, introduced himself by noting that the board was likely familiar with him from previous correspondence, including a letter he had submitted and a petition campaign that had gathered approximately 1,235 signatures in a two-week period, with additional signatures continuing to be collected. He began by expressing appreciation for the board and emphasizing that he and the residents supporting his efforts do not view the commissioners as adversaries. He acknowledged the challenges of serving in a public role and stated that his group's intention has been to work collaboratively with the Road Commission rather than simply oppose its actions. He described their goal as finding a reasonable compromise. Regarding the SS4A grant and associated tree removal project, he stated that he and his supporters do not want the project to be abandoned. He expressed support for the SS4A initiative's overall objectives and indicated that residents would like to see the project move forward. However, he urged the board to pursue amendments that would avoid the widespread removal of approximately 8,000 trees. He stated that residents support targeted tree removal where necessary, including at intersections to improve sight distance and for the removal of dead trees and hazardous limbs. He also offered his assistance in helping prepare or process any grant amendments if additional support was needed. He cited the strong public turnout as evidence of community engagement and democracy in action and encouraged the board to carefully consider residents' concerns as part of its decision-making process. He concluded by stating that he and his supporters would continue advocating for their position while remaining willing to meet with the Road Commission and work toward a mutually acceptable compromise.

Ms. Kassie Maurer, 8505 Almena Drive, began by noting that she was only able to attend the meeting because she is retired. She expressed concern that holding the meeting at 3:00 p.m. on a weekday limited participation by younger and working residents and raised broader concerns about transparency and accessibility in the public engagement process. She stated that she frequently travels Almena Drive and described its tree-lined roadway as one of the area's most attractive and distinctive features. She recounted that she was startled by the large number of trees marked with orange X's and said that seeing the markings while driving nearly caused her to have an accident. She explained that she had only become aware of the proposed tree removal project the previous week and had rearranged her schedule specifically to attend the meeting and voice her concerns. She described the trees along Almena Drive as a valuable community asset and a defining feature of Oshtemo Township. She echoed concerns raised by other speakers regarding the potential for increased snow drifting and other adverse effects if large numbers of trees were removed. She also suggested that grant funding could be directed toward alternative

safety initiatives, including restoring driver education programs in public schools, improving roadway signage, and lowering speed limits in certain areas. She stated that widespread tree removal was not the appropriate solution and encouraged the board to continue pursuing amendments to the SS4A grant rather than moving forward with the project as currently proposed.

Ms. Rhonda Walters, 12480 S 18th Street, began by asking board members to consider how they would feel if the trees along their own streets were removed and replaced with stumps. She encouraged the commissioners to view the issue from the perspective of the residents directly affected by the proposed tree removals. She argued that mature trees and green spaces contribute significantly to the desirability of a neighborhood and questioned whether prospective homebuyers would prefer homes located in tree-lined areas versus those without substantial vegetation. She suggested that widespread tree removal could negatively affect property values and diminish the overall appeal of the community. She also questioned the safety rationale behind the project, specifically asking how likely it is for residents to be involved in collisions while exiting their driveways and how often such incidents would actually involve striking a tree. Her comments reflected skepticism regarding whether the proposed scale of tree removal was justified by the identified safety concerns. Additionally, she raised questions about the disposition of the removed trees, asking what would happen to the wood once the trees were cut down. She wondered whether the material would be discarded or repurposed into consumer products, expressing concern about waste and the broader environmental impacts of the project. In closing, she emphasized the deep roots many residents have in the affected areas, noting that some families have lived there for multiple generations. She underscored their long-term commitment to the community and their strong attachment to the landscape and character of the area.

Ms. Nicole Romo, 9695 W XY Avenue, stated that she had prepared a more extensive statement but chose to focus on several issues that she felt had not yet been fully addressed by previous speakers. Her first concern involved blowing and drifting snow. Drawing on her experience as a local resident, she described how nearby open agricultural fields routinely create snow drifts two to three feet deep during winter months, sometimes causing vehicles to become stuck in the roadway. She noted that many of the affected roads are not plowed as frequently as major thoroughfares and argued that removing large numbers of roadside trees would likely worsen drifting snow conditions. She further suggested that increased snow accumulation could require more frequent plowing operations, resulting in additional maintenance costs. She also raised concerns regarding wildlife habitat. She referenced observations of pileated woodpeckers within some of the tree corridors proposed for removal and noted that the species is federally protected. She questioned the appropriateness of using federal funding for a project that could negatively impact wildlife habitat and called for environmental assessments to evaluate the potential effects of removing approximately 8,000 trees on local ecosystems and protected species. She cited research and traffic studies indicating that tree-lined roadways can have a traffic-calming effect by encouraging drivers to reduce speed and remain attentive. She argued that removing trees could result in higher vehicle speeds and potentially increase risks for motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and nearby residents. She concluded by asserting that the primary causes of traffic crashes are impaired driving, distracted driving, and excessive speed, rather than the presence of roadside trees.

Mr. Wade Adams, 15124 E MN Avenue, provided historical context regarding roadside tree preservation efforts in Kalamazoo County. He recalled that approximately 40 years ago he was a member of an organization known as Save Our Roadside Environment (SORE), which advocated for the protection of roadside trees and natural corridors. Adams stated that he attended Road Commission meetings regularly during that time and noted that public interest in roadside tree preservation was significant even then. He explained that SORE worked persistently to oppose the practice of clear-cutting roadside rights-of-way as part of road improvement projects. He stated those efforts ultimately led to policy changes by the Road Commission that reduced widespread tree removal, and the issue remained largely dormant for many years until the current SS4A project renewed public concern. He observed that the unusually large turnout at the meeting demonstrated the level of community interest in the issue. He suggested that the attendees likely represented many additional residents who shared similar concerns but were unable to be present, estimating that the broader community interest extended well beyond those in attendance. In closing, he encouraged the board to reconsider and modify its approach in a manner that balances roadway safety objectives with the preservation of mature trees. He emphasized that many of the trees under discussion are

extremely old and valuable community assets, noting that some may be hundreds of years old and cannot be replaced once removed. He urged the board to pursue a solution that addresses residents' concerns while maintaining public support for the project.

Mr. Kevin Kolk, 7153 N Sprinkle Road, spoke about the potential impacts of the proposed tree removal project on his property and the surrounding environment. He explained that his home is situated approximately 10 feet below the elevation of Sprinkle Road, with a sloped embankment between the roadway and his property. He stated that the stability of this slope is currently maintained in large part by several mature oak trees, some of which he estimated to be hundreds of years old. He noted that the trees on his property frontage have already been inventoried by the Road Commission, although they had not yet been marked for removal. He expressed concern because his section of roadway is included in a project phase anticipated to move forward later in the year. He stated that the removal of the mature trees could significantly reduce the long-term stability of the slope. He stated that stormwater runoff from higher ground across the roadway already flows through the area and that the loss of tree root systems could increase erosion, potentially leading to slope failure and flooding risks for his home. He also raised environmental concerns related to nearby natural resources. He noted that Spring Brook, a state-designated cold-water trout stream, is located less than 500 feet from his property. He expressed concern that changes to drainage patterns and erosion control resulting from tree removal could affect the stream and may require environmental review, permitting, or additional studies. He urged the Road Commission to ensure that all necessary environmental evaluations, drainage assessments, and permitting requirements are completed before any trees are marked or removed in his area. He emphasized that his concerns extend beyond aesthetics and involve the protection of his property, home, and nearby environmental resources. Written comments were also received and entered into the record.

Mr. Craig Rolfe, a resident of Brady Charter Township and municipal attorney, criticized the decision to hold the meeting at 3:00 p.m. on a weekday, stating that it limited public participation and conveyed a lack of consideration for the public. He encouraged the Board to reconsider its scheduling practices and suggested that any future meetings regarding the SS4A grant be held in a larger venue due to the significant public interest. He stated that, based on public comments he had heard and reviewed, opposition was primarily focused on the proposed large-scale tree removal component of the grant rather than the grant as a whole. He encouraged the Board to focus on addressing that specific concern. He disputed statements that the grant could not be modified, asserting that grant amendments are possible. He stated that the Board chose to include the tree-removal component in the application and could choose to pursue an amendment to revise that portion of the project. He expressed concern about deteriorated road shoulders throughout the county, noting that shoulder drop-offs and ridges can contribute to vehicles leaving the roadway and drivers overcorrecting. He suggested that improving shoulder maintenance may provide a more effective safety benefit. He stated that numerous diseased and aging trees located near roadways pose immediate safety risks. He urged the Road Commission to prioritize the removal of those hazardous trees rather than pursuing broader tree-clearing efforts.

Mr. Brian Kaye, 6570 N Riverview Drive, began by thanking the commissioners for their service, noting that he had not experienced any road-related incidents, such as becoming stuck or sliding on ice, in approximately ten years. He then shared several concerns regarding conditions near his property on Riverview Drive in the vicinity of the Springbrook bridge. He stated that a guardrail near the Springbrook and Riverview bridge had been damaged for approximately four months and had not yet been repaired. He noted that the guardrail has historically provided an important safety function and suggested that extending it by approximately ten feet on the opposite side of the roadway could eliminate the need to remove two trees that had been marked for removal, as those trees would then fall within the protected area of the guardrail. He also expressed concern that one of the marked trees is providing support for his septic system, which is located in his front yard. He stated that removing the tree could negatively affect the septic system and potentially result in contamination reaching Springbrook, which he described as a nearby trout stream of environmental importance. Additionally, he discussed flooding conditions in the area, stating that heavy rainfall can cause water levels to rise significantly around his property. He expressed concern that a vehicle leaving the roadway could roll into a water-filled ditch, creating a potential drowning hazard. He further emphasized his concerns regarding the potential environmental impacts to Springbrook if tree removal were to

compromise his septic system. He urged the Board to consider repairing and extending the damaged guardrail as a safer and more practical alternative to removing the trees, stating that such an approach would help protect both public safety and the surrounding environment.

Mr. Kurt Wiley, 1335 W. U Avenue, stated that he has approximately one and one-quarter miles of road frontage and referenced a previous road widening project that affected his property. Mr. Wiley noted that during the road widening project, only one tree was removed. He expressed confusion and concern that under the current grant project, which does not involve road widening, 48 trees on his property have been marked for removal. Mr. Wiley questioned the rationale for removing such a large number of trees in the absence of roadway expansion and suggested that the current approach appeared inconsistent with past practices.

Mr. Michael Tsilis, 15648 Portage Road, expressed strong opposition to the project. He stated that the planned removals would significantly alter the character of his neighborhood and argued that there was no justification for removing the number of trees identified. He noted that he has lived in the area for approximately 40 years and could recall only one instance of a vehicle striking a tree in that location. He further stated that he was unaware of any accidents involving a large, mature tree at a nearby corner that has been marked for removal. He also expressed concern about the broader impact of the project throughout the county. He referenced a visit to Elmina Drive, where he observed that trees along the roadway had also been marked for removal. He stated that the mature tree canopy along that roadway contributes significantly to the area's character and questioned the necessity of removing trees that have taken many years to reach their current size. Regarding safety, he stated that he did not believe the proposed removals were justified by safety concerns. He suggested that traffic incidents are more likely attributable to driver behavior than to the presence of roadside trees. He also questioned the public outreach process related to the project, specifically referencing surveys reportedly distributed to Kalamazoo County residents. He stated that neither he nor others present had received a survey and requested verification that the surveys had been distributed as reported. He concluded by expressing concern that the removal of mature roadside trees could lead to unintended consequences, including higher vehicle speeds. He stated that tree-lined roadways create a visual narrowing effect that encourages motorists to drive more cautiously and that removing the trees could diminish that traffic-calming benefit.

A resident at 15237 Portage Road addressed the Board and expressed appreciation for the Road Commission's work. Drawing upon her background in biology, she voiced concerns regarding the environmental and ecological impacts of the proposed removal of approximately 8,000 trees. She stated that the removal of the trees would significantly reduce carbon sequestration, estimating that approximately 384,000 pounds of carbon dioxide would no longer be processed annually. She expressed concern that the cumulative effect would result in a substantial increase in atmospheric carbon over time. She also discussed the role of tree canopy in regulating temperatures, stating that the loss of roadside trees could increase pavement and roadway surface temperatures significantly. According to her comments, shaded roadways remain considerably cooler than those exposed to direct sunlight, and the removal of tree cover could negatively affect both environmental conditions and nearby residents. She further addressed stormwater management concerns, explaining that mature trees intercept and absorb substantial amounts of rainfall. She stated that widespread tree removal could increase runoff, contribute to flash flooding, accelerate ditch erosion, increase sediment entering streams and lakes, and potentially result in road washouts following heavy rain events. In discussing wildlife habitat, she referenced a mature oak tree on a neighboring property and described the variety of species it supports, including insects, birds, bats, squirrels, and other wildlife. She stated that mature trees provide ecological benefits that cannot be immediately replaced by newly planted trees. She also raised concerns regarding air quality and public health. As an individual with asthma and sensitivity to smoke, she noted that trees help filter airborne pollutants and particulate matter. She expressed concern that removing large numbers of trees would reduce natural air filtration, resulting in increased dust, vehicle exhaust exposure, and diminished air quality for residents living near roadways.

Ms. Debbie Vernon, 310 W Vienna St, focused on the statistical effectiveness of rumble strips, noting that placing rumble strips down the center of a rural road can decrease accidents by 38 to 50%, and placing them along the sides as well could add another 26 to 46% reduction. She questioned why tree removal was necessary when

these alternatives could nearly eliminate accidents on their own. She expressed that she was not entirely opposed to tree removal, specifically agreeing that trees located in ditches, on curves, or those that are old and potentially dangerous should be removed. However, she strongly felt that the other trees should be left alone and that alternative safety measures should be tried first before resorting to mass tree removal. She also raised a concern shared by others about whether stumps would be left behind after tree removal, arguing that stumps could actually be a worse accident hazard than the trees themselves. Finally, she expressed disappointment that in the planning process for this grant, there appeared to be no involvement of an environmental consultant who could have assessed the roadside trees and provided guidance on which ones truly needed to be removed, suggesting that such oversight was a significant gap in the process.

Ms. Katie Maier, 294 Beymoure Street and an associate member of the Environmental Concerns Committee for Kalamazoo, addressed the Board regarding the proposed tree removal project. She stated that she has studied environmental biology and began her remarks by referencing the Road Commission's mission statement, specifically the commitment to "manage the roadside environment with a view toward preservation." She emphasized that preservation is a stated objective of the organization and encouraged the Board to give that commitment careful consideration. She shared that she grew up near Almena Drive and was unaware of the proposed tree removals until a neighbor pointed out trees marked with X's. She expressed concern about what she viewed as a lack of public notification and transparency regarding the project. She also commented on the meeting's 3:00 p.m. start time, stating that she had to arrange several hours of childcare in order to attend and felt the timing limited participation by working residents. Addressing safety concerns, she recalled a serious accident from her childhood on Almena Drive involving an impaired driver who struck a tree rather than continuing into a nearby residence. She suggested that, in some circumstances, roadside trees may provide a protective barrier for adjacent properties and residents. She also discussed information contained within the RCKC Action Plan. She stated that, based on her review of the document, 11 roadway segments had been identified as high-risk locations for clear zone improvements. She noted that only a small number of the fatal crashes referenced involved collisions with trees and further stated that some of those incidents involved impaired drivers and adverse weather conditions. Based on her interpretation of the data, She questioned whether the information provided sufficient justification for the removal of approximately 8,000 trees and urged the Board to carefully evaluate the scope of the proposed project.

Ms. Anne Bannister, Ann Arbor, participated remotely and noted her background as a former Ann Arbor City Council member and member of the Environmental Commission. She began by applauding and agreeing with all the residents from the Kalamazoo area who came out to speak. She observed that over nearly two hours of public comment, every speaker agreed on the need to do better. She summarized the key points raised by the community, including the following: targeted maintenance on dead trees and dead limbs was supported as a reasonable approach, along with having a qualified arborist conduct a detailed assessment. She noted that adding rumble strips would be a more fiscally responsible use of the grant money. She highlighted the environmental and community benefits of keeping the trees, noting that removing them would decrease property values and quality of life. She emphasized that the trees provide natural barriers against ice, naturally clean the air, serve as stormwater infrastructure, sequester carbon, and provide habitat for hundreds of wildlife species, pollinators, and federally protected birds, calling them the lungs of the earth. She referenced Sheila from Dexter's point that the Washtenaw County Road Commission, when faced with the same situation, chose to return a portion of their grant. She stressed that these ancient trees, once removed, can never be recovered within anyone's lifetime. She concluded by appreciating the specific facts and figures shared by speakers, including the approximately one million pounds of carbon sequestered annually by the trees, the dramatic increase in heat on roads without tree canopy, the decline in wildlife, and the increase in dust and air pollution that would result from removing the trees. She closed by praising the trees for working for free and multitasking for the benefit of the community.

Ms. Kalyn Hoffman, 9078 S. 8th Street, participated remotely and stated she had been listening to the entire meeting and seconded everything that the previous speakers had said. She emphasized the value of mature trees for both aesthetic and environmental reasons, noting their role in producing oxygen and contributing to overall community health. She stated that she lives in a rural area and explained that the trees along her property serve as a natural air filter. While expressing support for local agriculture, she noted that farming activities can affect air quality

and that the roadside trees help reduce dust and other airborne particles reaching her property. She also raised a safety concern related to her residence, explaining that her property is very flat and that the trees between the roadway and her yard serve as a physical barrier. She expressed concern that if a vehicle were to leave the roadway, the trees could provide protection for individuals on her property, including her children, when they are playing in the yard. She concluded by emphasizing the environmental and safety benefits provided by the existing trees and voiced support for concerns previously raised by other residents regarding their removal.

Ms. Kathy Justen, 2880 W. C Avenue, participated remotely and stated that she shared many of the concerns previously expressed by other speakers. She referenced a past road project on 14th Street near her residence and explained that, after observing numerous trees marked for removal, she contacted the Road Commission to inquire about the planned work. She stated that she was informed that roadway improvements, including ditching work, would be performed. However, she felt that the work ultimately completed was limited, consisting primarily of a small amount of work related to a neighboring drainpipe, while a significant number of large, mature trees were removed. She also expressed concern about conditions following the tree removals. She noted that logs and sections of the felled trees were left along the roadside and argued that these materials could create a safety hazard. She stated that large tree trunks lying near the roadway may present a greater danger to motorists who leave the roadway than the standing trees did previously. She questioned whether the resulting conditions improved roadway safety and urged the Board to consider the potential hazards created by leaving cut timber adjacent to the road.

Ms. Mary Huyck, 738 N. 33rd Street, participated remotely and began by seconding and reiterating the comments made by previous speakers, noting that much of what she had prepared had already been addressed. She mentioned that she had read the minutes from the previous meeting and found that some questions raised by participants were answered there, though it also brought up additional questions. Regarding the tree removal and road safety statistics, she questioned what percentage of accidents involving cars leaving the road were also connected to impaired or distracted driving, rather than trees being the primary cause. She then brought up the topic of marijuana use and impaired driving, referencing statistics from a survey of marijuana users who were asked whether they felt their driving was impaired when high. She noted that the majority of those surveyed believed their driving was actually better when high, which she found concerning. She pointed out that impaired driving is not limited to alcohol and that the legalization of marijuana has contributed to more people driving under its influence, something she said she personally notices frequently. She also spoke about trees as a natural form of traffic calming, referencing a trip to England where she observed hedges very close to roadsides that naturally encouraged drivers to slow down. She also mentioned physical barriers placed in the middle of roads in small villages as a deliberate traffic calming measure. She raised the question of whether some of the grant money could be used to protect the Road Commission from potential lawsuits filed by people who hit trees within the right of way. She briefly mentioned that her mail carrier expressed fear about delivering mail due to cars speeding past without slowing down, though she acknowledged this point was not directly related to the tree issue.

Ms. Denise Miller, 241 N. Sunset Street, participated remotely and mentioned that, rather than speaking directly about the tree removal issue, she chose to share a relevant experience from her own community as a constructive suggestion for the board. She explained that in her area, residents had been attending township board and planning commission meetings regarding a different issue, specifically a battery energy storage system. She noted that when they first began attending those meetings, the relationship between residents and the township board was very contentious. However, she shared that over time, as residents continued to engage and the board listened to their concerns, the relationship improved significantly. As a positive outcome of this ongoing dialogue, she mentioned that at their most recent township board meeting, it was suggested that a subcommittee be formed. This subcommittee would be comprised of two members from the township board, two members from the planning board, and three residents, allowing all parties to study the issue thoroughly and give it proper consideration. She concluded by acknowledging that there were many people in the room with strong backgrounds and expertise, and she offered this subcommittee model as a potential idea for the Road Commission to consider in working through the tree removal issue with the community. She also briefly noted her personal commitment to the health of trees and the well-being of people in the area.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to accept Wesley Farms – G Avenue Condominiums in Section 5 of Comstock Township into the public road system for certification and approve the drainage agreement for the Managing Director's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared on August 15, 2023, the Board approved the preliminary plans for the G Avenue Condominiums, which connected Meadowood Estates to G Avenue and added 33 condominium units to the neighborhood. The developer began construction on portions of the project, including storm and sanitary sewer work, before the plans were approved and without appropriate RCKC inspection. As construction neared completion, the storm sewer was televised to inspect the work. Portions of the storm sewer were not constructed to RCKC specifications and, in some cases, were damaged and required replacement. The developer was required to remove and replace all deficient storm sewer infrastructure. This work was reconstructed in accordance with RCKC standards and included appropriate inspection and materials testing. Because the corrective work occurred after final paving, the RCKC team worked with the developer to evaluate alternatives that would not require repaving the entire roadway. Of the alternatives considered, the developer elected to repave the portions of roadway affected by the storm sewer replacement and deposit \$16,049.00 to cover the cost of a future chip seal application in 2029.

The development is now complete, and all final acceptance documentation has been submitted, including as-built drawings, benchmarks, and right-of-way/centerline survey documents. All punch list items have been completed. The RCKC Team has inspected the construction and found it to be in compliance with the RCKC procedures, guidelines, and specifications for developing new public roads policy.

For the construction of the new roadways, a drainage agreement is essential. This agreement outlines the developer's responsibility to build and maintain a storm basin and storm sewer system outside the road right of way (ROW). It also grants RCKC the right to channel public road drainage to the new storm basin within the development. Furthermore, the agreement permits the RCKC to take over maintenance of the stormwater discharge areas if the developer neglects this duty, with the costs billed to the developer. Once approved, this drainage agreement will be included in RCKC's electronic records.

RCKC collected the 3% inspection fee of \$10,692. The remaining balance of \$1,936.36 for RCKC inspection and testing costs has been paid by the developer. The developer has also paid \$16,049 for the future chip seal application. Future expenses may include routine maintenance and preservation of the roadway as well as winter maintenance beginning in 2026.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether the full width of the roadway would be replaced or only portions of it. Assistant County Engineer Minkus explained that the repairs varied by location. Some areas involved only the shoulder, while others extended approximately halfway across the roadway, depending on the condition of the pavement. He noted that this variation created concerns about joints meandering along the roadway. Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether the new joints would align with the existing pavement joints. Assistant County Engineer Minkus explained that, to address the meandering joints, they agreed to pave back approximately half the roadway in those areas. As a result, there will be a single longitudinal joint near the center of the roadway rather than the previous zigzag pattern.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the patching could result in differential settling due to differences in compaction or the underlying materials beneath the roadway. Assistant County Engineer Minkus acknowledged that differential settling is always a possibility when excavating and rebuilding a roadway. He explained that the contractor compacted the material during backfilling, and testing confirmed that the required compaction standards were met. He added that every effort was made to minimize the potential for future settling.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether there would be any type of warranty on the work. Assistant County Engineer Minkus explained that, in this instance, the Road Commission is accepting the roadway as constructed. He noted that staff discussed how a warranty could be applied and, ultimately, staff and the developer agreed that applying a chip seal would serve as a form of insurance by allowing any joints or other issues that develop over the next few years to become apparent and be addressed.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to rescind the Previous and approve the revised Brady, Climax, and Wakeshma Townships Local Road Contracts for the Chair's signatures. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the revisions were made after the Road Commission identified an opportunity to apply remaining

2025 grant funding toward projects scheduled for 2026. He stated that staff worked with Brady, Climax, and Wakeshma Townships to convert planned chip seal projects to rubber-modified chip seal projects utilizing grant assistance through EGLE. He emphasized that the change would not increase project costs for either the townships or the Road Commission, as the grant funding would offset the additional cost associated with the rubber-modified chip seal application. He noted that the treatment is particularly well-suited for preserving roadway networks in more rural townships.

Commissioner Kennedy asked what benefits the proposed change would provide and whether the rubber-modified chip seal treatment was still being tested. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that the rubber-modified chip seal program remains in a trial phase, with some installations now approaching four years in service. He explained that the treatment can be applied to roadways in relatively poor condition that might otherwise be candidates for paving, but where paving is not financially feasible. He stated that the rubber-modified chip seal serves as an alternative preservation treatment that extends the life of existing asphalt surfaces. He added that the availability of grant funding is tied to the ongoing evaluation of the treatment, and that staff continue to monitor the performance of roads where it has been applied.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo has long recognized the importance of roadside trees in enhancing the county's aesthetic character, environmental health, and adjacent property values. As part of the Board's continued commitment to balancing infrastructure improvements with environmental stewardship, staff has developed a draft Tree Replacement policy establishing a structured approach to tree replacement associated with road improvement projects. The proposed policy provides for a cost-sharing framework under which the Board may contribute up to fifty percent (50%) of the cost of replacement trees, with the remaining cost borne by participating property owners. This approach supports responsible replanting efforts while maintaining safe and functional roadside clear zones. The draft policy emphasizes the use of native species, adherence to professional planting standards, and implementation of an annual cost-share program. Additionally, the policy includes an enhanced replacement option for projects related to road widening, reconstruction, or other improvements funded through specialized federally funded grant programs. Under this provision, up to two (2) replacement trees may be planted for each one (1) tree removed, following the same Board contribution of up to 50% of the cost of replacement trees. All replacement trees must be planted in the vicinity of the tree(s) removed, outside of the road right-of-way (ROW), with sufficient spacing to promote healthy growth and avoid overcrowding with existing vegetation. The draft policy establishes a general spacing guideline of approximately fifty (50) feet between trees. If approved, staff will proceed with developing the annual species list, detailed cost-sharing guidelines, and corresponding budget allocations necessary for implementation of the program. Staff has also reviewed Act 51 and confirmed that the Tree Replacement policy would be limited to trees removed as part of preservation or structural improvement projects. Trees removed in response to routine maintenance and service requests—such as those that have fallen into the roadway—would not be eligible for participation in this program for cost share utilizing Michigan Transportation Funds (MTF).

