

## **WEXFORD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Regular Meeting \* Wednesday, May 20, 2026

Meeting called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Chairman Taylor.

Roll Call: Present- Commissioners Jason Nelson, Mark Nyman, Sandy Bengelink, Julie Theobald, Gary Taylor, Jason Baughan and Brian Potter.

Absent- Commissioners Aaron Sogge and Michael Bush.

Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Additions/Deletions to the Agenda-**

Add: J.3. Resolution 26-17 Extending Appreciation for Ginette Hines' Dedicated Services

J.4. Resolution 26-18 Extending Appreciation for Mistine Stark's Dedicated Services

J.5. Resolution 26-19 Supporting the Sale of the Dam

### **Approval of the Agenda**

**MOTION** by Comm Theobald, seconded by Comm Potter to approve the agenda, as amended.

**All in Favor.**

**Employee Recognition-** *None.*

### **Presentation and Reports-**

Mr. Eric Karbowski from Michigan State University Extension wanted to share a couple of updates and introduce a couple of guest celebrities he had with him. He explained some of the different programs available through the MSU Extension and 4-H programs. The first was the agriculture program. It enables them to work with our agriculture community in such ways as getting them the ability to access equipment they may need. If anyone knows or hears of a farmer needing help, Eric is hoping this will help them know there is assistance available.

Eric introduced Josie, who is their 4-H program coordinator. Josie has been bringing a lot of great things with a lot of energy. Her position is MOA and up for milage renewal in August. Eric wanted to make sure the community got a chance to meet her prior to that election.

Josie Clement stated that she is the new program coordinator in Wexford County. She started out as a volunteer, so she is not new to the hard work that her 4-Hers know every day. Josie gave us an update, stating that last year 4-H directly reached 861 youth directly. Josie is direct contacting educational programming and has reached 394 youth this year. She feels she is well on her way to reach her personal goal of trying to make it happen. There are two new clubs that Josie has added, the Curiosity Club and the Sewing Club. The Sewing Club is only made possible by using the location currently at the County building. They are able to house the members, which is nice because it gives parents a central location to drop off their children. The kids will get sewing education. The second program, called the Curiosity Club, is a club for children to follow their

passions. Currently they are calling it Miniature Locomotives Trainers, which is a lot of fun. They have previously done beatboxing. The agriculture clubs have doubled in size since the past year. Josie was able to add another agriculture club specific to rabbits and two members have gone to the State competitions. They will also be adding a gardening club this year at the educational garden, with a whole gardening club that will work on that all summer. There is a wild nature theme club at the Carl T Johnson Center. There is a team committee that is currently working on creating an I do drive to donate to the local shelter. Mia Crouch is heading to a national archery competition in Brighton.

There is so much pride in the 4-H teams in the area and that they do what they can to support them. Josie is also working with her Engagement Center, only because of their space at 401 Lake Street. They started a parent cafe, which is able to host dinners for parents and get them the community resources in our county while providing both their children and the parents the education they need. The students built catapults while doing a STEM project. They have also made model rockets with over 300 youths. The children also get to meet with professionals, do mock interviews, update/learn to create a resume and some have had head shot photographs done.

Through the CAPS Crew they have been able to start a club for an after-school program. The FAR Club combines art with the fair. All the art can be submitted to the local fair. It is a partnership between Wexford, the Northern MI District Fair and the Caps Crew Kids. Any of their entries will be put into the fair, free of charge. The hope is to grow the exhibits at the fair. Josie has gotten a lot of feedback on that program. There are two teenagers going to exploration games which is a college prep experience that MI offers.

Josie ended by saying that she looks forward to meeting more of the Board and hearing from them and thank you.

Eric commented that Josie has done a great job and he is very proud of the work she has done. She has brought diversity to the programs, a lot of new opportunities and more youth engagement opportunities. Eric would also like to introduce Heather Sal, the office manager, who has been with them for a year.

Heather started by saying hello and expressing that she is the face you are going to see or voice you will hear if you come to or call their office. She stated that their office is amazing and welcomed people to stop in and check it out. They have different murals and artwork from the programs. They are trying to collaborate with as many groups in the community as possible. Next month they are holding a class with USDA. Heather runs the social media pages for Wexford, and she tries to put as much information out to the community. There is also a Color Run coming up. Please feel free to reach out or stop into their office with any questions.

