



# MINUTES

## Committee of the Whole

### Special Meeting

10:00 AM - Wednesday, April 20, 2022

H.H. Purdy Building Board Room, 125 W. Lincoln St., Caro, MI 48723

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Commissioner Bardwell called the special meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the County of Tuscola, Michigan, held at the H.H. Purdy Building Board Room, 125 W. Lincoln St., Caro, MI 48723, on Wednesday, April 20, 2022, to order at 10:02 AM local time.

Roll Call - Chief Deputy Clerk Elenbaum

Commissioners Present In-Person: Thomas Young, Thomas Bardwell, Kim Vaughan, Doug DuRussel, Dan Grimshaw

Commissioners Absent: None

Others Present In-Person: Curtis Elenbaum, Sheila Long, Mike Miller, Eean Lee, Ryan Robinson, Brian Harris, Ryan Herford, Brian Hemerline, Jon Ramirez, Candy Rogner, Gina Gohs, Robin Neff, Shelly Lutz, Barry Lapp, Debbie Babich, Clayette Zechmeister, Aaron Weiss, Lee Nichols, Alicia Miller, Magistrate Joseph Van Auken, Tim Green, Julie Strasz, Doug Osier, Jamie Pierce, Wendy Franks, Jacquita McCrory, Matt Koch, Steve Anderson, Ted Hull, Marne Daggett, Jamie Pierce, Prosecutor Mark Reene, Kristy Suber and others.

Also Present Virtual: Amy Gregor, Janie Hemerline, Tracy Violet, Kristi Phipps, Angie Daniels, Shannon Beach, Judge Nancy Thane, Brenda Peters, Crystal Knoblock, Dara Hood, Sheriff Glen Skrent, Heather Malloy, Heather Walther, Jonathan Suber, Karen Haire, Darlene Parker, Krystaria Skakle, Linda Strasz, Mary Drier, Robert Baxter, Shannon Beach, Bridgette Elenbaum, Tom McLane, Cindy McKinney-Volz, Cindy Hughes, Christy Poulos, Treasurer Ashley Bennett, Matt Brown, Mark Haney, Nicole Friday, Elizabeth Shook

At 10:02 a.m., there were a total of 36 participants attending the meeting virtually.

#### County Updates

None

#### New Business

1. Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) Presentation and Discussion - Marne J. Daggett, Regional Manager Municipal Employees' Retirement System of Michigan, gave the presentation on MERS and Tuscola County highlighting Defined Benefit Plan Funding. General breakdowns were given of their role in providing options for benefits that Tuscola County offers to employees.

- A discussion was had about Defined Benefit versus Defined Contribution and the cost to Tuscola County from the coverages provided.

- Commissioner Grimshaw and Commissioner DuRussel expressed concerns about the cost of benefits for county employees with the current economic trends that could make funding through MERS extremely difficult and the possibility of adverse effects on the taxpayers of the county.

Matter discussed by the Board.

### **Public Comment on Presentation and Discussion**

- Mark Reene thanked Marne for the presentation. He explained there is not one unimportant person employed in this County and pointed out the importance of the value of those employees. His belief is that the economics should be taken into account but more importantly the rhetoric needs to change to ensure all employees are valued and feel valued.

- Jacquita McCrory spoke to the importance of longevity and knowledge these employees have. She questioned the intent of changing these benefits and instilling fear of loss into employees while also reminding the Board that they are under contract with union employees.

- Eean Lee mentioned that in his eyes his department employees are not paid enough but the one thing they do have and can rely on are their retirement benefits.

- Ryan Herford brought attention to how much times have changed compared to when he started from a recruitment perspective. He spoke on the staffing challenges at the Sheriff's Office and how much money is invested in training that would be lost if incentives to stay are lost.

- Brian Harris stressed that the current climate is that the employees are not feeling as if they are appreciated by certain board members.

- Aaron Weiss pointed out from a budget perspective how much his department alone has saved the County money over the years and pleaded that the Board consider the individuals effected and not just worry about the money.

- Joseph Van Auken inquired about if they were to freeze the pension and everyone walked out, what kind of impact that would have on liabilities.

- Kristy Suber echoed the notion that there will be employees that would leave if such a thing were to happen. She also pointed out the impact on the taxpayers of losing knowledgeable seasoned employees and the service they provide.

- Jon Ramirez explained how he's had many jobs in many places but ended up back here with this community and has always kept the mentality of wanting to give back to the community.

- Commissioner Young thanked Marne for her presentation as it validated his belief that we currently have a fair plan in place for our employees as it stands.

- Commissioner Bardwell stated that he believes in the old adage "You are only as good as the employees you have". He wants to ensure all employees who shared their feelings and opinions are valued. He stated that the retirement benefit determines the quality and longevity of employees. He stated the Board is very concerned about how any decision may affect the employees of the County. He reviewed how much there would be to overcome if a change were to happen. The concern of the employees in the County is evident by the attendance today.

- Marne reminded everyone that MERS is here to educate everyone and provided ways to reach out for continued knowledge or questions at any time.

### **Other Business as Necessary**

None.

### **On-Going Other Business as Necessary**

None

### **Public Comment Period**

None

### **Adjournment**

Motion by Thomas Young, seconded by Kim Vaughan to adjourn the meeting at 12:49 p.m. Motion Carried.

Curtis Elenbaum  
Tuscola County Chief Deputy Clerk