Mr. Brad Sadowski, 1963 E Y Avenue, began by pointing out what he believed was the origin of the policy idea, noting that he was present at the May 20th Township Supervisors meeting where a gentleman in attendance suggested the tree replacement policy as a public relations move to, in Brad's words, "soften the blow" of the SS4A project and reduce pushback from residents. He then stated firmly that the proposed tree replacement policy was unacceptable to residents. He referenced the extensive public comments heard earlier in the meeting, noting that dozens of speakers had made clear that small saplings would not come close to replacing trees that are 50, 60, or even 100-plus years old. He emphasized that these mature trees carry significant value in terms of property values for owners, safety benefits, and environmental impact, none of which could be replicated by planting young replacement trees. He further commented that he first learned of the policy through a news report, leading him to believe it was being used as a public relations measure by the Road Commission. He concluded by expressing disbelief that residents might be required to pay 50 percent of the cost of replacement saplings, stating that such a requirement would make the policy even less acceptable to the community.

Ms. Marilyn Branch, 9085 North Riverview Drive, shared that she had spent the past 40 years caring for the trees along the roadway in front of her property, nurturing them from small trees to mature specimens. She explained that she personally spent several years removing gypsy moths by hand in an effort to save the trees and prevent the infestation from spreading. Ms. Branch noted that after the first year, the county did not assist with addressing the infestation, but she continued her efforts for an additional three years. She also stated that she had hired professional tree pruners at her own expense to help maintain the trees. She expressed support for having an arborist evaluate the trees and determine appropriate pruning needs. She questioned whether responsibility for managing overhanging limbs rested with her as the property owner, particularly given that the county was proposing to remove the trees but had not been maintaining or pruning them. She voiced opposition to the proposed tree replacement policy, stating that newly planted saplings would not provide the shade, aesthetic value, or benefits of the mature trees she had spent decades caring for. She further questioned why residents would be expected to pay 50 percent of the replacement cost for trees that, in her view, would not adequately replace those being removed.

Ms. Tiffany Sadowski, 1963 E Y Avenue, raised a practical concern that had not been previously considered: the survival rate of newly planted trees. She explained that, based on her own experience planting new trees on her property, young trees need to be completely screened or protected because rabbits and deer tend to destroy them. Given the small size of the replacement trees being proposed (approximately 2-inch caliper trees, roughly 4 to 7 feet tall), she expressed doubt that these trees would even survive their first year without proper protection. While she acknowledged that the tree replacement policy was a good thought and showed good intentions, she ultimately concluded that the existing mature trees are doing a far better job than any newly planted saplings could.

Ms. Julie Richardson, 44667 27th Street, expressed strong opposition to the tree replacement idea. She found it deeply troubling that the board was even considering a tree replacement policy after hearing so many residents speak out against tree removal. She stated that the trees cannot and will not truly be replaced. She concluded with a firm and direct message to the board, stating that the trees are not going to be replaced, and that either the board members themselves would be replaced, or the project would be stopped, presenting those as the only two options.

Oshtemo Township Supervisor Cheri Bell began by thanking the Road Commission for developing a formal tree replacement policy, acknowledging that having a consistent framework is valuable for local partners. She encouraged the Road Commission to consider how the policy aligns with township master plans, noting that Oshtemo and many other municipalities have long-range plans that prioritize preserving and expanding tree canopy along transportation corridors. She highlighted that trees help manage stormwater, reduce runoff, and contribute to safer streets. She also urged the Road Commission to reconsider the prohibition on planting replacement trees within the public right-of-way. While she acknowledged maintenance, utility, and liability concerns, she pointed out that there are corridors where trees could be safely accommodated through thoughtful design. Furthermore, she raised several practical concerns about requiring trees to be planted on private property, including whether public funds can be spent on private property, whether temporary easements would be required, who would be responsible for acquiring and funding those easements, and what would happen if a property owner declines. She asked for clarification on whether townships would be expected to contribute 50% of replacement costs when trees are removed solely to construct non-motorized paths or other public improvements. She also asked whether neighborhood road funds could be used to support those costs where legally permissible. She suggested revisiting the minimum 2-inch caliper tree standard, recommending that larger caliper trees be evaluated for better long-term survivability and community benefit. She also noted that the proposed 50-foot space between trees appears wider than standards used by other communities and may reduce the long-term canopy the program intends to restore. She concluded by thanking the Commission and expressing hope that her comments would help refine the program into one that is practical to implement and beneficial for all communities throughout the county.

Ms. Georgia Evans, 830 East U Avenue, expressed that the proposed policy would not be practical for her situation. She explained that all 10 of her trees are scheduled for removal and that she has no room to plant new replacement trees in the front of her property because the trees are located in the right-of-way. She further noted that there is a consumer's power line near her property that creates a 15-foot no-tree zone, which means she would

have no ability to plant replacement trees even if she wanted to. She acknowledged the Road Commission's attempt to address the issue through the replacement policy but made clear that the policy would not work for her or for several other residents in similar situations. She concluded by stating that residents simply want to keep their existing trees rather than have them replaced with saplings.

Managing Director Bartholomew emphasized that the draft Tree Replacement Policy states replacement trees shall be planted within the maintained roadside area, in the general vicinity of the trees removed. He explained that the intent is to replant trees along the road frontage while ensuring they are located outside the road right-of-way so they do not become a future maintenance responsibility of the Road Commission. He further clarified that the draft policy is not intended solely for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, but would apply to all Road Commission road improvement projects. He noted that the Road Commission removes trees annually as part of various projects, often exceeding 1,000 trees per year. However, because those removals occur on a smaller scale over time, they typically receive little public attention. In contrast, the SS4A program encompasses approximately 130 miles of roadway at one time, resulting in greater public awareness and concern.

Commissioner Davis asked for clarification that the Tree Replacement Program is entirely voluntary. He asked whether property owners would have the option to request a replacement tree and confirmed that no one would be required to participate or incur any costs if they chose not to. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that participation in the program would be voluntary.

Commissioner Stehouwer raised a procedural question, noting that Board policies are typically reviewed through multiple readings and revisions before adoption. He stated that there was no need to take action on the policy that day and that additional deliberation could occur without unnecessary delay. He expressed his preference to table the discussion for consideration at a future meeting.

Commissioner Pawloski agreed that, as a discussion item, the draft Tree Replacement Policy could be brought back for further review and additional public input. He added that the policy had been developed in response to feedback received from township officials and county residents.

Commissioner Stehouwer stated that he had thoroughly reviewed Mr. Sadowski's email and the supporting references he provided. He thanked Mr. Sadowski for his input and the resources he shared. Commissioner Stehouwer also noted that he had spoken with Mr. Howard Hill regarding the matter. He acknowledged the Road Commission's limited financial resources, explaining that funding must be balanced among many priorities, including gravel shoulders, pothole repairs, and other maintenance needs. He stated that the Board would continue working toward the best path forward while remaining respectful of citizen input.

Commissioner Kennedy asked whether the draft Tree Replacement Policy could help address some of the concerns expressed by community members during the meeting. She acknowledged that the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant project had been in development for approximately three years and expressed her desire for the Road Commission and the community to work together to find solutions that address residents' concerns.

Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the Road Commission previously had a Tree Replacement Policy, but it was discontinued approximately 10 years ago due to limited participation and the associated costs of maintaining a program that was rarely used. He stated that, given the current circumstances, there may now be renewed interest in offering such a program. He explained that the purpose of the proposed policy is to replace trees removed from the road right-of-way with new trees planted outside the road right-of-way. This approach would allow the Road Commission to maintain roadside tree canopy while avoiding future maintenance responsibilities associated with trees located within the right-of-way. He acknowledged that the program is intended as a long-term investment, noting that a mature tree, such as a 60-inch-diameter maple, cannot realistically be replaced with another tree of similar size. Instead, the policy proposes planting two-inch caliper trees, measured six inches above the ground, which are typically four to seven feet tall, depending on the species. He further explained that, for federally funded projects such as the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, staff had discussed a potential two-for-one replacement option in which participating property owners could work with the Road Commission to plant two replacement trees for each tree removed. Under the proposed policy, the cost of purchasing, delivering, and planting a replacement tree—currently estimated at approximately \$500 to \$800 per tree—would be shared equally between the Road Commission and the participating property owner.

He concluded by providing a broader financial illustration of the potential costs associated with implementing the proposed Tree Replacement Policy. Using an estimated Road Commission contribution of approximately \$400 per replacement tree and applying it to the roughly 8,000 trees included in the Safe Streets and

Roads for All (SS4A) project, he estimated the Road Commission's potential share of the replacement cost at approximately \$3.2 million. He noted that participating property owners would collectively contribute a similar amount under the proposed 50/50 cost-sharing arrangement. He acknowledged that not every property owner would be expected to participate in the program, meaning the actual costs would likely be significantly lower. However, he emphasized that, if the policy were adopted, the Road Commission would need to be financially prepared for the maximum potential cost should participation be higher than anticipated.

Commissioner Davis observed that several citizens who addressed the Board had used the word "legacy," which he described as a meaningful theme. He noted that the concept of legacy aligns with the Road Commission's goal of managing the roadside environment with a view toward preservation, suggesting that the two ideas are closely connected. He stated that the proposed Tree Replacement Policy provides an opportunity to create a lasting legacy by encouraging the planting of replacement trees on private property over time. While acknowledging the Road Commission's commitment to keeping trees out of the road right-of-way to improve safety and reduce future maintenance concerns, he emphasized the importance of taking a long-term approach to preserving the environmental and community benefits that trees provide. He remarked that, as a geologist, he is accustomed to thinking in long timeframes and views even a 15-year plan as relatively short-term. He stated that the Road Commission's work is intended to anticipate the needs of future generations and that long-term planning is an essential part of its mission. He concluded by referencing a comment made by a member of the public that small steps can have a cumulative impact. He expressed his belief that, if maintained over time, the Tree Replacement Policy could become a meaningful part of the Road Commission's long-term efforts to enhance the community and preserve its roadside environment.

Commissioner Stehouwer stated that he believes partnerships could play an important role in the success of the Tree Replacement Program. Drawing on his nearly 30 years of experience in municipal civil engineering, particularly in the Greater Holland area, he noted that standard specifications for infrastructure projects commonly included replacing trees that were removed or disturbed, typically using the two-inch caliper standard. He also agreed with Commissioner Davis that small steps taken in the right direction can create a lasting legacy and, over time, provide meaningful benefits to the broader community.

Commissioner Pawloski noted that the Road Commission was scheduled to meet with the Kalamazoo County Conservation District the following day to discuss its annual tree-planting fundraising efforts and explore potential partnership opportunities to plant additional trees beyond those included in the draft Tree Replacement Policy. He also mentioned the possibility of pursuing outside grant funding, such as through the Arbor Day Foundation, to support tree planting outside the roadway right-of-way. As an example of potential supplemental efforts, he referenced a recent tree-planting ceremony held at Frays Park in Kalamazoo Township. He then asked whether any type of guarantee or warranty would be provided for replacement trees if the Board chose to move forward with the proposed policy. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that, under the draft policy as currently written, once a tree is planted, responsibility for its care and watering would rest with the property owner. Commissioner Pawloski asked whether the Board could modify that provision of the policy, and Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that it could.

Commissioner Kennedy emphasized the importance of ensuring the community has a meaningful role in future discussions and decision-making. She stated that she wanted community members to have a seat at the table and to be included in the process. While noting that she was not involved when the original decision regarding the approximately 8,000 trees was made, she clarified that she was not suggesting the community had been neglected. Rather, she stressed that, moving forward, it is important that community perspectives are considered alongside those of the Road Commission and its partners. She concluded by stating that meaningful community involvement is extremely important to her.

Commissioner Davis acknowledged the concerns expressed by members of the public regarding communication and transparency. He stated that effective community outreach has become increasingly challenging, noting that, unlike in the past, there is no longer a single, widely relied-upon source of local information. He cited the decline of the Kalamazoo Gazette as an example, explaining that it once served as a central source of community news and public awareness, whereas today's media environment is much more fragmented. He commented that this broader shift has contributed to people feeling less connected to their local governments and community affairs, describing it as a societal challenge rather than one unique to the Road Commission. He also noted that the Road Commission does not have the resources to purchase television or other paid media coverage

and generally relies on the communication tools available to it. He expressed his belief that staff had made diligent efforts to inform the public using the available resources.

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to postpone the Tree Replacement Policy until June 30th for further discussion.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Ms. Marilyn Branch, 9985 Riverview Drive, expressed concerns about speeding traffic and the lack of law enforcement presence on her road. She recalled that sheriff's deputies regularly patrolled the area in the past but stated that public safety officials had informed her there are no longer sufficient resources for routine traffic enforcement. She noted that many residents, including senior citizens, must cross the road to retrieve their mail, creating safety concerns due to speeding vehicles. She stated that, over the past 40 years, there had been seven incidents involving her property, only one of which involved a tree. She expressed concern about tree stumps being left after removals, describing safety hazards and instances where stumps had regrown into mature trees. She requested that stumps be ground below grade and asked that care be taken to avoid damage to landscaping, shrubs, and bushes during tree removal operations. She also pointed to discarded beer cans and liquor bottles along the roadway as evidence that impaired driving, rather than roadside trees, is a significant safety concern. She suggested a phased approach to tree removal, recommending that the most hazardous trees be removed first while healthy trees remain until replacement trees have had time to mature. She stated that this gradual approach would preserve roadside shade, reduce the impact on the community, and provide a more thoughtful long-term strategy.

Mr. Rob Morrison, 5188 Green Meadow Road, urged the Road Commission to amend the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant by removing the proposed large-scale tree removal component. He stated that he believes the grant funds would be better invested in traffic calming measures, which he said have been proven to improve roadway safety. He expressed concern that extensive tree removal could create additional safety issues by increasing soil erosion and winter wind and drifting conditions. He also stated that removing trees would not address the primary causes of crashes, including impaired, distracted, and careless driving. He noted that Oshtemo Township's nearly completed master plan does not identify widespread tree removal as a roadway safety strategy, and he stated that this reflects many of the concerns expressed by community members during the meeting. He concluded by recommending that the Road Commission establish an advisory committee composed of citizens and township representatives. He suggested that such a committee could provide public input on tree-related issues, advise the Road Commission on future decisions, and strengthen community involvement while recognizing that final decision-making authority would remain with the Road Commission.

Ms. Katie Meier, 294 Beymoure Street, commented on the Road Commission's public outreach efforts, noting that the online interactive map used to gather public input received 324 responses, which she stated represented a very small percentage of Kalamazoo County's population. She contrasted this with the City of Kalamazoo's outreach for its Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant, which she said generated more than 1,000 responses through various public forums. She stated that this demonstrated residents are willing to participate when they are adequately informed. She referenced Oshtemo Township's draft master plan, stating that it identifies a higher fatal crash rate than neighboring townships, the Cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, and the statewide average. She said the plan concludes that widening roads, enlarging intersections, and removing trees are not the preferred methods for improving roadway safety. She also cited the township's Master Streets document, which states that roadside trees can serve as an effective traffic-calming measure by creating an optical narrowing effect that encourages lower and more consistent vehicle speeds. In addition, she referenced a study of urban roadways in Texas that she said found reductions in crash rates, tree collisions, and pedestrian fatalities following the installation of roadside landscaping. She concluded by urging the Road Commission to amend the SS4A grant to focus on removing only dead or hazardous trees rather than proceeding with the proposed large-scale tree removal.

A speaker who did not provide a name or address recommended that the Road Commission focus on installing rumble strips rather than removing roadside trees. He cited Road Commission data indicating that centerline rumble strips reduce serious lane-departure crashes and injuries by approximately 72 percent. He suggested installing the rumble strips first, monitoring the resulting crash data, and using that information to

evaluate their effectiveness before pursuing large-scale tree removal. He stated that, in his view, rumble strips alone could address the safety concerns without the need for widespread tree removal.

Ms. Jenny Doezeema, 6612 Hart Drive, thanked the Board for its willingness to remain and listen to all of the public comments. She expressed support for replacing broad-scale tree removal with a more selective approach focused on removing dead, dying, hazardous, and invasive trees, as well as trees that obstruct intersections, while preserving healthy, mature trees. She acknowledged the need for a consistent countywide approach and expressed support for establishing an advisory committee to help develop an alternative tree management strategy. She noted that her road is not included in the proposed tree removal areas, although nearby roads are. She stated that she had driven throughout the county and observed a substantial number of trees marked for removal. She cited statistics regarding the effects of air pollution on public health, emphasizing the role of trees in improving air quality, sequestering carbon, and helping mitigate climate change. She also stated that, in her view, there is insufficient evidence to support the conclusion that widespread tree removal improves traffic safety and referenced earlier testimony suggesting that roadside trees can contribute to lower vehicle speeds through traffic-calming effects. Before concluding, she briefly referenced the additional environmental benefits of trees, including stormwater management and wildlife habitat preservation.

Mr. Mike DeLeeuw, 830 East U Avenue, stated that he discovered trees in front of his property marked for removal approximately two weeks earlier when he went to retrieve his mail. He said the markings were upsetting and noted that the large turnout at the meeting demonstrated how deeply the issue affects many residents. He referenced tree removal work completed along Portage Road the previous year, stating that the extensive clearing significantly changed the character of the roadway and was disappointing to see. He expressed concern that similar work is now proposed for his road. He concluded by inviting the commissioners to visit the area in person to view the roadway and its tree canopy, stating that seeing the location firsthand would provide a better understanding of what residents believe would be lost through the proposed tree removal.

Ms. Julie Richardson, 44667 27th Street, acknowledged the many concerns expressed by community members throughout the meeting but stated that she was concerned the decision regarding the proposed tree removal may have already been made. She also noted that many residents appeared not to have received the Road Commission's public survey and expressed disappointment about the level of public awareness. She encouraged the Board to consider Dr. Carol Friesen's earlier offer to assist with amending the grant through her professional grant-writing experience. She urged the Board to listen to and work collaboratively with the community in determining the best path forward. While acknowledging the Road Commission's authority to remove trees within the public right-of-way, she stated that she believes those trees provide important benefits to the community. She concluded by emphasizing the environmental value of healthy trees and urged the Board to work together with residents to preserve them whenever possible.

Managing Director Bartholomew informed the Board that a meeting with township supervisors was scheduled for the following day at 9:30 a.m. at the Road Commission. He also noted that the Road Commission had been scheduled to attend the Kalamazoo County Board meeting that evening. Public Relations Director Worden advised that the County was experiencing technical difficulties and had proposed rescheduling the meeting to July 7. Commissioner Pawloski announced that the meeting was tentatively rescheduled for July 7.

Commissioner Kennedy reported that the Women's Veterans Conference was held the previous week and was well attended. She expressed her appreciation to the 17 vendors who participated in the event and recognized the women veterans who attended. She also thanked the residents who attended the meeting to share their concerns regarding the proposed tree removals associated with the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant project. She acknowledged their participation and stated that she heard and appreciated their concerns. She noted that the Board continues to evaluate the matter and that she is personally continuing to learn more about the issues before reaching a decision. She concluded by assuring those in attendance that the Board hears them and values their input.

Commissioner Davis reported that he was unable to attend the Environmental Health Advisory Committee (EHAC) meeting due to other pressing obligations. He offered his apologies to Cooper Township Supervisor Jeff Sorensen and the other committee members for his absence. Commissioner Davis also expressed his appreciation to the many citizens who attended the Board meeting and thanked them for their participation. He encouraged them to return and remain engaged by attending future regularly scheduled Board meetings.

Commissioner Thompson reported that the Board of Public Works (BPW) meeting had been canceled and that its next meeting would be held at a later date. He also thanked the citizens who attended the meeting and shared their comments. He stated that the public input provided the Board with many important issues to consider as it continues its deliberations.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked the citizens who attended the meeting and shared their comments. He noted that the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) project has been under development for approximately three years and acknowledged that, although efforts were made to publicize the project, the outreach may not have reached as many people as intended. He echoed earlier comments regarding the challenges of effectively communicating with the public in today's fragmented media environment. He noted that the Road Commission has partnered with several organizations on the SS4A initiative, including the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club (KBC). He also discussed roadway safety for cyclists, stating that he has personally witnessed bicyclists sustain serious injuries after crashes involving rumble strips, including broken hips and broken limbs. He acknowledged comments made by Oshtemo Township Supervisor Cheri Bell and noted that township master street plans have been shared with Road Commission staff. Commissioner Stehouwer also emphasized the Road Commission's commitment to transparency, pointing out that Board meetings are recorded and available to the public at any time. He stated that the Road Commission conducts its business openly as a public agency. He concluded by reaffirming that the Board takes public comments seriously and is committed to improving roadway safety. He also reported that he would be unable to attend the July County Parks meeting and that Commissioner Kennedy would attend on his behalf.

Commissioner Pawloski began by recognizing the accessibility of Road Commission Board meetings through Zoom and telephone participation. He credited staff for making remote participation available and stated that he was proud of the organization for providing that opportunity to the public.

Regarding the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, Commissioner Pawloski asked whether tree stumps are ground down following tree removal. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that stumps are flush-cut in non-maintained areas and ground below grade in developed yards. He further clarified that stumps frequently referenced during public comment are left outside the road right-of-way for the property owner. While they remain visible and could potentially be struck, they are outside the Road Commission's jurisdiction and are therefore not the Road Commission's responsibility or liability. He thanked the residents for attending, noting the exceptional turnout. He highlighted the Road Commission's installation of approximately 130 miles of centerline rumble strips and 74 miles of shoulder rumble strips. He explained that shoulder rumble strips were intentionally omitted on approximately 56 miles of roadway following collaboration with local bicycling organizations, as those roadways are designated bicycle routes within the county's bicycle master plan.

Commissioner Pawloski also discussed the "Three E's" of traffic safety—Education, Engineering, and Enforcement. He noted that the Road Commission's primary role is engineering and that it also supports education efforts, while traffic enforcement is the responsibility of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies. In response to comments made during public comment regarding driver education, Commissioner Pawloski stated that he would like to see Michigan return to a model in which driver education is provided through the public school system at no cost to students. He expressed concern that the current system, which relies on multiple private driver training providers, may result in inconsistent instruction. He concluded by noting that Kalamazoo County continues to experience population growth while many Michigan counties are losing population. He emphasized that the Road Commission bases its decisions on data, science, mathematics, and sound engineering principles.

Addressing questions raised during public comment regarding the disposition of trees removed through the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, Commissioner Pawloski asked Managing Director Bartholomew to explain the process. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that trees removed as part of SS4A projects are generally located within the public road right-of-way, although the adjacent property owner typically owns the

underlying property to the roadway centerline, including the tree. He stated that the Road Commission provides affected property owners with a tree removal notification identifying each tree by number and species, along with options to retain all or a portion of the wood, keep the wood chips, or have the tree and all debris removed. He further explained that, if a property owner chooses not to keep the wood, the contractor typically removes the material and may process it for firewood or other resale purposes. When Road Commission crews perform the removal and the property owner does not wish to keep the material, it may be disposed of by burning at a Road Commission gravel pit.

Commissioner Pawloski concluded by noting that the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program being implemented by the City of Kalamazoo is separate from and unrelated to the Road Commission's SS4A program.

Commissioner Thompson stated that the Board received many valuable comments from residents during the meeting. He noted that one of the concerns he heard repeatedly was that many people "didn't hear about this" or "didn't hear about that." He invited those still in attendance to share ideas on how the Road Commission could improve its communication and outreach efforts. Commissioner Thompson encouraged residents to help identify better ways to inform the public, stating, "Help us help you."

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, June 30, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Andy Davis, Toni Kennedy
Absent: Randy Thompson

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the June 16, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$	252,857.66
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Vendor Account:	\$	1,022,843.67
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Mr. Rodney French, 8505 Almena Drive, briefly addressed the board during the public comment period for non-agenda items. He stated he needed to be quick as he had to leave. His comment expressed frustration and confusion regarding the board's position on a matter related to trees, specifically referencing X's and numbers he had been seeing marked on trees, which he described as "outrageous" from his perspective. He also expressed a desire to receive communication through technology to better understand where the board stands on the issue. He questioned why the public kept having to come back to address the same concern, suggesting a lack of clarity or resolution on the matter. Commissioner Pawloski acknowledged his comment but redirected him, explaining that his concern was actually an agenda item scheduled for later in the meeting, and that the public comment period at that moment was designated for non-agenda items only. Mr. French was therefore asked to stop his comment, with the assurance that the topic he raised would be discussed later in the meeting.

Operations Director Bartholomew provided a brief update from the previous meeting's discussion, highlighting the following key points of the proposed Draft Tree Replacement Policy. He shared the policy would operate on a 50% cost share basis, meaning the Road Commission would contribute 50% of the cost, while the

property owner would be responsible for the remaining 50% for tree replacement. He explained that the general rule would be a one-to-one replacement, meaning for every one tree removed, one tree would be replaced. However, if the project is part of a federally funded grant program, the ratio could increase to two trees replaced for every one tree removed. The replacement tree would need to be planted outside of the road right-of-way, but along the front edge of the property, with the intent of promoting roadside vegetation. To qualify for tree replacement under this policy, the tree removal must be part of an official project. Under Act 51, which is the law governing road commissions, tree replacements cannot be offered for trees that were removed due to storm damage or routine maintenance activities. The tree removal must specifically occur as part of a designated project.

Ms. Tiffany Sadowski, 1963 East Y Avenue, referenced the previous meeting's discussion, particularly the point about the road commission needing to look 25 to 50 years into the future and how young replacement trees would eventually become legacy trees. Her main concern was that the county already has legacy trees in place that she feels should be preserved rather than removed. She acknowledged that some trees could be determined by an arborist to be dead, diseased, or dying, and that select trees may need to be cut near intersections. However, she strongly opposed what she described as the clear-cutting of existing legacy trees throughout the county. She emphasized the significance of these trees to the community, noting that many residents have reached out expressing concern over multi-generational properties where trees are used for harvesting maple syrup, and where walnut trees that are 100 to 250 years old have stood for decades. She referred to these as generational and legacy trees worth saving. Her closing argument was that replacing these long-standing legacy trees with saplings is not an acceptable solution, implying that a sapling would take many years to reach the same significance as the trees currently being removed. She urged the board not to cut down these existing legacy trees across the county.

Ms. Georgia Evans, 830 East U Avenue, emphasized that the existing trees are already established legacy trees that serve as a canopy and contribute to the aesthetic beauty of the neighborhoods. She described the proposed removal of these trees as "totally ridiculous," stressing that the trees are already grown and beautiful. She questioned whether the board had taken seriously the challenge from the previous meeting to go out to the neighborhoods and personally observe the trees in question. Her tone suggested frustration that the board may not have fully appreciated the value and significance of the existing trees to the community. She mentioned that the current trees are irreplaceable legacy assets that are already in place and thriving, and that removing them in favor of a tree replacement policy involving saplings does not adequately address or compensate for the loss of these mature, established trees.

