

TUSCOLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 19, 2019 Minutes

H. H. Purdy Building

Commissioner Bardwell called the special meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Tuscola, Michigan, held at the H.H. Purdy Building in the City of Caro, Michigan, on the 19th day of March 2019, to order at 8:00 o'clock a.m. local time.

Prayer – Pastor Jon Terry, New Hope Alive Church, Reese

Pledge of Allegiance – Commissioner Bardwell

Roll Call – Clerk Fetting

Commissioners Present: District 1 - Thomas Young, District 2 - Thomas Bardwell, District 3 - Kim Vaughan, District 4 - Mark Jensen, District 5 – Daniel Grimshaw (arrived at 8:03 a.m.)

Commissioner Absent: None

Also Present: Mike Hoagland, Clerk Jodi Fetting, Eean Lee, Kent Graf, Maggie Root, Matt Campbell, Russ Rienas, Pennie Rienas, Ed Smith, Judge Amy Grace Gierhart, Ray Rendon, Keith Baur, Damian Wasik, Dave Gloer, Marty Hall, Marc Augsburg, Dawn Leyva, Jim McLoskey, Jon Terry, Clayette Zechmeister, Joe Greene, Michael Silverman, Bill Bushaw, Steve Erickson, Bob Eschenbacher, Dave Osentoski, Evan Osentoski, Ann Hepfer, Gene Pierce, Mike Green, Roger Hood, Register John Bishop, Treasurer Patricia Donovan-Gray, John Axe (via phone), John Tilt, Ken Martin, Mark Haney and many other community residents

Adoption of Agenda -
19-M-061

Motion by Young, seconded by Vaughan to adopt the agenda as presented.
Motion Carried.

Brief Public Comment Period for Agenda Items Only -

-Matt Campbell - The current location of the Caro Center is at an interchange of three major state highways. There are people located in the area that would be qualified to be hired it is just that the opportunity needs to be afforded to leaders at the Caro Center to complete the hiring process. A question he has for the Board is if the water can be made available. The Board answered that water project can be completed. Matt distributed a map of areas in the State of Michigan that are served by the Caro Center. Patients have expressed how much they appreciate being able to see the country setting and hearing the sounds of nature. It is important to keep the patient's needs in the forefront. It is vital that all parties involved work together to retain the Caro Center in Tuscola County.

-Josh Skinner - Josh questioned the Board if they were aware of any deadlines that the contractors on the project have been given.

-Ed Smith - Congressman Mitchell's office has been working through this issue since the news broke over the weekend. Congressman Mitchell has submitted a letter to the Governor's office to retain the Caro Center and is waiting for a response from the Governor. Ed read the letter to the Board.

-Joe Greene - Joe believes there is a need to educate the new staff in the Governor's office regarding the information that was collected previously. He also reiterated the importance of the Caro Center to our community.

Consent Agenda Resolution - None

New Business -

-Discussion in Regards to Retaining the New State Psychiatric Hospital -

-John Axe, Clark Hill - Mr. Axe explained that the Clark Hill firm would be able to be contracted to provide lobbying services regarding the project. The firm would be contracted to assist with governmental assistance in Lansing. Also, the firm would help keep the project construction on track and located in Tuscola County.

-Mike Hoagland stated Clark Hill would engage their consulting team to evaluate the project and the steps that need to be taken. There needs to be a unified front moving forward in the project. Tuscola County feels the water issue has been resolved. An engineer had been contracted and was able to provide a cost effective way to provide water to the Caro Center as well as for future development in that area.

-Commissioner Grimshaw asked for a description of the success of Clark Hill in lobbying versus litigation.

-Commissioner Bardwell does not feel recruitment would be an issue if the Caro Center was portrayed as stable. He does not feel family visits should be a top concern to cause the move as the amount of family visits will remain the same wherever the facility is located. The water issue has been discussed and resolved from the Board's perspective. Today's meeting was held in order to review the steps that have been taken to retain the Caro Center. Contact has been made with Senator Daley and Representative Green for direction and leadership in Lansing. Commissioner Bardwell encouraged the public to continue to reach out to show their support for having the Caro Center in Tuscola County at the current location.

-Mike Hoagland would like to keep the contact with leaders as a high priority and at the forefront of all steps moving forward. Mike has a lot of the research completed that can be shared with the Governor's office. Representative Canfield stated all parties involved need to work together and win this again.

-Commissioner Vaughan would like to focus resources available where they can be used most effectively.

-Commissioner Bardwell feels the best strategy is the individual communication to the Governor's Office and to the Legislators. Steps need to be taken in order to educate new officials in Lansing.

-Commissioner Grimshaw stated the new Director of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is Robert Gordon. He provided an overview of his background and concerns he has regarding that.

-Senator Mike Green has had concern from the beginning that DHHS wanted to move the Caro Center and felt there was information that was provided that was misleading. He has concerns that even though appropriation has been made to keep the Caro Center in Tuscola County that could be changed by Governor Whitmer. He feels the decision will be made in the next few months. He feels the current Legislators in the Senate and in the House are firmly behind Senator Daley and Representative Green. It is important to keep positive communication lines open in Lansing.

-It is projected that 54 million dollars flows through the local economy because of the Caro Center.

Other Business as Necessary -

-Commissioner Bardwell will not be in attendance at Monday's Committee of the Whole meeting as he has another meeting in Lansing,

Extended Public Comment -

-Matt Campbell - There has been funding appropriated to hire 50 more employees at the Caro Center. There have been 25 new employees hired but the next wave of hiring has not been allowed to happen at this point. Letters and phone calls need to be made in order to show our support. Matt is attending a meeting in Lansing in reference to the matter.

-Renee Berlin - It is important to talk about the patients as many have no family that visits them and the patient considers the staff their family.

-Commissioner Bardwell stated the Board will continue to work with leaders in Lansing in order to keep this matter at the forefront.

-Clerk Fetting asked if a model letter can be prepared as it was last time. Mike Hoagland will prepare a letter to be able to send to the Governor's Office. Clerk Fetting also thanked the many people who attended the meeting today to show their support.

-Commissioner Vaughan is dedicated to work with officials every step of the way.

-Commissioner Bardwell stated the matter to be placed on Monday's Committee of the Whole Agenda.

-Wayne Susala supported the need to keep these jobs in Tuscola County.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Jodi Fetting
Tuscola County Clerk