Northern Lakes Community Mental Health Services CEO, Lynda Zeller stated that after 25 years in local work, including 24-hour shifts with her husband, doing case management, for a nonprofit. Lynda worked for the State of Michigan and was responsible for everything substance use for about three years. She was responsible for the healthcare of Michigan's prisons statewide including mental health and behavioral health. After doing some philanthropic work and

attempting to retire twice, a short stay in Thailand, they moved back to the area they fell in love with, Northern Michigan. After some persuasion she has been with NLCMH for seven months. Lynda stated there were three things she wanted to cover, the first annual report, which was included in the agenda packet. The innovation through partnership is true, different partners in our six counties are critically important as the report shows expenditures exceed the revenue by a considerable amount. The agency has been on a steady downward trend for cash on hand for the last two years. Due to the hard work of people who came before Lynda that downward trend ended in July, however, they are still struggling with cash on hand. The Northern MI Regional Entity and Medicaid partners have been great and willing to work with Lynda, even sending early funds. Gradually they are getting better and better, but it is going to take a while. There is still a discrepancy from years 2023 and 2024.

Lynda is committed to NLCMH, she is glad to be back in the local community. She believes that the enabling agreement that was crafted was great and the message was loud and clear. Transparency and accountability is needed for all six counties. She is very clear and very committed to that. She is willing to come to as many meetings and/or work sessions as needed and work with the administrator and deputy administrator. She thanked the Board for placing Comm Nyman on their board. They will be providing quarterly reports to Joe. Some of the agreements may need to be rewritten as some were created three years ago.

Lynda was pleased with a lot of things she discovered at the agency. The people closest serving the community are amazing and dedicated. They stayed through no salary increases and layoffs of colleagues. They have made it through a couple really hard years, and their commitment is rock solid.

With that being said, there are significant system problems and a variety of operational issues they are working through. Without getting into it, the problems and issues are fixable, with a lot of work. She has been receiving a lot of volunteers from the community, fellow counties and fellow Medicaid entities. The support is amazing!

The community mental health system is funded 87% from Medicaid. The general fund has a 3-million-dollar operational budget. The general fund would pay for any individual who does not have Medicaid. Regardless of whether the individual has the ability to pay for the services, every person in the county is entitled to the services. Joe Barkman and Erica Longstreet manage the crisis system for everything out of the tri-city. The challenge with the money in the general fund is flexible, but the money from Medicaid is pretty inflexible. She is working with others to find good funding streams for the things that are not covered by the county and state general funds, through possibly creating "special funds account". She will continue to work to settle 2023 & 2024 years. She thanked the board for the opportunity.

**Public Comment-** *None.*

**Consent Agenda**

1. Approval of the May 6, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes

**MOTION** by Comm Theobald, seconded by Comm Bengelink to approve the Consent Agenda.

**All in Favor.**

**Agenda Items**

1. Resolution 26-16 Support of Michigan House Bill 5152 & 5153  
**MOTION** by Comm Bengelink, seconded by Comm Nyman to approve Resolution 26-16 in Support of House Bill 5152 & 5153 and authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the County.

**Roll Call: Motion passed 7-0.**

2. Culligan Proposal & Rental Agreement - Public Defenders Office  
**MOTION** by Comm Nyman, seconded by Comm Nelson to approve the Culligan Proposal & Rental Agreement for the Public Defender's Office and authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the County.

**Roll Call: Motion passed 7-0.**

3. Resolution 26-17 Extending Appreciation for Ginette Hines' Dedicated Services  
**MOTION** by Comm Potter, seconded by Comm Theobald to approve Resolution 26-17 Extending Appreciation for Ginette Hines' Dedicated Services.

**Roll Call: Motion passed 7-0.**

4. Resolution 26-18 Extending Appreciation for Mistine Stark's Dedicated Services  
**MOTION** by Comm Theobald, seconded by Comm Baughn to approve Resolution 26-18 Extending Appreciation for Mistine Stark's Dedicated Services.

**Roll Call: Motion passed 7-0.**

5. Resolution 26-19 Supporting the Sale of the Dam  
**MOTION** by Comm Nyman, seconded by Comm Bengelink to approve Resolution 26-19 Supporting the Sale of the Dam.