Ms. Penny Briscoe, S Barton Lake Drive, began by noting the irony of discussing saving trees during an extreme heat dome, pointing out the important role trees play in addressing climate change. She referenced a letter from Gail Walter of the Audubon Society of Kalamazoo which emphasized the importance of maintaining green spaces through a more thoughtful, science-based approach that identifies trees genuinely posing a hazard, rather than applying a blanket removal standard. She highlighted that trees serve as an important carbon sink, and that removing large numbers of them would release stored carbon and eliminate their ongoing ability to capture more. She also challenged a claim in the Road Commission's PowerPoint presentation that cutting trees benefits monarch butterflies, calling it inaccurate and stating that monarchs actually need trees. She further noted that treeless roadside stretches with milkweed are routinely mowed during the period when monarch eggs and caterpillars are maturing. Additionally, she suggested alternative safety measures instead of tree removal, such as reinstating motorcycle helmet laws and reducing speed limits, particularly on South Portage Road, arguing these approaches could more effectively save lives. Her comments were cut short by the board before she could finish.

Ms. Marilyn Branch, 9085 North Riverview Drive, explained that she shares her right-of-way with Consumers Power and the Road Commission, and that her house is located only 30 feet from the road. She mentioned that she has landscaped her front yard with no grass to mow. Her primary concern was about what would happen when her shade trees are removed. She raised the question of whether alternative plantings, such as shrubs or native evergreens, could be used as replacements instead of traditional trees. Her reasoning appeared to be that these alternatives could serve the same purpose of screening her front yard from the road. She concluded her comments by urging the board to be diligent and thoughtful about what would constitute an acceptable replacement tree or

plant under the policy, suggesting that the definition of a replacement should perhaps be broadened to include options beyond just trees.

Ms. Tama Cathers, 15227 Portage Rd, pointed out that when she recently went shopping for trees, a two-inch sapling costs between \$200 to \$400. Under the proposed 50% cost-share policy, homeowners would be responsible for paying approximately \$200 per tree, which she implied was a significant financial burden. She raised concerns about whether the replacement trees would be native species, and whether oak trees, which take hundreds of years to grow, would simply be replaced with faster-growing but less desirable species like sweet oak or silver maple. She also expressed concern about whether the replacement trees would be grafted trees, which she noted have a lump at the bottom and are not healthy trees that will grow well over time. She also mentioned that at the previous meeting, it was stated that stumps would be left for homeowners to deal with at their own cost, and that the wood from removed trees would also be left on their land, which she found problematic.

Mr. Brad Sadowski, 1963 E Y Avenue, began by clarifying the broader context of the community's concerns. He mentioned that he and his wife had gone door to door to hundreds of residents and had gathered over 100 volunteers, along with more than 2,000 petitions as of that morning. He pointed out that the tree replacement policy discussion seemed to have caught residents off guard, and that the majority of residents are primarily focused on stopping the tree removal altogether, rather than discussing a replacement policy. He emphasized that the community's main goal is to prevent what they describe as vast clear-cutting of trees, not to negotiate replacement terms. Regarding the 50% cost-share proposal, he stated that residents view it as a slap in the face or an insult to injury, since they are being asked to pay to replace trees they never wanted removed in the first place. He also provided some clarifications on behalf of the Road Commission, confirming that they would remove and clear any brush or wood cut down if the homeowner chooses, and that stumps would be ground down in maintained yard areas and flush cut in unmaintained areas. He concluded by urging everyone to stay for the entire meeting and reiterating that the residents' core demand is simply to stop the tree removal, regardless of any replacement policy being drafted.

Ms. Alexis Belland, 850 Davis Street, expressed strong opposition to the proposed tree replacement policy, describing it as feeling like "a slap in the face." She highlighted the fundamental contradiction of the policy, noting that residents currently do not have to pay for any trees, yet the Road Commission's proposed solution is to charge them money to replace trees that they never wanted cut down in the first place. She raised concerns about financial hardship, pointing out that even at 50% cost share, the price of replacement trees could be a significant burden for some families in the county, especially given that they are being asked to pay for something they did not request or want. She emphasized the long-term environmental damage, stating that by the time the replacement saplings grow to a comparable size, the damage to the ecosystem would already be done, which is why residents are asking for the trees not to be cut down at all. She questioned where the financial value of the removed trees goes, noting that a 150-year-old tree could contain thousands of dollars worth of lumber, yet residents are being offered two saplings at their own expense in return. She concluded by stating that the tree replacement policy is simply not an adequate solution for the residents, and that this issue compelled her to speak publicly despite not being comfortable with public speaking.

Ms. Kassie Maurer, 8505 Almena Drive, expressed strong opposition to the tree replacement policy being placed on the agenda, arguing that it was premature and unfair since the community had not yet agreed to the overall proposal of tree removal. She described this as "putting the cart before the horse," emphasizing that there is still much more negotiation to be done before any replacement policy should even be considered. She also raised a concern about the timing of the meeting, held at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, which she felt excluded working people and those with families from participating and voicing their opinions. She acknowledged that she would not be able to stay for the entire meeting but made it clear that she is firmly against the tree cutting proposal. She also stressed that those present at the meeting represent a much larger group of people who could not attend, stating that they are the voice for many who cannot be there. She concluded by calling for more work to be done on the draft proposal and suggesting that there are other ways to improve traffic safety beyond cutting down trees.

A resident of 15227 Portage Road stated clearly that the policy was not a satisfactory solution and that replacing trees with saplings would not provide the same benefits as the existing trees, potentially not within her lifetime. She emphasized that the saplings could not replace the carbon sequestration capacity, the aesthetic beauty, or the scientific benefits of the current trees for at least one to two generations.

Ms. Rhonda Walters, 12480 South 18th Street, made a brief but focused comment regarding the tree replacement policy. She raised a practical concern about the survivability of replacement trees. Drawing from her personal experience of having planted many trees, she noted that it is very difficult to keep newly planted trees alive. Her main question to the board was whether there would be some kind of warranty or replacement program for the replacement trees that do not survive. This was the entirety of her public comment on the proposed tree replacement policy.

Mr. Rob Morrisson, 5188 Green Meadow Road, who participated online, shared his perspective on the proposed tree replacement policy. He expressed his agreement with the community members who had spoken before him, indicating that he believed the policy should be tabled. His reasoning was based on the significant amount of negative comments and input being received from the community regarding the grant and clear-cutting of trees. He further argued that it was premature to move forward with this type of policy at this stage. He also recommended that the board seek more public comment on the matter before proceeding. Additionally, he suggested that the board should discuss the policy with township boards, as he felt there was an assumption being made that people would be both willing and able to pay for the tree replacements, which he implied was not necessarily the case. In summary, his position was that the tree replacement policy needed more deliberation, broader community input, and consultation with township boards before any further action should be taken.

Ms. Miranda Hvinden, 10963 W M Avenue, highlighted the impact of the spongy moth infestation that affected the county approximately three to four years ago, noting that she observes dead trees resulting from this infestation during her daily walks. This gave context to her thinking about tree replacement. She emphasized the importance of diversity in tree selection. She recommended that when species are chosen for the replacement policy, officials should prioritize native species while also ensuring a wide variety of tree types. Her reasoning was that a diverse spread of trees would help prevent future disease outbreaks and insect infestations from causing massive damage to newly planted trees. She suggested going beyond a simple one-for-one tree replacement approach. She proposed the idea of planting guild structures, meaning combinations of different tree varieties together, such as pairing Juneberries with a sycamore and other species, to maximize long-term ecological and practical benefits. She touched on the utility of trees for both nature and humans, mentioning edible food forests and the joy people derive from trees like maple trees for maple sap. She noted that if current trees are cut down, it would take a very long time before such benefits could be enjoyed again from replacement saplings.

Commissioner Davis disagreed with tabling the policy, viewing it as an ongoing conversation rather than something to set aside. They acknowledged that some people might see the policy as a reactive response to community pushback, but emphasized that it reflects a long-term goal for the board to think beyond immediate needs and consider future generations. The speaker shared a personal story about collecting maple syrup from trees on AV Avenue with his sons, noting that those trees eventually died on their own, illustrating that all trees eventually perish. He pointed out that many trees in the 66-foot right-of-way will likely be lost over time regardless of board actions. He also made a point about carbon sequestration, arguing that new trees actually sequester more carbon over time than old trees, since old trees store carbon but cycle it back through fallen leaves. He expressed strong support for developing a tree replacement policy and endorsed Ms. Hvinden's suggestion about creating greater species diversity, noting that the historical practice of planting only maple trees created monocrop problems that allowed diseases to spread easily.

Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the Road Commission had a tree replacement policy in place historically for many years, but approximately eight years ago, they discontinued it. The primary reason for discontinuing the policy was that it was not being used very often. The process of bidding trees and hiring contractors to plant them was quite involved, and it also required participation from residents, which made it a

complex undertaking. Over the years, there was very little interest in using the policy. He noted that with the current situation involving the removal of additional trees, it seemed like a good opportunity to bring the policy back, as there may be renewed interest in using it. He also clarified that this replacement policy is not specifically tied to the Safe Streets for All project trees. Rather, it is intended to address tree removals that happen as part of regular Road Commission projects. To provide context, the Managing Director shared that in recent years, the Road Commission has removed over 900 trees per year on average as part of reconstruction and paving projects. In 2025 alone, the Road Commission responded to over 1,700 calls for tree removals, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He emphasized that the policy is meant to give residents who had no choice in the removal of their trees an opportunity to have those trees replaced outside of the road right-of-way.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked the members of the public for their comments and participation, noting that many of the concerns expressed were similar to those raised at the previous meeting. He shared that he personally appreciates tree-lined roads, enjoys bicycling on them, and understands the significance of trees that have been planted in memory of loved ones. He expressed concern regarding the proposed use of County Local Act Budget (CLAB) and Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) dollars to help fund replacement trees located outside the road right-of-way on private property. He questioned whether it was an appropriate use of transportation funding, suggesting those resources might instead be better directed toward roadway improvements, such as pavement preservation, gravel roads, and other transportation needs that benefit the traveling public. He also noted that many residents had indicated the proposed 50 percent cost-sharing arrangement was not viewed as a meaningful solution, and he questioned whether Road Commission funds should be used for trees located on private property. He Stehouwer concluded by encouraging a broader, countywide approach to environmental stewardship. He observed that the road right-of-way represents only a small portion of the county's forested land and suggested that long-term efforts to increase tree cover should extend beyond the road right-of-way through partnerships and community-wide initiatives, while recognizing the personal value that individual trees hold for many property owners.

Commissioner Davis stated that the proposed Tree Replacement Policy presents an opportunity to develop partnerships with organizations such as the Conservation District, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and nonprofit foundations. He suggested that these partnerships could help offset the cost of replacement trees for participating property owners. Commissioner Davis further commented that, if the community wishes to promote and maintain a more forested environment, there may be opportunities to collaborate with outside organizations that share those goals and are willing to provide financial or other assistance through cooperative partnerships.

Commissioner Pawloski explained that the proposed Tree Replacement Policy was listed under Old Business because it had been introduced as New Business at the previous meeting and had originally been scheduled for discussion several weeks earlier before being postponed. He expressed strong support for adopting a Tree Replacement Policy, stating that, regardless of the outcome of the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program, the Road Commission should have a policy in place. He noted that trees will continue to be removed as part of normal road operations and that establishing a replacement policy would provide a consistent approach for the future. He further stated that replacement trees should be planted outside the road right-of-way to avoid creating future roadway safety and maintenance concerns. He also reported that he had met with representatives of the Kalamazoo Conservation District, who expressed interest in partnering with the Road Commission. He explained that discussions included the possibility of replanting trees removed as part of the SS4A program in parks and other suitable locations throughout the county using grant funding, including potential assistance from the Arbor Day Foundation and other sources, with the goal of replacing removed trees without additional cost to taxpayers. He concluded by expressing his desire to have a draft Tree Replacement Policy placed on the agenda as New Business at the Board's next meeting for consideration and possible action.

Commissioner Stehouwer acknowledged the comments received from the public and identified several suggestions he believed should be considered in the development of the proposed Tree Replacement Policy. He noted the importance of including warranty provisions for replacement trees, promoting diversity in species selection, and providing clarification as to whether the policy would apply only to trees or also permit the planting of

evergreens and shrubs. He also emphasized the importance of pursuing partnerships with other organizations to help offset replacement costs. He expressed appreciation for Commissioner Pawloski's outreach to the conservation community and encouraged staff to continue exploring additional partnerships and funding opportunities that could further assist property owners with replacement efforts.

Commissioner Pawloski concurred with Commissioner Stehouwer's comments regarding the proposed Tree Replacement Policy. He stated that the policy should include additional details, such as tree warranties, minimum caliper (diameter) requirements, the use of native species, and a diverse mix of species. He also expressed concern with the proposed 50 percent cost-sharing arrangement for replacement trees. He suggested exploring alternative approaches to lessen the financial burden on residents, including partnerships with other governmental entities. He proposed that the County, townships, or other funding sources, including grants, could potentially contribute toward replacement costs. He also suggested considering a deferral or assistance program for residents who may be unable to afford their share of the replacement expense.

Commissioner Kennedy thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and sharing their perspectives, stating that their participation is important and helps ensure the Board hears and understands community concerns. Regarding the proposed Tree Replacement Policy, she expressed concern that property owners would be responsible for 50 percent of the cost to replace trees that they did not want removed. She stated that she was uncomfortable with that aspect of the draft policy and acknowledged that it reflected a significant concern expressed by the community. She expressed support for exploring alternative funding sources that could reduce or eliminate the financial burden on residents. She stated that, while adoption of the policy would ultimately be a Board decision, she was hesitant to support a draft policy that would require residents to share in the cost of replacing trees removed through the project. She concluded by again thanking the public for participating in the process, stating that community involvement and public input are essential in helping the Board consider and respond to residents' concerns.

County Engineer Minkus acknowledged the strong feelings expressed by residents on all sides of the roadside hazard mitigation discussion. He noted that he had spoken with individuals who are passionate about preserving trees and the environment, as well as families who have lost loved ones in roadway crashes. He emphasized that the primary purpose of the program is to improve roadway safety by reducing roadside hazards, of which trees are only one component. The three options staff considered following public feedback received at the previous meeting:

Requesting a formal amendment to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant to either eliminate tree removal entirely or limit it to intersections and documented hazard or crash locations. He explained that staff did not recommend this option because it would be inconsistent with the program's goal of reducing fatal and serious injury crashes.

Revising the project design to reduce the extent of roadside hazard mitigation while remaining within the existing grant requirements. He stated this option was feasible because the project has not yet entered the design phase.

Maintaining the original proposal to establish a 33-foot clear zone, which staff determined was not appropriate in light of the significant public concerns that had been expressed.

He stated that, after reviewing nationally and state-recognized roadway design standards that consider factors such as traffic speeds, traffic volumes, and roadside slopes, staff recommends reducing the standard clear zone from 33 feet to 17 feet from the edge of the travel lane. He explained that this revision is expected to reduce the number of affected trees by approximately half, from an estimated 8,000 trees to approximately 4,000 trees.

He further explained that there are several exceptions to the proposed 17-foot standard. Road segments involving roadway widening or full reconstruction, including portions of Portage Road south of W Avenue, may require clearing beyond 17 feet to accommodate roadway improvements, shoulders, and drainage facilities. He also noted that roadway curves and locations with a history of crashes may warrant a larger clear zone based on engineering evaluation. In addition, all dead or dying trees located within the original 33-foot clear zone would continue to be removed as part of the project.

Managing Director Bartholomew asked County Engineer Minkus whether vehicle speed is a factor in determining the clear zone distance and, consequently, the distance from the roadway at which trees would be removed.

County Engineer Minkus confirmed that speed is one of the factors considered in establishing an appropriate clear zone. He explained that, from an engineering and physics standpoint, the objective is to provide sufficient recovery area for a vehicle to dissipate energy if it leaves the roadway. He stated that several variables influence the required clear zone, including terrain, roadside slope, and the posted speed limit. He noted that rough terrain can help slow a vehicle, while steeper slopes can increase a vehicle's speed after leaving the roadway. He further explained that higher-speed roadways generally require larger recovery areas and that nationally accepted engineering standards account for roadway speed when determining appropriate clear zone distances. He added that, under the revised design approach, the Road Commission proposes reducing the standard clear zone from 33 feet to 17 feet, while recognizing that site-specific conditions, such as curves, reconstruction projects, or locations with a history of crashes, may require a greater clear zone where warranted.

Commissioner Kennedy stated that she respects and appreciates the staff and recognized that she is still learning. She referenced the three options previously presented regarding the SS4A project: requesting an amendment to the FHWA grant, revising the design, or maintaining the original 33-foot clear zone. She noted that staff had chosen to pursue the design revision option but expressed confusion because her understanding from prior discussions was that the grant could not be amended without jeopardizing the \$25 million award. While she preferred reducing the anticipated tree removals from approximately 8,000 to 4,000, she questioned how the design could now be changed after the Board had previously been told the project needed to proceed as originally approved.

County Engineer Minkus explained that there is a significant difference between a formal grant amendment and a design revision. He stated that discussions with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) indicated that a formal amendment could take an unpredictable amount of time to process, noting that even a simple name change amendment had required approximately three months. Because the project is subject to grant completion deadlines, pursuing a formal amendment could jeopardize the schedule. He explained that a design revision, however, does not require a formal grant amendment and therefore does not affect the project timeline. Based on guidance from the FHWA, the Road Commission has flexibility within the design process to revise the clear zone from 33 feet to 17 feet without modifying the grant itself.

Commissioner Davis noted that in the previous proposal involving the 33-foot clear zone, there was a provision regarding "straddlers," which referred to trees that were positioned on or straddling the 33-foot line. He asked County Engineer Minkus what the policy would be for straddlers under the new revised 17-foot line proposal. In response, County Engineer Minkus confirmed that the same rule would apply to the 17-foot line, meaning that if any portion of a tree is touching or straddling the 17-foot line, that tree would remain and would not be removed.

Commissioner Stehouwer noted that the 17-foot recommendation from the staff appeared to be a defensible number based on safety data, highway research, and insurance industry research, referencing clear zone standards. County Engineer Minkus agreed and added that there is some flexibility in applying this distance depending on the specific characteristics of each road, such as slope, and that it could be slightly less or more than 17 feet depending on the situation.

Commissioner Davis referenced the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program summary, specifically page C10 addressing the proposed clear zone improvements. He noted that the revised 17-foot clear zone was estimated to reduce crashes of all severities by approximately 44 percent. He contrasted this with the original 33-foot clear zone proposal, which projected an estimated 75 percent reduction in crashes. He questioned whether reducing the clear zone from 33 feet to 17 feet would result in the Board accepting a significantly greater level of risk for the traveling public in exchange for preserving additional roadside trees.

County Engineer Minkus confirmed that Commissioner Davis's understanding of the projected safety benefits was correct. He clarified, however, that the revised 17-foot clear zone is only one component of the overall Safe Streets for All (SS4A) project. He explained that the project includes multiple roadway safety countermeasures that work together to reduce crashes. Specifically, he stated that the 17-foot clear zone is estimated to provide approximately a 40 percent reduction in roadside hazards, while the installation of shoulder rumble strips is expected to contribute an additional crash reduction benefit of approximately 30 percent. He explained that these combined safety improvements are intended to help offset some of the reduction in safety benefit associated with decreasing the clear zone from 33 feet to 17 feet.

Commissioner Pawloski asked whether the approximately 56 miles of roadway identified as bicycle routes in the Road Commission's master plan would continue to be excluded from the installation of shoulder rumble strips.

County Engineer Minkus confirmed that those roadway segments would not receive shoulder rumble strips. Commissioner Pawloski then asked County Engineer Minkus whether he could provide additional information regarding the role impaired driving, including alcohol-related crashes, plays in fatal roadway departure crashes involving roadside hazards. County Engineer Minkus responded that the Road Commission has tracked fatal crashes on the approximately 130 miles of roadway included in the safety study from 2021 through 2025. He stated that during that period there were eight fatal crashes in which a vehicle struck a tree. He explained that, based on the crash reports, one of those crashes involved a driver who was suspected of being impaired by alcohol, although the report did not confirm intoxication, and the fatality in that crash was the passenger rather than the driver. He further noted that another crash involved suspected drug impairment, although he indicated he could not fully interpret the findings related to that case. He concluded that approximately 75 percent of the fatal tree-strike crashes during the study period did not involve suspected alcohol or drug impairment, indicating that impaired driving was not the primary contributing factor in most of those fatal crashes.

Commissioner Stehouwer broadened the discussion beyond trees, noting that roadside hazards include more than just vegetation. He asked County Engineer Minkus to explain other methods used to mitigate roadside hazards, specifically inquiring about the use of flatter slopes, guardrails, and cable barrier systems, and under what circumstances each of those safety measures would be appropriate.

County Engineer Minkus responded that cable barrier systems are generally not used on local road systems and are more commonly found on state highway facilities maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Addressing the use of standard guardrail, he explained that guardrail is itself considered a roadside hazard from an engineering perspective. He stated that engineers evaluate whether the hazard being shielded presents a greater risk than the guardrail itself. If the hazard behind the guardrail poses the greater danger, installation of a guardrail is warranted. Conversely, if the guardrail would create a greater hazard than the object it is intended to shield, other mitigation measures are considered. He added that, before installing guardrail, engineers also evaluate whether the roadside hazard can instead be relocated, modified, or removed to improve safety.

Commissioner Kennedy expressed her appreciation to the staff for the work they have devoted to the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. She acknowledged that many members of the public had hoped no trees would be removed and stated that she appreciated staff's willingness to revisit the original proposal in response to the community's concerns. She specifically recognized the staff's recommendation to reduce the estimated number of trees affected from approximately 8,000 to approximately 4,000. She stated that she viewed this as a meaningful effort to incorporate public feedback and emphasized the importance of listening to the community throughout the decision-making process. She further expressed her hope that the experience would serve as a reminder of the importance of engaging the public early and ensuring community input is considered in future decisions and projects. She concluded by thanking County Engineer Minkus and the engineering staff for their efforts and for reevaluating the original proposal to develop a compromise that reflected the concerns raised by the public.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked County Engineer Minkus to explain the professional standards and responsibilities associated with being a licensed professional engineer in the State of Michigan. He prefaced his question by noting that he had previously been a licensed professional engineer but no longer maintained his license following retirement and the associated continuing education requirements. He confirmed that he is a licensed professional engineer in the State of Michigan. He explained that maintaining his license requires the completion of 15 hours of continuing education during each two-year license renewal cycle. He noted that the continuing education requirements include mandatory ethics training focused on professional responsibility and the consequences of negligence affecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public. He stated that the foremost responsibility of a licensed professional engineer is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. He further explained that professional engineering standards continue to evolve and become more rigorous over time, reflecting the engineering profession's commitment to maintaining a high level of public trust similar to that expected of other licensed professions. He stated that he takes his professional education, certifications, and engineering license seriously and strives to ensure that his engineering decisions are made in the best interest of the residents of Kalamazoo County.

Ms. Tama Cathers, 15227 Portage Rd raised several concerns regarding the proposed Tree Replacement Policy, particularly the potential cost to property owners. She stated that replacement trees with a two-inch caliper can cost between approximately \$200 and \$400 each and questioned what the Road Commission's actual cost would

be. She expressed concern that requiring homeowners to pay 50 percent of that cost could create a significant financial burden, especially for those with multiple trees removed. She also asked for additional details regarding the quality of replacement trees. She questioned whether replacement trees would consist of native species, whether mature oak trees would be replaced with comparable species rather than less desirable alternatives, and whether the trees would be of sufficient quality to ensure long-term growth and survival. She further asked what the total replacement cost could be for property owners with heavily wooded lots. In addition, she sought clarification that the Road Commission would remove the wood and grind stumps associated with tree removals rather than leaving those responsibilities to homeowners. Regarding the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program, she expressed appreciation that the proposed revisions would reduce the estimated number of affected trees from approximately 8,000 to approximately 4,000, stating that she viewed this as evidence that the Road Commission was listening to public concerns. She encouraged the Road Commission to provide a publicly accessible source for project updates and suggested establishing a process to consider special exceptions for irreplaceable trees, such as mature oak trees approximately 150 years old. She also emphasized the environmental and community benefits of mature trees, including improved air quality, carbon sequestration, traffic calming, stormwater management, noise reduction, and cooling of air and surface temperatures.

Mr. Jon Barnard, 15634 Portage Road, began by referencing the Road Commission's mission statement, specifically the part about managing the roadside environment with a view toward preservation. He acknowledged and respected the safety concerns that brought the proposal forward, noting that it was funded under the title of Safe Streets. He then shared observations about the road he lives adjacent to, specifically XY, which runs between 131 and Portage Road. He described it as a straight, flat stretch of roadway. He noted that according to the study conducted on accidents, there were precisely zero fatal or serious accidents on that three and a half mile stretch of roadway during the study period. Despite this, he observed that every single tree on both sides of that roadway, from 16th Street East to Portage Road, had been marked with an orange X for clear cutting. He argued that the proposed tree removal was wildly out of proportion to the actual danger present. He urged the Commission to employ flexibility and a realistic, case-by-case approach to what is truly needed in each given circumstance. He acknowledged the board members as people of good faith but expressed concern that the approach resembled, in his words, using a meat axe when a scalpel would be more appropriate, and humorously compared it to treating dandruff by decapitation.

Ms. Mariann Barnard, 15634 Portage Road, explained that she only became aware of the tree removal project after noticing spray-painted numbers (101, 102, 103, 104) on trees in her area. She stated she would not have known about the project otherwise, and questioned whether residents were adequately informed, noting that while a survey was reportedly sent out, she did not recall receiving one. She asked for a show of hands from the audience to see who had received the survey, implying that public awareness of the project was limited. She noted that the Road Commission received 324 survey responses, with feedback focused on congestion, delineation, speeding, and curves. She specifically addressed the stretch of XY road between 131 and Portage Road, noting that according to the safety study data, there were zero serious or fatal accidents on that three and a half mile stretch during the study period, yet every tree on both sides of the road had been marked with an orange X for removal. She found this disproportionate given the absence of accidents in that area. She sought clarification on whether all the previously marked trees would still be removed under the new 17-foot proposal. She was informed by the board that all previous markings were now void and trees would need to be re-measured under the new criteria, which she acknowledged as important information for the public to know. Finally, she raised the concern about the criteria used for marking trees, pointing out that within a cluster of trees, some may be healthy while others are dead, and suggested that this distinction should be carefully considered. She also noted that the SS4A project information was available on the website and encouraged it to be updated with the latest developments discussed at the meeting.

