



# MINUTES

## Finance Committee Meeting

10:30 AM - Monday, November 17, 2025

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

Commissioner Bardwell called the meeting of the Finance Committee of the County of Tuscola, Michigan, held at the H.H. Purdy Building Board Room, 125 W. Lincoln St., Caro, MI 48723, on Monday, November 17, 2025, to order at 10:30 AM local time.

Roll Call - Clerk Fetting

Commissioners Present In-Person: Thomas Bardwell, Matt Koch

Others Present In-Person: Clerk Jodi Fetting, Eean Lee, Erica Dibble, Connie Keinath, Mike Miller, Commissioner Kim Vaughan, Commissioner Bill Lutz, Commissioner Nancy Barrios, Sheriff Ryan Robinson, Jon Ramirez, Treasurer Ashley Bennett, Cody Horton, Angie Daniels

Also Present Virtual: Tracy Violet, Angie House, Debbie Babich, Cindy McKinney-Volz, Brandon Bertram, Mitch Davies, Bonnie Fackler, Carrie Tabar, Echo Torrez, Mary Drier, Steve Root, Tom McLane, Larry Zapfe, Register Marianne Brandt, Sheila Long, Drain Commissioner Dara Hood, Kyle Nordstrom, Barry Lapp, Matthew Sexton, Kandi Teddy

At 10:32 a.m., there were a total of 21 participants attending the meeting virtually.

### County Updates

None

### New Business

#### 1. Treasurer's Investments -

Treasurer Ashley Bennett stated this meeting was requested in the Spring of 2025 to discuss matters moving forward from 2025 and into 2026.

Commissioner Koch addressed that if the \$1.5 million was the average interest earned against all funds in 2025 would the interest earned amount being projected for the 2026 budget at \$278,894.00 be correct.

Treasurer Bennett stated the average interest earned prior to 2023 was approximately \$250,000.00 to \$300,000.00. It was also stated that balancing a budget on projected interest earned is not a good practice to be accustomed to.

Commissioner Bardwell stated the 2026 budget is facing a \$1.9 million dollar deficit. There was an Elected Official and Department Head budget meeting where each Department looked at areas for potential cuts. Interest earned is an option for increasing revenue. The Equalization Department is not expecting there to be large tax increases to subsequently increase revenue, which means expenditures are exceeding revenues.

Commissioner Bardwell is projecting the costs of a full-time employee to be approximately \$200,000.00. The Board will need to look at eliminating non-mandated services then divide out the remaining deficit to determine how many employees would need to be cut.

Treasurer Bennett has identified \$17 million in fund balances that could be invested that has not been in the past.

Commissioner Koch stated that using interest earnings to balance a budget is not the best practice but it is the situation Tuscola County is faced with. By not investing county funds as has been done the past 3 years, all departments are impacted.

Commissioner Bardwell stated the projection that Clayette Zechmeister had prepared shows that 2027 could be even worse. The financial struggles in 2008 were difficult for all departments.

Treasurer Bennett stated that the aggressive investing practice took time and effort outside of regular duties and she has proven the challenge given as the County Treasurer.

Commissioner Bardwell stated that Treasurer Bennett has moved the county forward since taking office.

Treasurer Bennett stated that \$1.3 million has been earned in interest to date in 2025 which was not entered in the 2025 budget.

Commissioner Koch stated that he is not sure what the County will do without any aggressive investments.

Commissioner Bardwell would like an expense/revenue line graph to show the last 6 to 8 years to show where it crossed and where it is projected for future years.

Commissioner Koch asked that if the investment portion is taking too much time, could the task be delegated to another staff member.

Treasurer Bennett has identified different departments' fund balances that could be invested but wanted discussion with the Board for collaborative direction.

Treasurer Bennett reviewed that there are current investments in CDAR's so there is security. The interest earned in 2026 should be higher than what is in the 2026 budget but that amount is not guaranteed.

Commissioner Koch stated that Treasurer Bennett is doing her job, but he is just unsure of where the interest earned projection of zero for 2026 is coming from.

Commissioner Bardwell would like the proposed 2026 budget updated with a more reflective interest earned amount as to if aggressive investing was pursued. The Board is uncertain where the final health insurance costs will end up as well as there are negotiations underway.

2. Summer Tax Collection by Tuscola County -

Treasurer Bennett reported that Tuscola County collects summer taxes for 9 Townships. The administrative fee retained by the County for doing this service in 2025 was approximately \$134,000.00. In the 2026 budget, this is projected at zero.

Treasurer Bennett is willing to do this continuing into 2026 but the Townships have the authority to take this duty back. There is a process that would need to be completed to have the Townships take the tax collection back and she does not feel it would be able to be completed in time for 2026. Tuscola County is the only county in the State that performs the summer tax collection on behalf of a local jurisdiction.

Commissioner Bardwell would like to learn more about the opportunity to have the Treasurer invest the \$17 million and what the potential interest earned would be. The Board is looking at all ways to increase revenue. Commissioner Bardwell requested a report on which departments would have a fund balance to invest, the amount that could be invested and the potential interest that could be earned.

**Old Business**

None

**Finance/Technology**

None

**Building and Grounds**

None

**Personnel**

None

**Other Business as Necessary**

None

**Public Comment Period**

Cody Horton addressed the Board to invest in the employees of Tuscola County.

Jon Ramirez commends Treasurer Bennett for shouldering requests for doing duties that are not statutorily required.

Commissioner Bardwell stated this meeting was requested in the past and at the Department Head budget meeting. The Finance Committee wanted to offer the opportunity to listen and understand.

**Adjournment**

Motion by Matt Koch, seconded by Thomas Bardwell to adjourn the meeting at 11:19 a.m. Motion Carried.

Jodi Fetting  
Tuscola County Clerk, MCCO