**Roll Call: Motion passed 6-1 with Commissioner Nelson voting against the motion.**

**Administrator's Report-**

Administrator Porterfield and Co-Administrator Bigger were at a conference and unable to attend, but Mr. Porterfield submitted the following Administrators report:

Thank you to Lynda for all she is doing for Northern Lakes

Congratulations to both Ginette and Mistine, I will miss you both. This place will not be the same without you both.

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Commissioner Taylor, Nyman and myself all attended a meeting of the Wexford joint planning commission on Monday night to get information on a possible solar farm project in Wexford and Grand Traverse Counties. There will be more meetings to come.

Jami and I are at the Michigan Association of County Administrators conference and will return on Monday.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joe

**Correspondence-** *None.*

**Public Comments-**

Donald Koshmider, Cadillac, Michigan stated that he was here today to speak specifically against data centers. With them popping up all over the country Don is hearing nothing but bad things. About 5 million gallons of water a day used to lose the water. It is supposed to be a closed loop system. The residents' water pressure goes to zilcho around the area and their electric bills skyrocket, if they don't lose their land all together eminent domain. Michigan's Mike Dugan embracing data centers runs for the Governor and President Trump pushing data centers now flabbergasts Don. Don is an active Republican and goes to all the meetings, pays attention to the news. Don mentions that Thomas Massie in Kentucky lost the primary election. Israel spent over \$30 million on their candidate and Thomas Massie took zero dollars from Israel. Don stated it is terrible if Israel can buy off elections of US politicians. This is America controlled by Isreal. Trump changed about six months ago. Now he is whatever Israel says. War with Iran even though his Joint Chiefs of Staff advised him against it. Alex Jones' InfoWars is gone but is up on appeal. You can still watch him every day at [alexjoneslive.com](http://alexjoneslive.com), his new website. Don started taking methylene blue three days ago. He is seeing what this stuff is all about, already feeling sharp as a tack, but his cognitive usually will be like a razor. He asked for no data centers in Michigan.

**Liaison Reports-**

Comm Theobald attended a Networks Northwest meeting. Things are moving along to purify the carbon in the system. Salvation Army is having an open house on June 5th. She will send out the information as soon as she has it.

Comm Baughan noted that he attended the AESE meeting yesterday and it was business as usual. He would like to remind everyone that there is a new disc golf course opening at Baker College's Campus and there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony on Saturday.

Comm Potter attended a DDA meeting where they gave some information regarding the gas stations in Clam Lake Township. The Sheriff has reported that the cars that were approved many months ago are being worked on. Road Commission is behind. They have replaced 20+ culverts and still have more to fix and replace. Multiple roads around Lake Mitchell are still closed. The water table is still too high to repair the road at this point. It does sound like they completely lost

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19 Road completely and are going to have it re-routed. They are also still not sure about 47 Road. They will continue to work on that. The delay on the brine, due to the storm repairs, was noted.

Comm Taylor stated the new Veterans Services Officer started Monday and will be around to meet the Board.

**Board Comments-**

Comm Nelson stated that the reason he voted no on Sale of the Dam was because he didn't have any information on that and did not feel it was appropriate to vote on something he had no information on.

Comm Nyman wanted to make people aware that he and Comm Taylor and Admin Porterfield went to a meeting at the Road Commission a couple of weeks ago. There is a solar farm being considered in the northwest part of Wexford County and Southern part of Grand Traverse County. About 2,800 acres they want to put solar panels in. They did not have a quorum and were not expecting a big meeting. About 120 people showed up. They will be having another meeting in June and are probably going to have it at the Buckley High School, so keep an eye on that. We want to save our prime farmland.

Comm Theobald wanted to give a personal thank you to Mistine and Ginette for their service to the county. They both gave a long time to our citizens. She wishes them both a new chapter in their life that's going to start and is the best part of life.

Comm Potter pointed out that between the years of service of Mistine and Ginette the county is losing a significant amount of knowledge.

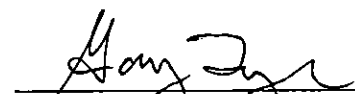
**Chairman's Comments-**

Chair Taylor thanked everyone for attending.

**Adjourn**

**MOTION** by Comm Theobald, seconded by Comm Bengelink to adjourn at 4:39 p.m.

All in favor.

  
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Gary Taylor, Chairperson

  
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Ashley Hackert, Chief Deputy County Clerk