Ms. Rachael Harding, 115 West Vine Street, began by sharing a personal anecdote about driving through the "tunnel of trees" in Petoskey, noting how beautiful and valued the tree-lined roads were in that area, and how the road was even built around the trees in some places. She then cited research indicating that trees naturally cause drivers to slow down, as they visually narrow the roadway and create a sense of enclosure, with studies showing speed reductions of 3 to 15 miles per hour on tree-lined streets compared to those without. She also referenced

studies from Baltimore and Chicago showing that neighborhoods with greater tree canopy experienced lower crime rates. She spoke from personal experience about South Oakland Drive in Vicksburg, where trees had been clear cut, noting it was the worst road she drives in winter due to snowdrifts, icy conditions, and difficulty seeing where the road is without trees as visual guides. She drew an analogy to Lake Michigan, suggesting that rather than eliminating a danger entirely, precautionary measures could be put in place instead. She proposed that the Road Commission consider alternatives such as removing only dead and dying trees and trimming hazardous branches rather than clearing 8,000 trees. She concluded by thanking the board for seeking other solutions.

Ms. Tiffany Sadowski, 1963 E Y Avenue, spoke to address the scientific aspects of carbon sequestration in relation to the tree removal proposal. She began by expressing her approval that amendments to the plan seemed possible, stating it was wonderful news for the audience. She then provided a scientific explanation of how carbon sequestration works through photosynthesis. She explained that trees have thousands of tiny pores on every leaf that pull carbon dioxide from the air, break down the molecules, and convert them into glucose. This glucose helps the tree grow more leaves, strengthen its bark, and develop stronger roots. The excess carbon produced is then locked into the soil through the life of the tree. Her key scientific argument was that large, mature trees with thousands of leaves sequester and store significantly more carbon than small saplings with only a few hundred leaves, because it is the pores in every single leaf that pull carbon dioxide out of the air. She also noted that some of these large trees pull up approximately 100 gallons of water per day through the soil, highlighting their enormous filtering capacity. She warned that cutting down large, living trees and replacing them with saplings would result in a dramatic reduction in the amount of carbon being pulled from the atmosphere, as well as reduced filtering of pollution and dust. She also referenced the Kalamazoo County Climate Action and Justice Plan, a 71-page document, specifically pages 49 through 53, which details how large trees in the community sequester and store carbon into the soil. She used this document to further support her argument that removing these trees would have serious environmental consequences, even if the removal numbers were being reduced from 8,000 to 4,000 trees.

A resident of 15227 Portage Road acknowledged that members of the public may have initially viewed the proposed Tree Replacement Policy as a response to the planned tree removals associated with the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. She expressed appreciation for the proposed revisions that would reduce the estimated number of trees affected but noted that the removal of approximately 4,000 trees remained a significant concern. She encouraged the Road Commission to continue refining the project to preserve as many existing trees as possible, stating that while some tree removals may be necessary for safety, each opportunity to retain mature trees is important. She further commented that the natural life cycle of trees should not be used as justification for removing healthy trees before the end of their lifespan, noting that mature trees continue to provide valuable environmental benefits. She also expressed support for planting additional trees in areas that currently lack tree cover but emphasized that new plantings should complement, rather than replace, the preservation of existing mature trees. She cited research indicating that carbon sequestration increases as trees mature and urged the Board to consider the long-term environmental value of preserving older trees wherever feasible.

Mr. Gordon Sheeler, 11757 Hopewell, expressed concerns regarding the proposed tree removals and their potential impact on winter driving conditions. He compared Oakland Drive, south of U Avenue, which he described as largely open with farm fields on both sides, to U Avenue, which is lined with trees. He stated that Oakland Drive frequently experiences significant snow drifting and can become difficult to travel during the winter, while U Avenue does not experience the same level of drifting because the trees serve as a natural windbreak. He stated that he was distressed to see that many of the trees along U Avenue had been marked for removal. He expressed concern that removing those trees could increase snow drifting and negatively affect winter travel conditions. He also questioned how leaving tree stumps in undeveloped areas would improve roadside safety if a vehicle left the roadway. During the discussion, Board members clarified that stumps would be ground below grade in developed areas and flush cut in undeveloped areas.

Ms. Marilyn Branch, 9085 North Riverview Drive, thanked the engineering staff for their professionalism, diligence, and willingness to engage with residents. She stated that she had spoken with members of the engineering team and appreciated their efforts to work with the community and the Road Commission. She described her

experience living in the rural Kalamazoo River Valley, noting concerns about speeding and impaired driving on her roadway. Drawing from her own property, she explained that after the removal of a cherry tree and a basswood tree, the remaining stumps produced new growth, with the basswood stump generating numerous suckers that developed into a large bush. She stated that the resulting vegetation now obstructs visibility when exiting her driveway. Based on that experience, she urged the Road Commission to remove tree stumps rather than leaving them in place following tree removals. She expressed concern that stumps left in place would produce new vegetation, creating visibility issues and potentially requiring chemical treatment to control regrowth. As an organic grower who sells food, she stated that she did not want herbicides used near her property. She also asked for clarification regarding roadside vegetation maintenance, noting that bushes had grown to the point of obstructing traffic signs along her road. She questioned whether maintaining vegetation around roadway signs is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner or the Road Commission.

Commissioner Pawloski clarified that the Road Commission has not yet adopted a Tree Replacement Policy and that the Board was discussing the possible development and implementation of such a policy. He also advised residents that if traffic signs are obstructed by trees, bushes, or other vegetation, they should notify the Road Commission by contacting the office directly or by submitting a service request through the Road Commission's website so the issue can be evaluated and addressed. Furthermore, we want all of our signs to be visible by the traveling public. We have a limited number of staff, so we rely on the community to let us know when those issues come up.

Ms. Theresa Whitaker, of 8045 East YZ, expressed concerns about the potential effects of the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) project on winter road conditions in the southern portion of the county. She stated that road maintenance in her area is already limited, noting that her road is infrequently plowed during winter weather events. She questioned how the Road Commission planned to address the loss of roadside trees that currently serve as natural windbreaks. She expressed concern that removing those trees could increase drifting snow and icy conditions on rural roadways and asked what measures would be implemented to mitigate those impacts. She also asked whether the Road Commission had evaluated the potential increase in winter maintenance costs, including additional plowing, salting, and sanding, that could result if the removal of roadside trees leads to more severe snow drifting. She concluded by explaining that she regularly travels between Vicksburg and Kalamazoo and stated that winter driving conditions are already challenging at times. She expressed concern that removing roadside trees could further reduce the safety of those roadways during winter months.

Doug Parker, of 15775 Portage Road, questioned the overall strategy for the proposed roadside tree removals, stating that he did not believe the current approach adequately targets the trees that present the greatest safety risk. He expressed concern that some trees marked for removal do not appear to pose a significant hazard, while other trees located in areas with a history of crashes have not been identified for removal. In his view, the approach lacked the precision of a truly targeted safety program. He cited his own experience living along Portage Road near two 90-degree curves, where he stated there have been numerous serious crashes involving roadside trees over many years. He observed that several trees in that area bear visible evidence of repeated vehicle impacts but have not been marked for removal. He argued that, while any driver can leave the roadway, it is not practical to remove every tree that could potentially be struck. He also expressed concern about existing roadside hazards, including stumps and logs remaining in ditches. He referenced a stump along Portage Road near the location of a fatal crash involving Ms. Davenport, stating that it remains standing and continues to present a potential hazard. He encouraged the Road Commission to adopt a more strategic, site-specific approach to roadside hazard mitigation by focusing resources on trees and obstacles that present the greatest demonstrated risk rather than removing trees along extended sections of roadway. He concluded by suggesting that such an approach would make more effective use of available funding while still improving public safety.

Ruth Prins-Borst, 3603 Madison Street in Kalamazoo, raised a concern about the framing of the Safe Streets for All program, questioning whether it is overly car-centric. She suggested that the program may be favoring cars and accommodating what she views as the true dangers on roads, specifically speed and distraction, rather than addressing trees as the primary hazard. She noted that trees do not pose a threat unless they are dead or dying. She also broadened the definition of what a truly safe street should mean, arguing that safety should encompass all users

of the road, not just drivers. She specifically mentioned walkers visiting neighbors, bicyclists, and runners who depend on shade provided by trees. She further emphasized that large trees offer distinct, irreplaceable benefits to the community, touching on mental health benefits and commercial benefits, though her comments were cut off at that point in the transcript before she could fully elaborate on those points.

Ms. Kathy Justen, 2880 W C Avenue, began by noting that her property is not directly affected by the proposal. She then referenced a scientific source (scienceinsights.org) to support the importance of preserving large, old trees. She cited that old-growth trees are highly effective at capturing and storing carbon, helping mitigate climate change. She specifically highlighted that the largest and oldest trees store a disproportionate amount of carbon, with the biggest 1% of trees accounting for 50% of above-ground carbon sequestration. She also noted that their extensive root systems and biomass stabilize soil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions over long periods of time. On a personal note, Kathy shared that she regularly walks in her neighborhood and gravitates toward shaded, tree-lined areas of the road, emphasizing the everyday value trees provide to residents. She also recounted observing three instances during the same week of impaired drivers passing by her, arguing that human behavior and impaired driving are significant contributors to road accidents, not the trees themselves. In closing, she acknowledged the goal of making roads safer but urged the board to take a more targeted, surgical approach to tree removal rather than broad clear-cutting, advocating for preserving the large, functioning trees that are already in place.

Michelle Smith, of 9650 North Riverview Drive, spoke about two walnut trees on her property. She stated that one tree had not been marked for removal because it was outside the road right-of-way, while the other, which she described as healthy, was located approximately 30 feet from the roadway and had previously fallen within the proposed 33-foot clear zone. During her comments, the Chair clarified that the Board's discussion had shifted to the revised proposal utilizing a 17-foot clear zone measured from the edge of the travel lane rather than the original 33-foot proposal. A brief exchange followed regarding the scope of the discussion and the time allotted for public comment, after which Ms. Smith's remarks concluded.

Joddi Witt, 10518 Riverview Drive, expressed that she was much more encouraged by the new 17-foot proposal, mentioning that she was eager to go home and measure where her walnut trees stood in relation to the new boundary. She admitted that until three weeks prior, she had little knowledge of the Road Commission or its role, despite having worked for Kalamazoo County Government for 36 years before retiring on June 1st. She acknowledged taking the Road Commission's work for granted and thanked them for their research and diligence. She gave particular thanks to County Engineer Ryan Minkus for the research he conducted that led to the reconsideration of the original proposal. She stated that seeing the X marks on her trees was shocking, as she had no prior knowledge of the project, and that it prompted her to attend the Cooper Township meeting and the Road Commission meetings. She appreciated that the board was listening to citizens' concerns about the trees, but urged a more section-by-section approach rather than a blanket removal of all trees within 17 feet. She noted that in 60 years of driving in the county, she had never hit a tree or been injured, and that no accidents had occurred in her yard in 23 years. She questioned whether blanket removal of 4,000 trees was truly the answer, suggesting that most accidents involved distraction or impairment, and that not all accidents can be prevented through tree removal.

Mr. Bruce Gothe, 9775 West M Avenue, requested clarification regarding the revised roadside hazard mitigation proposal. He asked staff to explain how the proposed 17-foot clear zone compares to the previously discussed 33-foot clear zone so that residents could better understand the changes being proposed. He acknowledged that the revised design is based on nationally recognized engineering standards but noted that national standards also emphasize the importance of responsible driving, including avoiding impaired and distracted driving. He commented that motorists also share responsibility for roadway safety. While recognizing the importance of improving road safety, Mr. Gothe stated that no roadway can be made completely risk-free. He suggested that engineering solutions should be balanced with practical judgment and cautioned against taking measures that could be viewed as excessive. He encouraged the Road Commission to evaluate trees on a case-by-case basis, particularly mature trees that provide significant environmental and aesthetic value. He urged the Board to carefully consider

whether individual trees present a genuine safety hazard before deciding to remove them, advocating for a more selective approach rather than broad-scale tree removal.

Mr. Brad Sadowski, 1963 East Y Avenue, acknowledged the three options presented by the Road Commission—requesting a grant amendment, revising the project design, or maintaining the original proposal—and stated that he appreciated the Board's willingness to consider alternatives. He reiterated that the primary request from residents throughout the process has been to eliminate the proposed broad-scale tree removal and instead focus roadside hazard mitigation on intersections, locations with documented safety concerns, and the removal of dead or hazardous trees, limbs, and other roadside obstacles. He stated that, during earlier meetings, Road Commission staff had indicated that changes to the project could jeopardize the \$25 million Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant. He expressed the opinion that the current discussion demonstrated that modifications to the project were possible without necessarily placing the grant at risk. He also shared that he had spoken with representatives of the U.S. Department of Transportation and suggested that the changes sought by residents might be accommodated through a design revision rather than a formal grant amendment. He also raised concerns regarding how the proposed 17-foot clear zone was being communicated. He noted that the original proposal referenced a 33-foot measurement from the roadway centerline, whereas the revised proposal is measured 17 feet from the edge of the travel lane. He stated that, depending on roadway width, the revised measurement could equate to a distance of approximately 28 to 32 feet from the roadway centerline. He expressed concern that this distinction had not been clearly communicated to the public and suggested that additional clarification would help residents better understand the extent of the proposed design changes.

Mr. Kurt Wiley, 1335 W U Ave, expressed a willingness to work with someone from the Road Commission to review the trees marked on his property. He acknowledged that some of the marked trees were dead or dying and should be removed, including some full-grown maple trees that were dying, one of which had already fallen and required a limb to be pushed off the road. However, he felt that most of the marked trees did not need to be removed and suggested working out a compromise. He also shared some context about accidents in his area, noting that most had occurred about 30 years ago. He mentioned two specific incidents involving motorcycles, one where a rider being chased by police hit a tree and died at a distance of more than 33 feet from the center of the road, and another where a speeding rider ended up in a marsh and was not found for a week. He pointed out that these accidents did not affect the surrounding trees that remained standing. He concluded by expressing appreciation and requesting that someone from the Road Commission come out to his property to take a look at the situation and work toward a compromise on which trees should be removed.

Ms. Ruth Mankowski, 4300 Londonderry Avenue, began by stating that she does not have any affected trees on her property, and that she believes the specific distance measurements of 17, 30, or 33 feet are not the core issue. She emphasized that the Road Commission's goal of preservation should also include improving quality of life for everyone in the community. She expressed hope that arborists are being involved in the decision-making process. She then raised concerns about the level of genuine listening happening among board members, suggesting that while some commissioners appear to be listening, others seem to have already made up their minds and are merely going through the motions. She connected this perceived lack of genuine engagement to why many residents had not received proper notifications about a project that affects not just Kalamazoo County but all of Michigan. She also challenged the framing of the 50% cost-sharing tree replacement policy, pointing out that the math is misleading. She explained that if three trees are removed and only two are replaced with the homeowner paying 50%, the homeowner effectively ends up paying 50% for two trees plus 100% for the third tree to restore their original number of trees. She concluded by expressing concern about what she perceived as unnecessary rushing and insufficient community engagement, referencing a past incident on Oakland Drive where residents lost significant portions of their front yards and incurred substantial costs. She stated she does not feel the Road Commission has the community's best interests at heart and urged them to prove her wrong.

An unidentified speaker commented that, during the public comment period, she had not heard from anyone expressing support for the proposed tree removals. She observed that the comments presented had largely opposed the removal of roadside trees.

Mr. Dennis Laskowsky, 1814 Thrushwood, an engineer and retired reserve deputy sheriff, stated that he had responded to traffic crashes throughout Kalamazoo County during his career. He presented calculations regarding the environmental impacts of removing approximately 4,000 mature trees. He stated that, based on the figures he cited, a mature tree produces approximately 50,000 liters of oxygen annually and approximately 3,300 kilograms of oxygen over its lifetime. Applying those figures to 4,000 trees, he estimated that their removal would represent the loss of approximately 264 million kilograms, or 58 million pounds, of oxygen production. He also stated that approximately 4,000 mature trees, at around 100 years of age, absorb an estimated 200 metric tons of carbon annually, emphasizing the environmental benefits of preserving mature trees. He also questioned the crash data used to support the project. He stated that, in his view, not all of the fatalities cited by the Road Commission were directly attributable to roadside tree hazards, noting that one fatality involved a tree falling onto a vehicle and another involved what he characterized as a suicide. Based on his interpretation of the available information, he questioned whether the remaining fatal crashes justified the removal of approximately 4,000 trees and expressed the opinion that the proposed level of tree removal was disproportionate to the number of applicable crashes.

Mr. Rob Morrison, 5188 Green Meadow Road, referenced a Transportation Research Record article based on the Federal Highway Administration's 1986 publication, Guide to Roadside Management of Trees, noting that both documents are publicly available. He stated that the report examined approximately 500 vehicle-tree crashes in Michigan and identified impaired driving, excessive speed, and nighttime driving as common contributing factors. He also noted that the report concluded no single roadway characteristic accounts for all crashes and recommended that roadside safety improvements balance safety objectives with environmental considerations. He stated that the report identifies tree removal as one of several available roadside safety treatments rather than the sole solution. He noted that the report discusses potential environmental impacts associated with tree removal, including the loss of shade, visual screening, wind protection, erosion control, sediment reduction, and changes to the character of the surrounding landscape. He also stated that the report identifies a variety of traffic safety measures, including treatments other than tree removal, and recognizes that curved roadways present elevated crash risks. He emphasized that, in his interpretation, the report supports selective, site-specific tree removal rather than broad-scale clearing. He further stated that the report recommends identifying and verifying high-risk roadway segments, selecting appropriate countermeasures based on site conditions, many of which may not involve tree removal, and providing advance communication with affected property owners. He concluded by thanking the Board for accepting public comment and for reconsidering the scope of the project in response to community input.

Ms. Miranda Hvinden, 10963 W M Avenue, expressed appreciation for the proposed reduction in the roadside clearing limits, stating that she viewed it as a positive step. She also acknowledged that the discussion suggested there may be flexibility to modify the project's approach. She shared a personal experience in which her vehicle was struck by a falling dead tree on Van Kal Avenue. She stated that, despite that experience, she had not observed many trees marked for removal along that roadway. She suggested that, if the estimated number of trees to be removed under the project is reduced from approximately 8,000 to 4,000, the Road Commission should consider redirecting its efforts toward identifying and removing dead, dying, or diseased trees in other areas of the county. She cited M Avenue as an example, stating that she had observed a significant number of dead trees, which she believed were likely the result of spongy moth damage, despite that roadway not being included in the current project. Ms. Hvinden suggested that prioritizing hazardous dead or declining trees would better support the project's safety objectives by reducing the risk of falling trees and lowering demands on emergency responders and public resources. She concluded by encouraging the Road Commission to continue using a targeted, data-driven approach to roadside hazard mitigation and suggested expanding the project's geographic focus, where appropriate, to address trees that present the greatest safety risk rather than relying on broad-scale tree removal.

Mr. John Kuchta, 12875 Bayview Drive, expressed support for creating exceptions within the proposed roadside hazard mitigation program for particularly significant mature trees. He suggested that property owners should have an opportunity to request an exemption for trees that are more than 150 years old, recognizing their historical and environmental value. He also raised concerns regarding the revised measurement standards for the proposed clear zone. He noted that roadway widths vary throughout the county and stated that changing the point of measurement from 33 feet measured from the roadway centerline to 17 feet measured from the edge of the

travel lane created confusion. He questioned how the revised measurement would translate in practice on roads of varying widths and encouraged the Road Commission to provide additional clarification so that affected property owners could better understand how the proposed changes would apply to their individual properties.

Katie Maier, 294 Beymoure Street, participated virtually and expressed appreciation for the proposal to reduce the estimated number of affected trees from approximately 8,000 to approximately 4,000. She stated that, at first, she viewed the proposed reduction favorably but questioned whether it would result in a meaningful decrease in the number of trees ultimately removed. She expressed concern regarding the change in the point of measurement for the proposed clear zone, noting that the original proposal measured 33 feet from the roadway centerline, while the revised proposal measures 17 feet from the edge of the travel lane. She stated that, depending on roadway width, the revised measurement could translate to a distance only a few feet less than the original proposal. She questioned whether the revised approach would, in practice, reduce tree removals by approximately 50 percent as indicated. She also raised questions about implementation, noting that trees had already been marked under the original criteria. She asked how contractors would distinguish between trees identified under the previous proposal and those that would remain under the revised design, suggesting that remarking trees or using a different marking system might be necessary to avoid confusion during construction. She concluded by stating that she hoped the revised proposal represented a meaningful compromise and encouraged the Road Commission to clearly demonstrate that the design changes would result in a substantial reduction in the number of trees removed.

Ms. Georgia Evans, 830 East U Avenue, raised a question about whether the Road Commission had actually gone out to assess the trees in relation to the new proposed 17-foot line, and how many trees would actually be saved under this revised proposal. She was informed by staff that they had in fact sampled roads and estimated that approximately 53% of the 8,000 trees would be saved, meaning fewer than 4,000 trees would need to be cut. She then asked if those specific numbers could be made available, particularly for U Avenue. She directly addressed Commissioner Davis regarding his characterization of the road right-of-way as a "sliver." She pushed back on this description, emphasizing that while it may seem like a small portion in a broader context, the trees within that area are deeply important to residents. She stressed that these are their trees, their canopy, and a significant part of what makes their community beautiful and meaningful. She pointed out that she personally stands to lose 10 trees, and that the trees in the park across the street from her home would also be removed. She contrasted her situation with that of Commissioner Stehouwer, suggesting that those who are not personally losing trees may not fully appreciate the impact on those who are.

Commissioner Pawloski clarified that the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program applies to approximately 130 miles of roadway out of the Road Commission's total network of approximately 1,270 miles. He explained that those roadways were selected based on crash history and stated that the project is intended to focus on specific high-risk corridors rather than the county road system as a whole.

Commissioner Pawloski noted that the Road Commission removes approximately 900 trees each year as part of its regular operations and capital improvement projects. He stated that the revised proposal to remove approximately 4,000 trees over a five-year period is generally consistent with the Road Commission's historical rate of tree removals. Addressing comments regarding the proposed Tree Replacement Policy, he clarified that the draft policy contemplates planting two replacement trees for each eligible tree removed and stated that it would not require property owners to fully fund additional replacement trees beyond the proposed program. He also noted that certain projects, including the planned conversion of Portage Road south of W Avenue to an all-season roadway, will require tree removal as part of roadway reconstruction regardless of the SS4A program. He announced that the Board's quarterly road tour would be moved from August to July to allow commissioners to observe project locations firsthand. He further clarified that the proposed 17-foot clear zone is measured from the edge of the travel lane, or from the edge line where one is present. He also confirmed that tree stumps would be removed as part of the project, with stumps in developed areas being ground below grade and those in undeveloped areas being flush cut. He noted that many roadside trees were originally planted during the horse-and-buggy era to provide shade for horses traveling at much lower speeds than modern traffic, observing that roadway design considerations have

changed significantly over time. He thanked County Engineer Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Hoekstra, and the engineering staff for considering public and Board feedback and developing the revised 17-foot design proposal. He reminded those in attendance that Michigan's Open Meetings Act prohibits commissioners from deliberating Board business outside of public meetings, requiring discussions and decisions to occur during open meetings. He concluded by noting that Kalamazoo County continues to grow and that accommodating that growth presents ongoing challenges for the community and the Road Commission.

Managing Director Bartholomew provided additional background and clarification regarding the proposed Tree Replacement Policy and the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. He explained that the Road Commission previously maintained a Tree Replacement Policy for a number of years but discontinued it approximately eight years ago because it was seldom utilized. He stated that the process of soliciting bids for replacement trees and hiring contractors to perform the work proved inefficient given the limited participation by property owners. He noted that the Road Commission has routinely removed more than 900 trees annually as part of its regular maintenance and construction activities, including hot mix asphalt paving projects and gravel road improvements. He emphasized that tree removal has long been a component of the Road Commission's routine operations and is not unique to the SS4A program. He explained that the SS4A project differs because it applies roadside hazard mitigation to approximately 130 additional miles of roadway over a four-year period, resulting in a substantially greater number of tree removals within a condensed timeframe. He also reported that, during 2025, the Road Commission responded to more than 1,700 emergency tree removal calls while providing around-the-clock service throughout the year.

Addressing the revised design proposal, he explained that the original concept measured the clear zone 33 feet from the roadway centerline, whereas the revised proposal measures 17 feet from the edge of the travel lane or edge line, where present. Using a typical 11-foot travel lane as an example, he stated that the revised design generally results in a clear zone extending approximately 28 feet from the roadway centerline, reducing the area subject to tree removal by approximately five feet. He further explained that the original grant application did not specify a fixed clear zone width but instead required the creation of an appropriate clear zone. As a result, the Road Commission retained flexibility to apply engineering judgment and accepted design standards during project development. He stated that this flexibility allowed staff to recommend the revised 17-foot design without requiring a formal amendment to the grant. He cautioned that pursuing a formal amendment to the grant would introduce significant uncertainty, including potential delays and the risk of jeopardizing funding for the approximately \$35 million program of improvements.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the Village of Vicksburg Local Municipality Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that, under the agreement, the Road Commission will perform chip seal and fog seal treatments on three roads within the Village of Vicksburg. He stated that the estimated total cost of the project is \$33,206 and that the Village of Vicksburg will be responsible for 100 percent of the project cost, with no Road Commission funds being used. He further noted that the contract amount is an estimate and that the Village will be responsible for the actual final cost of the work, whether it is greater or less than the estimated amount.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to select Tom Doty of Mackinac, Beth Hunt of Lenawee, and Laurita Humphrey of Muskegon for the County Road Association Self-Insurance Fund (CRASIF) 2026 Board of Trustees Election Ballot. Managing Director Bartholomew shared the ballot is requesting a vote for three (3) candidates. There are three (3) candidates interested, and we appreciate their willingness to serve.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to select for the Deb Kessner of Saginaw for the Southern Representative and Brett Laughlin of Ottawa for the At-Large Michigan County Road Commission Self-Insurance Pool (MCRCSIP) 2026 Board of Directors Ballots. Managing Director Bartholomew shared the item, explaining that the MCRCSIP Board serves as the Road Commission's liability pool. There were two open seats on the

board with three candidates being considered. One seat was for a Southern representative and one was an at-large position.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

Ms. Theresa Whitaker, 8045 E YZ Avenue, asked whether the Road Commission ever conducts bus tours during the winter months, and inquired about the routes taken during these tours, wanting to know if they include county roads that are not plowed very often in the winter. Her main concern was about the roads in the Vicksburg area, which she described as nearly impassable due to drifting and poor plowing during winter months. She connected this concern back to the tree removal discussion earlier in the meeting, pointing out that if the windbreaks provided by the trees along the roads are removed, the drifting conditions on those roads would only get worse. She expressed a desire to see a plan in place to address greater road care and road safety in light of the potential loss of those windbreaks before any tree cutting begins. She concluded by simply stating she wanted assurance that there was a plan to handle the increased road maintenance challenges that would result from the tree removals.

Brad Sadowski, of 1963 East Y Avenue, sought additional clarification regarding the proposed 17-foot clear zone. He stated that, on roadways without an edge line, the measurement would be taken from the edge of the pavement and questioned whether, depending on roadway width, this could result in a clearing distance of approximately 30 to 32 feet from the roadway centerline. He also questioned the estimate that approximately 4,000 trees would be removed, noting that the marked trees had not yet been re-evaluated under the revised design criteria. He referenced a previous resurfacing project on 32nd Street between O Avenue and OP Avenue, where trees initially marked for removal were ultimately retained following public concerns. He cited this as an example of the Road Commission exercising discretion and modifying project decisions in response to community input. He also expressed the opinion that pursuing a formal grant amendment would not necessarily delay the project, stating that beginning the amendment process immediately could still allow completion before the anticipated construction schedule. He further suggested that reducing the scope of tree removals could shorten the overall project. He questioned what he viewed as an inconsistency in the project's safety strategy regarding shoulder rumble strips. He noted that approximately 56 miles of roadway identified as bicycle routes would not receive shoulder rumble strips and stated that, in his view, this appeared inconsistent with the project's emphasis on maximizing roadway safety. He referenced previous Road Commission research supporting the effectiveness of rumble strips and questioned the rationale for excluding those roadway segments. He also informed the Board that 1,933 petition signatures had been collected and encouraged commissioners to review the accompanying public comments. In closing, he read a statement from a retired firefighter-paramedic expressing the opinion that removing roadside trees would not address distracted driving, which the individual believed to be a primary cause of many crashes. The statement urged the Road Commission to focus on the underlying causes of traffic accidents while preserving healthy roadside trees wherever possible.

Ms. Marilyn Branch, 9085 N Riverview Drive, began by mentioning that she had met with an elected official earlier that day, who pointed out that several of the marked trees may fall on the boundary line, and suggested that a couple of hers might as well. She then raised the question of whether property owners have the right to meet with the surveyor, engineer, or forestry personnel when they come to their property to discuss which specific trees are being marked for removal and why. She expressed that she was unaware the Road Commission had a forestry person on staff and said she would welcome the opportunity to speak with them. She also brought up the concern about public communication and transparency, noting that the Road Commission's website had not been updated since March, and that she expected to find updates following the meeting held two weeks prior, particularly regarding the grant and the proposed changes.

Commissioner Pawlsoki responded by directing her to speak with staff directly after the meeting regarding her question about meeting with surveyors or arborists on her property. He also acknowledged her point about the website needing to be updated.

Mr. Dan Collins, 10015 Woodlawn Drive, identified himself as a retired career firefighter with 30 years of service on the south side of Chicago. He stated that he attended the meeting to personally deliver comments that had previously been read to the Board by another speaker. He explained that, based on his experience responding to motor vehicle crashes, distracted driving is a leading cause of vehicles leaving the roadway and striking roadside trees, except in situations where a tree falls onto a vehicle. He described frequently encountering cell phones, tablets, laptops, and other electronic devices in crashed vehicles and recalled incidents involving drivers who were watching videos or performing other activities while driving. He also commented that advancements in modern vehicle design, including improved occupant protection systems, have contributed to increased survivability in many crashes. He expressed concern that tree removal could create new roadside hazards if stumps remain after trees are cut, stating that vehicles striking stumps may overturn. He encouraged the Board to carefully consider whether the proposed roadside hazard mitigation strategy could unintentionally introduce new safety concerns while attempting to address existing ones.

Katie Maier, 294 Beymoure Street, participated virtually. She thanked the board for listening to the public. She also stated that she was still having difficulty understanding how reducing the clear zone from 33 feet off the center line to 17 feet off the edge of the road would result in cutting the number of trees from 8,000 down to 4,000, noting that in her understanding this only amounted to saving about 5 feet on each side. She requested that the board be transparent and provide clear data explaining how that relatively small distance reduction would translate into saving approximately 4,000 trees. She concluded by again thanking the board for their responsiveness to the community's concerns.

Managing Director Bartholomew had no comments during Managing Director's time.

Commissioner Kennedy thanked everyone who attended the meeting, stating that public participation and community input are valuable to the Board and help inform its decision-making. She then read a prepared statement recognizing Kalamazoo County's participation in the upcoming America 250 commemoration. She stated that the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding provides an opportunity to celebrate the country's history, reflect on its progress, and recognize the shared civic responsibilities of its citizens. She noted that Kalamazoo County's America 250 activities throughout the coming year will include historical exhibits, educational programs, community discussions, concerts, and other events designed to bring residents together to reflect on the nation's history and future. She also addressed the use of fireworks during Independence Day and other commemorative celebrations. She acknowledged that fireworks are a longstanding tradition symbolizing freedom, resilience, and national pride, and that many veterans enjoy celebrating with family and friends. At the same time, she recognized that some veterans, particularly those living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may experience fireworks differently, as unexpected loud noises and flashes can trigger traumatic memories and emotional distress. She emphasized that this experience is not universal among veterans but is an important consideration for the community. She encouraged residents to be mindful of their neighbors by providing advance notice before setting off fireworks when possible, attending organized public displays, complying with local ordinances, and being considerate of the timing and duration of neighborhood fireworks. She concluded by expressing hope that the community would celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary with pride and gratitude for those who have served, while demonstrating respect, compassion, and consideration to help ensure that everyone can safely participate in the celebrations.

Commissioner Davis responded to a question submitted online by Katie regarding how reducing the proposed clear zone by approximately five feet could decrease the estimated number of trees removed from approximately 8,000 to approximately 4,000. He explained that tree distribution within the clear zone is not uniform. He stated that the density of trees generally increases farther from the roadway, meaning that the outer portion of the proposed clear zone contains a greater concentration of trees than the area immediately adjacent to the travel lane. As a result, eliminating the outer portion of the original clearing area would preserve a disproportionately larger number of trees. He stated that this variation in tree density is the reason a relatively modest reduction in the clear zone distance is estimated to reduce the number of affected trees by approximately 50 percent.

Commissioner Stehouwer thanked Commissioner Kennedy for her remarks recognizing America's 250th anniversary and discussing the impact of fireworks on veterans. He stated that the nation's anniversary should be celebrated with gratitude while remembering those who have served to preserve the country's freedoms. He shared personal experiences illustrating that fireworks can have unintended impacts, including a family dog that ran away after being frightened by fireworks and veterans he had known whose post-traumatic stress was triggered by loud noises. He also referenced a fatal fireworks incident in Holland and encouraged residents to celebrate Independence Day safely and responsibly. He reported that the Parks Commission would not hold a meeting in July due to a lack of agenda items, noting that the July meeting is frequently canceled because of the Independence Day holiday. He also shared that he had attended a recent Oshtemo Township meeting, where he listened to comments from residents regarding local issues. He noted that he continues to receive and consider feedback from constituents. He stated that he often prefers to observe road conditions by bicycle rather than by automobile because it provides a different perspective. He relayed a concern raised by a motorcyclist regarding the use of DuraPatch for pothole repairs. He noted that loose aggregate remaining on the roadway can create hazardous conditions for motorcycles and bicycles, similar to loose stone following chip seal operations before sweeping is completed. He encouraged staff to remain mindful of those conditions and their potential impact on all roadway users. He concluded by thanking the public for their comments and expressing appreciation for the staff's continued work.

Commissioner Pawloski began by clarifying the five-foot reduction on each side of the road, noting that it amounts to a total of ten feet, which explains the significant reduction in the number of trees from 8,000 to approximately 4,000. He highlighted that the Road Commission received 1,700 calls in just one year regarding trees in the road, emphasizing the scale of the issue. He pointed out that not all road departures are caused by distracted or impaired driving, noting that deer, animals, and pets jumping into the road are also contributing factors. He stressed the importance of storm damage preparedness, noting that dead and dying trees falling during high winds, tornadoes, and storms can block roads and delay emergency vehicles such as ambulances and fire trucks, potentially putting lives at risk. The Chair also mentioned concerns about power outages during heat events caused by falling trees. Furthermore, he acknowledged that there are residents who support the program, even though they were not present at the meeting to speak. He expressed the Road Commission's core goal of ensuring everyone gets home safely and commended staff for their efforts in finding a balanced compromise between safety and residents' concerns. He defended the bicycle lane component of the project, noting that elected officials and residents had expressed its importance. He praised the county's road network as one of the best in Michigan and credited both current staff and former boards for maintaining that standard.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

July 7, 2026 – Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners Infrastructure Report
Presentation

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

A joint meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo (RCKC) and the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners was held at 201 West Kalamazoo Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49007, on Tuesday, July 7, 2026. The joint meeting began at 6:30 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Toni Kennedy

Absent: Randy Thompson, Andy Davis

Also present: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, County Commissioners Jen Strebs, John Taylor, Tami Rey, John Gisler, Monteze Morales, Abigail Wheeler, Jeff Heppler, Wendy Mazer, Dale DeLeeuw, and Deputy Administrators Terrell Cole and Lyndi Smith.

Managing Director Bartholomew presented the RCKC's 2025 Annual Report, highlighting the organization's accomplishments and activities over the past year. His presentation included an overview of infrastructure improvements, awards and recognition, funding sources, service requests, the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program, the 2026 Primary Road Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and the Road Commission's communication and public outreach efforts.

County Commissioner Gisler complimented the Road Commission on the quality of the 2025 Annual Report and asked about the purpose of pavement markings visible on roadways. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the markings are survey marks used to identify locations for surveying and engineering purposes related to road projects.

County Commissioner Taylor asked about the status of the Neighborhood Road Fund (NRF) program and when funding is expected to be received. He also inquired about the Participation (PAR) Funds Program. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the Road Commission is hopeful the NRF funding will be received this fall; however, it is expected to arrive too late to be used for construction projects during the current year.

County Commissioner Strebs asked how the new NRF dollars will be distributed among the townships and also inquired about the additional ("overmatch") dollars that townships may contribute toward PAR Funds projects. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the NRF dollars will be distributed based on each township's percentage of local road mileage. He also clarified that any overmatch contribution by a township toward PAR Funds projects is voluntary and not required.

County Engineer Minkus presented an overview of the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Program, highlighting the Transportation Safety Action Plan and the overall scope of the initiative. He reviewed the planned safety improvements, including the installation of centerline and edge line rumble strips and clear zone enhancements through the removal of roadside hazards. He also outlined the project's timeline, including key phases for design, public outreach, and implementation.

County Commissioner Strebs asked whether lane departure crashes include vehicles crossing the centerline as well as those leaving the roadway onto the shoulder. County Engineer Minkus confirmed that both types of incidents are classified as lane departure crashes.

County Commissioner Taylor asked what time period was used for the Sprinkle Road safety data showing reductions in fatalities and crashes. County Engineer Minkus responded that the data reflected a 10-year period.

County Commissioner Strebs asked what safety treatments, other than rumble strips, could improve roadway safety. County Engineer Minkus explained that the Sprinkle Road project included multiple safety improvements in addition to rumble strips. He noted that the project's safety benefits resulted from a combination of treatments and that the improved outcomes could not be attributed to any single factor.

July 7, 2026 – Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners Infrastructure Report
Presentation

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

County Commissioner Strebs asked whether rumble strips and designated bicycle routes can coexist on the same roadways. County Engineer Minkus explained that the Road Commission consulted with the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club (KBC) during the planning process to help determine appropriate rumble strip locations. He noted that the KBC's preference was to avoid installing rumble strips on designated bicycle routes.

County Commissioner Strebs asked for clarification regarding the 11 roadway segments that experienced three fatalities and questioned the source of the statistic that 60% was mentioned. County Engineer Minkus explained that the 60% figure refers to the percentage of roadway fatalities that involved vehicles striking trees.

County Commissioner Strebs asked how the Road Commission determined that reducing the clear zone by five feet would result in approximately a 50% reduction in tree removals. County Engineer Minkus explained that the estimate was developed by Road Commission staff based on measurements taken from several representative project corridors.

County Commissioner Strebs asked why the Road Commission would not rely more heavily on rumble strips, which are less expensive than tree removal, if they are effective at improving safety. County Engineer Minkus explained that the anticipated crash reduction is achieved through a combination of safety treatments. He noted that rumble strips alone would not provide the same level of safety improvement or achieve the desired reduction in crashes.

County Commissioner Wheeler asked whether the project is reevaluated as it progresses over time. County Engineer Minkus responded that it is, explaining that the project is continually evaluated throughout its development to ensure it remains appropriate and effective.

County Commissioner Strebs asked why Drake Road was not included in the Transportation Safety Action Plan, noting that it experiences a high number of crashes. County Engineer Minkus explained that the SS4A project focuses specifically on reducing lane departure crashes, and the majority of crashes on Drake Road are not lane departure-related, making the corridor ineligible for inclusion under this particular grant program.

County Commissioner Morales asked whether the SS4A grant funds could be used for maintenance activities on other roadways. County Engineer Minkus explained that the grant is restricted to eligible project activities and cannot be used for routine maintenance.

County Commissioner Morales also asked whether trees that do not need to be removed would still be cut or whether those funds would be saved. County Engineer Minkus responded that each tree will be evaluated individually, and if a tree does not need to be removed, it will be retained rather than cut.

County Commissioner Morales noted that there is a radar speed feedback sign on Portage Road that displays motorists' speeds and asked whether the Road Commission owns and installs those signs. County Engineer Minkus explained that the Road Commission does not own the signs. He stated that they are typically owned and installed by law enforcement agencies, and the Road Commission permits their placement within the public right-of-way.

County Commissioner Gisler asked about improving safety at intersections. County Engineer Minkus explained that, after lane departure crashes, intersection-related crashes were identified as the second leading cause of serious crashes, with limited sight distance being a significant contributing factor. He noted that, as part of the 130-mile SS4A project, the Road Commission will address sight distance issues at intersections to improve safety.

July 7, 2026 – Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners Infrastructure Report
Presentation

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

County Commissioner Strebs noted that the public survey identified the intersection of 14th Street and D Avenue as a safety concern but observed that it was not included in the SS4A project. County Engineer Minkus explained that, while the Transportation Safety Action Plan identified numerous safety needs, the SS4A grant does not provide sufficient funding to address every recommended improvement. He added that the Road Commission has prioritized the 14th Street and D Avenue intersection for future state safety grant applications.

County Commissioner Strebs asked why the Road Commission was not using the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Green Book in the design of the SS4A project. County Engineer Minkus explained that the Road Commission is using multiple engineering design resources and standards in developing the project, including the AASHTO Green Book, along with other applicable guidance and criteria.

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By: _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

July 13, 2026, Board of County Road Commissioners Road Tour

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

The Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo participated in a road tour on Monday, July 13, 2026. The tour began at 7:00 a.m. from the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) 4400 S. 26th Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49048.

Present: Larry Stehouwer, Randy Thompson, Toni Kennedy

Absent: David C. Pawloski, Andy Davis

Also present: Managing Director Travis Bartholomew, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Operations Director Anthony Ladd

Road Commissioners and staff toured several Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) project locations, including Portage Road, XY Avenue, and 8th Street. During the tour, staff provided information about the proposed improvements and answered questions from the Commissioners at each location. The tour concluded at approximately 9:45 a.m., RCKC.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By: _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, July 14, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Andy Davis, Randy Thompson, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, and Administrative Assistant Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo is to use our expertise, energy, and funds to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible, and to contribute to economic development and a high quality of life throughout the county. Our goal is to maintain a county road system that is safe and convenient for public travel and to manage the roadside environment, with a view toward preservation.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the June 30, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented and the July 7, 2026, County Board Infrastructure Report Presentation minutes as corrected. Commissioner Davis noted that he did not attend the July 7, 2026, County Board Infrastructure Report Presentation, and the minutes were corrected to reflect his absence.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$	242,042.94
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Vendor Account:	\$	767,877.37
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve Commissioner Stehouwer's expense report as presented. Commissioner Pawloski shared that the total expense report is for \$35.95. Commissioner Kennedy suggested that the amount should be included in the minutes.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Ms. Chandra Kinney, Kalamazoo Conservation District Manager, introduced herself and said she looks forward to collaborating with the Road Commission.

Mr. Chuck Culver, 8105 AB Avenue, addressed the Board regarding dust control, grading, ditching, culvert installation, and driveway restoration associated with the road project. He stated that work on his road began around April. After dirt was placed over the existing asphalt surface, the roadway became extremely dusty. He

contacted the Road Commission to report the issue. Although dust control was eventually applied, he stated the road was never graded beforehand, resulting in a washboard surface that he believes has continued to deteriorate. He also discussed the ditching and culvert installation work. He explained that when a work crew arrived to install culverts beneath driveways, he requested that a culvert not be placed under his driveway because an existing ditch had adequately handled drainage and had never caused water-related issues affecting the roadway. According to Mr. Culver, the project manager informed him that it was Road Commission policy to ditch all roads and install culverts where none existed. Despite his concerns, the culvert was installed. He stated that the ditch along his driveway was made significantly steeper, and he expressed concern that it may not be safe to mow without risking the lawnmower tipping over. He further stated that the policy did not appear to be applied consistently throughout the project. He noted that three nearby driveways were not provided with culverts, and the roadway in that area was not ditched. He also expressed concern regarding the restoration of his paved driveway. He stated that the driveway was cut to accommodate the culvert installation and that he was informed the first layer of asphalt would be placed initially, with the final layer to be installed after the roadway received its double chip seal so the driveway grade would match the finished road elevation. However, he stated the contractor applied the second layer of asphalt before the double chip seal was completed, leaving him uncertain whether the final driveway grade would properly align with the roadway. In closing, He complimented the Road Commission on the work completed on Drake Road in front of Kalamazoo Central High School. He also invited any member of the Board to visit his property to observe the concerns he described firsthand.

Mr. Bob DePauw, 8219 W AB Avenue, addressed the Board regarding concerns about the road project on his road. He stated that the project began on April 21 and expressed concern that residents received little communication regarding the project timeline or anticipated work. He noted that the only correspondence he received pertained to the handling of wood from removed trees and felt that additional communication should have been provided, given the scope of the project. He also expressed frustration with the length of the project, stating that work had been ongoing for nearly three months on approximately one and one-quarter miles of roadway. He questioned the consistency of the culvert installation process. He stated that residents were informed that culverts would be installed at all driveways where none existed, but observed that several locations did not receive culverts. He also noted that some driveways received wider culverts while others did not receive any, leading him to question how those decisions were made. He further discussed concerns regarding his driveway. He explained that the existing culverts were installed when his home was built approximately 32 years ago and asked why they needed to be replaced. He stated that the replacement culverts were approximately 10 feet wider than the originals. Although he requested asphalt extensions to match the wider culverts, he stated that dirt was placed along both sides of the driveway instead. He expressed concern that the edges could be damaged by larger vehicles using the driveway. He also described an issue involving stump removal. He stated that the contractor was initially unable to grind one of the tree stumps to the desired depth because of an accumulation of wood chips. According to Mr. DePauw, he removed some of the wood chips himself to assist with the work, and the contractor later returned to complete the stump grinding. He referred to a neighboring property, stating that the neighbor's concrete driveway was cut in preparation for the installation of a culvert; however, a culvert was ultimately not installed at that location.

Ms. Cindy Johnson, 12568 South 18th Street, addressed the Board regarding the value of mature trees and the use of crash statistics in evaluating the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. She shared her experience visiting Airlie Gardens in North Carolina. She distributed photographs of the trees to those in attendance to illustrate the beauty and value of preserving mature trees. She encouraged the Commissioners to personally drive the rural roads in Kalamazoo County that are proposed for tree removal so they could observe the existing conditions firsthand rather than relying solely on photographs. She also discussed the crash statistics presented in the SS4A information available on the Road Commission's website. Based on her review, she stated that approximately 80 percent of the county's crashes occur on rural roads and estimated that, of the approximately 1,700 annual crashes, about 1,360 occurred on rural primary roads. She further estimated that approximately 61 of the 76 fatal and serious injury crashes occurred on rural roads. She noted that approximately half of all crashes involve lane departures, which include both vehicles leaving the roadway and head-on collisions. She stated that she was unable to determine from the information provided how many fatal or serious injury crashes specifically involved vehicles striking trees. She

concluded by cautioning against relying solely on statistics when evaluating the project, stating that the data does not always provide the complete context.

Ms. Suzie Fitzgibbon, 15651 Portage Road, addressed the Board regarding the proposed tree removal associated with the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. She stated that members of the community, including the Schoolcraft Township Board, do not support the removal of healthy roadside trees and believe that only dead, diseased, or hazardous trees should be removed. She reminded the Commissioners that they are appointed by the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners. She referenced a petition containing approximately 2,100 signatures, stating that it reflected significant public opposition to the proposed tree removal. Drawing on her experience as a federal employee, state employee, and former city council member, Ms. Fitzgibbon stated that when a petition receives that many signatures, it typically represents a much larger number of individuals who share the same concerns but did not sign the petition.

County Commissioner John Gisler announced that Dr. Kevin Catlin, Kalamazoo County Administrator for the past four years, will be leaving his position to accept an opportunity in Virginia. He thanked Dr. Catlin for his service and described him as an outstanding administrator. Commissioner Gisler stated that Mr. Terrell Cole will serve as Interim County Administrator for approximately six months, overseeing the county through the remainder of the budget process and the end of the year. He also commented on the upcoming countywide childcare millage proposal. While expressing his support for childcare initiatives, he stated that he does not believe a millage is the appropriate funding mechanism. He noted that Kalamazoo County has a budget of approximately \$325 million and expressed his opinion that funding for childcare should be identified within the existing budget rather than through a new tax levy. He addressed the proposed roadside tree removal associated with the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. He noted that his wife is passionate about trees and expressed appreciation for the Road Commission's willingness to continue discussions with residents and consider public input. He commended the Board for listening to the concerns raised by citizens and encouraged continued dialogue while expressing hope that available federal funding could still be utilized as discussions move forward.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded, to table consideration of the Draft Tree Replacement Policy for four (4) weeks and bring it back under New Business on a future agenda. Operations Director Bartholomew provided a brief update from the previous meeting's discussion, highlighting the following key points of the proposed Draft Tree Replacement Policy. He shared the policy would operate on a 50% cost share basis, meaning the Road Commission would contribute 50% of the cost, while the property owner would be responsible for the remaining 50% for tree replacement. He explained that the general rule would be a one-to-one replacement, meaning for every one tree removed, one tree would be replaced. However, if the project is part of a federally funded grant program, the ratio could increase to two trees replaced for every one tree removed. The replacement tree would need to be planted outside of the road right-of-way, but along the front edge of the property, with the intent of promoting roadside vegetation. To qualify for tree replacement under this policy, the tree removal must be part of an official project. Under Act 51, which is the law governing road commissions, tree replacements cannot be offered for trees that were removed due to storm damage or routine maintenance activities. The tree removal must specifically occur as part of a designated project.

Ms. Chandra Kinney, Kalamazoo Conservation District Manager, asked if there would be an age requirement for the tree. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that currently, we do not. He explained this would be a new policy for us, so we would have to set those parameters and guidelines for the size of the tree and the species that would be replaced.

Ms. Suzie Fitzgibbon, 15651 Portage Rd stated that she appreciated the Board's efforts to develop a tree replacement policy but expressed concern that the proposal lacked specific details. She questioned whether the Board had sufficient information regarding the Managing Director's plan and whether the policy was developed enough to be considered. She raised several questions regarding the proposed policy, including the size or age of replacement trees, the source of funding, the species of trees that would be planted, and other implementation details. She also noted that while the possibility of using federal funding had been mentioned, no specific funding

source or plan had been identified. She concluded by stating that, in her opinion, the policy remained too preliminary and lacked the level of detail needed for public understanding. She encouraged the Board to further develop the proposal and provide more specific information before moving forward, while emphasizing that the public wished to remain engaged in the discussion as the policy continued to evolve.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the Road Commission's proposed 50 percent contribution toward tree replacement would be funded through Act 51 state transportation funds. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that the Road Commission's contribution was not tied to Act 51 funding requirements, but instead represented a partnership between the Road Commission and participating property owners. Commissioner Davis further noted that Act 51 funds may only be used for tree replacement when it is part of an eligible transportation project. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that this interpretation had been verified with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Commissioner Davis also expressed concern that the proposed 50 percent cost share could present a financial hardship for some residents. He encouraged the Board to explore options to make the program more accessible, including partnering with nonprofit organizations, pursuing alternative or supplemental funding sources, and establishing a grant program to assist property owners who may be unable to afford their share of the replacement costs. Commissioner Davis stated that improving the affordability of the tree replacement program should remain an important consideration as the policy is further developed.

Commissioner Thompson concurred with Commissioner Davis' comments and shared that we need to look into some other avenues before making a final decision.

Commissioner Stehouwer commented that much of the public feedback he has heard regarding the proposed tree replacement policy has been negative, stating that many residents have indicated they are not interested in replacement trees. While he acknowledged that offering a replacement program is a worthwhile concept, he expressed concern about using Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) dollars to support the program. He stated that dedicating Road Commission funds to tree replacement could reduce the resources available for essential transportation functions, including winter maintenance, shoulder improvements, mowing, brush removal, and other roadway maintenance needs. He further stated that the Road Commission already faces significant budget challenges and suggested that Kalamazoo County should play a larger role in supporting tree replacement efforts rather than placing the primary financial responsibility on the Road Commission. He also observed that trees are removed throughout the county for a variety of reasons, including private development, construction projects, and other land use activities, noting that the Road Commission represents only a small portion of the overall tree loss occurring countywide. He further commented that while the petition submitted to the Board focuses on tree removal, many of the concerns expressed by residents also relate to speeding, distracted driving, and other roadway safety issues. Vice Chair Stehouwer emphasized that the Road Commission's primary responsibility is to provide safe roadways for the traveling public and stated that he would not compromise sound engineering principles in fulfilling that responsibility. In closing, he stated that he has reservations about the proposed policy and believes the discussion should continue with additional community partners, including organizations such as the Conservation District, to explore broader solutions.

Commissioner Davis expressed support for continuing to expand and preserve a healthy tree canopy. He agreed with Vice Chair Stehouwer that the responsibility for maintaining and enhancing tree cover should be shared, noting that the Road Commission manages only a 66-foot road right-of-way, which represents a small portion of the county's overall land area. He suggested that Kalamazoo County, local townships, and other partners should also play a role in supporting tree-planting efforts. He stated that the Road Commission's responsibility extends beyond maintaining the roadway itself and includes being good stewards of the road right-of-way. He expressed support for developing a policy that encourages the expansion of the county's tree canopy. He also voiced concern about the long-term decline of tree canopy, noting that several tree species have been lost or significantly impacted during his lifetime, including ash, oak, and maple trees. He stated that he would like to see efforts made to help restore and preserve tree cover for future generations. He further commented that, where possible, replacement trees should be planted outside of the public road right-of-way. He encouraged adjacent property owners to consider how their properties could contribute to maintaining and expanding the county's tree canopy. He concluded by stating that the

proposed policy should be part of a broader, long-term approach to promoting tree planting while continuing to work with residents to preserve existing trees whenever feasible.

Commissioner Pawloski stated that he would prefer to bring the proposed tree replacement policy back for Board consideration under New Business in four weeks, noting that Commissioner Kennedy would be absent from the meeting scheduled in two weeks. In the interim, he encouraged staff to continue exploring grant opportunities and other potential funding sources to assist property owners who may experience financial hardship with the proposed 50 percent cost share. He expressed interest in developing a process to provide additional financial assistance based on need. He also suggested implementing the tree replacement policy as an 18-month pilot program. He stated that, at the conclusion of the pilot period, the Board could evaluate the program's effectiveness, costs, participation, and overall performance before determining whether to continue or modify the policy. He read the Draft Tree Replacement Policy in full:

The Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo has long recognized the importance of roadside trees in enhancing the county's aesthetic character, environmental health, and adjacent property values. As part of the Board's continued commitment to balancing infrastructure improvements with environmental stewardship, staff has developed a draft Tree Replacement policy establishing a structured approach to tree replacement associated with road improvement projects.

The proposed policy provides for a cost-sharing framework under which the Board may contribute up to fifty percent (50%) of the cost of replacement trees, with the remaining cost borne by participating property owners. This approach supports responsible replanting efforts while maintaining safe and functional roadside clear zones. The draft policy emphasizes the use of native species, adherence to professional planting standards, and implementation of an annual cost-share program.

Additionally, the policy includes an enhanced replacement option for projects related to road widening, reconstruction, or other improvements funded through specialized federally funded grant programs. Under this provision, up to two (2) replacement trees may be planted for each one (1) tree removed following the same Board contribution of up to 50% of the cost of replacement trees.

All replacement trees must be planted in the vicinity of the tree(s) removed, outside of the road right-of-way (ROW), with sufficient spacing to promote healthy growth and avoid overcrowding with existing vegetation. The draft policy establishes a general spacing guideline of approximately fifty (50) feet between trees.

If approved, staff will proceed with developing the annual species list, detailed cost-sharing guidelines, and corresponding budget allocations necessary for implementation of the program.

Staff has also reviewed Act 51 and confirmed that the Tree Replacement policy would be limited to trees removed as part of preservation or structural improvement projects. Trees removed in response to routine maintenance and service requests—such as those that have fallen into the roadway—would not be eligible for participation in this program for cost share utilizing Michigan Transportation Funds (MTF).

Implementation of this policy is subject to available revenue. The Board would need to allocate annual funds for this program based on the approved budget. Staff would monitor participation levels and adjust future budgets as needed to ensure sustainability. Staff has checked local pricing for 2" caliper (2" diameter at 6' above ground level) deciduous trees and confirmed the estimated cost for a single tree, including delivery and planting by the contractor, to range from \$500-\$800 each.

He added that you can have a canopy of trees grown full with mature trees still over the roadway outside the 66-foot roadway. There are plenty of examples of that in the county. If we do this right and plant these trees now, there will be, 50 years from now, 100 years from now, a good canopy over roads with them outside the road right-of-way.

Commissioner Kennedy asked for clarification regarding what information would be presented when the proposed tree replacement policy returned to the Board for consideration. Specifically, she asked whether the Board would receive additional information regarding potential partner organizations and other resources that could assist with implementation. Commissioner Pawloski responded that the Board would be considering action on the policy at that meeting. He stated that, in the interim, staff would continue refining the policy language and exploring grant opportunities and other funding sources to help offset the proposed 50 percent cost share for property owners who may experience financial hardship. Commissioner Kennedy also asked about the types of trees that would be

included in the replacement program. Staff responded that native tree species would be preferred and noted that coniferous trees would generally be avoided because they can become difficult to maintain when they encroach into the public road right-of-way. Commissioner Davis noted that the draft policy addressed this topic in the section directing staff to develop an annual approved species list. He explained that, if the policy is adopted, staff would establish and maintain the list of acceptable tree species, which would provide specific guidance regarding the types of trees to be planted through the program.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether the proposed tree replacement policy would apply to both primary and local road projects. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that the policy would apply to both. Commissioner Stehouwer noted that local road projects are typically funded through a cost-sharing arrangement between the Road Commission and the respective township and questioned whether townships would also be expected to participate in the tree replacement program. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that the tree replacement program would be separate from the roadway project itself and would not be funded as part of the project costs. Instead, the proposed tree replacement program would operate independently through the cost-sharing arrangement between the Road Commission and participating property owners. Commissioner Stehouwer stated that he would like to hear whether townships would be willing to participate as partners in the program. He suggested that, if additional partners were not available, the Board might wish to focus assistance on residents experiencing financial hardship. He added that, in his opinion, the Road Commission has higher budget priorities than funding a tree replacement program.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to support refining our approach to clear zone width so that it reflects the specific characteristics of each corridor, rather than a single standard applied uniformly across the program. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the RCKC was awarded an SS4A grant from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to reduce serious crashes and fatalities across roughly 130 miles of county roads. A significant portion of the program's safety benefit comes from roadside hazard elimination, which removes trees, brush, and other fixed objects from within the road's clear zone – the recoverable area beside the travel lane where a driver who leaves the roadway has room to slow down or stop before striking a fixed object. As originally scoped, the program defined this clear zone as a flat 33 feet from the center of the road within the RCKC's right-of-way (ROW), regardless of a corridor's traffic speed, volume, or roadside slope.

Since the program began marking trees in the fall of 2024, RCKC staff have received feedback from residents along the affected corridors. While there has been support for this effort, some residents oppose removing mature trees in front of their properties. Staff recognizes that this feedback reflects several distinct, and equally legitimate, sets of concerns: residents who value the trees for their environmental and aesthetic contribution to the corridor; families for whom certain trees hold personal significance; and the RCKC's own responsibility, and that of our federal grantor, to reduce roadside crash severity along these corridors. Staff have taken this feedback seriously, followed up directly with numerous residents, met internally to review, and weighed the options available to RCKC in response.

At the Board meeting on June 30, 2026, staff recommended a design revision that considered national and state-accepted practices for establishing clear zone widths. Rather than applying a single, uniform clear zone distance across all roads in the program, this guidance supports refining our approach so that the clear zone reflects the specific characteristics of each corridor, calibrated to traffic speed, volume, and roadside slope. Applying this guidance, staff provided 17 feet from the edge of the travel lane (28 feet from the center of the road) for 55-mile-per-hour roads in place of the previous 33-foot ROW limit. This revision would be implemented at the design stage of each project, on a corridor-by-corridor basis, rather than through a formal amendment to the RCKC's FHWA grant application. This is presented as a general, program-wide example to give residents an idea of the impacts; it is not a ceiling, and individual projects may still require a wider clear zone where conditions such as horizontal curves, reconstruction, widening or steeper roadside slopes warrant it.

At the June 30 meeting, some residents shared that this proposal is not enough and that they are petitioning for an amendment to the grant to remove the clear zone improvements and limit tree removals to dead/dying trees and intersections. Staff cannot recommend an amendment to exclude roadside hazard elimination from the grant, as this would remove one of the program's core safety benefits and is not something staff can put

forward as sound engineering practice. The current proposal from staff offers a practical middle ground, meaningfully reducing the number of healthy, mature trees removed under the program while preserving the safety benefit the SS4A grant is intended to deliver, and it does not require FHWA's approval of a grant amendment to implement. The revised approach to clear zone improvements would apply across the full SS4A program. Exact figures will not be known until each corridor completes the tree survey process, but staff currently estimate that this change will reduce the tree portion of roadside hazard elimination from an initial program-wide estimate of approximately 8,000 trees to approximately 4,000. Staff also want to be clear with the Board and the public that this tree count includes dead and dying trees, and is not limited to healthy, mature trees. This recommended design revision best balances resident concerns, sound engineering practice, and the RCKC's obligations under the SS4A grant.

The proposed design revisions within the existing scope of the SS4A grant do not, by themselves, change the grant award or require additional RCKC funding at this time. Because exact tree counts and clearing limits will not be finalized until each corridor tree survey is complete, corridor-specific cost impacts will be evaluated prior to bid. With the reduction in overall tree removals, it is anticipated that additional dollars will now be available to address more miles of poor road surface conditions prior to the installation of rumble strips within the program.

He added that part of this safety grant program is road reconstruction and paving type projects. He explained the road reconstruction projects typically are widening the footprint of the road, which requires moving the road shoulder out and creating new drainage areas outside that shoulder area, which is, in essence, where a lot of these trees are located. Portage Road would be a great example of a road where we would still remove the trees to do the project even if we made even further adjustments to clear zone.

Ms. Cindy Johnson, 12568 South U Avenue, expressed support for the revised SS4A proposal, particularly the corridor-specific approach. She appreciated the Board's consideration of each roadway's unique characteristics and aesthetic value, citing U Avenue near 18th Street as an example of a scenic corridor with Prairie View Park, a white picket fence, and mature black walnut trees. She said she was pleased that roads with distinctive features would receive individual consideration. She also agreed with comments made by Commissioners Davis and Stehouwer regarding the importance of planting a diverse mix of native tree species. She noted that invasive insects and diseases, including oak wilt affecting trees on her own property, demonstrate the need for greater species diversity. She expressed concern about what she viewed as repeated tree removal along U Avenue east of Portage Road, noting that trees had already been removed during the road reconstruction project completed the previous year. She questioned why additional trees in the same corridor would now be removed as part of the SS4A project. She also asked why the recently reconstructed roadway had been chip sealed so soon after completion, observing that a similar treatment had occurred on another section of U Avenue several years earlier. While she acknowledged the explanation that chip sealing is intended to preserve pavement and extend the life of the roadway, she remained uncertain about the timing of the treatment.

Ms. Susie Fitzgibbon, 15651 Portage Road, stated that the Board's responsibility is to listen to the concerns of the public and noted that, although the commissioners are appointed rather than elected, many residents share her views. She expressed significant concern about applying a 55-mph clear zone standard to Portage Road. She described the section north of W Avenue as a heavily developed corridor with numerous intersections, residential subdivisions, commercial businesses, a railroad crossing, a public boat launch, and a school. She stated that the amount of activity along the corridor makes it impractical for motorists to travel at 55 mph, adding that even her GPS identifies the area as a 25-mph residential zone. She opposed removing trees along Portage Road, arguing that doing so would encourage higher vehicle speeds rather than improve safety. She also expressed concern that, despite the revised corridor-specific approach, Portage Road would still be subject to tree removal. She urged the Board to give special consideration to the unique characteristics of the Portage Road corridor before making a final decision.

Ms. Joddi Witt, 10518 Riverview Dr, stated that this was her third Road Commission meeting and said she was encouraged by the Board's willingness to listen to public input. She acknowledged that the commissioners have a difficult job and remarked that Kalamazoo County residents are deeply attached to their trees and landscapes. She shared that she is working to preserve the walnut trees on her property and said she would be following the corridor plans for her area closely. While recognizing that Portage Road has received significant attention, she noted that

Riverview Drive is also an important corridor to her because of its scenic, tree-lined character. She stated that she supports removing certain roadside hazards along Riverview Drive and observed that the affected property owners generally appear to support those removals, although she acknowledged that not all residents share that view. She also asked for clarification regarding the Road Commission's straddle tree policy. She explained that she had measured her trees and believed they might qualify under the guideline but wanted to know how far into the right-of-way a tree could be located and still be preserved. Commissioner Pawloski noted if a tree is on the 17-foot line, it would stay. Managing Director Bartholomew added measuring from the edge of the lane which is 11 feet from the center of the road, or the white line, if there's a white line present, any portion of that tree is outside that 17 feet the tree would stay.

Commissioner Davis expressed support for the proposed policy but raised a question regarding roads with posted speed limits below 55 mph. He noted that the staff presentation focused on a 17-foot clear zone for 55 mph roadways and asked what criteria would apply to corridors posted at lower speeds, such as 45 or 35 mph. He questioned whether different clear zone standards would apply or whether additional modifications to the policy would be necessary for those corridors. County Engineer Ryan Minkus responded that staff had been reviewing the posted speed limits along the affected corridors and found that some road segments are posted as low as 35 mph. He explained that American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidance establishes recommended clear zone widths based on both the posted speed limit and roadside slope. He stated that the previously discussed 17-foot clear zone represents a conservative standard for 55 mph roadways and that lower speed limits would generally warrant narrower clear zones. He added that staff continues to evaluate the applicable guidance, including how to revise surveys that had originally been marked using the 33-foot standard. He also noted that the AASHTO guidance provides a range of acceptable clear zone widths, allowing staff flexibility to determine the most appropriate treatment for each corridor. Commissioner Davis then asked whether the proposed motion, which calls for refining the clear zone approach to reflect the specific characteristics of each corridor, would provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate these corridor-specific evaluations. County Engineer Minkus confirmed that it would.

Commissioner Stehouwer stated that he appreciated the presentation provided by Managing Director Bartholomew and County Engineer Minkus to the County Board of Commissioners. He commented that the presentation was well done, that County Commissioners asked thoughtful questions, and that they received valuable information and feedback during the discussion. He also noted that several Road Commissioners and staff participated in the July 13 site tour to visit a number of the project corridors. He said the tour demonstrated the Board's and staff's commitment to investing the time and effort necessary to better understand the project areas and evaluate the concerns raised by residents.

Commissioner Kennedy thanked staff for their presentations and the work they had done on the project. She noted that she participated in the July 13 site tour, explaining that it is difficult to make informed decisions without seeing the affected areas firsthand. She said the tour provided a valuable opportunity to view the corridors from both the residents' perspective and the Board's perspective, allowing her to better understand the concerns that had been raised. She also expressed appreciation to staff for revisiting the clear zone approach and for taking the time to meet with community members to address their concerns. She acknowledged that reevaluating the project and developing a revised approach was not an easy task and thanked staff for their willingness to incorporate public feedback into the decision-making process.

Commissioner Stehouwer remarked that he had not personally received any calls from residents regarding tree removal, although he had heard concerns about the issue while attending several township board meetings. He also noted that a County Commissioner had shared that similar comments had been raised during township meetings. He encouraged residents to use the Road Commission's service request system to communicate concerns. He explained that service requests may be submitted by phone or online and emphasized that doing so creates a formal record of the concern with the Road Commission. He noted that the system can be used to report a wide variety of issues and cited AB Avenue as an example of a location where residents could submit service requests regarding their concerns.

Commissioner Thompson expressed his appreciation to both staff and the members of the public who participated in the discussion. He thanked staff for taking the time to reevaluate the project and citizens for sharing their concerns throughout the process. He described the revised approach as a reasonable compromise, acknowledging that it is not always possible to satisfy everyone. He also recognized the need to work within the project's budget and grant requirements while making meaningful adjustments to address public feedback. He concluded by thanking everyone involved, noting that although the process required considerable time and effort, it resulted in a positive compromise.

Commissioner Davis observed that although reducing the number of trees to be removed could generate cost savings, much of that savings would likely be offset by the additional staff time and effort required to evaluate each corridor individually. He noted that the more detailed corridor-specific reviews and engineering analysis would require significant additional work, meaning there would not necessarily be a substantial amount of uncommitted funding remaining. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that the original estimated cost for the tree removal portion of the project was approximately \$8 million. He explained that reducing the number of trees by roughly half could lower that cost to approximately \$4 million, creating significant savings. While he acknowledged that the revised corridor evaluations would require additional engineering and staff effort, he stated that those costs would not approach the approximately \$4 million difference. He further explained that the Road Commission's Federal Highway Administration contact had advised that if roadway conditions changed, the remaining grant funds could be redirected to resurface roads whose pavement condition had deteriorated to the point that they would no longer be suitable candidates for rumble strip installation. As a result, staff's intent would be to use any available savings to pave additional road segments that were not included in the original project scope.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether engineering costs were eligible expenses under the grant. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that consulting engineering services are eligible for reimbursement under the grant, noting that while engineering costs are not always included in federal aid projects, they are allowable under this program. The Board acknowledged that any savings realized from reducing the amount of tree removal would remain within the grant program and could be redirected toward additional roadway resurfacing projects consistent with the grant requirements. Discussion continued...

Commissioner Pawloski noted that out of the 130 total miles covered under the SS4A program, 74 miles are planned to have shoulder rumble strips, while 56 miles will not have them due to the presence of bike lanes. He emphasized that the decision to exclude rumble strips from certain roads was the result of extensive consultation with the bicycle club and cycling community. He acknowledged that this collaboration had been a longstanding practice, mentioning several former commissioners who were actively involved in working with the bicycle club, including Commissioner Thom Brennan, Commissioner Mike Boersma, Commissioner Deb Buccholtz, and Commissioner David Worthams. He stated that after many months and years of consultation, the county developed a master plan and bike route plan, and that this collaborative approach has been taken very seriously over the years. He expressed his personal support for the decisions made regarding rumble strips, acknowledging that it represents a balancing act between the safety needs of the general traveling public and the needs of bicyclists. He concluded by expressing his support for how staff arrived at their conclusions on this matter and wanted to make sure the public was aware of the thoughtful and consultative process that led to the current approach regarding rumble strips across the program.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

Mr. Bob DePauw, 8219 W AB Avenue, thanked Commissioner Davis for encouraging him to attend the meeting, noting that he had been unaware of the Board meetings prior to their conversation. He stated that he has lived on his road for nearly 33 years and, during that time, had never experienced flooding. As a result, he questioned the necessity of the ditching work that had recently been completed. He referenced a recent news story about a homeowner who experienced flooding for the first time in 35 years, acknowledging that drainage issues can sometimes arise unexpectedly. However, he maintained that there had been no historical flooding concerns on his road to justify the work that was performed. He also expressed appreciation for the Board, stating that, as a former

engineer with 35 years of experience, he understood the challenges of responding to public concerns and recognized that commissioners often hear more criticism than praise. He questioned the contractor selection process, asking whether contractor qualifications and equipment capabilities are evaluated in addition to project cost. He cited the stump grinding work as an example, stating that the contractor's equipment was not large enough to grind the stumps to the desired depth and suggesting that equipment capability should be considered during the bidding process. He also encouraged the Road Commission to improve communication with residents by providing clearer project schedules and timelines, including information about the handling of removed trees and excavated soil. He noted that topsoil generated during the ditching work was hauled away and suggested that residents should have been offered the opportunity to keep it. He questioned why trees on the western end of the road had not been removed during work completed approximately two years earlier, stating that the trees have continued to grow and now appear to be affecting drainage in that area.

Suzie Fitzgibbon, 15651 Portage Road, responded to comments made earlier in the meeting regarding roadside tree removal. She disagreed with the comparison between private developers removing trees and the Road Commission's work within the public right-of-way, stating that the right-of-way is publicly owned and maintained on behalf of taxpayers. She emphasized that, unlike private developers, the Road Commission is accountable to the public for decisions affecting those areas. She also requested clarification regarding the term "all-season road." She explained that, based on a brief internet search, she understood it to mean a roadway that cannot be closed for more than two days, but said she was uncertain whether that matched the Road Commission's use of the term. Returning to Portage Road, she reiterated that the section between W Avenue and XY Avenue functions more as a neighborhood corridor than a typical rural roadway. She noted the presence of a school, a public boat launch, residential developments, numerous driveways, and multiple intersections. She expressed concern that removing trees along that stretch would encourage higher vehicle speeds, creating additional safety concerns for children, boat traffic, and residents entering and exiting their properties. She also remarked that her GPS identifies the area as a 25-mph residential roadway, reflecting what she believes to be the character of the corridor.

Brad Sadowski, 1963 East Y Avenue, stated that he had not originally intended to speak but wished to clarify several points. Responding to Vice Chair Stehouwer's comment that he had not received calls regarding the tree removal proposal, he noted that nearly 2,000 petition signatures, many accompanied by written comments, had already been submitted. He suggested that residents had chosen to express their concerns through the petition process rather than by telephone. He also emphasized that the petitions were submitted specifically in opposition to the proposed tree removal, whether the original proposal involving approximately 8,000 trees or the revised proposal involving approximately 4,000 trees. While acknowledging that some petition comments included suggestions such as lowering speed limits or other safety measures, he stated that the central purpose of the petitions was to oppose the removal of roadside trees. He expressed concern that some comments during the meeting appeared to misinterpret the intent of the petitions and encouraged the Board to review the petition comments carefully so that everyone had a clear and accurate understanding of the concerns being expressed.

Ms. Georgia Evans, 830 East U Avenue, thanked the Board for visiting U Avenue during the recent site tour, stating that she appreciated the opportunity for commissioners to see the corridor firsthand and better understand the concerns she had raised at previous meetings. She questioned whether anyone who participated in the tour believed it would be appropriate to drive 55 mph along the winding and curving sections of U Avenue. She stated that, in her opinion, motorists could not safely travel at that speed on the roadway and that doing so would not reflect typical driving behavior. She recommended that the Road Commission evaluate reducing the speed limit on U Avenue from Portage Road to US-131 to 45 mph. She noted that the section near Prairie View Park is already posted at 45 mph and pointed to the S-curves farther west as additional justification for extending the lower speed limit throughout the corridor. She asked the Board to consider the recommendation and requested that staff evaluate the proposal. She also stated that she had not yet heard how the revised corridor-specific approach would affect roadway segments posted at 45 mph. She noted that a 45-mph roadway differs significantly from a 55-mph roadway and asked County Engineer Ryan Minkus to comment on her proposal to reduce the speed limit along that section of U Avenue.

Managing Director Bartholomew announced that a Township Supervisors Meeting was scheduled to be held at the Road Commission the following day at 9:30 a.m. He also noted that an additional site tour of project corridors with Road Commissioners was scheduled for August 7 at 9:00 a.m., departing from the Road Commission. He reported that crews were currently chip sealing Sprinkle Road from Business Loop I-94 north to the Kalamazoo River Bridge. He stated that chip seal operations were expected to be completed by early that afternoon, although lane closures would remain in place. Crews planned to complete additional sweeping overnight, followed by fog sealing the next day, with pavement markings to be installed shortly thereafter. He also provided an update on the 2025 chip seal corrective work previously authorized by the Board. He reminded the Board that it had approved \$300,000 to repair four chip seal projects that experienced excessive stone loss due to an emulsion that did not meet specifications because of excessive viscosity, resulting in poor adhesion between the emulsion and aggregate. One of the affected projects was 29th Street, from N Avenue to S Avenue, a segment that also served as a detour during the Sprinkle Road project. He explained that the corrective work had been challenging because surface conditions varied significantly, with some areas retaining aggregate while others were left with little more than the emulsion layer. The chip seal application on that project had been completed that morning, with sweeping, fog sealing, and pavement marking scheduled to follow later in the week. He added that staff would continue monitoring the repaired roadway closely, particularly during periods of extreme heat. He explained that pavement temperatures can reach approximately 140 degrees, causing the emulsion to soften and migrate through the aggregate. If necessary, additional stone would be applied to maintain a safe driving surface and prevent vehicles from tracking into the exposed emulsion.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the chip seal work completed with the emulsion that failed to meet specifications had been performed by Road Commission crews or by a contractor. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that the work occurred during the previous construction season and involved a combination of Road Commission crews and contractors. He added that, beginning with the current construction season, the Road Commission had transitioned away from using contractors for chip seal application by renting and purchasing its own distributor equipment. Commissioner Davis then asked whether there had been any repercussions for the contractor or supplier for providing material that did not meet specifications. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that there were no contractual penalties because the bid specifications in place at the time did not include provisions addressing materials that failed to meet specifications. He stated that the Road Commission has since revised its procurement process to require suppliers to provide a certified batch test showing the emulsion meets specifications before each delivery. Managing Director Bartholomew noted that one challenge with emulsion testing is that comprehensive laboratory testing typically requires four to five days, while the material is delivered and used the same day. He reported that all emulsion delivered during the current construction season had met specification. He further explained that the material supplied the previous year had an excessively high viscosity because it contained too much asphalt cement. Ironically, he noted that material actually cost the supplier more to manufacture than emulsion meeting the required specification.

Commissioner Kennedy commented on the speed at which a truck passed a Road Commission employee who was placing a traffic cone during work on Sprinkle Road. She said that observing the work firsthand gave her a greater appreciation for the challenges and risks faced by road crews, noting that it is an entirely different perspective when watching employees work in live traffic. She thanked the Road Commission staff for the work they do and expressed her appreciation for their efforts to keep both workers and the traveling public safe.

Commissioner Davis noted that several members of the public had raised questions about reducing speed limits and suggested it would be helpful to clarify the Road Commission's role in that process. He asked Managing Director Bartholomew to explain the Road Commission's authority regarding speed limits. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the Road Commission does not establish speed limits. He stated that speed limits are determined through a process involving the Michigan State Police, typically following a resolution from the local township requesting a traffic and engineering study. He explained that the Michigan State Police conducts the study and, based on factors including the 85th percentile speed of existing traffic, determines the appropriate posted speed limit. He noted that the Road Commission's role is limited to installing the speed limit signs once the speed has been established and emphasized that the Road Commission does not have the authority to set or change speed

limits. Commissioner Stehouwer added that posted speed limits are generally based on actual driver behavior rather than being determined by the Road Commission. He explained that the Michigan State Police establishes speed limits by conducting a traffic and engineering study that considers the 85th percentile speed of motorists using the roadway. He noted that roadway characteristics, such as school zones, residential development, and other site-specific conditions, may also be considered as part of the evaluation. However, he emphasized that the Road Commission does not determine speed limits, and that the posted speed is ultimately based on the findings of the traffic study conducted by the Michigan State Police.

Commissioner Pawloski asked Managing Director Bartholomew to explain the difference between a regular road and an all-season road. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that all-season roads are generally part of the primary road system, although a limited number of local roads are also designated as all-season routes. He stated that the distinction between all-season and non-all-season roads is primarily related to how the roadway performs during the winter freeze and spring thaw cycle. He explained that during the winter, the roadway foundation freezes and expands. As temperatures rise in the spring, the underlying aggregate base begins to thaw, temporarily reducing its ability to support heavy truck traffic. As a result, non-all-season roads are typically subject to seasonal weight restrictions to protect the roadway from damage during this period. He noted that all-season roads are constructed with a reinforced road base designed to withstand heavy vehicle loads even during the spring thaw. Because of this enhanced structural design, all-season roads do not require seasonal weight restrictions. As an example, he referenced Portage Road south of W Avenue, explaining that once it is reconstructed as an all-season road, it will no longer be subject to spring weight restrictions. He added that constructing an all-season road often requires roadway widening, ditch improvements, and other infrastructure work that can necessitate roadside tree removal independent of the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program.

Commissioner Pawloski mentioned that he received an email from a resident who was concerned about having a tree down with a power line entangled in it. The resident was confused about whose responsibility it was. He explained that when trees are in contact with or interfere with overhead power lines, the Road Commission does not perform the work until Consumers Energy has addressed the utility lines. Managing Director Bartholomew added that Road Commission crews use voltage detection equipment to identify potential electrical hazards and do not approach trees or work areas involving energized power lines. He emphasized that members of the public should also avoid such situations and allow the utility company to safely address them.

Commissioner Pawloski shared that he had received an email from a resident concerning a traffic signal in Texas Township that went dark following a storm-related power outage. He explained that the Road Commission's traffic signals are equipped with battery backup systems that typically provide power for approximately six hours before the signals become completely inoperative if commercial power has not been restored. In response to a question about placing temporary stop signs at intersections with dark traffic signals, Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the Road Commission does not install temporary stop signs or convert the intersection to a four-way stop during power outages. He stated that doing so can create confusion once power is restored, as motorists may be uncertain whether the temporary stop signs or the traffic signals control the intersection. Managing Director Bartholomew further explained that, under Michigan traffic law, a dark traffic signal does not automatically become a four-way stop. He stated that the major roadway retains the right-of-way, a point that was confirmed by the Road Commission's engineering staff. He acknowledged, however, that many motorists mistakenly treat dark signals as four-way stops. While the Road Commission does not have traffic enforcement authority, he noted that motorists generally stopping and proceeding cautiously has, in practice, helped reduce conflicts during power outages.

Commissioner Kennedy had no report.

Commissioner Davis reported that he and Commissioner Thompson attended the recent Cooper Township Board meeting, where there was considerable discussion regarding proposed battery storage facilities and data centers. He noted that those topics would likely be discussed further at the upcoming Township Supervisors Meeting. He also stated that the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program was discussed during the meeting. He

said there appeared to be an appreciation for the Road Commission's efforts to improve roadway safety, while also expressing a desire from those in attendance to preserve more roadside trees and reduce the number of trees removed where possible.

Commissioner Thompson reported that the next two Board of Public Works (BPW) meetings have been canceled. He noted that the Board's next scheduled meeting will be held later in the year.

Commissioner Stehouwer reported that, while he had not attended any formal township board meetings, he did attend an open house for Kalamazoo Township's new police administrative complex on Douglas Avenue. He described the facility as impressive and noted that the approximately 50-acre site required tree removal, extensive grading, and other site work as part of its development. He added that he found discussions with the former police chief and the project architects to be informative. He also described the time he has spent familiarizing himself with roads and roadside tree conditions throughout the county. He stated that on July 3 he traveled approximately 165 miles to observe corridors associated with the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, and on July 11 he visited AB Avenue. He noted that he regularly drives and bicycles on county roads, including Riverview Drive, G Avenue, and roads in Alamo and Oshtemo Townships, and said that when residents raise concerns, he makes an effort to visit the locations personally and, when appropriate, meet with residents. He stated that, although the Board had received petitions and heard public comments regarding the tree removal proposal, no residents had contacted him directly by telephone. He emphasized that the commissioners devote significant time to their responsibilities and cited the July 13 site tour as an example of the Board's commitment to understanding the issues firsthand. He encouraged residents to use the Road Commission's service request system, either by telephone or through the online portal. He explained that service requests create a formal record of a concern, allow staff to provide an official response, and establish a documented history that can be reviewed by commissioners. While acknowledging that the process may seem bureaucratic, he stressed that it is an important tool for tracking and addressing resident concerns. He concluded by saying that, although he enjoys serving on the Board, the recent workload has been substantial, and he encouraged residents to communicate directly with commissioners when they have concerns.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that he recently attended Brady Township and Texas Township board meetings, where he provided updates on the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program. He also congratulated Kalamazoo Township on the groundbreaking for its new Township Hall, noting that although he was unable to attend the ceremony, he later visited the site and observed that construction had begun. He referred to the project as a new Township Hall community campus. He thanked Manager Kinney of the Kalamazoo Conservation District for attending the meeting and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to continue working together on tree planting and related initiatives. He noted that they had met previously to discuss potential grant opportunities and extended an invitation for a future tour of the Road Commission's facilities. He also shared that he had attended a Westwood Neighborhood Association meeting approximately two months earlier, where concerns were raised about Drake Road between West Main Street and Squires Drive. He reported that the issue discussed at that meeting had since been addressed. He thanked everyone who contacted him regarding the storm-related power outages in Texas Township over the holiday weekend and expressed his appreciation to Road Commission staff for their response efforts. He also noted that local fire departments had received county grant funding to purchase Road Closed signs for use during incidents involving downed power lines. He added that, unlike the Road Commission, fire departments are eligible for reimbursement from utility companies for their response time. He thanked staff for their presentations to the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners, noting that they were well received. He also expressed his support for the revised SS4A approach, describing the reduction in the estimated number of trees to be removed—from approximately 8,000 to 4,000—as a positive compromise. He added that he anticipated additional refinements would occur on lower-speed corridors as staff continued to evaluate roadway speeds, slopes, and other corridor-specific engineering factors.

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis, Kennedy

July 14, 2026 – Board Meeting

Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

The meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, July 28, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Andy Davis, Randy Thompson

Absent: Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Callaway, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hoekstra, and Administrative Specialist Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Kalamazoo County is to apply its expertise, energy, and resources to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible while supporting economic development and enhancing quality of life throughout the county. We are committed to maintaining a road system that is safe, efficient, and reliable for public travel.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the July 13, 2026, County Road Commissioners Road Tour minutes and July 14, 2026 regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented. Managing Director Bartholomew highlighted several of the larger vendor expenses, including Asphalt Materials at \$726,637 for chip seal and fog seal operations, Lakeland Asphalt at \$402,630 for resurfacing and rotomilling, Verplank Trucking at \$186,212 for trap rock delivery, Jensen Bridge at \$83,715 for culvert inventory restocking, Frontline Maintenance at \$83,592 for storm cleanup tree removal, and Hubbell, Roth & Clark at \$81,137 for engineering services. Commissioner Davis commented that the significant expenditures reflect the high level of road work and construction activity currently underway.

Payroll Account:	\$	245,163.49
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Vendor Account:	\$	2,030,007.34
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve Commissioner Pawloski's expense report for \$168.78 as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson

County Commissioner John Gisler expressed his opposition to the childcare millage and encouraged voters to reject the proposal. He stated that childcare funding should be identified within the County's existing budget rather than through a new millage and noted that this was his final opportunity to address the matter before the election. He announced that a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Youth Sports Center, located north of West Main Street and east of US-131, would be held on Friday at 10:00 a.m. Due to active construction at the site, attendees

would be shuttled to the ceremony. He emphasized the importance of the facility to Kalamazoo County, noting that it would reduce the need for residents to travel to cities such as South Bend, Fort Wayne, or Lansing for basketball and volleyball tournaments. He also referenced a written summary and a recorded two-hour panel discussion held in June at Kalamazoo Valley Community College regarding data centers. He noted that at least two of the five townships he represents had enacted 12-month moratoriums on data center activity while the communities gathered additional information. Lastly, he announced that the Kalamazoo County Fair would begin on August 4, which coincided with Election Day. He highlighted elephant ears and the Saturday evening rodeo at 8:00 p.m. as notable attractions and noted that the rodeo required an additional admission fee.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded, to approve the preliminary plan for the Woodbrook Condominiums, located in Sections 25 and 36 of Prairie Ronde Township. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that Woodbrook Condominiums is an existing condominium neighborhood located off 11th Street just South of XY Avenue in Prairie Ronde Township. This proposed development will add 21 units to the existing neighborhood between Prairie Ronde Road and 11th Street. Each proposed lot will be between 0.6 and 1.2 acres in size, with the entire proposed development area being 21.30 acres.

The proposed development includes the construction of two new roads, Blazing Star Trail and Wheatgrass Path. Blazing Star Trail is approximately 1,500ft in length and extends to the south from Deer Run Road, terminating in a permanent cul-de-sac. Wheatgrass Path is approximately 450ft in length and connects the new Blazing Star Trail to existing Prairie Ronde Road. Both proposed roads will be constructed as a public local road (28-foot width asphalt, 66-foot Right-of-Way) and will include a storm drainage system. Stormwater will be collected in catch basins and discharged to a retention basin on the South end of the development. A 20ft wide drainage easement will allow access to the basin. A drainage agreement will be required once construction is complete, as the basin is located outside of the public road right-of-way. The property is currently undeveloped, so appropriate soil erosion and sedimentation control measures will be implemented throughout construction.

Currently, the existing adjacent neighborhood does not have water or sanitary sewer. Each lot will utilize individual well and septic systems, which will be approved by the Kalamazoo County Health Department. There are no non-motorized facilities being proposed within this development.

We have reviewed the layout and found it to comply with the RCKC Construction Guidelines Policy. A copy of the preliminary layout is attached for reference.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the Traffic Control Orders (TCOs) 1718-1720, Comstock Township for the Managing Director's signature. Managing Director Bartholow shared a TCO is used by the RCKC whenever establishing speed controls, parking controls, and intersection controls. A TCO is a legal document for which a traffic violation may be issued by law enforcement. Both speed and parking controls are issued by the MSP after investigation by both MSP and RCKC staff. Intersection controls are issued by the RCKC without MSP investigation.

Intersection control refers to the vehicular right-of-way at an unsignalized intersection. RCKC staff reviews traffic volume, sight distance, and approach speed when determining intersection control. Intersection control can either be stop, yield, or uncontrolled. The Michigan Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD) also provides guidance and standardization traffic control devices. We also have an RCKC Traffic Control brochure on the topic, along with our Sign Policy. Often, initial intersection control TCOs are submitted to the RCKC Board at the time of acceptance of a roadway. The RCKC team also reviews intersection controls as needed, with projects or by service requests submitted.

The TCOs before the Board for consideration are:

- #1718 – Wesley Circle to STOP for G Avenue, Comstock Township
- #1719 – Little Red Avenue to STOP for Wesley Circle, Comstock Township
- #1720 – Little Red Avenue to STOP for Wild Meadow Street, Comstock Township

At the June 16th, 2026, meeting, the RCKC Board approved the final acceptance of the Wesley Farms Plat. Wesley Farms included the construction of Wesley Circle off G Avenue and terminated with a cul-de-sac. Little Red

Avenue, which was an existing stub road, was extended to connect Wesley Circle to existing Wild Meadow Street. The roads are now complete, and new signage is required at these intersections.

Commissioner Davis inquired about the costs associated with putting up new signage. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that a typical sign installation ranges from approximately \$200 to \$500, depending on the type of sign and the number of posts required.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to rescind the previous and approve the revised Schoolcraft Township Local Road Contract for the Chair's signature. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the reason for the revision was that when the Road Commission staff were preparing for a rubber-modified chip seal project, they discovered that the original contract had not properly identified the grant funding source. Specifically, a grant from EGLE (Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) in the amount of \$14,761 had been included under the township's additional funds rather than being listed separately as grant dollars. This grant was intended to fund half of the cost of the rubber-modified chip seal project included in that contract. To correct this oversight, staff requested that the Board rescind the original contract and approve the revised version, which properly separates and identifies the \$14,761 in EGLE grant funding from the township's own contribution.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis

Managing Director Bartholomew announced that, immediately following the Board meeting, a joint liaison meeting would be held between the Board leadership (Chair and Vice Chair), Kalamazoo County liaisons, and the County Administrator. He reminded the Board that the next Road Tour is scheduled for Friday, August 7, at 9:00 a.m. at the Road Commission. Commissioners planning to attend were asked to notify staff in advance for headcount purposes. He added that, weather permitting, the tour may include a visit to observe the rubber-modified chip seal operation. He reported that the Southwest Council Meeting is scheduled for August 10 at the Cass County Road Commission. He noted that Commissioners Pawloski and Stehouwer planned to attend, along with three or four staff members. He also announced that the County Road Association (CRA) Commissioners Seminar will be held September 27–28 in Mount Pleasant. Commissioners interested in attending were asked to contact Administrative Specialist Rider to register. He noted that County Engineer Ryan Minkus will be a presenter, speaking on the benefits of artificial intelligence at road agencies. He informed the Board that a newly developed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document regarding the SS4A grant had been posted that morning on the Road Commission's website under the SS4A tab and shared on the Road Commission's Facebook page. He offered to provide Commissioners with an electronic copy to assist in responding to public inquiries. He also announced that printed copies of the 2025 Annual Report were available at the back of the meeting room, noting that approximately 12 to 15 copies remained following a recent presentation to the Kalamazoo County Board.

Commissioner Pawloski raised a concern about ensuring that road work did not interfere with Election Day activities, recalling an issue that had occurred in the past. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that Public Relations Director Worden had proactively prepared and distributed a map identifying all Election Day polling locations throughout the organization to ensure staff were aware of the sites and could avoid scheduling work that would impact access. Commissioner Stehouwer added that he had noticed "Vote Here" signs while traveling on Douglas Avenue that morning and noted that there are nine early in-person absentee voting locations. He expressed his appreciation for the staff's proactive planning to prevent conflicts with Election Day activities.

Commissioner Davis stated that trees have been at the forefront of his thoughts as he has been traveling throughout the county and observing roadway conditions. He noted that the county has experienced significant tree canopy losses in the past, most notably the widespread loss of ash trees, which has largely been addressed through maintenance efforts. He expressed concern that oak wilt will become an increasingly significant issue over the next decade and encouraged the Board to begin planning and ensuring adequate maintenance funding is available to address the anticipated increase in tree removals resulting from the disease. He stated that he wanted to keep the issue on the Board's radar. He also thanked staff for preparing the informational document regarding the Safe

Streets for All (SS4A) grant. He stated that he believes the document will help residents better understand the project's priorities and the Road Commission's efforts to balance public safety with community input and concerns.

Commissioner Thompson concurred with Commissioner Davis's comments regarding the increasing number of tree-related issues along county roads. He noted that he has already received calls from residents about dead trees and has encouraged them to submit service requests through the Road Commission's established process. He also commended staff for preparing the informational document regarding the SS4A grant, describing it as excellent work. He stated that he had asked the Managing Director to distribute the document to all township supervisors and townships, emphasizing the importance of providing accurate information to local officials and the public.

Commissioner Stehouwer echoed the comments of the other Commissioners regarding the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) informational brochure, stating that it was very well prepared and that he had been receiving positive feedback from residents. He shared that he had received a call from a resident regarding trees and met with the resident early that morning, accompanied by a township supervisor, to review the location in person. While he acknowledged that the trees in question would likely need to be removed, he emphasized the importance of meeting with residents on-site to better understand their concerns. He noted that staff would further evaluate the location to determine whether any alternatives were available. He also reported that he had been on vacation for the past couple of weeks and, as a result, had not attended recent township meetings. He added that a lunch meeting previously scheduled with a township supervisor and a County Commissioner had been postponed and would be rescheduled.

Commissioner Pawloski noted that the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Youth Sports Complex is scheduled for Friday at 10:00 a.m. and stated that he plans to attend. He advised that if more than two Commissioners plan to attend, appropriate notice should be posted, and asked interested Commissioners to let him know. He announced that he will be absent from both Board meetings in September. He stated that he will be in Denver during the first meeting and in Las Vegas attending a convention during the second meeting. He expressed his appreciation to Commissioner Stehouwer for presiding over the meetings in his absence. He reminded the Board of the upcoming bus tour scheduled for the following Friday and stated that he plans to attend. He also noted that Commissioner Stehouwer was planning to attend and remarked that he had been unable to participate in the previous tour. He echoed Commissioner Gisler's comments regarding the recent data center forum held at KVCC, describing it as a well-organized event that presented multiple perspectives in a balanced manner. He noted that many township and county officials attended and encouraged anyone seeking additional information to watch the recorded presentation available through Public Media Network. He added that battery energy storage systems were also discussed during the forum. He thanked staff for being mindful of the August 4 primary election and for their efforts in planning around Election Day. He encouraged fellow Commissioners to attend the Commissioners Seminar on September 27–28 in Mount Pleasant, although he noted that he would be unable to attend because he would be returning from his convention. He also encouraged Commissioners to attend the upcoming Southwest Council meeting, stating that he plans to participate. In closing, he thanked staff for their outstanding work in preparing the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) informational flyer and for their continued efforts related to tree remarking and the revised policy. He noted that he has attended several community meetings, including a meeting of the South County Sewer and Water Authority, to explain the revised approach and answer questions from the public.

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis

The meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, August 11, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Larry Stehouwer, Andy Davis, Randy Thompson, Toni Kennedy

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hosekstra, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Operations Director Rusty McClain, Human Resources Director Debbie Hill, Project Superintendent Jeff Wayne, and Administrative Specialist Selena Rider.

Administrative Assistant Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Kalamazoo County is to apply its expertise, energy, and resources to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible while supporting economic development and enhancing quality of life throughout the county. We are committed to maintaining a road system that is safe, efficient, and reliable for public travel.

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the July 28, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented. Managing Director Bartholomew highlighted several of the larger vendor expenses, including Entech \$398,819 for the rubber modified chip seal contract, Lakeland Asphalt at \$277,731 for hot mix asphalt (HMA) resurfacing, Asphalt Materials at \$213,830 for chip seal and fog seal emulsion, and Vander Veen Excavating at \$172,817 for storm emergency clean-up, ditching and storm sewer. They also help with project prep work and they work on our service requests.

Payroll Account:	\$	226,804.62
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Vendor Account:	\$	1,514.316.87
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Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Stehouwer moved, and it was seconded to approve Commissioner Davis's expense report for \$153.97 as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Ms. Julie Ann Shabi, 915 Arthur Avenue, expressed concerns regarding drainage issues in the Eastwood neighborhood. She stated her understanding that the Road Commission focuses its efforts on a specific area of the county every ten (10) years and that Eastwood is the designated area for 2026. She noted that roads in the neighborhood lack sufficient pitch toward the catch basins, resulting in water pooling in low-lying areas. She indicated that the drainage concerns extend throughout an area approximately sixteen (16) blocks east to west and three (3) blocks north to south. She requested that proper grading and roadway pitch be considered when

resurfacing is performed to help ensure water drains toward the catch basins. She also noted that she has previously submitted service requests regarding the drainage concerns.

Attorney Joel Finnell provided Commissioner Pawloski with legal documents regarding a roadway defect on behalf of his client.

County Commissioner John Gisler briefly commented on the county fair, noting favorable weather and what appeared to be good attendance. He announced a farewell event for County Administrator Kevin Catlin that is scheduled for August 12 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Don Cooney Cultivation Center, formerly known as the Farmer's Market or Bank Street Market. He noted that the event would be an open, drop-in gathering and encouraged citizens and others interested to attend and wish the Administrator well. He expressed regret regarding the Administrator's departure and spoke positively of his service to the County.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded, to approve the neighborhood traffic calming plan for Casper Street in Comstock Township, consisting of one traffic circle and three speed humps as described. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that in 2021, the RCKC Board approved a policy allowing consideration of traffic calming on residential local streets. Under this policy, staff seeks a resident petition and township resolution of support, screens the location against qualifying criteria, and pursues enforcement and education first. If those efforts prove insufficient, a resident subcommittee works with RCKC staff to develop a traffic calming plan, which then goes to a public informational meeting and a neighborhood survey. Final approval rests with the RCKC Board, and installation typically occurs under permit by the township, at its own cost.

A petition was received in 2022 for traffic calming on Casper Street. The study area was later expanded to include Borgess Drive, Pristine Avenue, and Sunsprite Drive, all of which connect into the same neighborhood. A traffic engineering investigation found that traffic volumes on Borgess, Pristine, and Sunsprite were within normal levels for residential streets. Casper Street recorded the highest speeds in the study area, ranging from 24.8 to 32.9 mph on a posted 25 mph street.

License plate studies conducted during peak travel hours also identified meaningful cut-through traffic: 47% of vehicles on Casper Street entered the neighborhood from H Avenue, 30% of vehicles on Borgess Drive entered from Nazareth Road, and 17% of vehicles on Pristine Avenue entered from Nazareth Road.

Following the investigation, staff conducted an educational and enforcement campaign in 2024. A resident subcommittee then worked with staff to develop a neighborhood traffic calming plan, which was presented to residents at a public informational meeting, followed by a neighborhood survey.

Because Borgess Drive, Pristine Avenue, and Sunsprite Drive each cross into both Comstock and Kalamazoo Townships, survey results were tracked separately by township. Kalamazoo Township's roads did not show the same speeding concerns identified on Casper Street, and Kalamazoo Township has chosen to hold off on moving forward at this time, preferring to see how the treatments on Casper Street perform first. Because staff have already completed the traffic engineering analysis for the full study area, Kalamazoo Township's portion of the project could be brought back to the Board in the future if and when the Township is ready to proceed. This memo addresses Comstock Township only.

RCKC sent 50 surveys to Comstock Township residents on Borgess Drive, Casper Street, Pristine Avenue, and Sunsprite Drive and received 31 responses, 28 in favor and 3 opposed, with 4 additional online submissions excluded due to a name mismatch. This translates to a 62% response rate and 90% approval rate, well above the minimum thresholds of a 50% response rate and 67% approval rate set in our policy.

The resulting neighborhood traffic calming plan for Casper Street includes:

- One traffic circle at the intersection of Casper Street and Borgess Drive
- One speed hump on Casper Street between H Avenue and Borgess Drive
- One speed hump on Casper Street between Sunsprite Drive and Grandessa Drive
- One speed hump on Casper Street between Grandessa Drive and Pristine Avenue

Each calming feature is spaced approximately 500 feet from the next. The Comstock Township Fire Department attended the public informational meeting and has not raised concerns about the plan's effect on emergency response times.

Per draft minutes of their July 20, 2026, meeting, the Comstock Township Board voted unanimously to fund the estimated \$37,000 cost of the project using this year's and next fiscal year's budgets, with no special assessment to residents. Comstock Township has also expressed interest in contracting with RCKC to construct the improvements on the Township's behalf. If pursued, staff will bring the terms of that agreement to the Board for separate consideration.

Commissioner Kennedy asked Managing Director Bartholomew to explain traffic calming for the benefit of the community. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that traffic calming addresses speeding concerns in residential areas through education and enforcement, followed, if necessary, by engineering measures such as speed humps and traffic circles designed to physically slow traffic.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked about the anticipated construction timeline. Managing Director Bartholomew stated that the project would not be constructed in 2026 and would likely move forward in 2027, contingent upon finalizing an agreement with Comstock Township and confirmation of the Township's budget. Commissioner Stehouwer noted that residents initially raised the issue approximately seven years ago and expressed appreciation that the project was moving forward, while acknowledging the lengthy process.

Commissioner Thompson noted that the public should understand that projects of this nature take considerable time. He stated that the traffic calming initiative began while he was serving as Comstock Township Supervisor and expressed appreciation that it was progressing.

Commissioner Pawloski clarified that the traffic calming policy applies to local residential streets and not primary roads.

Commissioner Stehouwer asked whether any additional traffic calming proposals were under consideration. Managing Director Bartholomew stated that residents along adjacent roads in Kalamazoo Township were watching the Casper Street project and may consider pursuing traffic calming measures on the other three roads within the same plat in the future. County Engineer Minkus added that petitions have been received from residents in other areas of Kalamazoo Township and that he had worked with a Township law enforcement officer regarding potentially bringing the matter before the Township Board. He noted that there had been no recent movement and that, while petitions had been received, no additional locations were currently in the study phase pending direction from the Township.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to award the Winter Maintenance Services #2026-08 to Maintenance Masters Inc., K&H Tree Service LLC, and Apex Outdoor Solutions, low bidders meeting specifications with the option to extend annually for up to three one-year terms by mutual agreement of both parties. Managing Director Bartholomew shared The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) utilizes a "mix of fixes" approach to deliver effective and efficient winter maintenance services that meet public service expectations. Our winter operations incorporate RCKC staff, contracted hourly operators, and contractors assigned to designated plats. This approach provides flexibility, operational efficiency, and enhanced responsiveness during and after winter events.

Contracted winter maintenance services within specific plats have proven effective in maintaining a reasonable level of service, particularly due to expedited response times during snow and ice events. While RCKC team focuses on Level 1 and Level 2 priority routes during winter storms, our contractor team begins work immediately on Level 3 (low-volume primary and local roads), Level 4 (residential), and Level 5 (dead-end and cul-de-sac) routes.

Typically, residential areas are among the last to receive service. Utilizing contractors within designated plats allows for a quicker response, improving service levels in heavily populated neighborhoods. In addition, RCKC employs contracted hourly operators who operate RCKC-owned equipment and are compensated based on actual hours worked.

RCKC solicited additional bids this year for material application services only. This approach establishes competitive and equitable pricing for the defined scope of work. By separating material application services only, we were able to obtain pricing that more accurately reflects the cost of material application activities, allowing for a more consistent and transparent evaluation of bids while ensuring the selected contractor is compensated appropriately for the specific services being provided.

RCKC currently maintains a fleet of twenty-seven (27) snowplow trucks available for the upcoming winter season. Our operation relies on three (3) shifts consisting of RCKC staff, contractors, and occasionally seasonal employees to sustain current service levels. Currently, RCKC is fully staffed and utilizes thirty (30) RCKC RMO's, and three (3) Mechanics available for winter maintenance activities.

In addition to the various building industry associations, we sent out a public bid notice to contractors and construction/bidding entities, as well as posting on our website. We had seventeen (17) downloads of the bid specifications and received six (6) bid proposals.

The approved 2026 Budget Amendment #1 for winter maintenance expenditures (contractors and the RCKC Team) is \$2,403,000. This year we have spent \$1,745,389, and last year we spent \$3,455,496.

The majority of the bids exceed the prior bid's pricing, and we are utilizing contractors for three (3) additional plats this year. We will continue to closely monitor our budget while providing the best service possible during winter events. If needed, we will request a budget amendment to transfer other maintenance or project budgets to fund the winter maintenance budget.

Commissioner Thompson asked whether contractors apply Road Commission-owned material. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that all contractors use Road Commission material, noting that bulk purchasing provides a discounted rate and that a scale system is used to track material loads distributed and returned.

Commissioner Stehouwer raised concerns regarding slippery road conditions experienced during the previous winter in the Ross Township and Gull Lake area, particularly on narrow streets near the lake where sand or other traction material was needed. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the new material application pricing included in the bid allows the Road Commission to address these situations without incurring the cost of a full plowing event.

Commissioner Davis asked how a winter maintenance event is initiated. Managing Director Bartholomew explained that the superintendents on call contact the contractors, determine the appropriate accumulation rate, and establish the service timeline. Commissioner Davis questioned how the quality of contractor work is evaluated. Managing Director Bartholomew stated that superintendents monitor contractor performance in the field and compare contractor work with work performed by Road Commission crews in adjacent areas. He added that resident feedback is also considered, particularly when evaluating new contractors who may be unfamiliar with an area. Commissioner Davis expressed concern that the Westwood plat received only one bid and asked whether the bidding process could be improved to encourage additional participation. Managing Director Bartholomew acknowledged that attracting bidders has been a recurring challenge. He noted that a long-standing contractor who had worked with the Road Commission for approximately 25 to 30 years recently discontinued providing services and that other contractors are currently at capacity in their existing service areas and lack the workforce necessary to take on additional work.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Pawloski moved, and it was seconded, to approve the tree replacement policy as an 18-month trial. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo has long recognized the importance of roadside trees in enhancing the county's aesthetic character, environmental health, and adjacent property values. As part of the Board's continued commitment to balancing infrastructure improvements with environmental stewardship, staff has developed a draft Tree Replacement policy establishing a structured approach to tree replacement associated with road improvement projects.

The proposed policy provides for a cost-sharing framework under which the Board may contribute up to fifty percent (50%) of the cost of replacement trees, with the remaining cost borne by participating property owners. This approach supports responsible replanting efforts while maintaining safe and functional roadside clear zones. The draft policy emphasizes the use of native species, adherence to professional planting standards, and implementation of an annual cost-share program.

Additionally, the policy includes an enhanced replacement option for projects related to road widening, reconstruction, or other improvements funded through specialized Federally funded grant programs. Under this provision, up to two (2) replacement trees may be planted for each one (1) tree removed following the same Board contribution of up to 50% of the cost of replacement trees.

All replacement trees must be planted in the vicinity of the tree(s) removed, outside of the road right-of-way (ROW), with sufficient spacing to promote healthy growth and avoid overcrowding with existing vegetation. The draft policy establishes a general spacing guideline of approximately fifty (50) feet between trees.

To allow the Board to evaluate participation, costs, administrative impacts, and community response, staff recommends implementing the Tree Replacement Policy as an 18-month pilot program. Prior to the conclusion of the pilot, staff will provide the Board with an evaluation and recommendations on whether to continue, modify, or discontinue the program.

If approved, staff will proceed with developing the annual species list, detailed cost-sharing guidelines, and corresponding budget allocations necessary for implementation of the program.

Staff has also reviewed Act 51 and confirmed that the Tree Replacement policy would be limited to trees removed as part of preservation or structural improvement projects. Trees removed in response to routine maintenance and service requests—such as those that have fallen into the roadway—would not be eligible for participation in this program for cost share utilizing Michigan Transportation Funds (MTF).

Implementation of this policy is subject to available revenue. The Board would need to allocate annual funds for this program based on the approved budget. Staff would monitor participation levels and adjust future budgets as needed to ensure sustainability.

Staff has checked local pricing for 2" caliper (2" diameter at 6" above ground level) deciduous trees and confirmed the estimated cost for a single tree including delivery and planting by the contractor to range from \$500-\$800 each.

Commissioner Pawloski expressed support for the proposal, stating that the 18-month pilot program would provide an opportunity to evaluate costs and community participation before determining how to proceed. While the proposal provides for a 50/50 cost share, he encouraged staff to pursue additional funding sources and grant opportunities, including potential partnerships with the Conservation District, County, or other entities, to reduce costs for both the Road Commission and participating property owners. He emphasized the importance of pursuing additional funding during the pilot period. Commissioner Pawloski further stated that offering a tree-replacement option would help maintain community support for necessary tree removals while encouraging future tree-preservation efforts.

Commissioner Thompson expressed support for the proposal, noting that the program is not a cure-all but represents a step forward in working toward a solution.

Commissioner Kennedy questioned whether potential outside funding opportunities would be available to homeowners, the Road Commission, or both. Commissioner Pawloski responded that opportunities should be pursued for both, with the goal of reducing costs equally for the Road Commission and participating homeowners.

Commissioner Davis reiterated the importance of securing outside funding and stated that, although such funding is not included in the current proposal, the commitment to pursue it should be incorporated into the program to ensure it remains a priority. He also emphasized the need to inform the public about the program during the 18-month pilot period and encouraged staff and the Managing Director to ensure residents are made aware of the tree replacement option.

Managing Director Bartholomew stated that, historically, when a similar policy was in place, the policy information was provided to residents along with the tree removal notification form, making residents aware of the tree replacement option at the time they were notified of a removal.

Commissioner Kennedy asked when the 18-month pilot program would begin. Managing Director Bartholomew responded that, upon Board approval of the tree replacement policy, the program would apply going forward to any tree that had not yet been removed.

Commissioner Kennedy asked whether residents receiving notification would be required to make a decision on the same day the tree was scheduled for removal. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that the tree removal notification form would be sent to the resident along with information regarding the tree replacement policy. Residents would then have a two-week period to respond regarding the proposed tree removal and indicate whether they were interested in participating in the tree replacement program.

Commissioner Kennedy further asked whether the information provided to residents would include a list of community programs or other resources that may be available to assist with the cost of tree replacement. Managing Director Bartholomew stated that there are currently no identified programs available to provide such assistance. He

noted that staff is exploring potential assistance through the Kalamazoo Conservation District and that other opportunities may also be available, but there is no additional funding at this point.

Commissioner Pawloski clarified that the 18-month pilot period would encompass two tree-cutting seasons—this fall and the following fall—providing two seasons of data for the Board to review when evaluating the program at the conclusion of the pilot period. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed.

Commissioner Stehouwer expressed significant financial concerns regarding the proposal, estimating that replacing 3,000 trees at approximately \$500 each could result in an annual cost of \$1.5 million. He noted that the Road Commission already spends approximately \$2 million annually on tree removal and questioned the feasibility of committing an additional \$1.5 million in road funds for tree replacement. He added that it was time for the County to take a more active role in addressing the broader issue of tree removal and replacement. He also raised concerns regarding potential conflicts with utility lines and future non-motorized pathways and emphasized the need to consider tree replacement as part of a more comprehensive, county-wide approach. He strongly encouraged partners, and maybe it needs to be included in the policy.

Commissioner Davis expressed strong support for moving forward with the policy, noting that its implementation is subject to available revenue and therefore would not financially obligate the Board beyond available budget resources. He characterized the proposal as a first step and noted that the policy could be amended as additional information becomes available. He also referenced the significant community interest in tree preservation in recent months and acknowledged that additional work would be required before implementation, including development of an approved tree species list and budget.

Managing Director Bartholomew explained that, historically, staff compiled a list of residents interested in participating in the program over approximately a one-year period, which allowed the Road Commission to determine participation levels and budget accordingly. He noted that the policy provides for participation as revenue is available, allowing the Road Commission to limit its financial commitment based on available budget. He stated that the program could be made available to residents immediately; however, participating residents may not receive a replacement tree until the following fall, subject to available funding. By that time, staff would have a better understanding of the number of trees to include in the bid and could obtain accurate pricing for the replacement work.

Commissioner Pawloski stated that these considerations were why he supported the 18-month pilot program. In response to Commissioner Stehouwer's concerns, he emphasized that the Road Commission should not spend \$2 million in an effort to save \$1 million, as that would be financially detrimental. He stated that the pilot period would allow the Road Commission to collect data, evaluate costs, and consider relevant information and analysis before making an informed long-term decision. He also noted that the Road Commission previously had a similar tree replacement policy, which was discontinued shortly before he joined the Board.

Managing Director Bartholomew stated that the previous tree replacement program began in the late 1980s and was discontinued around the time Commissioners Pawloski and Stehouwer joined the Board. He explained that the policy was discontinued primarily because participation was limited and staff was administering a program that generated little public interest.

Commissioner Pawloski, referencing Commissioner Davis's comments regarding incorporating language about seeking additional funding and partnerships, asked whether the policy could be amended at a future meeting if approved as presented. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that the policy could be amended at the Board's next meeting or at a later date.

Commissioner Davis stated that the policy represented a good first step and established tree replacement as an organizational objective. He acknowledged that the policy does not yet address many details regarding financing or community involvement but provides a framework for moving forward. He noted that the policy could be amended as additional information becomes available regarding participation rates, costs to the Road Commission, and opportunities to reduce or eliminate those costs through partnerships with nonprofit organizations or other entities that may provide funding.

Commissioner Kennedy expressed concern with approving a policy that she believed remained incomplete. She cited the lack of identified funding partners, an established budget or spending cap, and additional unanswered questions regarding administration of the program. She indicated a preference for allowing additional time to further develop the policy, identify potential partners, and establish financial parameters before Board approval.

Commissioner Stehouwer identified additional potential funding options, including a millage or County funding. He also suggested establishing an annual funding cap, such as a \$50,000 budget allocation, to provide a baseline for the program and limit the Road Commission's financial commitment. Discussion continued...

Managing Director Bartholomew further noted that tree removal notification forms associated with the Safe Streets for All program would be distributed soon, creating a need to have the tree replacement policy in place before those notifications were sent.

Commissioner Thompson supported moving forward, noting that the Board would not be required to spend unavailable funds and that taking no action was not a responsible alternative.

Commissioner Pawloski agreed with Commissioner Thompson and noted that the Road Commission had administered a similar policy in the past and was therefore not entering new territory. He stated that the 18-month pilot period would provide the data and information necessary to evaluate the program and that the actual cost could not be determined until resident participation and interest were known. He also emphasized the need to move forward in a timely manner, noting that tree removals were anticipated to begin October 1. Based on feedback received from residents over the previous several months, he believed moving forward with the program was appropriate.

Commissioner Davis moved to call the question.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Pawloski requested approval of the draft tree replacement policy.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson

Nay: Stehouwer, Kennedy

Commissioner Pawloski directed staff, as part of the policy's implementation, to actively pursue outside funding opportunities, including grants and potential partnerships with the County, Conservation District, and other entities. Commissioners emphasized the importance of securing outside funding and establishing partnerships to help offset costs and support the program's long-term financial sustainability.

Ms. Julie Ann Shabi, 915 Arthur Avenue, asked the Board to clarify whether Eastwood is a designated focus area for 2026, as referenced during her earlier comments. The Board indicated that a staff member would speak with her following the meeting regarding the specific paving, chip seal, and fog seal projects currently underway in the Eastwood area. She then asked whether she and other Eastwood residents would need to formally submit a proposal to the Board to request repaving with consideration for improved drainage. The Board clarified that roadway improvement requests of this nature are initiated through the township, explaining that the township and Road Commission work each year collaboratively to identify roads for improvement. She was advised to first bring her concerns to the township. Ms. Shabi thanked the Board.

Mr. Brue Goethe, 9775 W M Avenue, began by thanking the board for passing the draft tree replacement policy. He commented that the lengthy discussion among commissioners was bordering on "analysis paralysis." He acknowledged being unfamiliar with the board's funding sources, so he refrained from commenting on that aspect. He then raised a point about the 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement, noting that a replacement tree of about 2-inch caliper costing \$500 does not come close to reflecting the true value of the trees being removed. He emphasized that trees hold enormous emotional and sentimental value for residents, which cannot be easily quantified. He shared a personal story, mentioning that he had been up north near the "tunnel of trees" over the weekend, noting that such landscapes take over 100 years to develop and cannot be easily restored. While he was away, his wife called to tell him that trees on their M Avenue property had been marked for removal. Upon returning home, he inspected the marked trees and felt that some judgment had been applied in the selection process. He also credited public involvement for changing the tree removal boundary from 33 feet from the centerline to 17 feet from the edge of the white line, and he praised the community for speaking up on behalf of the trees.

Ms. Elizabeth Kucinich, 2948 Casper Street, participated via Zoom and spoke in support of the proposed traffic calming project on Casper Street. She noted that she had been involved in the process from its beginning, including initiating the original petition and conducting extensive outreach to residents to gather support and provide information regarding meetings and votes. She described longstanding concerns regarding speeding and cut-through traffic on Casper Street, Pristine Avenue, and Borges Drive. She shared a personal incident in which a vehicle traveling at an estimated high rate of speed left the roadway, went through her yard and privacy fence, and came to rest in her backyard, creating significant concern for the safety of her children. She also noted safety concerns expressed by elderly residents and stated that some residents had moved from the neighborhood due to speeding concerns. She stated that the Road Commission had completed its review and collected data supporting the need for traffic calming measures on Casper Street. She further noted that Comstock Township had approved the project and allocated funding for construction the following summer. She concluded by thanking the Board and staff for their work on the project.

Managing Director Bartholomew introduced Jeff Wayne, who was recently promoted from Road Maintenance Operator to Project Superintendent, and congratulated him on his promotion. He reported that chip seal operations were nearing completion and approximately two weeks ahead of the end-of-August target. He recognized staff for the significant hours worked throughout the summer while balancing construction activities and emergency calls. Fog seal operations were also nearing completion, with approximately five (5) to seven (7) days of work remaining. The 9th Street project from KL Avenue to M-43 was in its final stages, with a final walkthrough anticipated within the next week. He mentioned that with chip seal operations winding down, staff will shift its focus toward addressing the backlog of service requests over the coming months. Crews have also begun preparations for the upcoming winter season, including servicing equipment and vehicles. He reminded Commissioners of the Commissioner's Seminar scheduled for September 27 and 28 in Mount Pleasant and encouraged those interested in attending to get with Administrative Specialist Rider. He announced that the Road Commission received a Top Honors Award from the County Road Association Self-Insurance Fund (CRASIF) for achieving a modification factor below 1.0, reflecting a low number of work-related injuries. He noted that this was the first time he had experienced this achievement in more than 30 years and congratulated the entire team on the accomplishment.

Commissioner Kennedy had no report.

Commissioner Davis reported that he recently visited a Road Commission crew working on a project on AB Avenue and observed that the project appeared to be progressing well overall. He noted that he had received comments from several residents, including Mr. Chuck Culver, regarding concerns with ditching and culvert work near their properties. Commissioner Davis stated that he met with some of the residents in person and described the discussions as positive and productive. He indicated that he intended to follow up with staff regarding the concerns raised.

Commissioner Thompson had no report.

Commissioner Stehouwer reported that he attended the County Fair the previous week and shared positive feedback regarding the event. He noted that he spoke with exhibitors and was pleased to see the participation of 4-H members. Regarding County Parks, he reported that the department is developing a Capital Improvement Plan identifying needs through 2031, which will be presented to the County Commission for budget consideration. He noted the department's efforts toward asset management planning. He also reported that Indiana Power plans to reroute power lines at Prairie View Park away from trees to help reduce the potential for storm-related damage. He also reported that he attended the Southwest District Council meeting the previous day with Managing Director Bartholomew, County Engineer Minkus, and Commissioner Pawloski. He described the meeting as informative and well attended, noting discussions regarding legislative priorities and common concerns, including challenges associated with bridge maintenance funding. He mentioned that he was looking forward to the Commissioner Conference in late September. He discussed projected Road Commission revenues, referencing correspondence from State Representative Matt Hall. He noted that while projected Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) revenues reflected increases, the projections were approximately \$33 million rather than the previously discussed \$38 million figure. He expressed concern that anticipated funding increases remain insufficient compared with the significant

statewide needs for county roads and noted that this concern contributed to his hesitation regarding costs associated with the tree replacement policy. He concluded by thanking township partners for their continued financial contributions and support.

Commissioner Pawloski reported that he attended the Kalamazoo Township meeting the previous evening, which was well attended. He noted that he provided updates regarding the Safe Streets for All program and the proposed tree replacement policy, both of which were well received. He expressed appreciation to staff for the informational flyers prepared following the previous meeting. He noted that one constituent had contacted him with concerns regarding tree removal and was provided with both the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and graphic informational flyers. He indicated that no additional concerns were received from the constituent following receipt of the information. He also reported receiving an email from Texas Township Supervisor Dr. O'Rourke regarding speed limit safety concerns and other related issues, which he forwarded to the other Road Commissioners. He noted that Dr. O'Rourke had also shared the correspondence with Senator Sean McCann and Representatives Julie Rogers and Matt Longjohn. He suggested that the correspondence also be forwarded to Speaker Hall, and Dr. O'Rourke agreed to do so. He reported attending the Southwest District Council meeting in Cassopolis the previous day with Commissioner Stehouwer, Managing Director Bartholomew, and County Engineer Minkus. He described the meeting as informative and well attended and noted that it provided valuable insight into how other Road Commissions address various issues.

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Stehouwer, Thompson, Davis

The meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Chair _____, Deputy Clerk

The regular meeting of the Board of County Road Commissioners of the County of Kalamazoo was held at the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) office at 4400 S 26th Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on Tuesday, August 25, 2026. Commissioner Pawloski called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Present: David C. Pawloski, Andy Davis, Randy Thompson, Toni Kennedy
Absent: Larry Stehouwer

Also attending: Managing Director Bartholomew, Public Relations Director Mark Worden, Finance Director Kim Bodnar, County Engineer Ryan Minkus, Assistant County Engineer Jim Hosekstra, Operations Director Anthony Ladd, Assistant Human Resources Director Jaycie Lindsey, Road Maintenance Superintendent Tony Allen, and Administrative Specialist Selena Rider.

Administrative Specialist Rider reviewed public meeting guidelines

Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Pawloski shared that the goal of the Board of County Road Commissioners of Kalamazoo County is to apply its expertise, energy, and resources to provide the safest and most convenient road system possible while supporting economic development and enhancing quality of life throughout the county. We are committed to maintaining a road system that is safe, efficient, and reliable for public travel.

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to approve the July 28, 2026, regular Board meeting minutes as presented.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Kennedy moved, and it was seconded to approve the payroll and vendor accounts as presented.

Payroll Account:	\$	217,385.98
Vendor Account:	\$	1,713.105.30

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded, to award the Police Interceptor Bid #2026-09 to Seelye Ford for a total price of \$61,346.00, low bidder meeting specifications. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that replacement of the police interceptor vehicle was included in the capital outlay section of the 2026 budget as part of the Equipment and Facilities Five-Year Plan. The weighmaster and permit agents use the vehicle daily. The Road Commission currently operates two police interceptor units, with the unit being replaced being a 2015 Ford Explorer Police Interceptor with approximately 160,000 miles. Rather than replacing the vehicle with the same model, staff recommended purchasing a Ford F-150 Police Responder, the pickup-truck version of the Interceptor. The new unit would include a six-year/100,000-mile extended warranty and has an estimated delivery time of 12 to 14 weeks. Two bids were received, one from Seelye Ford and one from Bob Maxey Ford. Bob Maxey Ford initially appeared to be the low bidder; however, upon further review, staff determined that its bid did not include the required extended warranty and therefore did not meet specifications. Staff also reviewed pricing available through Bob Maxey Ford under the MiDEAL purchasing program, but that price was higher than the local bid. The 2026 budget included \$65,000 for the vehicle purchase. Seelye Ford's bid of \$61,346.00 is approximately \$3,600 under budget.

Commissioner Davis asked whether the total bid price of \$61,346.00 included tax and title. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that the Road Commission is tax-exempt and does not pay sales tax on the vehicle.

Commissioner Thompson expressed appreciation for the opportunity to purchase the vehicle locally. Managing Director Bartholomew noted that historically the MiDEAL purchasing program had provided more favorable pricing; however, over the past couple of years, there have been opportunities to purchase vehicles locally at competitive prices. Staff confirmed that both MiDEAL and local purchasing options continue to be evaluated to obtain the best value for the Road Commission.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to award the ¾ Ton Pickup Truck Bid #2026-10 for two (2), Ford F250 4X4 Super Duty, Crew Cab Trucks to Seelye Ford for a total price of \$134,260.00. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that the purchase of two three-quarter ton pickup trucks was included in the capital outlay section of the 2026 budget as part of the Capital Improvement Plan. The vehicles will be used for administration, construction, and road maintenance operations. The Road Commission currently maintains a fleet of 37 vehicles, including vans, SUVs, and pickup trucks. The purchase includes two 2027 Ford F-250 4x4 Super Duty Crew Cab trucks. The new trucks will initially be used as administrative vehicles for approximately three to four years before being transferred into the general fleet. As part of the fleet rotation, two existing administrative vehicles will be moved into the general fleet, and a 2015 GMC three-quarter ton truck with approximately 140,000 miles will be sold. Two bids were received, one from Seelye Ford and one from Bob Maxey Ford. Seelye Ford was the low bidder at \$134,260.00 for both vehicles. The estimated delivery time is 120 days, and the purchase includes a 72-month warranty. The 2026 capital outlay budget included \$150,000 for the purchase of the two trucks. Seelye Ford's bid is more than \$15,000 under budget.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Commissioner Davis moved, and it was seconded, to award Underbody Scraper – Sectional Tungsten Carbide Tipped and Special Hardened Cutting Edges Bid #2026-11 to St. Regis Culvert, Inc., the sole bidder meeting specifications, with the option for three (3) one (1) year extensions upon mutual agreement of both parties. Managing Director Bartholomew shared that underbody scraper cutting edges are wearable edges used on the moldboards of snowplows and motor graders. They are used for snow removal, grading gravel roads, and preparing road surfaces for hot mix asphalt paving projects. He emphasized that cutting edges are critical to winter maintenance operations, comparing their necessity to having salt available in the salt barn. Two types of cutting edges were included in the bid. Tungsten carbide-tipped cutting edges are the primary type currently used and last approximately five times longer than flame-hardened cutting edges. They are supplied in four-foot sections, with three sections required for each plow truck underbody scraper. The bid included 270 sections at approximately \$775 each, for a total of \$209,088. He noted that the cost has increased significantly due to tariffs, as tungsten carbide is primarily sourced from China. The second type, special hardened or flame-hardened cutting edges, costs approximately \$153 each and is supplied in six-foot sections, with two sections required per blade change. These cutting edges typically last only two to three days during snowplowing operations and are primarily used on gravel roads, motor graders, and for preparing road surfaces prior to hot mix asphalt paving. The total cost for the special hardened cutting edges was approximately \$18,000. The combined cost for both types of cutting edges was \$227,412. St. Regis Culvert, Inc. was the sole bidder, although the bid documents were downloaded by 10 potential bidders, compared to the two or three downloads typically received for this type of bid. St. Regis Culvert, Inc. was also the Road Commission's previous supplier. He noted that the company could only guarantee its pricing for 30 days rather than through the end of the year as requested in the bid specifications. Therefore, the quoted pricing would apply to the current purchase rather than future purchases or extensions. The cutting edges will be purchased and placed into inventory and expensed to the equipment budget as they are used.

Commissioner Kennedy sought clarification regarding the total amount being approved, noting that two different figures were included in the agenda documents. Managing Director Bartholomew clarified that \$209,088 was for the tungsten carbide-tipped cutting edges and \$18,324 was for the special hardened cutting edges, for a combined total of \$227,412.

Commissioner Thompson asked whether the Road Commission was moving away from tungsten carbide cutting edges due to the increased cost. Managing Director Bartholomew confirmed that both types would continue to be used. Tungsten carbide remains the preferred option for most applications, while the special hardened cutting edges are better suited for gravel roads and grading operations, where the carbide material tends to wear away prematurely.

Commissioner Davis asked about the cost-benefit crossover point and how close the rising cost of tungsten carbide was to making the less expensive flame-hardened cutting edges more economical. Managing Director Bartholomew indicated that costs are approaching that point and noted that an additional increase of approximately 20% in the price of tungsten carbide could make it more economical to use the less expensive cutting edges and replace them more frequently.

Managing Director Bartholomew also noted that alternative options have been evaluated over the years, including double-thick flame-hardened cutting edges and rubber cutting edges; however, none have proven as effective as tungsten carbide for the Road Commission's operations.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

Managing Director Bartholomew announced that the Road Commission received safety grant funding for two projects potentially scheduled for 2028. The first project is a roundabout at Sprinkle Road and V Avenue. The second project is on East Michigan Avenue from Sprinkle Road west to the City of Kalamazoo limits and will consist of an HMA project that includes rumble strips, similar to the current Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) work. He provided an update on the project at Sprinkle Road and M-343. He shared that although relatively small in scope, the project is located in a heavily traveled area and included paving at the intersection. The work was expected to be substantially completed that day or shortly thereafter, with minimal restoration remaining due to the project primarily involving median fill work. He thanked the public for their patience during construction. He reminded the Commissioners that budget season is approaching and asked them to mark their calendars for a budget work session scheduled for November 17, immediately following the regularly scheduled Board meeting. He shared information regarding an asset management training opportunity for paved roads scheduled for September 15 at the St. Joseph County Road Commission. The three-hour session will be presented by Pete Torola from the Center for Technology and Training (CTT) and will cover the fundamentals of asset management. Commissioners and interested staff were encouraged to attend and asked to notify him or Administrative Specialist Rider if they planned to participate.

Commissioner Kennedy had no report.

Commissioner Davis reported on his attendance at the Environmental Health Advisory Council (EHAC) meeting two weeks prior, which included a presentation from the Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Office. The presentation provided an overview of MSU Extension's mission and the various programs and projects it supports throughout Kalamazoo County. He noted that the presentation was very informative and highlighted the broad range of services provided, including tree planting and tire recycling programs. He further noted that, despite having a relatively small staff, the MSU Extension team appeared energetic and motivated to collaborate with community partners and other stakeholders.

Commissioner Thompson reported that the most recent Board of Public Works (BPW) meeting was canceled and noted that they would see if a meeting is scheduled for the following month.

Commissioner Pawloski reported on his attendance at the Township Supervisors meeting, where several topics were discussed at length. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity for the Road Commission to continue hosting the meetings. Regarding discussion about the group potentially becoming more formalized, He noted that he believes the group's informal structure is one of its greatest strengths and encouraged the supervisors to continue operating in that manner. He also noted that Consumers Energy provided a presentation regarding upcoming pipeline work planned throughout the county over the next couple of years. He expressed appreciation for the

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Vice Chair Int'l _____

Clerk Int'l _____

presentation and looked forward to working with Consumers Energy as the project moves forward. He mentioned that Commissioner Stehouwer was absent due to vacation.

Commissioner Thompson moved, and it was seconded to adjourn the meeting.

Carried by the following vote:

Aye: Pawloski, Davis, Thompson, Kennedy

The meeting was adjourned at 3:26 p.m.

Attest: Meredith Place, County Clerk

By _____, Vice Chair _____, Deputy Clerk